

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Anadolu via Getty Images

Steve Witkoff, an envoy for **Donald Trump**, visited **Gaza** to observe the first phase of Israeli troops' withdrawal from the territory. Up to 200 American soldiers are on their way to Israel to run a centre that will monitor the [ceasefire between Israel and Hamas](#) and help deliver aid. Meanwhile thousands of Palestinian refugees travelled north along Gaza's coast, returning to [what remains of their homes](#).

Mr Trump said he would [impose](#) an additional **100% tariff** on imports from **China** and enact controls on exports of critical software on November 1st. The move is in retaliation for China imposing export controls on [rare-earth metals](#). Earlier Mr Trump suggested that he might pull out of upcoming trade talks with Xi Jinping, China's leader. Stockmarkets fell on the news.

President Emmanuel Macron re-appointed **Sébastien Lecornu** as **France's** prime minister days after his centrist ally resigned, deepening the country's [political crisis](#). Mr Lecornu, who said he re-accepted the post "out of duty", will need to take another stab at naming a cabinet and putting together a new budget, which must be proposed by Monday.

Mr Trump directed the **Department of War** “to use all available funds” to pay American troops. More than 1.3m personnel had been due to miss pay on October 15th because of the government shutdown. Mr Trump previously suggested that Congress could pass a standalone bill to pay soldiers. He [accused Democrats](#) of causing the shutdown and holding “our military...HOSTAGE”.

The **Rapid Support Forces**, a Sudanese militia, killed at least 60 people in **el-Fasher**, the capital of the North Darfur region in western Sudan. Local activists said an attack by the RSF’s [drones and artillery](#) hit a university and refugee camp. El-Fasher is the Sudanese army’s last stronghold in Darfur. It has been under siege by the RSF since May 2024.

An explosion at an ammunition plant in **Tennessee** on Friday left 18 people unaccounted for. On Saturday officials said that no survivors had been found and that the search for the missing had become a recovery effort. Investigators have not determined the cause of the explosion, which levelled the factory.

The **Nobel Institute** is investigating whether the winner of this year’s **peace prize** was leaked. Hours before the institute announced **María Corina Machado**, a Venezuelan opposition leader, her odds of winning surged on Polymarket, a betting site, from around 4% to 74%. [Ms Machado](#) is a vocal critic of Venezuela’s dictator, Nicolás Maduro, and lives in hiding in the country.

Word of the week: *Rattus norvegicus*, the brown, or Norwegian, rat, presently on the back foot in New York. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: BACKGRID

France's familiar new prime minister

After a week of intense talks among opposition parties in France's fractured parliament, President Emmanuel Macron on Friday night named as his new prime minister the same one who quit on Monday: [Sébastien Lecornu](#). The 39-year-old centrist and confidant of the president enters office again formally on Saturday, and will spend the weekend forming a government.

He will have to move fast. A budget for 2026 needs to go to cabinet on October 13th. [François Bayrou](#), Mr Lecornu's predecessor, had pledged to slash the deficit from 5.4% of GDP this year to 4.6% in 2026. Mr Lecornu has already said that the deficit next year is likely to be closer to 5%. He will be under pressure to give ground to the left, especially over demands to suspend Mr Macron's reform from 2023 which raised the minimum retirement age from 62 to 64. Left-wing parties are furious that Mr Macron did not appoint one of their own leaders. Parliamentary haggling has yet to begin.

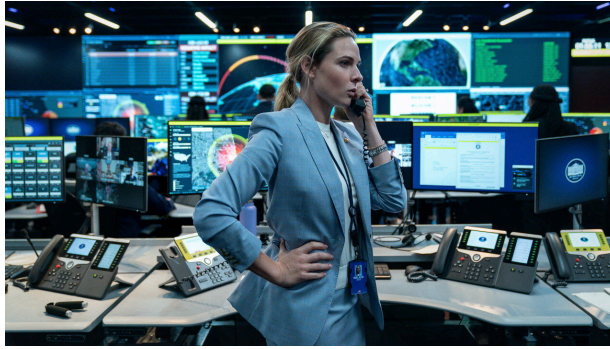


Photograph: Getty Images

Peru's politics slide further into chaos

On Friday Peru's Congress impeached the president, [Dina Boluarte](#). Few Peruvians will miss her. She had a 3% approval rating, having been accused of taking Rolex watches as bribes and illegally abandoning her post to get a nose job (she denies wrongdoing). She also failed to curb rising [crime](#). An attack by gunmen on a popular band this week was the final straw for parties that had helped her stay in power for nearly three years.

Her replacement is José Jerí, the former head of Congress. He is Peru's seventh leader in the past decade. In his inaugural speech, the 38-year-old declared a "war on crime" and called for unity. Mr Jerí may not last until the next election in April. He has been investigated for rape, which he denied. (A probe was shelved in August.) Before he had even donned the presidential sash, Congress considered a motion to censure and replace him. It failed, but Peru's instability looks set to continue.



Photograph: Eros Hoagland/Netflix

A nuclear-weapons nail-biter at the cinema

A ballistic missile, armed with a nuclear warhead, is heading towards Chicago, launched from the Pacific by an undetermined country. The time to impact is 18 minutes. That is the nail-biting plot of “A House of Dynamite”, directed by Kathryn Bigelow, which arrived in cinemas this week.

The American president, played by Idris Elba, is alerted while he is showing off his basketball skills at a high school. While the White House debates whether to try to intercept the nuke or gamble that it will not detonate, General Anthony Brady (Tracy Letts) argues for launching missiles that could intercept it. Captain Olivia Walker (Rebecca Ferguson), the Situation Room’s duty officer, tries to work out the threat level. Maps showing the missile’s approach flash on screens in the dark enclave. The sharp dialogue is peppered with acronyms. The cold war is over, but as more countries [pursue nuclear arms](#) today this race-against-the clock thriller is a reminder of the destruction leaders must work to prevent.



Photograph: Shutterstock

The woes of Italy's footballers

Italy is a giant of world football. Its men's team has won the World Cup four times; their last victory was in 2006. But in recent years they have faltered during qualifying competitions, failing to reach the 2018 and 2022 tournaments. They have a chance to redeem themselves on Saturday, when they play Estonia in a qualifying match for the 2026 World Cup. But even if Italy wins, it may yet have to enter a play-off for the third consecutive time because it lost to Norway 3-0 in June.

So the *Azzurri*'s appearance at next year's tournament in the United States, Canada and Mexico is not assured. For Italian supporters that is hard to take. Still, Italian sports fans need not despair. Italy will appear in at least one World Cup next year. In July the country's [cricketers](#) unexpectedly qualified for the T20 tournament in India and Sri Lanka.



Photograph: AFP

Weekend profile: María Corina Machado, Venezuela's iron lady

It overlooked Donald Trump's persistent demands that he be awarded the Nobel peace prize. But perhaps, in favouring one of the American president's foreign-policy priorities, the Norwegian committee that makes the award has shown political subtlety. It chose María Corina Machado, it said, because of "her tireless work promoting democratic rights for the people of Venezuela".

Forced to live in hiding for the past 14 months, Ms Machado is, for many, a Latin American Joan of Arc. Her [candidacy](#) for Venezuela's presidential election last year unified a normally fragmented opposition and inspired hope of change. Her feat, in October 2023, of winning 92% of the total votes in an open primary for the opposition shook the dictatorial regime of Nicolás Maduro, the country's president since 2013. The regime barred her candidacy on spurious grounds. Despite constant harassment, she campaigned on behalf of a stand-in, Edmundo González.

The regime declared that Mr Maduro had won the election; it has never published the full results. But the opposition collected 82% of the tally sheets from polling stations, and those showed that Mr González had won with 67% of the vote to 30% for Mr Maduro. For many, Ms Machado is [Venezuela's rightful president](#).

Most of her family now lives abroad, but Ms Machado has refused to leave the country. A liberal conservative who admires Margaret Thatcher, she is sometimes dubbed Venezuela's Iron Lady. She has shown skill in navigating the choppy currents of opposition politics, moving towards the centre for her presidential campaign. The Nobel recognises her courage in speaking out for over 20 years against Venezuela's descent into dictatorship, first under Hugo Chávez and then, since his death, under Mr Maduro.

The regime faces a tricky moment: Mr Trump's administration has sent a flotilla of eight ships to the edge of Venezuelan territorial waters. With [dubious legal authority](#), the force has blown up four small boats in the Caribbean, killing over 20 people. While the aim is ostensibly to interdict drugs, the strategic objective may be to drive Mr Maduro from power. Venezuelan officials deny that they have any involvement in drug-trafficking.

To the forces arrayed against Mr Maduro, the Nobel committee has [added a powerful moral one](#). Ms Machado represents the hope of peaceful political change in Venezuela. Diplomatically, in a post on social media she dedicated her victory to Mr Trump "for his support of our cause", as well as to "the long-suffering people of Venezuela". Her prize also carries a wider message in a world where democracy is in retreat, a declaration of idealism in an increasingly brutal and transactional era.



Illustration: The Economist

Mini-crossword

We now publish an interactive edition of our crossword twice a week, allowing you to enter and check the answers, and see explanations, instantly. Try it [here](#). Or, if you prefer to do things the old-fashioned way, use the grid below.

Our crossword has two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers, all of which feature in articles in this week's edition of The Economist:

Cryptic clues

1 across - Father, who art in heaven, is given a storied place to worship (6)

2 across - Fool around with a thousand in cash (6)

3 across - Men who hit the high notes snort bananas, including the repulsive tip (6)

1 down - The standard size for a film studio (9)

Straight clues

1 across - A many tiered Buddhist temple (6)

2 across - A tree-climbing primate (6)

3 across - Male singers with the second-highest voice (6)

1 down - Hollywood studio recently acquired by David Ellison's Skydance Media (9)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am BST on Monday to [\[email protected\]](#). We will pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners in next week's edition.

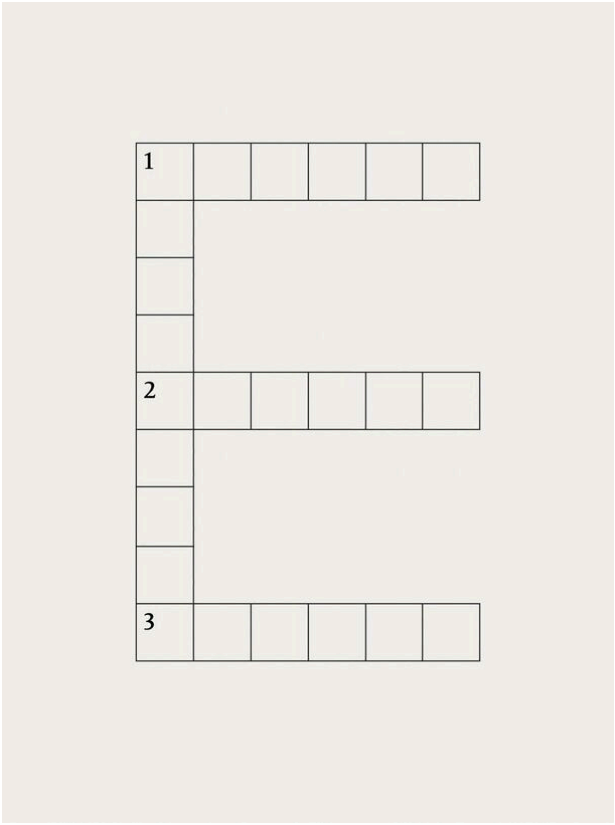


Image: Crossword



Illustration: The Economist

The winners of this week's quiz

Thank you to everyone who took part in this week's quiz. The winners, chosen at random, were:

Borislav Stefanov, Sofia, Bulgaria

Elizabeth Costello, Syracuse, New York, America

Teemu Riipi, Helsinki, Finland

They all gave the correct answers of: Bruce Lee, Ulysses, Chuck Sherman, the Stonewall Inn and Lincoln. The theme is the us civil war, which featured the generals Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant, William Sherman, "Stonewall" Jackson and President Abraham Lincoln

The questions were:

Monday: Which martial arts star became a global icon before dying at age 32 from a brain edema in 1973?

Tuesday: Which James Joyce novel describes events over a single day in June 1904?

Wednesday: Chris Owen played which character in the American Pie film series?

Thursday: At which Greenwich village site in 1969, did a protest against police harassment spark a broader movement for gay rights?

Friday: Which luxury car range is Ford's equivalent of General Motors's Cadillac brand?

*Do what you feel in your heart is
right, for you'll be criticised for it
anyway.*

Eleanor Roosevelt