

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: EPA/Shutterstock

**Ukraine's** president, **Volodymyr Zelensky**, unveiled a revised version of a [peace proposal](#) drawn up by his country and America. The 20-point plan envisages a withdrawal of Russian forces from some occupied territory to create a demilitarised zone in eastern Ukraine; Mr Zelensky said Ukraine would be willing to pull back troops. Russia has so far been unwilling to soften its position.

**Russia** and **Ukraine** attacked each other with drones. The SBU, Ukraine's security service, said that Ukrainian drones struck energy facilities in Temryuk, a port near Crimea, and Orenburg, a city more than 1,000km from Ukraine's border. Moscow's mayor said that air defences shot down 25 Ukrainian drones that were aimed at the city. Meanwhile, Ukraine said that Russia launched more than 130 drones overnight. Ukraine shot most of them down.

**America** ordered its armed forces to "quarantine" **Venezuelan oil** for at least two months, according to an unnamed official interviewed by Reuters. The official reportedly said that America's strategy is to put "economic pressure" on [Venezuela](#), a big oil exporter, rather than using force to remove its regime. Donald Trump has accused Venezuela's government of smuggling drugs to America and stealing American assets, including oil.

**China** accused **America** of trying to create “discord between China and other countries”, after the Pentagon published a report suggesting that China might try to dissuade [India](#) from strengthening its ties with America. Lin Jian, China’s foreign-ministry spokesman, welcomed easing of tensions between China and India in recent months and said that their border—where the two countries clashed in 2020—was “stable”.

**Turkey’s** counter-terrorism police arrested 115 suspected members of [Islamic State](#) in Istanbul. They also seized weapons and ammunition. The city’s chief prosecutor accused the group of planning to attack Christmas and new-year celebrations. Islamic State has carried out several attacks in Turkey over the past decade, including one on a night club on new-year’s day in 2017, which killed 39 people.

**America’s** Department of Justice said it uncovered more than 1m additional documents potentially linked to **Jeffrey Epstein**, a dead sex offender. The discovery will delay the full release of the [Epstein files](#) required under a law passed by Congress last month. Officials said they need weeks to review the material and make redactions to protect victims. Lawmakers have criticised the slow release and extensive redactions.

Authorities in **Honduras** declared **Nasry Asfura**, of the right-wing National Party, the winner of the country’s presidential election. Mr Asfura edged out Salvador Nasralla of the centre-right Liberals. Donald Trump had [threatened](#) to cut off aid to Honduras if Mr Asfura was not elected—and recently pardoned Juan Orlando Hernández, an ex-president from Mr Asfura’s party imprisoned in America for conspiring with drug gangs.

**Figure of the day:** 1,499 yuan (\$212), the price per bottle of *baijiu*, China’s favourite firewater, as set by Kweichow Moutai, a state-owned giant. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Reuters

## The unsinkable world economy

*We are looking back on 2025. Today, finance and economics.*

As President Donald Trump announced a trade war of unprecedented ferocity in April, firms and investors braced for a slump. Movements in financial markets pointed to a recession. American consumers' confidence nosedived. So did some real-time measures of economic growth. Yet "Liberation Day" has had less effect on business activity and economic growth than had been feared.

Global [economic growth](#) has held up in part because Mr Trump's tariff war has turned out to be less brutal than expected. And gung-ho fiscal policy, especially in America, has stoked demand. On top of this, economic worries related to artificial intelligence have not materialised: unemployment has not shot up since the release of ChatGPT, and concerns that growth is over-reliant on artificial-intelligence investment appear to have been overblown.

Still, economic-policy uncertainty has hurt consumer confidence around the world. Economists typically believe that gloominess portends a slowdown. But the global economy appears to have become remarkably resilient to turmoil.



Photograph: Getty Images

## Who is winning the trade war?

At the start of 2025 Donald Trump thought he would bring [China's economy](#) to its knees by ratcheting up tariffs on its exports. But as the year went on it became clear that, unlike in Mr Trump's first term, China was ready to hit back with even more ferocity. In April and again in October, China unveiled export controls on rare earths that, if sustained, would have brought much of the global auto industry to a standstill.

China's bare-knuckle tactics paid off. At a meeting in late October, Mr Trump agreed to reduce tariffs so long as Xi Jinping, China's leader, froze the export controls. China also promised a bigger effort to stop the flow of precursor chemicals for fentanyl into America. This renewed co-operation sets the stage for a busy diplomatic calendar in 2026: the two leaders may meet as many as four times as they work towards a more ambitious trade deal.



Photograph: Getty Images

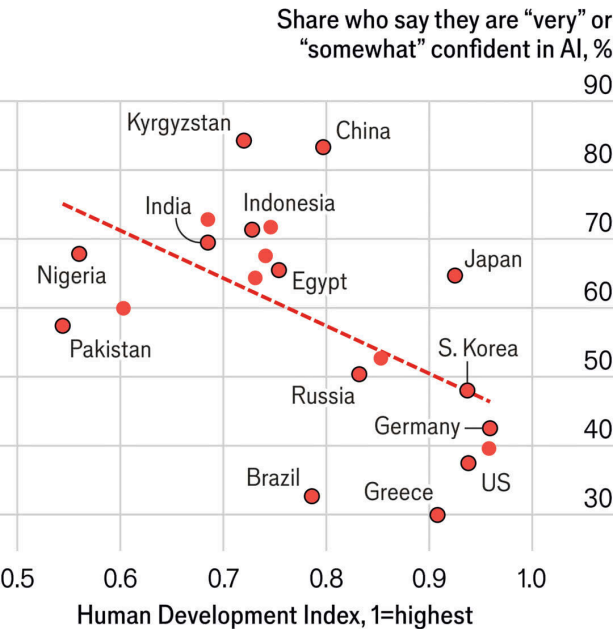
## AI could make the poor world richer

Three years after the launch of ChatGPT 800m people—a seventh of the world's adults—use it each week. Many are in the developing world, where populations are young and tech-savvy. After America, India and Brazil are the biggest markets. Countries that have low scores in human-development indices tend to have more confidence in AI, a UN survey found (see chart).

Can AI [democratise knowledge](#) in such countries by putting a tutor, doctor or adviser in every pocket? AI could spread through cheap smartphones. But for that to happen, data needs to become cheaper and connectivity needs to expand. Even where people are connected, they need to learn the skills required to use AI productively. The World Bank estimates that 70% of ten-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries cannot read a simple text. To lift productivity across entire economies, schools and businesses will have to reorganise to exploit the technology.

Model pupils

21 countries, 2025



Source: United Nations Development Programme





Photograph: Getty Images

## China's clean-energy revolution

The scale of China's renewables revolution is almost too vast to comprehend. The country can produce almost a terawatt of renewable-energy capacity in a year. That is more than the energy 300 big nuclear-power plants could supply. The forces that created all this generating capacity are far from exhausted. China's huge demand—it generates a third of the world's electricity—has spurred more efficient manufacturing that keeps pushing costs down. Many of the subsidies that started this virtuous circle are [ending](#) because they are no longer needed.

China has exceeded, or is on course to exceed, most of its international climate targets. The work it does to cut emissions at home—cheaper renewables, increased storage, more efficient electricity markets—will thus be increasingly sellable beyond its borders. Strikingly, this anti-emissions machine is powered by self-interest. China is making more money from exporting green technology than America does from exporting fossil fuels.



Illustration: The Economist

## Daily quiz

We will serve you a new question each weekday. All five have a common theme. We won't pick any winners this week, normal service will return next week.

**Thursday:** Bert, played by Dick van Dyke in the film “Mary Poppins”, was a member of which profession?

**Wednesday:** *Rangifer tarandus*, an animal sometimes referred to as a caribou, is more generally known by what name?



*You'll never find a rainbow if  
you're looking down.*

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***Charlie Chaplin***