

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Tom Jamieson for The Economist

Sir Keir Starmer called **Reform UK**, Nigel Farage's right-wing party, "pro-Putin or Putin-neutral". In [an interview](#) with *The Economist*, Britain's embattled prime minister said a Reform government would harm Britain and potentially break the West. He added that Russia is already interfering in Britain's democracy. "If there is a Conservative government, I can sleep at night," Sir Keir said. A Reform one would be "a different proposition".

The White House said that **American** and **Ukrainian** officials would meet in Florida on Thursday to continue discussions to end the war in Ukraine. President Donald Trump said the path to peace in Ukraine remained unclear, despite a "reasonably good" meeting between Russian and American officials this week. Meanwhile, Russia [attacked energy infrastructure](#) in Kherson and Odessa, two Ukrainian cities, leaving thousands of people without power.

The European Commission opened an **antitrust probe** into **Meta** over its integration of "Meta AI" into WhatsApp, its messaging app, amid concerns it could shut out rival chatbots. Italy is already investigating the social-media giant for this. The case will proceed under traditional antitrust rules, a route that allows potentially

broader penalties than the bloc's new Digital Markets Act. WhatsApp called the claims "baseless".

Israel said it would open the Rafah crossing between **Gaza** and **Egypt** within days, allowing [Palestinians](#) to leave the territory. Egypt, however, denied that the crossing would reopen. It wants the crossing to open in both directions to allow Palestinians to enter Gaza too. Meanwhile, officials in Gaza claimed that an Israeli strike had killed five people. Israel said it had targeted a "Hamas terrorist".

A Pentagon watchdog reportedly concluded that **Pete Hegseth**, America's war secretary, risked endangering troops by using a messaging app to [communicate plans to bomb Yemen](#). An investigation was opened after Jeffrey Goldberg, the editor-in-chief of the *Atlantic*, was [accidentally added to a Signal chat group](#) where the attack last March was being discussed. The full findings are set to be published on Thursday.

The **price of copper** reached a record high of \$11,412 per tonne on the London market, [driven in part](#) by frantic buying ahead of expected American tariffs. Supply has also been squeezed by disruptions at mines in Indonesia, Chile and Congo this year. The rollout of electric vehicles and AI has boosted demand for the metal.

LandSpace, a private **Chinese** space firm, [launched its Zhuque-3 rocket into orbit](#)—but the reusable booster ignited and crashed rather than landing on the designated recovery pad. LandSpace, which is investigating the cause, had hoped to become the third company after SpaceX, headed by Elon Musk, and Blue Origin, owned by Jeff Bezos, to successfully land a reusable rocket.

Figure of the day: \$5bn, the size of India's "emergency procurement" fund for its armed forces. [Read the full story](#).

Get a behind-the-scenes look at how we choose and design each week's front cover by subscribing to the [Cover Story](#) newsletter.



Illustration: David Simonds

Not to be crude: Vladimir Putin visits Delhi

On Thursday Vladimir Putin arrives in India for the 23rd India-Russia summit, his first visit since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. The timing is awkward. India's [purchases of Russian oil](#) are falling as tighter American and European sanctions make transport, insurance and payments more difficult. That has led some in the West to speculate that India might be rethinking the relationship.

Their hopes are probably misplaced. Donald Trump's recent move to punish India for its Russian oil purchases—with an aggregate tariff of 50% on Indian goods—has only [pushed India closer to its long-standing partner](#). The summit is expected to advance joint projects on new weapons. Although Russia's defence industry has a growing reputation for shoddy workmanship and unreliable supply—not helped by the war in Ukraine—it remains India's biggest arms supplier, accounting for roughly 35% of its defence imports. [Russian kit](#) is typically cheaper and more readily available than Western alternatives. For now, Mr Trump seems to be making the India-Russia relationship great again.



Photograph: EPA

Central European rifts on display at the Visegrad summit

[Karol Nawrocki](#), Poland's president, and [Viktor Orban](#), Hungary's prime minister, have much in common. Both are right-wing populist leaders who excoriate Brussels for over-reaching regulation; they denounce immigration, gay rights and green-energy policies. But when it comes to Russia, they disagree. Mr Nawrocki shares his nationalist countrymen's antagonism towards Russia; Poland is one of Ukraine's biggest supporters. Mr Orban is the most pro-Russian leader in the EU. He has tried to veto sanctions and refuses to wean his country off Russian oil and gas.

This week those differences were on display at the Visegrad summit in Hungary, an annual gathering of four central European countries (the Czech Republic and Slovakia are the others). Last week Mr Orban had a friendly visit with Vladimir Putin in Moscow. As a result, Mr Nawrocki canceled plans for a one-on-one with Mr Orban on Thursday.



Photograph: Getty Images

Luxury watches withstand tariff pressure

Watches of Switzerland, Britain's biggest luxury-watch retailer, reported strong half-yearly results on Thursday. The company said revenues had increased by 10% year on year to £845m (\$1.1bn) for the six months ending on October 26th.

Sales of fancy timepieces have held up despite adverse events. In August the Trump administration announced 39% tariffs on [Switzerland](#), which dominates the market and ships a fifth of its watch exports to America. The following month such exports plunged by 55%. In November, however, Swiss authorities talked Donald Trump down to a 15% rate, helping to [restore demand](#).

[Affluent Americans'](#) appetite for shiny chronometers has not abated. Many, undaunted by price increases, are on waiting lists for the most in-demand watches, notes Watches of Switzerland, which sells plenty of Rolexes. As a result, the company's American business, which is now nearly as large as its British one, delivered a standout performance during the same period: a 20% boost to sales.



Photograph: Getty Images

Trump brokers deal between Rwanda and Congo

On Thursday Donald Trump will host the leaders of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, who will sign what the White House calls a “historic peace and economic [agreement](#)”. The arrival of [Paul Kagame](#) and Felix Tshisekedi signals the latest stage of American-brokered talks to resolve the long-running conflict in the [east of Congo](#), where M23, an armed group backed by Rwanda, still controls important towns and cities.

Much remains to be worked out, not least whether this proxy force remains in Congolese territory. Yet all sides see benefits in a deal. America gets better access to critical minerals; Rwanda has built a buffer zone to its west; Congo gets the promise of more American investment. As ever, though, the people of eastern Congo, who for the time being live under the harsh rule of M23, risk being left out.



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 GMT on Friday to [\[email protected\]](mailto:). We'll pick three winners at random and crown them on Saturday.

Thursday: Which 2001 film starring Tom Cruise and Penélope Cruz is a remake of the Spanish film “Open Your Eyes”?

Wednesday: Dr Sidney Russell invented what night-time heating device in 1912?

Political questions are far too serious to be left to the politicians.

Hannah Arendt