

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](#).

China blamed **America** for the countries' [sudden deterioration](#) in trade relations, accusing the Trump administration of adding Chinese firms to a blacklist. It defended its decision to impose fresh export controls on rare-earth metals, a move that prompted Mr Trump to add a 100% levy to imports from China from November 1st and limit exports of critical software.

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".

Ukraine reportedly hit an oil refinery in Bashkortostan, deep inside Russia. It is the latest attack in Ukraine's mission to disrupt Russia's fuel supplies. [Almost half](#) of the country's refineries have been struck by drones and missiles in recent months, causing long queues at petrol stations and forcing the Kremlin to limit diesel exports.

There was heavy fighting on the border between **Afghanistan** and **Pakistan**, as Taliban fighters attacked Pakistani troops, who responded with artillery fire. The Taliban has accused Pakistan of bombing a market in Kabul last week. Pakistan has not claimed responsibility for the strike, but has long complained that Afghanistan harbours terrorists that attack it.

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.

Diane Keaton, an American actor, died aged 79. Ms Keaton was best known for her role as Annie Hall, in Woody Allen's film of the same name, for which she won an Oscar for Best Actress. Renowned for her comic timing, she starred in dozens of films and television series over her 50-year career, including "The Godfather" and "Reds".

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



Photograph: AP

Health in a post-aid world

What is the future of global health in a [post-aid](#) world? On Sunday more than 4,000 delegates, including health ministers and NGO leaders, will gather at the World Health Summit in Berlin, Germany's capital, to tackle this question, among others. The withdrawal of America as a big international funder in health, along with the tightening aid budgets of many European governments, has prompted a profound rethink of how to better fund health care in poor parts of the world.

There is reason to be more hopeful in other areas, however. Another big topic will be the potential of AI to [enhance](#) health care, better target spending and make health systems more efficient. And the fight against non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes will be aided by the imminent arrival of cheap generic copies of Semaglutide, a weight-loss drug, in more than 80 countries next year.



Photograph: Getty Images

Paul Biya's last stand in Cameroon

The result in Sunday's election in Cameroon is not in doubt. Paul Biya, the world's [oldest](#) head of state, will be re-elected in another dubious vote and therefore extend his 43-year reign over the central African country. Less clear is what happens next. The 92-year-old may not finish another seven-year term. Rumours abound about his health. If death does not stop him then a palace coup just might.

For decades Mr Biya has been able to keep rivals at bay through a mix of repression, patronage and backing from the former colonial power, [France](#). Meanwhile, ordinary Cameroonians suffer from poverty and, in the English-speaking west of the country, a vicious and underreported war. But in Mr Biya's dotage elites are getting restless. His daughter, Brenda, called on Cameroonians to vote for someone else in a viral video on TikTok. The leader known as the lion man may find soon that the pride has run out of uses for him.

Go, me?

World's longest-serving country leaders*

October 2025

■ Africa ■ Europe ■ Asia

Leader	Country	Years in power
T. Obiang	Eq. Guinea	46.2
P. Biya	Cameroon	43.0
Y. Museveni	Uganda	39.7
I. Afwerki	Eritrea	32.4
A. Lukashenko	Belarus	31.2
E. Rahmon	Tajikistan	30.9
D. Sassou Nguesso	Congo- Brazzaville	28.0
I.O. Guelleh	Djibouti	26.4
P. Kagame	Rwanda	25.6
R.T. Erdogan	Turkey	22.6

*Excludes monarchs

Sources: Zárata's Political Collections; *The Economist*



Photograph: Reuters

Europe's borders go digital

The familiar thump of passports being stamped at border control is about to become a thing of the past in Europe. On Sunday the European Union will launch a digital system to track who comes in and out of the bloc. Travellers into the EU's [Schengen area](#), which includes most EU countries and a few neighbours, will instead be fingerprinted and photographed upon their first entry. That process may lead to long queues, though the system will be implemented gradually until April 2026.

Keeping digital tabs on travellers is meant to prevent them overstaying their visas and [manage illegal migration](#). The scheme, which has been in the pipeline for years, comes ahead of another new requirement for visa-exempt visitors from outside the EU to pre-clear their travel to the bloc, something that is already done in America and Britain. Collectors of passport stamps will need to find other hobbies.



Photograph: Getty Images

Tea v trees

China is renowned for growing tea. The country produces half of the nearly 7m metric tonnes of tea harvested globally each year. The crop grows mainly in China's warmer, southern regions. But [global warming](#) is shifting the tea belt northwards.

Using climate models trained on terrain and soil data, Chinese researchers mapped where tea plants can thrive today, and where they will be able to in the 2050s and in the 2090s. In Jiangbei, the most northerly of China's tea-producing regions, the share of land suitable for growing tea is projected to rise from 6.5% today to 23% by the 2090s if greenhouse-gas [emissions](#) are high. That would be good for tea drinkers, but might be bad for China's forests. The researchers at Kunming's Southwest Forestry University warned that farmers may fell rare forests to plant tea.



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.

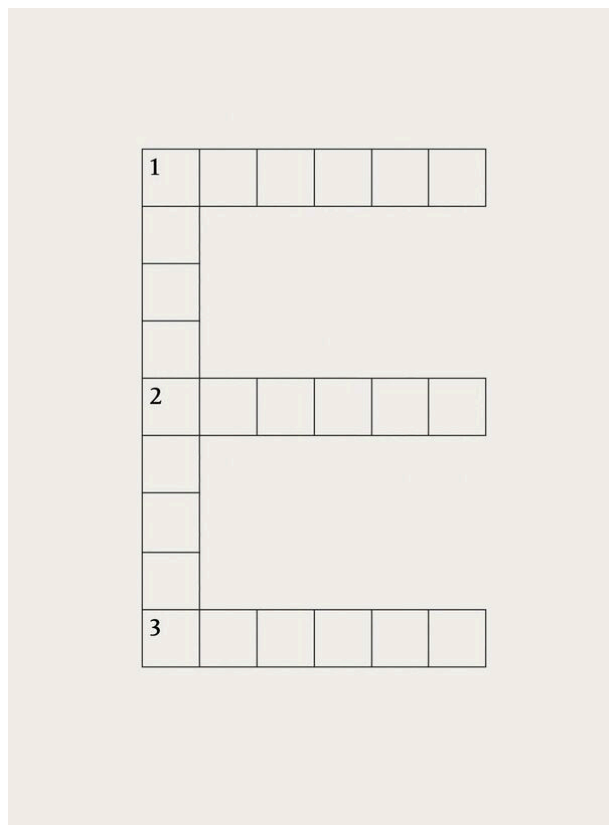


Image: Crossword



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, 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