

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

The UN Security Council passed a resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire in **Gaza** during the month of Ramadan, as well as the immediate release of the Israeli hostages. **America** abstained, allowing the vote to pass. The vote underscores the [growing rift](#) between America and its close ally. In recent weeks **Joe Biden** has sharpened his tone towards Israel. He has come under increased pressure, at home and abroad, over the appalling toll of the war and the mass displacement of Gaza's population.

**America** and **Britain** imposed sanctions against a “state-sponsored” **Chinese** firm and two Chinese nationals, accusing them of carrying out a series of **cyber attacks**. America’s Justice Department filed related criminal charges against seven people—all Chinese nationals. Their targets allegedly included American, British and European government and parliamentary accounts to “compromise government institutions and steal trade secrets”, according to an American official.

An appeals court reduced **Donald Trump**’s bond, agreeing to let the former president pay \$175m within ten days. Last week he told the court he was unable to find an insurance company to underwrite the full \$464m he owes as [punishment for civil fraud](#). The original bond was due on Monday; New York’s attorney-general could have seized his assets if he failed to pay.

**Russia** charged four men with carrying out the [terrorist attack](#) in **Moscow** that killed 137 people. The men were identified as citizens of Tajikistan. Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the rampage, but Russian officials have tried to put some of the blame on Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine’s president, called

Russian leaders “scum” for linking the attack to his country. Meanwhile, France raised its terrorism alert to its highest level.

The **European Commission** opened an investigation into whether tech giants Apple, Alphabet and Meta are complying with the bloc’s competition laws. The probe will look at whether the **Google** search engine (owned by Alphabet) “self preferences” the company’s own products, as well as Meta’s use of users’ personal data. Apple will also be scrutinised; it has introduced features to redirect customers to its app store. It is the bloc’s first action under the new [Digital Markets Act](#).

David Calhoun, **Boeing’s** chief executive, announced he would step down by the end of the year as part of a broader management shake-up. The planemaker has been embroiled in controversy since January, when part of a Boeing plane—a panel plugging an unused emergency exit—blew out during a flight. There has recently been a [series of mishaps](#) for Boeing aircraft.

British **farmers** chugged tens of tractors up to London to protest against trade deals that they say will damage their livelihoods and put food security at risk. Agricultural workers across Europe are [growing grumpier](#) about policy shifts. Last month French farmers rode convoys of tractors to Paris to demand protection against low pay and tougher regulations.

**Figure of the day:** 30%. The fee collected by Apple, a tech giant, on most purchases made using the App Store. [Read the full story](#).



Photo: Getty Images

## Guatemala's president visits the White House

On Monday America's vice-president Kamala Harris will welcome Bernardo Arévalo, Guatemala's newly inaugurated president, to the White House to talk about Central American migration. The Arévalo administration is trying to re-engage in international diplomacy and work with officials in the United States to improve economic conditions at home so fewer feel compelled to leave.

When Ms Harris was tapped to be Joe Biden's border czar three years ago she was tasked with tackling the "root causes" of migration in the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras. But as the number of border crossings has since swelled to record highs, she has consequently garnered immense criticism for that narrow focus. Migrants from the Northern Triangle make up a much smaller share of arrivals than they used to. In December the US border patrols intercepted roughly 60,000 migrants coming from there—from elsewhere the number was up to 190,000. The changing nature of America's [border crisis](#) makes the Biden administration's job of defending its policies on the campaign trail even harder.



Photo: Getty Images

## Singapore's fragile recovery

In February Lawrence Wong, Singapore's deputy prime minister, warned that inflation in the city-state remains high. He announced a package of handouts to help Singaporeans cope with rising prices, after the country raised its goods and services tax to 9% in January. Data released on Monday justified the assistance. The core inflation rate, which strips out volatile food and energy prices, rose by 3.6% year on year in February, up from 3.1% in January and the fastest pace in seven months. The jump was partly caused by an increase in consumer spending over the lunar new year.

Singapore expects output to grow by 1-3% this year, but the government warns of “significant” global risks. An important one for the trade-dependent city-state is further disruption to supply chains, given the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. Nonetheless, experts surveyed by Singapore’s central bank have raised their GDP forecasts for the year, mostly because of faster-than-expected growth in manufacturing and construction.

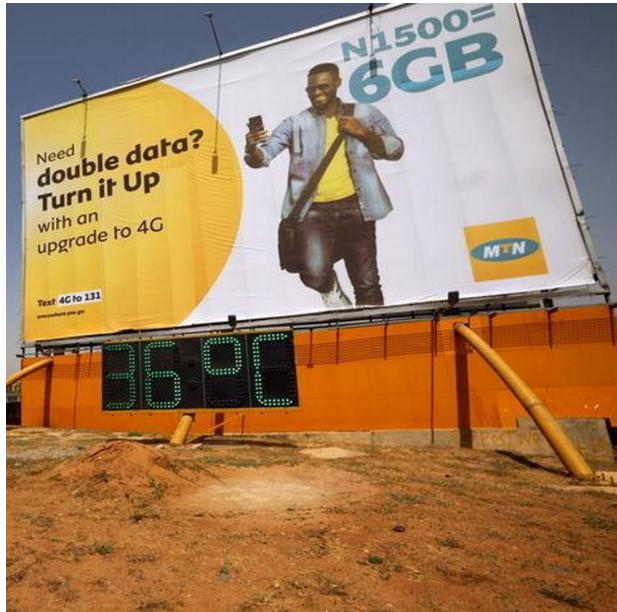


Photo: Reuters

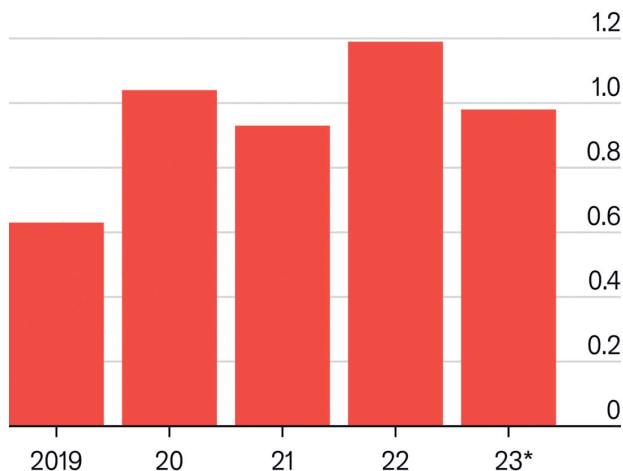
## MTN has a big Nigerian problem

As Africa's digital economy expands, the continent's network providers have been on a roll. Smartphone use continues to grow, and businesses and consumers demand faster mobile internet. All this has seen Africa's major telecoms providers enjoy sales growth of 29% over the past five years, despite pandemic-related setbacks, according to Bloomberg. The Johannesburg-based conglomerate MTN, Africa's biggest telecoms firm by revenues, reports its financial results on Monday.

They will be watched closely. For all its recent success, MTN has problems. Its largest user base is in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, which is in the grip of a [crippling currency crisis](#) after a series of devaluations. MTN's Nigerian subsidiary, which is responsible for up to a third of the company's earnings, has reported foreign-exchange-linked losses of \$570m. Group-wide headline earnings per share (a measure of profitability) are expected to fall by over 60%. It is a worrying signal.

## Calling Africa

MTN Group, net profit, \$bn



Source: Bloomberg

\*Estimate



Photo: Reuters

## Belarus's Freedom Day in name only

On Monday Belarusians mark Freedom Day. The unofficial holiday commemorates the day in 1918 when the first independent Belarusian state emerged from under 150 years of Russian occupation. It is rejected by President Alexander Lukashenko, a close ally of Vladimir Putin. Celebrating it has thus become a way for his critics to show defiance.

Few in the country will openly disobey him. The Belarusian strongman has clamped down on dissent and locked up some 1,500 political prisoners, according to Human Rights Watch. And with a presidential election coming next year, Mr Lukashenko is curbing civil society.

Instead, Freedom Day will be marked by the growing number of Belarusians who have fled the country—roughly a tenth of the population since Mr Lukashenko came to power in 1994. The opposition leader, [Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya](#), herself in exile, encourages them to write to political prisoners and fly Belarusian flags. That is no substitute for freedom itself.



Photo: AFP

## Europe's ever-closer union, by rail

German electronic-music giants Kraftwerk celebrated a “Trans-Europe Express” as far back as 1977. On Monday Europe finally gets the real thing: a 15-and-a-half-hour overnight service linking Brussels to Prague. The 720km-journey is already covered by several daily flights, which take around 14 hours less than the train. But planes are out of favour with those mindful of their carbon footprints (and trains retain a romantic appeal for many).

Leaving in the early evening three times a week, the train will putt-putt its way through Antwerp, Rotterdam, Berlin, Dresden and a dozen other stops before arriving in Prague just before 11am.

Sleeper carriages, inevitably stuffed with snoring fellow travellers, are available.

Cheap air travel saw off once-common night trains in Europe. But they are enjoying something of a renaissance, thanks in part to public money. A Paris-Berlin service was launched last year, and a train linking Amsterdam and Barcelona is planned for 2025.



## Daily quiz

We will serve you a new question each day this week. On Friday your challenge is to give us all five answers and, as important, tell us the connecting theme. Email your responses (and include mention of your home city and country) by 1700 GMT on Friday to [\[email protected\]](mailto:[email protected]). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

**Monday:** Who was the founder of Mormonism? He published the Book of Mormon in 1830

*Conformity may give you a quiet life; it may even bring you to a University Chair. But all change in history, all advance, comes from the nonconformists.*

*A J P Taylor*