

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AFP

**Iran** said that it would respond to any **American** attacks by striking American bases in the Middle East. The foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, said any retaliation should not be considered as attacking the bases' host countries. On Friday he had adopted a different tone when saying that **Iran and America** had made a "good start" in talks about the future of his country's nuclear programme.

Polls opened in **Japan** and **Thailand** as both countries began voting in national elections. In Japan **voters are expected** to back Takaichi Sanae, the country's prime minister, who assumed the role only a few months ago. The contest is expected to be **much tighter in Thailand** with no single party predicted to win a majority.

Will Lewis resigned as chief executive of the ***Washington Post*** just days after the newspaper laid off nearly a third of its staff. Mr Lewis said it was "the right time for me to step aside", but did not provide further details about his decision. Jeff D'Onofrio, the firm's chief financial officer, will take over.

**Saudi Arabia** and **Syria** signed an investment deal that will involve the countries working together to create a low-cost airline and a new airport in Aleppo in northern Syria. The package is believed to be the biggest since America and other Western

countries lifted sanctions on Syria, which is still [recovering](#) from a devastating years-long war.

**America** has demanded that **Ukraine** and **Russia** reach a peace agreement by June, said the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky. America will “probably put pressure on both sides” to meet the deadline, he said, and “will do everything to end the war”. To that end it has offered to host trilateral talks next week, possibly in Miami. Ukraine has confirmed it would join.

**Donald Trump** declared his support for the \$6.2bn purchase by **Nexstar** of Tegna, a rival. The two companies own substantial numbers of local TV stations in America. After the deal was announced, Mr Trump worried that its approval by regulators might “allow the Radical Left Networks to ‘enlarge’”. Now he thinks differently. “We need more competition against THE ENEMY, the Fake News National TV Networks,” he wrote on social media.

Riot police used tear-gas to disperse protesters in **Milan** after violence erupted at an **anti-Olympics** demonstration. The Italian city is hosting the Winter Olympics, which began on Friday. On Saturday a group of activists and NGOs took to the streets to protest against the “economic and social harm” caused by the Games. Officials also suggested that the protesters may be behind railway disruptions in the area.

**Word of the week:** *Comandos Jungla* (Jungle Commandos), an elite unit of Colombia’s anti-narcotics police. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: EPA

## Japan goes to the polls

On Sunday Japan held a snap general election. Takaichi Sanae, [the country's first female prime minister](#), called it last month, three months into her job. She hopes her high approval ratings will deliver a landslide. [Polls](#) suggest her Liberal Democratic Party and its coalition partner could win more than 300 seats out of the 465 in the lower house.

Ms Takaichi is not without her vulnerabilities. She was recently criticised for talking up the benefits of a cheap yen at the same time as the currency's historic weakness is squeezing household budgets. Indeed, Ms Takaichi's triumph will owe much to the weakness of her opponents. Ahead of the election, the main centre-left opposition formed a coalition, the Centrist Reform Alliance. It is flailing; polls suggest its constituent parties may lose half their seats. Voters who spurn the LDP are scattering to new parties of the far left and the far right. Japan is entering an era of multi-party politics, but one party, Japan's postwar behemoth, still looms above them all.



Photograph: EPA/Shutterstock

## Thailand goes to the polls, too

Thai voters began casting their ballots on Sunday to elect a new lower house of parliament. The general election is a three-way race between liberals, populists and conservatives. Move Forward, a liberal party, [won the previous election in 2023](#), but the military-appointed senate blocked it from forming a government. Move Forward and its leaders were later banned from politics. A court found that their proposed reforms to Thailand's strict *lèse-majesté* laws, which forbid insulting the monarchy, breached the constitution. Most of Move Forward's members [have regrouped into the new People's Party](#), which has been leading in the polls.

But the People's Party will probably fall short of a majority. That would give the upper hand to Anutin Charnvirakul, the prime minister and leader of the Thai Pride Party. A dealmaker, he will find it easier to put together a majority from the conservative and populist camps.



Photograph: Getty Images

## A visit by Israel's president tests Australia

Isaac Herzog, Israel's president, will arrive in Australia on Sunday. He will visit Bondi Beach, the [site of a devastating antisemitic attack](#) in December. Many Australian Jews criticised the prime minister, Anthony Albanese, for failing to prevent the attack. The Israeli government linked the violence to [Australia's decision to recognise a Palestinian state](#). Mr Albanese will attempt to use Mr Herzog's visit to regain the trust of the Jewish community.

But Mr Herzog's arrival will test Australia's fraying social cohesion. Some on the left have raised concerns about the visit, citing the Israeli government's war in Gaza. On the right, a populist party, growing in popularity, is generally supportive. Authorities will try to keep a lid on any disquiet. New laws introduced after the Bondi attack enable the authorities to disband groups committing hate crimes and to ban protests. They are already being put to use. The New South Wales government has banned demonstrations in parts of Sydney during Mr Herzog's stay, although protesters say they will defy the order.



Photograph: Reuters

## Bunny boilers at the Super Bowl

The Seattle Seahawks and New England Patriots face off in the Super Bowl on Sunday. While the game itself offers several compelling storylines, much of the attention in the build-up has focused on the half-time performer, Bad Bunny. Born Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio, he is [one of the most streamed artists in the world](#) and the king of Latin trap. Earlier this month he won three Grammy Awards, including album of the year. He has also infuriated supporters of President Donald Trump.

Conservatives object to his Spanish-language performances, his celebration of Latino culture and his criticism of the administration's anti-immigration policies. Mr Trump condemned his pick as half-time performer when it was announced, and Mr Bunny's remarks criticising Immigration and Customs Enforcement at the Grammys prompted a fresh backlash. One conservative group has advertised a rival "All-American" half-time broadcast featuring Kid Rock, a pro-Trump musician. Mr Bunny, for his part, was born in Puerto Rico—which is part of the United States.



Illustration: Sandra Navarro

## 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:

**Linda Bonger**, Zurich, Switzerland

**Michel Simard**, Gatineau, Canada

**Kariem Abdellatif**, Uebersyren, Luxembourg

They all gave the correct answers of: Yemen, Nigeria, Iran, Somalia and Syria. The theme is that they are all countries in which the second Trump administration has launched military action.

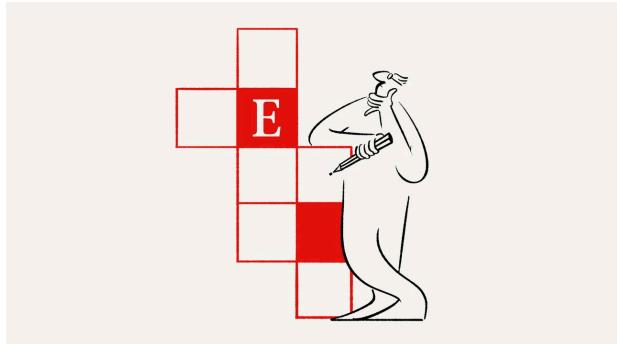


Illustration: The Economist

## Mini crossword

We publish a new interactive edition of our crossword daily, allowing you to enter and check the answers and see explanations. Try it [here](#).

### Cryptic clues

*1 across* - Quiet before the French get into central position (5)

*2 across* - Test the leading currency (5)

*3 across* - Serif letter contains comb (5)

*1 down* - Mixed in portion to get red (5,4)

### Straight clues

*1 across* - Flower; factory (5)

*2 across* - Tribunal or assessment (5)

*3 across* - To rummage; a type of gun (5)

*1 down* - A light-to-medium-bodied red wine (5,4)

There are two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and

the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers.

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am GMT on Monday to [\[email protected\]](mailto:[email protected]). We will pick three winners at random and crown them in Tuesday's edition.

*If honour were profitable,  
everybody would be honourable.*

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***Sir Thomas More***