

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: EPA

Germany banned the export of arms that “could be used in the Gaza Strip” to **Israel**. Germany, once a stalwart supporter of Israel’s war on Hamas, shifted its stance after Israel’s security cabinet on Friday approved a plan to launch a [full-scale military occupation](#) of Gaza City. The proposal has drawn wide criticism, including from Britain and the United Nations.

Armenia and **Azerbaijan** signed a declaration of peace at the White House on Friday, [marking the end](#) of decades of conflict. Previous negotiations between the neighbouring countries had repeatedly stalled. As part of the agreement, America plans to develop a transport route through the region called the “Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity”.

Russia’s president, Vladimir Putin, spoke to China’s leader, Xi Jinping, and India’s prime minister, Narendra Modi, to discuss his talks with **America** over [the war](#) in **Ukraine**. Mr Xi welcomed such diplomacy, according to Chinese state media; Mr Modi said he had a “very good” conversation with his “friend” Mr Putin. Russia’s leader is soon expected to meet Donald Trump to discuss the conflict.

America's **Justice Department** reportedly opened an investigation into the office of **Letitia James**, New York's Democratic attorney-general, and issued two subpoenas. It is apparently probing whether Ms James, whose office brought a [civil lawsuit](#) against Donald Trump for fraud after his first term, violated the president's rights. It is also looking into a case Ms James brought against the National Rifle Association.

America unexpectedly levied tariffs on **one-kilo gold bars**, according to sources from the Customs and Border Protection agency cited by the *Financial Times*. It was widely assumed that gold would be exempt from tariffs. Such a levy would be [especially disastrous for Switzerland](#), which is a big exporter of gold to America. The price of gold futures in New York reached record highs on the news.

Kosovo's constitutional court tweaked the rules on electing a new parliamentary speaker in a bid to break a political deadlock that has lasted months. Judges said candidates for the role, which needs to be filled before a government can be formed, could only be nominated a maximum of three times. The country's biggest party has nominated the same candidate repeatedly since elections in February.

Shares in **Crocs** plunged by 29% to their lowest level in nearly three years after the maker of foam footwear said it expects revenue to fall by around 10% year on year in the third quarter. It warned that American consumers are treading carefully when it comes to discretionary spending, and it risks being tripped up by Mr Trump's trade policies, which are increasing costs.

Figure of the day: 53.5m, the amount of rubble in tonnes currently strewn across Gaza. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Alamy

Trump's mystery game in Ukraine

Donald Trump likes to keep friends and foes guessing, not least in dealings with Russia and Ukraine. With one hand, he threatens economic punishment for Russia and those who buy its oil, such as India, on which he has imposed an extra 25% tariff. With the other, he has offered peace talks and the first summit with Russia's leader since he returned to the White House.

Both signals came a day after his special envoy, Steve Witkoff, visited Moscow for talks on Wednesday. "Great progress was made!" claimed Mr Trump, giving no details. Friday is Mr Trump's deadline for Russia to [stop fighting](#) or face "secondary" tariffs on its trading partners. He said countries besides India could be hit, including China. He also said he might hold a bilateral summit with the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, and a trilateral one with the Ukrainian one, Volodymyr Zelensky, as early as next week. What deal might be in the offing? Nobody knows.



Photograph: Alamy

Breaking up Google is hard to do

As early as Friday, the judge who last year called Google an illegal monopolist will decide whether or not to [break up the search giant](#). Judge Amit Mehta will probably not go to such lengths. But he may prohibit Google from paying billions of dollars to Apple and other firms to ensure the default position of its search engine on their web browsers. He could also force it to share its user data with rivals.

The most drastic solution sought by the Department of Justice is a sale of Google's Chrome browser. That is unlikely. Even the landmark 1999 verdict deeming Microsoft to be acting as a monopolist did not lead to the company's dismantling. If the judge targets the default payments made by Google, he may cut them off in favour of a [menu of options](#), or allow such payments from Google's rivals, but not the company itself. Neither would wreck Google. The company might even save itself a fortune. But Apple, which has received about \$20bn a year from Google, would lose a big source of profits.

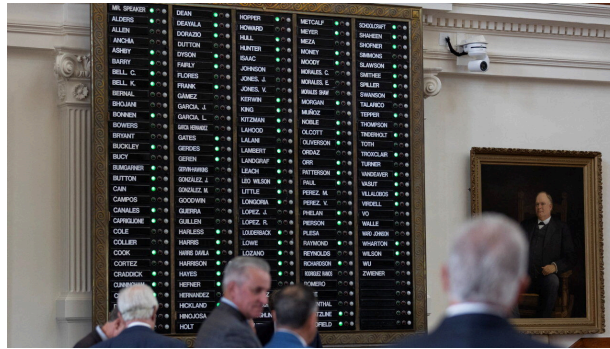


Photograph: EPA

Modi's partnership with Trump turns tragic

On August 6th Donald Trump doubled his country's [tariff rate for Indian goods to 50%](#). It was a penalty for India funding "the Russian War Machine" through oil purchases, he posted on social media. Russia is India's top supplier, accounting for 35-40% of its oil imports, up from 0.2% before the Ukraine war. Mr Trump is also angry about India's trading relationship with America, its biggest export market. At almost \$46bn, America runs a "MASSIVE TRADE DEFICIT WITH INDIA!!!" wrote Mr Trump.

Mr Trump's first term saw a diplomatic honeymoon with Narendra Modi, the strongman prime minister of India. Now that bromance looks to be over. Faced with Mr Trump's tariff vendetta, on August 7th Mr Modi pledged to "never compromise" the well-being of the country's farmers and fishermen, suggesting India would not open up its agricultural sector as desired by American negotiators. Even India's former Trump fans seem resigned to simply surviving his presidency.



Photograph: Reuters

Texas hunts its political jet-setters

Ken Paxton, Texas's attorney-general, has warned that if Democratic lawmakers do not return to Austin by Friday he will try to get the courts to boot them from the legislature. At least 50 Democrats have fled to Illinois, Massachusetts and New York to stall a Republican redistricting effort pushed by Donald Trump. They consider it to be a partisan power grab. They plan to stay away until the state's special legislative session ends next week.

Republicans say that the wayfarers abandoned their duties and should be punished. "If you don't show up to work, you get fired," Mr Paxton wrote. Because Texan police have no jurisdiction out of state, the FBI has agreed to a request from John Cornyn, Texas's senior senator, to help "locate or arrest" them. Mr Trump seems to support the chase. At the state capitol, some Republicans want to know why their Democrats were allowed to scarper. Hardliners reckon this all could have been avoided had the House speaker locked the members inside the chambers.



Photograph: Reuters

A prospect of peace in the Caucasus

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been locked in conflict for decades. In 2023 Azerbaijan recaptured Nagorno-Karabakh, a territory that Armenian-backed separatists had controlled since the 1990s. More than 100,000 people fled. Since then the two countries have been trying to [sign a peace deal](#), but negotiations have stalled.

On Friday Donald Trump will meet Nikol Pashinyan, Armenia's prime minister, and Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan's leader, at the White House to try to break the deadlock. A deal would pave the way for Armenia to normalise relations with Turkey, which closed its border with Armenia in solidarity with Azerbaijan, its ally, in 1993. It would also weaken Russia, which has exploited the rivalry to deepen its influence in the region.

But disagreements remain: Mr Aliyev has demanded a transport corridor across Armenia to Nakhchivan, an Azerbaijani exclave. And distrust is high. Mr Pashinyan, nervous about Azerbaijan's military dominance, is concerned that such a scheme could diminish Armenia's sovereignty. Mr Trump's dealmaking faces another tough test.





Illustration: The Economist

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 BST on Friday to [\[email protected\]](#). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Friday: The face of which US President is featured on the \$20 bill?

Thursday: Which film concerns the Muppets' attempt to conquer Broadway?

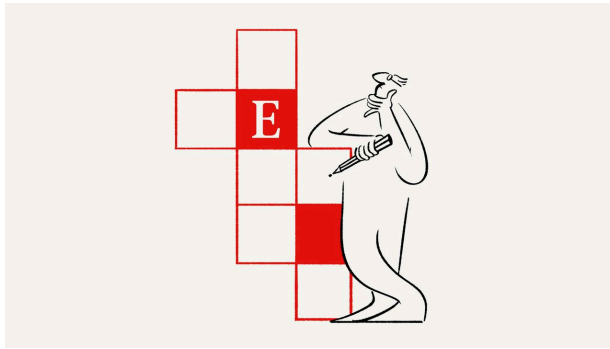


Illustration: The Economist

The winners of this week's crossword

Thank you to everyone who took part in our weekly crossword, published in the weekend edition of Espresso. The winners, chosen at random, were:

Amelia Cheng, Coquitlam, Canada

Gerry O'Connor, Naples, Florida, America

Martyn Abbott, Heckington, Britain

They all gave the correct answers of Singh, army, apple and [Shinawatra](#).

No live organism can continue for long to exist sanely under conditions of absolute reality.

Shirley Jackson