

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Anadolu via Getty Images

Shabana Mahmood, Britain's home secretary, is to announce measures to curtail aid for [asylum seekers](#), including an end to guaranteed housing and the withdrawal of financial support for those able to work or with independent means. Asylum will be granted for 30 months, instead of five years. The governing Labour Party is currently trailing the hard-right Reform UK in the polls.

President Donald Trump exempted several **foodstuffs**, including beef and coffee, from “reciprocal” **tariffs** imposed on imports to America. The president said that the levies were no longer needed, but the change seems more likely to reflect concerns among Republicans that tariffs have pushed up Americans' cost of living.

The **Democratic Republic of Congo** and **M23**, a rebel group which earlier this year seized territory in the east of the country, signed a framework peace agreement in Doha, the capital of Qatar. The two sides agreed on a ceasefire in July, but each has since accused the other of breaking it. In June Congo and Rwanda, which supports M23, signed a [peace accord](#) in Washington.

us **Border Patrol** agents started making arrests in **Charlotte**, North Carolina. It is the latest Democrat-led city to draw particular attention from the Trump administration. After the stabbing to

death of a Ukrainian woman on a local train in August, the White House blamed the “woke agendas” of local Democrats. The mayor criticised the agents for causing “unnecessary fear and uncertainty”.

Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps confirmed that it had seized an **oil tanker** on Friday. The Cypriot-owned *Talara*, flagged in the Marshall Islands, was sailing from the United Arab Emirates to Singapore when it was intercepted in the Strait of Hormuz. The IRGC claimed that its cargo was “unauthorised”. The seizure is thought to be the first by Iran in over a year.

Thousands of people marched in Belém, the Brazilian city that is hosting the **COP30 environmental summit**, to urge faster action to limit climate change. The demonstration, halfway through the two-week meeting, included a “funeral for fossil fuels”. It was the first such protest for a while: the hosts of the past three **COPs**, Azerbaijan, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, restricted public protests.

At least nine people died when a store of confiscated explosives went off in a police station in Srinagar, in Indian-controlled **Kashmir**. A further 32 were reported injured. Forensic experts and police were inspecting the material at the time. The explosives were seized as part of a crackdown on Kashmiri terrorists, who were blamed for a bombing last week outside Delhi’s historic Red Fort.

Word of the week: codas, the name researchers use for the series of clicks female sperm whales communicate by. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Getty Images

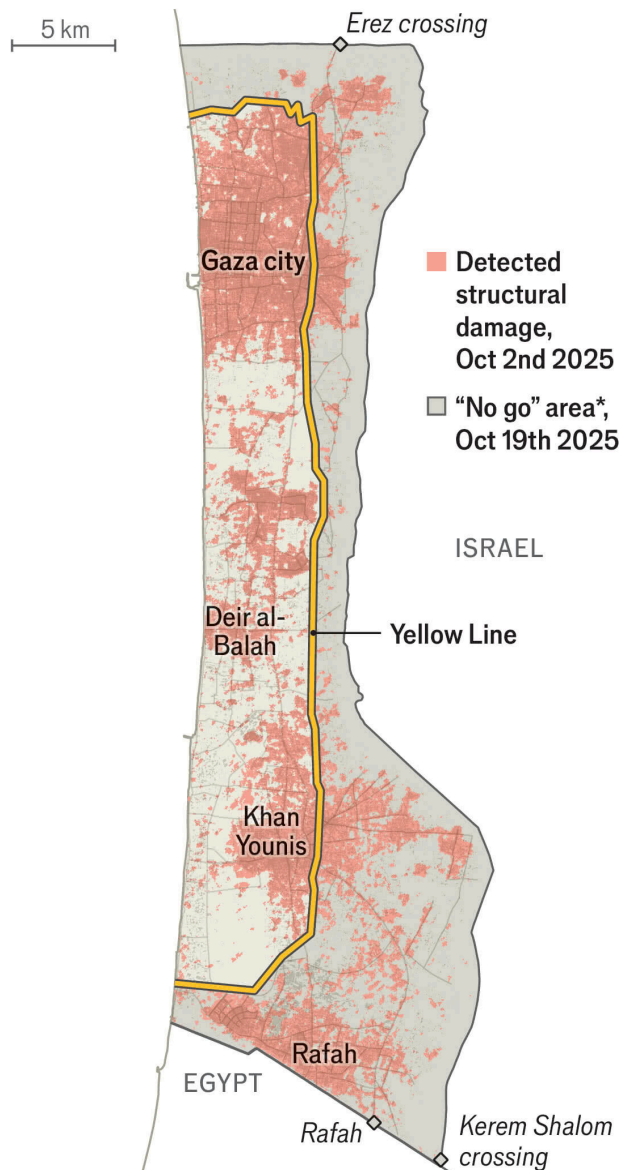
Despair continues in Gaza

The bombing may have stopped, but more than a month into the ceasefire in Gaza there has been [no progress on reconstruction](#). A \$53bn Egyptian plan to rebuild has stalled. Donors do not want to stump up unless they know the [war is truly over](#). That will require Hamas to disarm—which the Palestinian militant group refuses to do.

Some officials in Jerusalem and Washington instead want to start rebuilding in the Israeli-controlled half of Gaza. They envision a string of modular towns, each of which could house thousands of Palestinians. But the scheme faces stiff opposition from Arab states, who fear it would cement the partition of Gaza. Americans close to Donald Trump who pitched the idea to at least one Gulf government earlier this month were rebuffed. Meanwhile, more than 1m Gazans are homeless. Almost the entire population is unemployed. As winter approaches, people are desperate for homes, services and livelihoods—yet plans to provide them are going nowhere.

Devastation reigns

Gaza, damaged or destroyed, October 2025



*Areas under Israeli control according to Oct 2025 ceasefire
Sources: Corey Scher and Jamon Van Den Hoek, Oregon State University; IDF



Photograph: Alamy

Chile looks right

Chileans vote on Sunday in the first round of a [presidential election](#). They will also choose the entire lower chamber of Congress and half the Senate. Crime and violence are their top concerns: 63% say they worry about them. Jeannette Jara, of the Communist Party, is likely to lead the first round because the right-wing vote will be split between many candidates. But she will probably struggle against the most popular right-winger in the run-off on December 14th.

José Antonio Kast (pictured), an ultra-conservative former congressman, is the favourite to join her and win in December. He promises an iron fist against crime and says he will shut the border to illegal migrants and ramp up deportations. Also hoping to make the run-off are Evelyn Matthei, a centre-right former senator, and Johannes Kaiser, who is to the right of even Mr Kast. Any of the three may well boast a majority in both houses of Congress, enabling a sharp right turn. .



Photograph: AFP

China's crackdown on religious freedoms

Chinese authorities are expected to formally indict 19 Christian leaders on Sunday for broadcasting their sermons on the internet. Police detained the Protestant pastors in raids across the country in October, drawing condemnation from America's secretary of state, Marco Rubio. They each face a maximum of seven years in prison.

The indictments would come amid renewed calls for the pastors to be set free, and may complicate thawing relations between America and China. On Wednesday the Senate unanimously passed a resolution demanding the pastors be released; a motion in the House of Representatives is expected soon.

And on Thursday leaders from more than 400 churches in over 40 countries that are part of either BRICS or China's Belt and Road Initiative appealed to the Chinese authorities to respect religious freedom. Many of them have large, fast-growing Christian populations. China, which hopes to [expand its influence in the global south](#), may have to take such sermons seriously.



Photograph: Getty Images

Burns turns to the American Revolution

Ken Burns is America's most indefatigable documentarian. He has produced series on, among other things, the [Vietnam war](#), baseball, jazz and America's civil war. His new six-part series, released on Sunday, traces America's maturation from 13 separate, often fractious colonies into a single united country.

In school Americans learn that the revolution was swift and inevitable; the series shows it was neither of those things. A civil war between independence boosters and loyalists went global as Europe's great powers took stakes in the outcomes.

Typically, Mr Burns's series involve [slow camera pans over photographs](#) to thoughtful narration and evocative music—but this subject predates photography, so Mr Burns has used re-enactors. Although this risks being cringeworthy, early reviews are promising. Viewers will see the experiences not just of soldiers on both sides, but also of indigenous and enslaved people, narrated by actors including Matthew Rhys, Claire Danes and Morgan Freeman.



Photograph: Getty Images

The unbearable lightness of culture

Endless reality TV, an infinity of cinema superheroes and, in the charts, an unshakeable duopoly of Taylor Swift and Beyoncé: do you ever feel [21st-century culture is predictable](#)? If so, W. David Marx agrees with you. In his new book, “Blank Space”, the critic laments and explains this sense of stasis.

In part, he blames lucre: among pop stars, the idea of “selling out” has died out. Celebrity is a reward for chutzpah and commercial nous, not talent. And the internet, argues Mr Marx, has become a swamp of mediocrity and lies. His case is forceful but too gloomy. Time always separates gold from dross: it is too soon to know how much of this era’s culture will last. Anyway, some of the dazzling leaps he admires, like the art of the early 20th century, followed global cataclysms. Could today’s artists achieve such feats? Better not to find out.



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:

Marina Boevska, California, America

Ozlem Sumnu, Barcelona, Spain

Alun Hindle, Banbury, Britain

They all gave the correct answers of: Los Angeles, Washington DC, Memphis, Portland and Chicago. The theme is that they are all cities to which President Trump has sent, or attempted to send, National Guard troops.

The questions were:

Monday: What city is home to the La Brea tar pits?

Tuesday: Which city was designed by Pierre Charles L'Enfant in 1791?

Wednesday: Which city, not known for its bear population, is home to the Grizzlies basketball team?

Thursday: Which city was built at the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia rivers?

Friday: Which city can trace its origins to the building of Fort Dearborn?

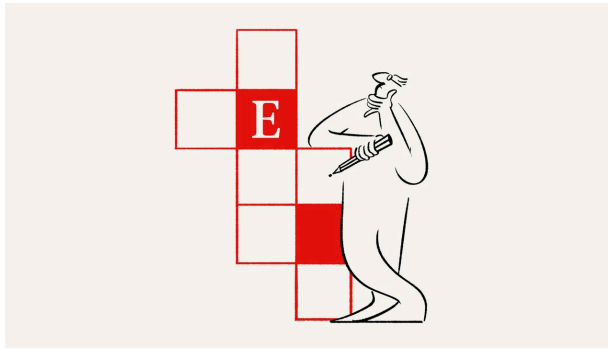


Illustration: The Economist

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 - Bill to permit medication (6)

2 across - Show hidden electrode origin (5)

3 across - DJ is unknown in day before party (6)

1 down - Self-proclaimed showgirl told garment-maker: “quick!” (6,5)

Straight clues

1 across - The Scottish equivalent of fudge (6)

2 across - Drive famed for shopping in Beverly Hills (5)

3 across - Jacket traditionally only worn after 6pm (6)

1 down - Who performed 149 concerts on their most recent tour
(6,5)

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

*Poetry is the art of creating
imaginary gardens with real
toads.*

Marianne Moore