

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 Israeli hostages held by Hamas.

America abstained, allowing the vote to pass. In response Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, cancelled plans to send an Israeli delegation to Washington. John Kirby, America's national security adviser, said the White House was "perplexed" by **Israel's reaction** as the UN resolution "fairly" reflected the Biden administration's stance.

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.

Huge sections of the 1.6-mile Key Bridge that spans **Baltimore** Harbour collapsed into the sea, after a cargo ship struck it. Early reports suggested that some workers on the bridge may have fallen into the water; there is no indication yet how many cars were crossing at the time. The incident happened at around 1.30am local time.

An appeals court in New York granted **Donald Trump** a reprieve by reducing the bond the former president owes as **punishment for civil fraud** from \$464m to \$175m. Last week Mr Trump told the

court he was unable to find an insurance company to underwrite the original amount. The court gave him ten days to find the new sum.

Adam Neumann, the flamboyant co-founder of **WeWork**, reportedly made an offer to regain control of the [bankrupt office-rental start-up](#). Mr Neumann was ousted as the firm's boss in 2019 after an attempted IPO crumbled. According to the *Financial Times*, Mr Neumann and several unidentified partners have made an offer worth \$600m.

Vladimir Putin, **Russia's** president, acknowledged that the terrorist attack in **Moscow** last week was carried out by “[radical Islamists](#)”, but still suggested that **Ukraine** was involved. He said, without evidence, that the assault was the latest in a “series of attempts” by the “neo-Nazi Kyiv regime”. Emmanuel Macron, France’s president, said French intelligence supported America’s claim that the Islamic State was behind the attack.

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 had to navigate [several years of turbulence](#). The latest mishap happened in January, when part of a Boeing plane—a panel plugging an unused emergency exit—blew out during a flight.

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.

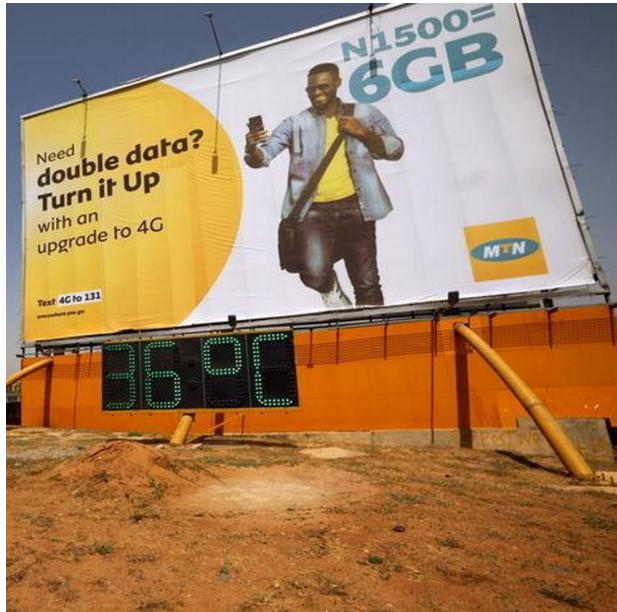


Photo: Reuters

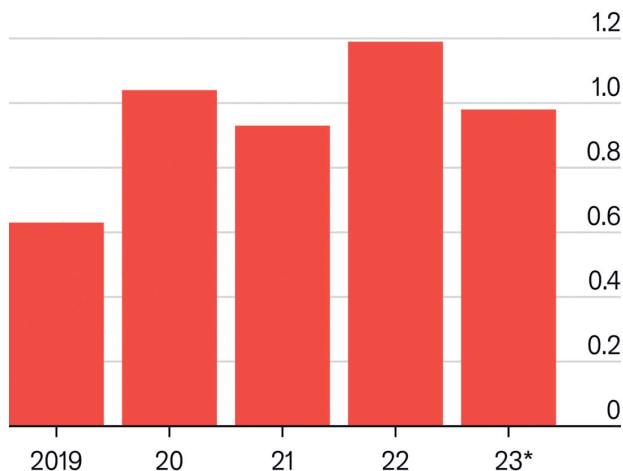
MTN has a big Nigerian problem

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:). 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