

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Anadolu via Getty Images

Marco Rubio said America “strongly rejects” the plan of **France’s** president, Emmanuel Macron, [to recognise Palestine](#) as a state. America’s secretary of state called it “a slap in the face” to the victims of Hamas’s attack on Israel on October 7th 2023. Israel’s prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, also condemned France’s decision, saying such a move “rewards terror and risks creating another Iranian proxy”.

**Volkswagen’s** profits took a €1.3bn (\$1.5bn) hit in the first half of 2025 as a result of American tariffs. The German carmaker, which owns Audi and Porsche, said profits fell 33% from a year earlier, to €6.7bn. In response, vw’s boss promised “huge investments” in the United States, and the possibility of a deal with America on a “company level” for car companies.

**Thailand’s** acting prime minister warned that [clashes](#) between his country and Cambodia could “move towards war”. He spoke as fighting escalated along the border, and Thai authorities evacuated tens of thousands of people. At least 15 people have been killed in the clashes over a disputed stretch of the border. America called for an immediate ceasefire.

**America** lifted sanctions against allies of **Myanmar's** [ruling junta](#) (and their military-linked companies) after its leader praised Mr Trump and requested relief from tariffs and sanctions. Min Aung Hlaing sent a letter to Mr Trump earlier this month lauding the president for his “strong leadership”. America’s Treasury, which issued the notice, gave no reason for the action.

**Meta**, an American social-media giant, said it will stop running political advertising in the **European Union** from October. The decision comes before the bloc introduces measures to regulate how online platforms deliver political content, part of a broader push to protect democratic processes and limit disinformation online. Meta, whose platforms include Facebook and Instagram, has been increasingly critical of such regulations.

**Britain's** new age-verification rules for **tech platforms** such as X and TikTok, came into force. Ofcom, the country’s media regulator, now requires companies to prevent under-18s from accessing adult or “harmful” content including pornography or material related to self-harm or suicide. Non-compliant companies risk fines of up to £18m or 10% of global turnover, whichever amount is greater.

Mr Trump arrives in **Britain** for a “working visit” that includes some golf and some politics. America’s president will visit two golf resorts that he owns in Scotland and will meet Britain’s prime minister, Sir Keir Starmer, on Monday. Sir Keir is expected to lobby the president about a final deal to cut tariffs on British steel and Scotch whisky.

**Figure of the day:** \$500bn, OpenAI’s planned investments in America alone. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: EPA

## Pressure and pain in Gaza

The talks seem endless. On Thursday Steve Witkoff, Donald Trump's Middle East envoy, met in Italy with Israeli and Qatari officials. Their goal was to finalise a ceasefire in [Gaza](#). Among the issues left to resolve was the extent of Israel's withdrawal from the territory during the initial 60-day phase of a proposed truce. Mr Witkoff hoped to travel onwards to Doha to seal the deal. But hours after he landed in Italy, Israel's prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, withdrew his negotiators from the Qatari capital. Mr Witkoff later said he would withdraw America's negotiating team because Hamas was not "acting in good faith".

While diplomats gab, [Gazans starve](#). The World Food Programme says one-third of Gaza's 2m population go days at a time without food. Children are dying of hunger. A shadowy foundation backed by Israel and America is delivering woefully insufficient aid to southern Gaza. The United Nations, which handles distributions in the north, cannot do so properly while the war rages.



Photograph: CAMERA PRESS

## Donald Trump packs his clubs

How far would you travel for a round of golf? If you are Donald Trump, the answer is around 6,600km. On Friday America's president will fly to Scotland for a four-day visit to his golf resorts at Turnberry and Menie. It will be Mr Trump's first trip to Britain since his re-election last year. He will return for an official state visit in September.

The White House is calling the trip a private visit, but Mr Trump will find time for business. On Monday he will meet Sir Keir Starmer, Britain's prime minister, to "refine" a [trade deal](#) that they struck in May. John Swinney, Scotland's first minister, will also meet the president, in part to discuss tariffs on Scotch whisky. Mr Swinney has been criticised at home for the cost of security during the visit, which is expected to reach some £3m (\$4m). An expensive round on the links.



Photograph: EPA

## Europe tries to cut a deal with Iran

On Friday Britain, France and Germany will hold another round of nuclear talks with [Iran](#). They want Iran to let the United Nations' nuclear watchdog resume inspections. They also want it to restart talks with America about a nuclear deal to replace the one Donald Trump withdrew from in 2018. But Iran is prevaricating. It will allow a UN team to visit soon, but only to discuss how and when inspections might restart. It is also open to negotiating with America, but has suggested that it will not give up its uranium-enrichment programme.

The Europeans have threatened to invoke a mechanism from the old deal that would restore UN sanctions if Iran does not agree to their demands. Although that provision expires on October 18th, both sides may extend the deadline to keep their negotiations alive. Iran has threatened to leave the Non-Proliferation Treaty if the Europeans do impose sanctions. That would make diplomacy much harder.



Photograph: Getty Images

## Single passengers, beware

Travel writers erupted in outrage two months ago at news that America's big legacy airlines had started charging higher per-person fares for solo travellers (often flying for business, so less price-sensitive) than for multiple-passenger bookings. Amid criticism, Delta and United reportedly scrapped the practice, but American Airlines held firm. All three have refused to comment.

To analyse this pricing, *The Economist* downloaded 19,000 economy-class airfares for all direct domestic routes on a single day, comparing one- and two-passenger prices for one-ways and round-trips.

[We found](#) that whereas Delta has abandoned the scheme and United has reintroduced it only sparingly, AA's fares are still frequently higher for solo travellers. Those who do not stay at their destination over a weekend—and are thus likely to be business travellers—paid at least 5% more on 57% of its routes, often by margins around 50%. Ironically, the outcry over the practice may have backfired: rather than reducing their fares for singletons, Delta and United simply increased prices for multiple-passenger bookings to match.



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:** Which Seattle-based musician, part of the grunge movement, was often viewed as a spokesman for Generation X?

**Thursday:** Which rock star was known by the nickname “The Lizard King”?





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:

**Sten Faerch-Jensen**, Copenhagen, Denmark

**Leo Varadkar**, Dublin, Ireland

**Osamu Senoo**, Izumo, Japan

They all gave the correct answers of legal, rival, level and [Liverpool](#).



*No man was ever yet a great poet,  
without at the same time being a  
profound philosopher.*

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***Samuel Taylor Coleridge***