

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: China News Service via Getty Images

A meeting between **Donald Trump** and **Volodymyr Zelenskyy** at the White House ended without **Ukraine's** president securing Tomahawk missiles. Mr Trump said supplying the weapons “could mean bigger escalation” with Russia. He had previously suggested he would provide them. On Thursday America's president spoke to Vladimir Putin, Russia's president, and agreed to meet in Budapest for more peace talks.

Mr Trump commuted the sentence of **George Santos**, a Republican former member of Congress, after he had served less than three months of a seven-year sentence. Mr Santos was expelled from Congress and pleaded guilty to fraud and identity theft. But his newspaper columns about his imprisonment apparently moved the president—as did his loyalty to Mr Trump.

**Global stockmarkets** calmed after worries over credit risk sparked a sell-off of American regional bank shares. The bankruptcies of two car companies, **First Brands** and Tricolor, have shaken investor confidence. In America the s&p 500 closed 0.5% higher on Friday. British stocks also recovered some earlier losses, although closed almost 0.9% lower. The price of gold fell after reaching a record high.

**China** said it had agreed to hold a new round of trade talks with **America** “as soon as possible”. Earlier Scott Bessent, America’s Treasury secretary, spoke to He Lifeng, China’s trade tsar, over video. Mr Bessent described the discussions as “frank and detailed”, and said the pair planned to meet in person next week. The officials are trying to avoid another painful [tariff battle](#).

Delegations from **Afghanistan** and **Pakistan** meet in Qatar today in an attempt to resolve a crisis that has led to dozens of deaths. A 48-hour ceasefire, agreed after a week of violence, ended on Friday night, and was followed by further assaults. Pakistan claims that Afghanistan is harbouring militants who have been striking across the border. Afghanistan has made similar claims about its neighbour.

A global tax on shipping for the sake of the climate hit the rocks. Before countries could vote on a tax to curb [greenhouse-gas emissions](#) in shipping, the **International Maritime Organisation**, a UN agency, adjourned following pressure from Saudi Arabia and others, pushing back discussions for at least a year. Mr Trump, who called the tax a “scam”, threatened countries that supported it with visa restrictions and port fees.

**Prince Andrew** renounced his royal titles, including the Duke of York. He remains a prince. He stepped down from duties in 2019 amid scrutiny over his ties to [Jeffrey Epstein](#), a convicted paedophile. He denies allegations that he sexually assaulted [Virginia Giuffre](#), a vocal Epstein accuser, when she was 17; her posthumous memoir will be released next week. “Continued accusations”, he wrote, “distract” from the royal family’s work.

**Word of the week:** *Slop*, a pejorative label for uncanny videos, images and audio generated by artificial intelligence that are clogging the internet. [Read the full story](#).



Photograph: Reuters

## Taiwan's opposition plots a comeback

Taiwan's biggest opposition party, the Kuomintang (KMT), which wants better relations with mainland China, chooses a new leader on Saturday. It has failed to win the presidency in three successive elections since 2016, most recently in January 2024. But the party has held a legislative majority since last year, along with its smaller ally, the Taiwan People's Party. It has used that power to frustrate the ruling Democratic Progressive Party, including by blocking funds designated for defence against Chinese aggression. The party has also gathered momentum since fending off efforts to unseat 24 of its 52 lawmakers in [a recall vote](#) earlier this year.

Whoever wins will probably lead KMT into local elections next year and presidential ones in 2028. They will also determine the party's cross-strait policy. The three leading candidates—Cheng Li-wun, Hau Lung-pin and Lo Chih-chiang—want to stabilise relations. They may yet convince voters that Taiwan's security lies in cosying up to China, not America.



Photograph: Getty Images

## Radicalism or resistance on America's streets?

When Barbara Hartwick, a retired teacher, attended a “No Kings” protest against Donald Trump in June, her sign read, “Let the wild rumpus start!” Parents may chuckle at the allusion to Max, the little tyrant from Maurice Sendak’s book, “Where the Wild Things Are”. But if Ms Hartwick brings it to one of the roughly 2,500 No Kings protests planned on Saturday, authorities may fail to see the funny side.

The Trump administration and its allies claim that the rallies—which organisers expect to attract even more than the estimated 5m people who turned out in June—are cooked up by Antifa, a loose collection of left-wing activists. Last month [Donald Trump](#) labelled Antifa a “domestic terrorist organisation”. He then ordered the FBI to investigate individuals based on criteria as nebulous as evidence of “hostility towards those who hold traditional American views on family, religion and morality”. Some of Saturday’s attendees could soon appear in the bureau’s dossiers.



Photograph: Ken Woroner/Netflix

## A very contemporary “Frankenstein”

The creature dreamed up by a teenage Mary Shelley in “Frankenstein” is vividly corporeal. For film-makers, he is also an inviting outline. The latest to resurrect him is Guillermo del Toro, whose “Frankenstein” is out in cinemas this weekend and on Netflix in November.

[His version](#), which unfolds in the mid-19th century, is distinctive—and itself made up of cinema scraps. Victor Frankenstein (Oscar Isaac) harnesses lightning à la “Back to the Future”. Reviled by his maker and holed up in a barn, the creature (Jacob Elordi) befriends some rats like a hulking Snow White. Doctor and monster appear together in a mirror, a nod to Thomas Edison’s silent version of 1910.

There are fresh touches, too. It is unusually interested in where the funding—and body parts—for Frankenstein’s experiments come from. The creature is much less hideous than Shelley’s ghastly original and many of his film predecessors. With a chiselled physique and comely brow, Mr Elordi is a body-conscious monster for the Instagram age.



Photograph: Riyadh Season/Netflix

## A lucrative game of tennis

The second, [Saudi-funded](#) Six Kings Slam tennis exhibition concludes on Saturday, with a final between Spain's Carlos Alcaraz and Italy's Jannik Sinner. The tournament has a budget that rivals many grand slams: all six players received \$1.5m just for participating.

There is little other motivation to play. This is the time of year when complaints about the sport's gruelling schedule get louder. Players have been competing for world ranking points since December, ahead of season-closing finals events next month. High temperatures and soaring humidity at the recent Shanghai Masters prompted Holger Rune, a top Danish player, to ask an umpire, "do you want a player to die on court?"

Mr Alcaraz's coach, meanwhile, has dubiously claimed that exhibitions help his player relax. Mr Alcaraz also recently described them as "just having fun for one or two days". Victory at Six Kings would be a welcome bonus: the winner will take away \$6m.





Photograph: Alamy

## **Weekend profile: Han Hak-ja, the scandalised leader of the cult-like Moonies**

“I love you, Mother Han,” supporters shouted as an 82-year-old woman in a wheelchair was pushed into a court in Seoul last month. Han Hak-ja is the leader of the Unification Church, a cult-like religious group also known as “the Moonies”, and the widow of its founder, Moon Sun-myung, a self-proclaimed messiah. She was arrested for allegedly bribing the wife of Yoon Suk Yeol, a former president of South Korea who was [impeached](#) after attempting to impose martial law in December. On October 10th, Ms Han was indicted. She denies wrongdoing. The affair deepens a crisis already engulfing the controversial church.

Critics denounce the church’s manipulative fundraising and deceptive recruitment. After Abe Shinzo, a former Japanese prime minister, was assassinated in 2022, the government stripped the church of its religious-corporation status and ordered it to dissolve. The killer, [Yamagami Tetsuya](#), said his mother bankrupted the family through donations to the church. He had planned to kill Ms Han but turned to Abe after seeing him in a video for a church-affiliated event.

Ms Han was born in 1943 in Anju, in what is now North Korea. Her grandmother and mother fought Japanese colonialism. When she was 17, she married Moon, who was then 40. She bore him 14

children, remaining in his shadow. They reigned as the “True Parents” to their followers.

After Moon died in 2012, Ms Han consolidated power. She cancelled many of his business ventures, which had included fisheries and arms manufacturing. She prioritised evangelism and youth education. She revised Moon’s teachings and texts, began calling herself “God’s Only Begotten Daughter” and urged followers to say “Heavenly Parent” instead of “Heavenly Father”.

When a power struggle erupted within the family, she removed Hyung-jin “Sean” Moon, her son, from church leadership. He founded a splinter sect in Pennsylvania that blends Unification theology with gun culture.

Unification Church membership has fallen to the low hundreds of thousands, down from a 1980s peak of what it claims (and perhaps overstates) was millions. Some suggest its financial troubles made [Ms Han](#) desperate. Prosecutors claim she gave Kim Keon-hee, then the first lady, a diamond necklace and Chanel handbags, while also funnelling 100m won (\$70,000) to a conservative lawmaker.

Her defenders say the charges are [politically motivated](#)—a purge of conservative groups by President Lee Jae Myung’s liberal government. They call for her release, citing her age and declining health. But her son, Sean, shows little sympathy. He called his mother the “Whore of Babylon” and a false leader who hijacked the church. When she was arrested, broke, he warned: “This is only the beginning of the Judgment.”





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](#). Or, if you prefer, use the grid below.

There are two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers.

### Cryptic clues

*1 across* - Am I scared? Snarling Ursus rarely heads back to the country (6)

*2 across* - A final bit of usury after good fortunes, I hear, is very nice (6)

*3 across* - Chair for Charles chuckled, I hear (6)

*1 down* - Messrs Orbison and Jolson, with some plum intel, are coining it (5,4)

### Straight clues

*1 across* - Bellicose state pushing NATO's limits (6)

*2 across* - A class of asset that the very rich are turning their back on (6)

3 across - Whereupon a king or queen might sit (8)

1 down - Coiner of British money, on whose former site China wants to build an embassy (5,4)

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

We'd like to hear from you to improve the crossword. Do you play the interactive version of our mini crossword, published daily? If not, why? How useful do you find the grid image? Do you prefer cryptic or straight clues? Are our puzzles too easy or hard, and is the difficulty consistent? And is there anything else you think about the crossword? Please tell us at [\[email protected\]](#).

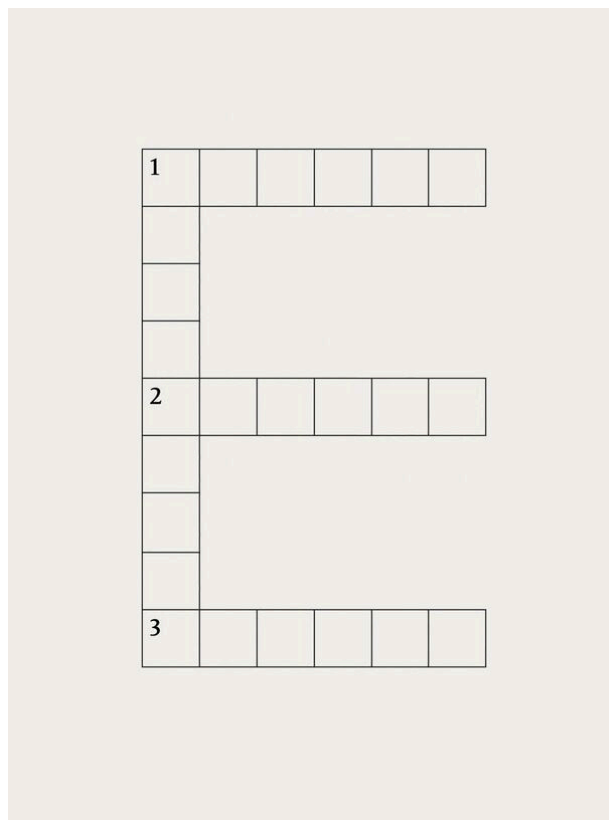


Image: Crossword



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:

**Don Shanks**, Thunder Bay, Canada

**Natalia Georghiou**, Alnwick, Britain

**Subash Bijlani**, Gurgaon, India

They all gave the correct answers of: wind, The Times, Masters and Johnson, The Woman in Black and the tambourine. The theme is songs by Bob Dylan: Blowin' in the Wind, The Times They Are A-Changin', Masters of War, Just Like A Woman and Mr Tambourine Man.

The questions were:

**Monday:** The Beaufort scale measures the intensity of what?

**Tuesday:** Which British newspaper was founded in 1785 under the initial title of "The Daily Universal Register"?

**Wednesday:** Which two-person team wrote the controversial study "Human Sexual Response"?

**Thursday:** Which ghost story by Susan Hill was turned into a 2012 film starring Daniel Radcliffe?

**Friday:** In the Abba song "Dancing Queen", which instrument does the character "feel the beat of"?

*The metaphor is perhaps the most  
fruitful power of man*

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***José Ortega y Gasset***