

# Daily briefing

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## The world in brief

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Updated 7 hours ago (New York 22:08 GMT-5)

**Donald Trump** has \$102m in political cash available, making him the most dominant fundraiser in America's Republican Party. The former president raised more than \$56m via WinRed, an online donations platform, in the first half of the year, more than any other Republican. Some of the donations are shared with the party, but Mr Trump also raised \$21m for political action committees that he controls directly.

**Pfizer** raised the price of its **covid-19 vaccine** by more than 25%, after trial data showed that the jabs were more effective than cheaper shots developed by Oxford/AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson. Contracts seen by the *Financial Times*, relating to the European Union's procurement deals, showed that the price of a Pfizer dose increased to €19.50 (\$23.14) from €15.50.

Clashes between **Afghan** and **Taliban** forces spread across three major cities in south and west Afghanistan. Herat, Kandahar and Lashkar Gah all saw heavy fighting as the Taliban sought to capture a provincial capital. Districts across Afghanistan have continued to fall to the Taliban since America's withdrawal of combat troops. The militants are already thought to have captured up to half of the country's territory.

Anthony Fauci warned that "things are going to get worse" in America as the **Delta variant** of covid-19 fuels a surge in cases. But the chief medical adviser to the president said that enough Americans were vaccinated to avoid future lockdowns. The average number of new covid-19 cases reported nationwide has nearly doubled over the past ten days.

Six months after seizing power in a coup that toppled **Myanmar's** elected government, Min Aung Hlaing, the military ruler, pledged to restore democracy, without specifying when. Nearly 7,000 political opponents have been arrested since February's putsch, and hundreds killed. The Association of South-East Asian Nations is due to appoint a special envoy on Myanmar on Monday, who will be tasked with brokering peace.

**South Korean** exports jumped to a record high in July as demand for microchips and petrochemical products continued to grow. Exports rose by 29.6% compared with a year earlier, reaching \$55.4bn, the biggest monthly tally since records began in 1956. The boost in activity comes as the country is battling its worst outbreak of covid-19 yet.

A **Belarusian** sprinter alleged that her Olympic team tried to remove her forcibly from **Japan** on Sunday, leading to a dispute at Tokyo's Haneda airport. In the early hours of Monday she said she was in a "secure situation" at a police station. Activists close to the athlete said she planned to apply for asylum in Austria or Germany.

**Word of the week:** *webtoon* (noun): a serialised comic strip that people can read on their phones. [Read the full article](#).

## Today's agenda

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Updated 1 day ago (New York 22:08 GMT-5)

### Book off: a British journalist is sued by oligarchs

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When "Putin's People" was published last spring, it received rave reviews, not least from *The Economist*. In it Catherine Belton, a former correspondent for the *Financial Times*, sets out a web of connections between the Russian state and wealthy Russians in the West.

But acclaim was not universal. Some of the people mentioned in the book are suing Ms Belton and the publisher, HarperCollins, for defamation. Two Russian businessmen have settled out of court. But Rosneft, an oil giant, and Roman Abramovich, the billionaire owner of Chelsea Football Club, seem intent on seeing the cases through.



Photo: Press Association

Mr Abramovich is particularly exercised about the suggestion that his purchase of Chelsea Football Club in 2003 was intended "to corrupt the UK political elite". Ms Belton's representative says "the authorial position plainly leaves [the matter] open". But this is just one of 26 passages in the book to which Mr Abramovich objects. The case looks set to roll on.

### Fleeing from horror: "Sabaya"

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The horrors that were inflicted on the *Yazidis*, a religious minority, in the wake of Islamic State's invasion of northern Iraq in 2014 are being widely told. On Friday "Sabaya", a new documentary named after the word IS used to refer to its sex slaves, was released in

America. It follows the efforts of a group of volunteers to rescue enslaved women from the perilous Al-Hol refugee camp in Syria. They have few resources beyond their wits, a van and a handgun, but are helped by former *sabaya* who smuggle the targets out of the camp under cover of night.

Former victims of IS are increasingly speaking out. In “The Last Girl”, a book published in 2017, Nadia Murad described being sold as a *sabaya* before fleeing to Germany in 2015. She is campaigning to bring the leaders of IS before an international court. Where there is horror, there is also great courage.



Photo: .

## The return of Gilgamesh? A step towards repatriation

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The epic of Gilgamesh, one of the world’s oldest works of literature, only exists in fragments today. These bits of text were found written on clay tablets, at least one of which has gone through its own epic journey. Earlier this week a federal court in America ordered that the so-called Gilgamesh Dream Tablet be forfeited to the government on the basis that it had been smuggled into the country.

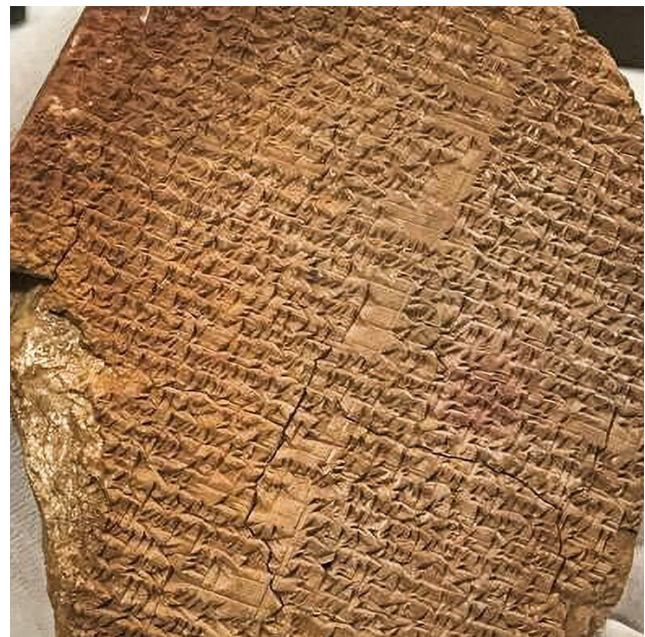


Photo: AP

Discovered in modern-day Iraq, the artefact changed hands several times before 2014, when it was sold to Hobby Lobby, an American arts-and-crafts company. The tablet subsequently went on display at the Museum of the Bible, founded by Hobby Lobby’s evangelical Christian president. (The story of Gilgamesh has long intrigued Bible scholars and enthusiasts for its parallels to the Hebrew Bible.) Millennia after it was written, Gilgamesh may finally be finding its way home.

## Not easily led: dogs suss human liars

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Man's best friend can be deceitful. Few dog owners have avoided being swindled into second dinners, or having their human snacks swiped. Apart from causing mischief, new research in *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, a journal, suggests canines are also adept at sniffing out lies.

Hundreds of dogs were trained to find a treat in one of two bowls by taking an unknown human's advice. Echoing previous findings in five-year-old children and monkeys, half of the dogs ignored the (useless) advice if the human was absent when the treat was hidden. But even more ignored the human when they knew she was knowingly lying. In other words, dogs were less likely to follow dishonest bad advice than honest bad advice. Terriers, however, were the sole exception. They behaved like the more trusting human infants. All the more reason to give them more treats.



Photo: Alamy

## Saturday profile: Lisa Su, chief executive of AMD

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Tech is a man's world. And nowhere more so than in the part of the industry that churns out the microprocessors that power the world's devices. Which makes Lisa Su's achievement even more remarkable: the turnaround of AMD, a once troubled chipmaker based in California. If further proof of the revival were needed, Ms Su, who became the company's chief executive in 2014, delivered it on July 27th with another set of stellar quarterly results. Compared with a year ago, revenue almost doubled to \$3.85bn and net income jumped by 352% to \$710m—both records for the firm.



Photo: Reuters

"Great leaders are trained, not born," she said in a recent interview—a view for which she is an excellent example. Born in Taiwan in 1969, she moved to America as a toddler and grew up playing the piano competitively, but was also good at fixing things. So she ended up studying electrical engineering at MIT and went on to work for several

American chipmakers, including 13 years at IBM. “I learned that when I chose something very difficult, and did well, it would give me great confidence for the next challenge,” she explained.

“Run towards problems,” a mentor once told Ms Su, who often wears a black leather jacket when giving speeches at tech conferences, where she is received like a rock star. That was definitely the approach she took when she joined AMD in 2012, which after years of mismanagement was a basket of problems. Once at the helm, she took swift action. She changed the architecture of AMD’s chips, shifted fabrication to TSMC, the world’s biggest semiconductor manufacturer, and focused on selling ones for desktops and laptops.

Ms Su will need all the confidence she can muster for the next challenge. After years in crisis, Intel, AMD’s big Silicon Valley rival, seems to be getting back on its feet under its latest boss Pat Gelsinger, who recently announced an ambitious plan “to fight for every socket”, referring to the slots for processors in a computer. Ms Su replied she would do the same. Historically, at least, a strong AMD has meant a weak Intel, and vice versa. But count on Ms Su to break that rule, too.

We swallow greedily any lie that flatters us, but we sip only little by little at a truth we find bitter.

*Denis Diderot*