

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AFP via Getty Images

Binyamin Netanyahu, **Israel's** prime minister, supported Donald Trump's plan to end the war in **Gaza**. Mr Trump's proposal, which he claimed has the backing of Arab leaders, includes the release of all Israeli hostages and the demilitarisation of Gaza. America's president will also chair a transitional "Board of Peace". Hamas said it was not consulted. Earlier Mr Netanyahu, who is visiting Washington, apologised to **Qatar's** prime minister for [an Israeli air strike](#) this month.

A consortium led by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund agreed to take **Electronic Arts** private for around \$55bn. The [American video-game maker](#) said that stockholders would receive \$210 per share; the deal is the largest leveraged buyout in history. The consortium also includes Silver Lake, an American private-equity giant, and Affinity Partners, an investment firm founded by **Jared Kushner**, Mr Trump's son-in-law.

**AstraZeneca** said it would list shares directly in New York, though it will keep its main listing in London. The drugmaker had reportedly considered [changing its primary listing to America](#) because of frustrations with Britain's regulatory regime. Separately,

Emma Walmsley, the boss of gsk, a struggling British drugmaker, said she would step down at the end of the year.

“A nationwide telecoms blackout” imposed by the **Taliban** took effect in **Afghanistan**, according to Netblocks, a cybersecurity watchdog. [TOLonews](#), an Afghan broadcaster, warned that its networks would “face disruptions”. This month [the Taliban](#) dismantled fibre-optic connections in parts of the country “to prevent immorality”. Since returning to power in 2021 the insurgents have introduced numerous restrictions and [rolled back women’s freedoms](#).

The price of **gold** rose above \$3,800 per troy ounce, a record that took its gains to more than 45% this year. Fears that America’s government could shut down partly explain the surge. America’s gold reserves are now worth more than \$1trn because of the record-breaking pricing. Officially America’s stash is worth \$11bn, because of the \$42.22-an-ounce price set in 1973.

Police in **Madagascar** clashed with thousands of demonstrators who took to the streets in Antananarivo, the capital, to protest against power and water cuts. Similar protests rocked the city last week, leading officials to declare a curfew. The protesters, mostly young people, have called for the resignation of the country’s president, Andry Rajoelina, and prime minister, Christian Ntsay.

**Elon Musk’s** social-media platform, X, condemned an Indian court that last week rejected its challenge against a government content-moderation tool. In March the tech firm sued India’s government over its Sahyog Portal, a mechanism that helps to block content [deemed to violate Indian law](#), calling it censorship. X said it would appeal the court’s decision.

**Figure of the day:** 6,549, the average number of miles the average British man travelled in 2024, down by 21% from 2002. [Read the full story](#).

*Correction: in an earlier edition of the World in Brief we said that Rory McIlroy was the captain of Europe's Ryder Cup team. He wasn't, it was Luke Donald. Sorry.*



Photograph: AP

## **A countdown begins for Thailand's new PM**

Last month Anutin Charnvirakul, Thailand's new prime minister, made a deal with the opposition People's Party. It would support a minority government led by his Bhumjaithai Party. In return he promised to call an election within four months of delivering a speech to parliament that lays out his government's policies. On Monday he gave that speech, during which he pledged to tackle Thailand's economic and security challenges.

Mr Anutin will make the most of the time available to him to improve his election prospects. He is reviving the "half-half" stimulus: a pandemic-era programme under which the government covers half the cost of basic goods that consumers buy from small businesses. That could secure him enough support to win an election. But he might have another way to stay in power. MPs from small parties have thrown their support behind the Bhumjaithai Party. If he attracts enough of them in the next four months he could get a majority in parliament without the need to call an election at all.



Photograph: Getty Images

## **Can America's Congress avoid a shutdown?**

Getting face time with Donald Trump is hard, especially if he dislikes you. Last week Hakeem Jeffries and Chuck Schumer, the top Democrats in Congress, were to meet the president, but he cancelled. Now they are set to talk on Monday. Republicans leaders will also attend. The two sides are negotiating over how to fund the government, which will soon run out of money. Without an agreement, it will shut down on Wednesday.

Democrats want to extend health-care credits that expire at the end of the year and roll back cuts to Medicaid, health insurance for the poor. Republicans want government spending to stay at current levels. Both are bullish, betting that the public will blame the other party for a shutdown. But Democrats are in a tricky spot. The administration has threatened to sack federal workers if there is a shutdown. And a win on health care now will deprive them of a cudgel against Republicans in midterm elections next year.



Photograph: Getty Images

## The “Trump Plan” for Gaza

Donald Trump’s other big meeting of the day will be with Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel’s prime minister. American and Israeli diplomats predict that it will be pivotal in ending the war in Gaza, which began in October 2023 when Hamas, a militant group, attacked Israel. Mr Trump has been raising expectations. “ALL ARE ON BOARD FOR SOMETHING SPECIAL. FIRST TIME EVER. WE WILL GET IT DONE!!!” he posted the day before the meeting.

The “Trump Plan”, as it has been nicknamed, calls for Hamas to release all Israeli hostages immediately and to disarm. Israel would fully withdraw from Gaza and allow a Palestinian technocratic government to take over civil affairs. A foreign peacekeeping force would be responsible for security.

The plan has elements that Israel and Hamas will find hard to accept. Whether Mr Trump and the Arab regimes who helped draw it up can force them to agree to it remains to be seen.



Photograph: EPA

## Russia's finances feel the strain

When Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, many thought its [economy](#) would soon collapse. Those predictions proved wrong. A short recession was followed by a military-spending-induced boom in 2023-24. And oil exports, a major source of revenue, dodged sanctions. Yet after three and a half years of war, Russia's economy is stuttering. The price of oil has fallen. In July the economy expanded by just 0.4% year on year.

On Monday Russia's government is expected to submit a draft budget for 2026 to its rubber-stamp parliament. It is keen to reduce the deficit, which at nearly 2% of GDP is roughly four times the government's target for 2025. To do so, it will raise value-added tax and lower the tax threshold for businesses from 60m roubles (\$720,000) to just 10m roubles in annual revenue. Expect Russians to grumble as the money to pay for the war increasingly comes out of their pockets.

Poorly oiled machine







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.

**Monday:** Which band was responsible for most of the biggest hits of the “Saturday Night Fever” soundtrack?

*Error does not end with youth but  
increases in the man.*

---

***W. H. Auden***