

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Bloomberg via Getty Images

Ukraine and **Russia** exchanged missile and drone attacks. Six people were killed in Kyiv, including two children, while a chemical plant was reportedly hit inside Russia. The strikes come after the White House said there were no plans for Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin to meet in Hungary to discuss ending [the war](#), despite earlier reports to the contrary.

Annual inflation in **Britain** remained at 3.8% in September, surprising economists who had expected a rise to 4%. Prices for food and non-alcoholic drinks fell by 0.2% compared with the month before, the first decline since March. That will please the Bank of England, which is mulling when to cut interest rates again. The economy grew by 0.3% in the third quarter, official figures showed last week.

The price of **gold** fell by 5.3% on Tuesday, its steepest one-day drop since 2020, following a recent record rally. The [yellow metal](#) rose above \$4,381 per troy ounce on Friday as investors fled to the safe asset. Hopes that trade tensions between China and America might be easing is one reason for the correction.

Paul Ingrassia, Mr Trump's pick for leading a federal watchdog agency, withdrew from the nomination process. On Monday

Politico reported that Mr Ingrassia had described himself as having a “Nazi streak” in text messages to fellow Republicans, and said that holidays celebrating black history should be “eviscerated”. John Thune, the Republicans’ Senate leader, [subsequently called](#) for Mr Ingrassia’s nomination to be dropped.

The arrival of **mosquitoes in Iceland** has caused a buzz. The island had until now been mosquito-free, an accolade shared only with Antarctica. The insects typically thrive in wetter, warmer climates. Matthias Alfredsson, of the Natural Science Institute of Iceland, said the insects probably arrived on ships or in containers, and that this species appeared better adapted to the cold.

Hamas returned to **Israel** the bodies of two deceased hostages, bringing the total to 15 of 28. The handover took place during J.D. Vance’s visit to Israel, where America’s vice-president said he had “great optimism” that the **Gaza ceasefire** would hold. He also warned Hamas that “very bad things” would happen if the militant group did not disarm as required [by the agreement’s](#) next phase.

OpenAI launched an AI-powered web browser, called ChatGPT Atlas. The rise of ChatGPT and other AI models—along with AI browsers—has already [changed how people navigate the web](#). In September **Google** incorporated Gemini, its AI assistant, into its browser, Chrome. Shares in Alphabet, Google’s parent company, fell by as much as 4.8% following OpenAI’s announcement.

Figure of the day: 54%, the share of Americans who said they drank alcohol according to a recent Gallup poll, the lowest number recorded in nearly 90 years. [Read the full story](#).



Photograph: Alamy

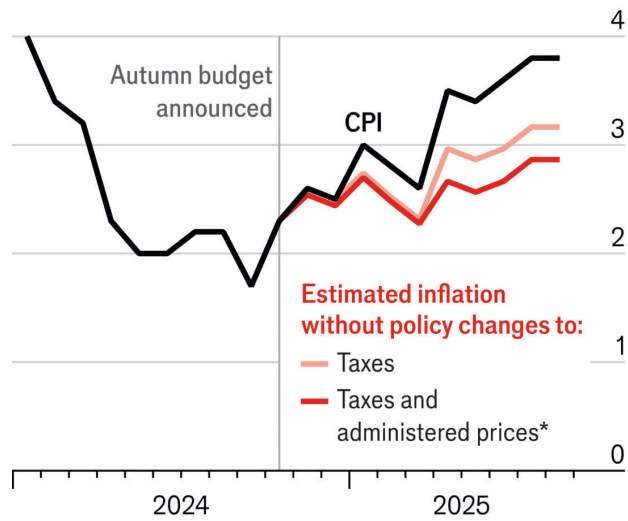
Tricky choices for Britain's chancellor

Data released on Wednesday showed that annual inflation unexpectedly stayed at 3.8% in Britain in September, undershooting analysts' expectations of a rise to 4%. But Britain remains an outlier. Its inflation rate is still roughly 0.9 percentage points higher than in America and 1.6 points above the euro zone's.

Higher energy and [food costs](#) are one cause, but policy has also played a role. Barclays, a bank, reckons that tax rises added 0.6 percentage points to inflation, while regulated price changes—such as a 26% jump in water bills in April—added 0.3 points. Inflation is forecast to decline over the next year, which could give the Bank of England scope to cut interest rates. Yet that depends on whether the government refrains from further inflationary tax rises as a way to reduce its deficit. The chancellor, Rachel Reeves, faces difficult decisions ahead of her budget in November.

Not helping

Britain, consumer prices,
% increase on a year earlier



*Includes higher water bills,
passport fees, postal charges and bus fares
Sources: ONS; Barclays Research



Photograph: AP

Tesla gets a boost

Elon Musk likes to spring a surprise when he delivers Tesla's results, be it a new model or a change of gear for an electric-vehicle company that increasingly develops robots and [robotaxis](#). But the news he might deliver with third-quarter results on Wednesday would be more like a bombshell—that his firm is not doing as badly as it has of late.

Revenues compared with the year before have declined for consecutive quarters; profits fell in the first three months of the year. But initial data released this month suggested that sales rebounded in the latest quarter, in part because American customers rushed to buy EVs before government subsidies ended in late September. Still, Tesla's recent launch of a more affordable version of its Model Y underwhelmed and a law ending programmes that helped the firm to sell carbon credits to other carmakers will soon start to hurt. Meanwhile revenues from those robots and robotaxis look distant.



Photograph: Getty Images

Military innovation: the need for speed

The war in Ukraine accelerated military innovation. The Western defence establishment has long prized heavy or complex weapons systems. But AI-enabled [drone swarms](#) and autonomously targeted long-range strikes now dominate the war. On Wednesday political, industry and military leaders meet in Hamburg to discuss the rate of change, and the growing role of AI, robotics and quantum computing in war fighting.

A significant lesson from Ukraine is the need for speed. Development, investment and deployment cycles that take years in the West have to be carried out in weeks. Perry Boyle of MITS Capital, a defence-industry investor, says that Ukrainian startups get instant feedback on their weapons from the front line. As he puts it, they can be “both the low-cost producer and the innovator at the same time.” Western armsmakers and governments may need a change of mindset.



Photograph: Blue Canyon Technologies/NASA/AP

How to avoid crashes in space

A million or so chunks of debris measuring at least 1cm across orbit the Earth; in five years the number of active satellites has quintupled to more than 13,000—with roughly two-thirds sent up by SpaceX, Elon Musk's firm. This crowded orbit will be on the agenda at the French government's Summit for Space Sustainability in Paris on Wednesday. Last year SpaceX conducted an average of 35 collision-avoidance manoeuvres for each of its satellites. Meanwhile [war in space is no longer science fiction](#): Russia has warned it might target commercial satellites used to support Ukraine.

In Paris politicians, scientists and aerospace-industry leaders will urge action. Governments could boost spending on debris-tracking systems. Satellite operators could share more data. More controversial will be calls to restrict the number of launches, require stronger liability insurance and enact harder rules on removing satellites from orbit at end of service. Smaller countries that aspire to build a presence in space, including Ukraine, might see such measures as a barrier to entry.



Illustration: The Economist

Daily quiz

We will serve you a new question each weekday. On **Friday** your challenge is to give us all five answers and tell us the theme. Email your responses (and your home city and country) by 1700 BST on Friday to [\[email protected\]](#). We'll pick three winners at random and crown them on Saturday.

Wednesday: Who was the only one of Elizabeth Taylor's husbands that she married twice?

Tuesday: Who in 2021 became the oldest person to win the Oscar for best actor?

Small things amuse small minds.

Doris Lessing