

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: EPA

Estonia said that three **Russian** fighter jets entered its airspace without permission, before NATO jets forced them away. Estonia lodged a protest with Russia's highest diplomat in the country; Margus Tsahkna, the foreign minister, called for more political pressure to be put on the Kremlin. Russia is [increasingly violating](#) NATO's skies: on September 9th 19 drones breached Poland's airspace.

Donald Trump “made progress” in a phone call with **Xi Jinping**, China's leader, towards the approval of a **TikTok** deal, he said, but he provided few details. America has extended a deadline for ByteDance, TikTok's Chinese owner, [to sell the app's American operations](#) four times—most recently this week. Mr Trump also said that he and Mr Xi would meet at the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum in South Korea next month.

The **Israel Defence Forces** said it would use “unprecedented force” against **Hamas** as it continues its offensive on [Gaza city](#), and urged civilians to leave the area. Meanwhile America blocked a resolution at the UN security council calling for a ceasefire. Ten countries including Britain are expected to formally recognise a

Palestinian state at a summit on Monday ahead of the United Nations General Assembly's general debate.

America's **Senate** failed to pass a short-term **spending bill** after each party blocked the other's version. Democrats voted against a bill that earlier passed the House of Representatives. Republicans, meanwhile, rejected Democrats' proposal, which reversed some [health-care cuts](#). Without stopgap legislation the government [could shut down](#) after September 30th, when funding expires. Senate Democrats are demanding that Republicans negotiate with them.

Nvidia announced a series of investments in British startups as part of a £2bn commitment unveiled during Donald Trump's visit this week. The American chipmaker is in talks to invest \$500m in Wayve, a self-driving car company, and plans to take a stake in Revolut, a financial technology firm. A day earlier it pledged to [invest \\$5bn in Intel](#), its ailing American rival.

A federal judge in Florida rejected Mr Trump's \$15bn libel and defamation lawsuit against the ***New York Times***, calling the lengthy complaint "decidedly improper and impermissible". Part of Mr Trump's suit argued a description made by *Times* reporters that he had been "discovered" for the "The Apprentice" was inaccurate because he was already famous. The president can re-file, but the new complaint must be succinct.

Cows painted like zebras suffered fewer insect bites, discovered one of the ten winners of the 35th edition of the **Ig Nobel Prizes**. The mock awards recognise "achievements that first make people laugh and then make them think". Another of this year's laureates studied how feeding people Teflon can help fight obesity. The peace prize went to a team that showed how a shot of vodka improved people's ability to speak foreign languages.

Figure of the day: 82%, the share of children in one study who retained stable gender identities seven years after transitioning.

[Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Getty Images

America's fragile relationship with China

It can be hard to keep track of where Donald Trump stands on China. Depending on the day he either says he wants tariffs of 100%, if not higher, on its products or an ambitious trade deal with his “friend” Xi Jinping. On Friday the two leaders will hold their third phone call since Mr Trump’s election victory.

Recent bilateral trade talks have gone smoothly. The call will probably yield an agreement to sell the American operations of TikTok, a Chinese-owned short-video app, to an American investor consortium. China may also pledge to buy planes from Boeing, America’s largest aircraft manufacturer. In return it will seek [reduced American tariffs](#) and export controls. But one fruitful phone call will not mend their strained relationship. A lack of breakthroughs on the thorniest issues—including America’s view that China is failing to stanch the flow of fentanyl-related chemical exports—means any detente could quickly unravel.



Photograph: Reuters

Russia's oil infrastructure takes a battering

Doubts as to whether [Ukraine](#) could maintain the tempo of attacks against Russian oil infrastructure have been dispelled. In the past few days Ukraine has [hit several refineries](#) producing a variety of petroleum products. Russia's largest, in Ufa, is about 1,400km from the front line. Saratov, another target that is about 600km from the fighting, was reportedly attacked by special forces as well as kamikaze drones. Ukrainian officials claim that the site supplied Russia's armed forces with fuel.

Ukraine's strategic air campaign is "generating compounding effects on Russia's ability to finance its war", according to The Institute for the Study of War, an American think-tank. Equally significant was a massive drone strike on Russia's largest Baltic Sea oil terminal at Primorsk on September 12th. Four days later, Reuters reported that Transneft, a state-controlled petroleum firm, had warned that the damage may have forced oil producers to cut output.



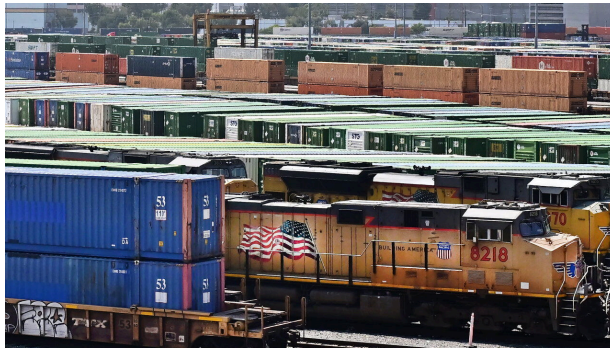


Photograph: Getty Images

The Bank of Japan's cloudy outlook

The Bank of Japan concluded its two-day policy meeting on Friday, keeping interest rates steady at 0.5%. Since ending its decades-long policy of keeping rates negative last year, the bank has been inching towards monetary normalisation. The annual inflation rate is now around 3%—above the bank's 2% target—putting pressure on officials to raise rates again, for the first time since January this year.

But trade tensions with America have made policymakers cautious. Domestic politics is adding to the uncertainty. This month Ishiba Shigeru [announced his resignation](#) as Japan's prime minister. A leadership contest will be held on October 4th. Mr Ishiba wanted to reduce Japan's budget deficit and [public debt](#), which now stands at 135% of GDP on a net basis. His successor is likely to be less fiscally conservative. One of two front-runners, Takaichi Sanae, wants looser fiscal policy and has criticised the idea of raising interest rates. Last year, she said the central bank would be “stupid” to do so.



Photograph: Getty Images

Tariff clash coming to SCOTUS

Over the summer three federal courts told Donald Trump he [lacked the authority](#) to rewrite America's tariff schedules. So the president asked the Supreme Court to rescue the “most significant economic and foreign policy initiative” of his administration. On September 9th the Supreme Court agreed to resolve the controversy on an unusually breakneck schedule. Mr Trump's briefs are due to the justices on Friday. Responses from the challengers—including a wine retailer and an educational-toy company—are due in October. Oral arguments will take place during the first week in November.

Mr Trump claims leeway to adjust tariffs in the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, a law from 1977 that allows presidents to regulate imports to “deal with any unusual and extraordinary threat”. Crises stemming from fentanyl trafficking and “large and persistent” trade deficits justify the duties, he says. The challengers condemn Mr Trump's “extravagant interpretation” of the act. They contend that tariffs are the constitutional prerogative of Congress, not the president.



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

Friday: Which actor played King Arthur in the film version of the musical “Camelot”?

Thursday: Which 18th-century satirist wrote the essay “A Modest Proposal” suggesting the poor should sell their children to the elite for use as food?



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

Gregory Sanial, Grand Rapids, Michigan, America

Thierry Rajaobelina, Alès, France

They all gave the correct answers of colony, effect, nuclei and Chappell Roan.

We now publish a [new mini crossword](#) every day.

*If the power to do hard work is
not a skill, it's the best possible
substitute for it.*

James A. Garfield