

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AFP via Getty Images

Donald Trump imposed **new tariffs** of 100% on **pharmaceutical products** imported into America. In a series of social-media posts, the president accused other countries of “large scale FLOODING” and **announced levies** on several other items including lorries and furniture. The new duties are due to take effect on October 1st. Mr Trump did not clarify if they would apply on top of existing national tariffs.

America’s Department of Justice **indicted James Comey**, just days after **Mr Trump** said the former FBI director should be prosecuted. Mr Comey is accused of lying to Congress and obstructing justice during an investigation into links between Russia and Mr Trump. Mr Comey denies the charges. Mr Trump celebrated the news on social media, calling Mr Comey “one of the worst human beings”.

Mr Trump signed an executive order allowing **TikTok** to operate in America by splitting the app from ByteDance, its Chinese owner. The president said Xi Jinping, China’s leader, had given him the “go ahead” **to proceed**. He added that Oracle, a software giant, will play a “very big part” in TikTok’s new American ownership. ByteDance will maintain a minority stake.

Mette Frederiksen, **Denmark's** prime minister, said she would work with NATO to address the “serious” drone swarms that forced Danish airports to temporarily close this week. On Thursday Denmark's defence minister said a “professional actor” was responsible for the latest incident in Aalborg, but found no evidence of [Russian involvement](#). Ms Frederiksen had suggested that Russia was responsible for an attack at Copenhagen airport on Monday.

Authorities in **Madagascar** declared a curfew in the capital, Antananarivo, after a day of violent protests. Thousands of people, mostly youngsters, took to the streets to demonstrate against persistent power cuts and water shortages. A shopping mall was reportedly looted and burnt, while the homes of two politicians were also attacked. The country of 32m people is one of the poorest in the world.

Amazon agreed to pay \$2.5bn in fines and customer payouts in one of the [Federal Trade Commission's](#) biggest settlements. America's competition watchdog accused Amazon of deceiving millions of people into subscribing to its Prime service and making it difficult to cancel. Amazon neither admitted nor denied wrongdoing but agreed to introduce clearer options for signing up and cancelling.

Microsoft disabled some cloud storage and AI services that it provides to **Israel's** Ministry of Defence, after finding evidence that they were being used to store data about civilians in [Gaza](#) and the West Bank. The tech giant said it began a review, which is still ongoing, after the *Guardian* published allegations of “mass surveillance” in a recent investigation.

Figure of the day: 31%, the share of the world's top 100 male foil fencers who are left-handed. [Read the full story](#).

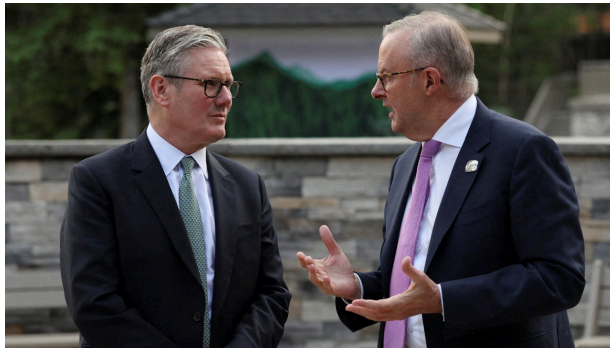


Photograph: Reuters

Russian air incursions rattle NATO

Rarely has NATO's military committee, which convenes on Friday in Riga, Latvia's capital, met during such a crisis. Senior officers from the alliance's armed forces will gather days after Poland and Estonia invoked Article 4 of the NATO treaty, which initiates consultation with allies, in response to [deliberate violations of their airspace](#). On September 9th Russian drones crossed into Poland's skies. Ten days later three MiG-31 fighter jets entered Estonia for 12 minutes; they were escorted out by NATO aircraft. Poland and the Czech Republic have proposed shooting down Russian planes if such incursions continue. Donald Trump has suggested he thinks they should. Other allies, fearing a clash with Russia, prefer restraint.

The committee's task is to advise NATO's civilian leaders on how to respond. It will probably issue fresh guidance on rules of engagement. But the alliance is unlikely to publish specifics. Ambiguity is part of the strategy: NATO wants to keep Russia uncertain about how far it might go.



Photograph: Getty Images

Australia and Britain look beyond America

On Friday Anthony Albanese, [Australia's](#) prime minister, will meet Sir Keir Starmer, his British counterpart, in 10 Downing Street. Both leaders face domestic challenges—rising living costs and contentious immigration debates—but their talks are expected to focus on foreign policy. Donald Trump's "America first" stance has raised doubts about his commitments to allies. The Pentagon is [reviewing](#) AUKUS, a trilateral pact under which Australia is to acquire nuclear-powered submarines with help from Britain and America.

As America's posture remains uncertain, the countries may look to deepen their own ties. In July they signed a bilateral defence agreement. Extending co-operation beyond security is also on the table. Discussions may focus on trimming regulations for firms operating in both countries. Australia is keen to draw more foreign investment into its clean-energy industries, from critical minerals to low-carbon fuels. But the main goal will be to show that Britain and Australia can sustain closer ties even if America pulls back.



Photograph: NikeSkims

Nike turns to celebrity power

Nike will debut a partnership with Skims, Kim Kardashian's underwear and loungewear label, on Friday. It comes as Nike tries to reverse years of revenue declines. The company built up too much stock and had to cut prices to sell it, squeezing margins. Skims, which has grown into a billion-dollar business since 2019, offers Nike a way to reach young female shoppers. Nike also hopes it will help it to move into the “athleisure” market—clothes designed for both exercise and everyday wear.

Nike also hopes to capitalise on the boom in [celebrity-led businesses](#). Rihanna's Fenty beauty line and Ryan Reynolds's Mint Mobile have turned their founders' fame and online followings into sky-high valuations. Nike is betting that Ms Kardashian's 350m Instagram followers can power similar success. That is unclear. The market for “athleisure” is [weakening](#): fashion editors have pronounced tight fits out and baggy ones in. It will take more than a tie-up with a flashy celebrity brand to revive Nike from its woes.



Photograph: Getty Images

Sweden leads Europe's fintech push

Sweden, a small Nordic country of just over 10m people, is a [startup powerhouse](#). Home to Spotify, a streaming giant, and King, the video-game company behind the wildly popular “Candy Crush Saga”, the country boasts the world's second largest number of “unicorns”—privately held tech firms valued at over \$1bn—per capita. One corner of Sweden's booming technology sector increasingly shines: financial technology.

Noba Bank Group, a digital bank, is preparing an initial public offering on the Nasdaq Stockholm stock exchange at a valuation of SKr35bn (\$3.74bn). Trading in the company's shares is expected to open on September 26th. It follows the float of another Swedish fintech company, Klarna. On September 10th the buy-now-pay-later firm listed in New York at a \$15.1bn valuation. Sweden's success stands out as a bright spot in Europe's relatively weak IPO market.



Photograph: Getty Images

Can Saudi Arabia take a joke?

Friday marks the opening of Riyadh Comedy Festival, which organisers claim will make Saudi Arabia the “comedy capital of the world”. More than 50 performers are lined up over the next two weeks, including Kevin Hart, Dave Chappelle and Jimmy Carr. Some are reportedly getting more than \$1.5m to appear. The festival is part of Vision 2030, the crown prince’s effort to lessen the economy’s reliance on oil and boost tourism and entertainment.

Critics, however, say the extravaganza will distract from Saudi Arabia’s human-rights abuses. Whether comedians will be free to poke fun at the kingdom—or whether censorship will spoil the jokes—is unclear. Last week Tim Dillon, an American comic who made remarks that upset Saudi authorities, said he was disinvited. Saudi Arabia’s ruler wants the soft power that comedy can bring, but mockery is by nature unruly, and that is [what strongmen fear](#).



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: California's Great America amusement park in Santa Clara features the world's tallest version of what ride?

Thursday: Which territory became an American state in 1907?



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:

Jordan Moar, Waterloo, Canada

Julie Delany, Brisbane, Australia

Carlos Sangil, Madrid, Spain

They all gave the correct answers of Shell, [shopaholic](#), ABBA and crown.

*Half of the harm that is done in
this world is due to people who
want to feel important.*

T. S. Eliot