

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Shutterstock

Steve Witkoff, America's [special envoy](#) to the Middle East, and **Jared Kushner**, Donald Trump's son-in-law, arrived in Egypt to join the **Gaza** peace talks. So far, [the indirect negotiations](#) between Israel and Hamas, which began on Monday, have not led to a breakthrough. Nonetheless, negotiators on both sides remain optimistic. Later on Wednesday Mr Trump said talks were "going well" and that he "may" travel to Egypt this weekend.

James Comey, a former FBI director, pleaded not guilty to charges of lying to Congress and obstructing an investigation. The case, [sought by Mr Trump](#), concerns testimony Mr Comey gave to a Senate committee in 2020 about a probe into alleged Russian links to Mr Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. Mr Comey's lawyers are seeking to dismiss it before trial, calling the prosecution vindictive.

The leader of Britain's opposition Conservative Party, **Kemi Badenoch**, promised to abolish primary-residence **stamp duty**, a tax on buying homes, if she wins the next election. The announcement, made at the party conference, was a much-needed hit with members. They had soured on Ms Badenoch as the once-

dominant Tories have struggled for relevance in Britain's [fragmented political system](#).

Britain's **Office for National Statistics** revised down its estimate of government borrowing from £83.8bn (\$112.3bn) between April and August by £2bn. Britain's tax authority had provided incorrect value-added-tax figures to the ONS, inflating its budget-deficit calculation. The blunder follows other corrections to the ONS's numbers this year, further eroding confidence in official statistics as the government prepares its November budget.

The share price of **Verisure**, a **Swedish** security company, closed 21% higher on Wednesday after it listed on Stockholm's bourse. Shares were initially priced at €13.25 (\$15.45), valuing the company at €13.7bn. They closed at €16. The initial public offering is **Europe's** biggest [in three years](#).

The **Nobel prize in chemistry** [was awarded](#) to Susumu Kitagawa, Richard Robson and Omar Yaghi for creating **metal-organic frameworks**, porous crystals that can be tailored to trap specific chemicals, making them handy for separating substances. If engineered at a larger scale, they could remove forever chemicals from water, or take carbon dioxide out of the air.

The **European Parliament** voted to chop meat-related words, like “burger” and “bratwurst”, from [plant-based products](#). It is part of a broader package, aimed at helping farmers, that the bloc will negotiate before it can become law. Meat substitutes are not the only alternatives to be grilled by the EU: it now defines dairy as “products secreted by mammary glands”, a blow for oat drinks.

Figure of the day: 46%, the share of Canadian respondents to a poll on October 5th who support Mark Carney's government. [Read the full story](#).



Photograph: Getty Images

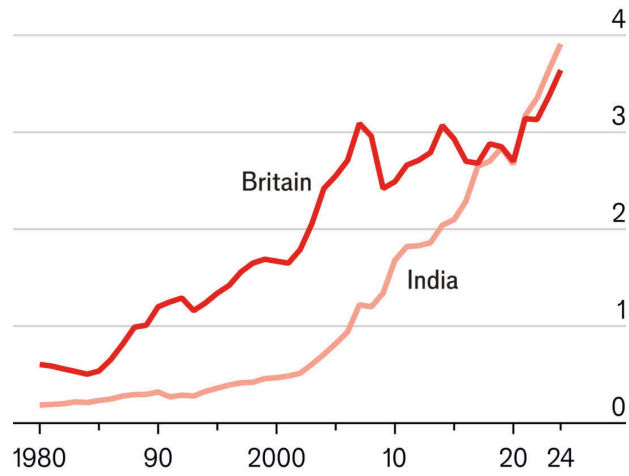
Britain and India grow closer

Sir Keir Starmer and Narendra Modi have both had rocky years. Scandals have weakened the British prime minister, who has been in office for just 16 months. His Indian counterpart has had troubles, too. Donald Trump, America's president, [thwacked](#) India with a 50% “punishment” tariff in August. Opposition parties in both countries smell weakness.

That makes it an intriguing moment for Sir Keir's first official visit to India on Wednesday, bringing together leaders of an emerging power and a waning one. India's economy has grown rapidly in recent years: in 2021 it overtook Britain's to become the world's fifth largest. Britain, meanwhile, is [stagnating](#). In July the two countries signed a trade deal, cutting tariffs on cars, whisky and clothes. There is talk of further agreements on defence and tech. For Mr Modi that may herald a “pivot to Europe”, where he hopes to find stable partners to support India's rise. Sir Keir may be relieved just to get away from home.

Rising power

GDP, nominal, \$trn



Source: IMF



Photograph: EPA

Ukraine eyes America's Tomahawk missiles

The Ukraine war is more dynamic in the skies than on the ground. The range of both sides' [fibre-optic drones](#) (which resist jammers) has increased, expanding the area along the front line in which almost nothing can move without being hit. That is one reason why Russia's summer offensive has stalled. Its army took half as much territory in September as it did in August.

Thwarted at the front, Russia is launching more drone and missile attacks on Ukrainian civilians and power infrastructure. Ukraine is intensifying its drone campaign against Russia's oil refineries. It has [hit nearly half of them](#), causing fuel shortages.

Donald Trump has mused about selling Tomahawk missiles to Ukraine. These long-range weapons could reach new targets in Russia's rear, including its biggest Gerbera-drone factory in Yelabuga, 1,300km from the front line. But even without Tomahawks, Ukraine may soon start hitting such sites with its own [Flamingo cruise missile](#), which is nearing mass production.



Photograph: Getty Images

Hamas's and Israel's nail-biting peace talks

As the war in Gaza enters its third year, the negotiations to end it enter their third day. On Wednesday diplomats will [meet](#) again in Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt to discuss Donald Trump's plan for a ceasefire. The mood is upbeat. Mr Trump thinks there is a "really good chance" of a deal. Egyptian officials say the talks are positive. Still, there are no concrete signs of agreement on the thorniest issues, from disarming Hamas to the extent of Israel's withdrawal from Gaza.

When the war began on October 7th 2023, no one expected it to last this long. But both sides have proved obstinate. Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, has avoided a ceasefire that might break up his ruling coalition. Hamas has [refused](#) to lay down its arms despite the devastation in Gaza. Pressure from America and Arab states has brought them to the table, but it has not yet compelled them to agree.



Photograph: Reuters

A heavenly show-off

Looking skywards this week may be unusually rewarding. On Tuesday a full [Moon](#) rose at the closest point in its orbit to Earth, creating a “supermoon”, which makes it appear larger and brighter than normal. Also called the Harvest Moon, it will continue to stun until the early hours of Wednesday before it wanes. It is the first in a trio of supermoons that will occur before the end of this year.

The Harvest Moon is not the only celestial spectacle this week. Britain’s Met Office forecasts enhanced geomagnetic activity on Tuesday and Wednesday, increasing the chances of seeing the northern lights. The annual Draconid meteor shower, visible in the northern hemisphere, is also predicted to peak on Wednesday evening. Expect several shooting stars, with tails lasting around a second. But, since these heavenly treats must share a single sky, the bright Harvest Moon will probably outshine the rest—as is its privilege.



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.

Wednesday: Chris Owen played which character in the American Pie film series?

Tuesday: Which James Joyce novel describes events over a single day in June 1904?

Style is not something that can be improvised: one has to construct it.

Natalia Ginzburg