

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

The Trump administration blocked **Harvard University** from enrolling foreign students, revoking a certification that allows the school to host non-Americans on certain visas. Kristi Noem, America's homeland-security secretary, said the action follows Harvard's failure to turn over information about alleged misconduct by foreign students, and called it a “warning” to other institutions. Harvard said the move was “unlawful”.

**America's House of Representatives** passed Republicans' budget bill by a single vote, handing Donald Trump a major political win. The legislation extends tax cuts and reduces spending on the social safety-net. It is projected to add about \$3trn to the federal debt over a decade. The bill now heads to the Senate, where some Republicans object to parts of it.

A split decision on **America's Supreme Court** halted a plan to open the country's first religious charter school in Oklahoma. Justice Amy Coney Barrett recused herself, leaving the judges deadlocked on the motion. The tie lets a lower-court ruling stand, blocking the Catholic-run school. The decision sets no national precedent, but highlights legal uncertainty over government funding for religious public schools.

A judge cleared the way for a sovereignty deal between **Britain** and **Mauritius** by overturning a last-minute injunction that had blocked it. The agreement will let Britain transfer ownership of the Chagos Islands while keeping control of the Diego Garcia military base, the Indian Ocean archipelago's biggest island. Critics say Chagossians were excluded from the talks.

Charities were able to distribute some aid in **Gaza** on Thursday for the first time in weeks. But the United Nations warned that deliveries remain far below needed after Israel's 11-week blockade of supplies—just 90 trucks entered the enclave, versus 600 daily deliveries during a ceasefire between January and March. Meanwhile, Israeli strikes killed at least 50 people as its [military operation](#) continued.

Net [migration](#) to **Britain** nearly halved in 2024 to 431,000, as tougher visa rules brought in by the former Conservative government began to show effect. Arrivals on work and study visas fell sharply; asylum claims rose to 109,000 in the year to March 2025. The drop eases pressure on the Labour government, which has promised further curbs.

America's aviation regulator cleared **Starship**, the [giant rocket](#) developed by Elon Musk's company **SpaceX**, to resume flights after a failed launch in March. The Federal Aviation Authority said the next test could take place as soon as next week. It is co-ordinating with countries along the rocket's flight path—including Britain, Mexico and the Bahamas—because debris could fall in their territory if the test fails.

**Figure of the day:** 142%, the increase in mature tropical-forest loss in Latin America in 2024, compared with 2023. [Read the full story.](#)

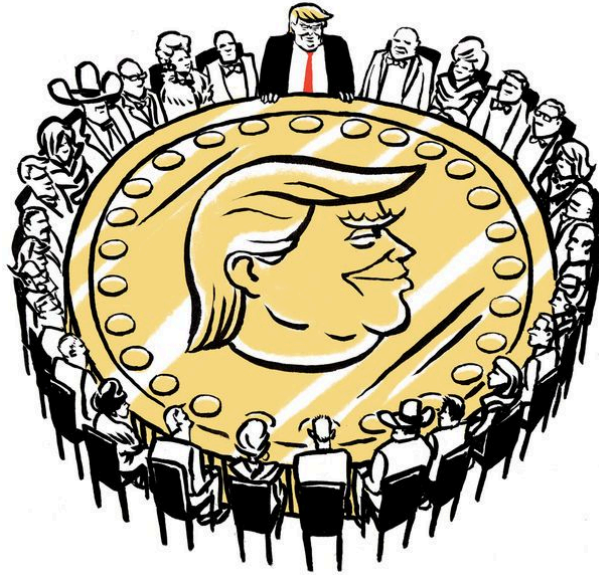


Illustration: David Simonds

## America: the world's first cryptocracy?

Congratulations to Justin Sun! The entrepreneur, who once bailed out a Trump [crypto company](#), has won an audience with Donald Trump on Thursday. He topped a leaderboard of \$TRUMP holders by buying \$19m-worth of the [meme coin](#). It might just be his best news since the Securities and Exchange Committee, a regulator, asked a judge to pause a case against him in February (Mr Sun denies wrongdoing). Twenty-four runners-up will also attend the “ultra-exclusive private VIP reception”; 195 more will get a gala dinner with America’s president.

Naysayers contend that paying for presidential access smells faintly of corruption. Others suspect more prosaic gifting: Trump-associated companies hold 80% of all \$TRUMP and make money on transactions of the coin. One senator has launched an investigation. The White House says Mr Trump is “abiding by all conflict of interest laws”. But the meme coin’s website seems aware it may look dodgy: it urges \$TRUMP-holders to check their spam folders for their invites.



Photograph: Getty Images

## Israel's rift with its allies

A trickle of aid should enter Gaza on Thursday. Whether it will reach needy people is another matter. After two and a half months of blockade, Israel allowed almost 200 lorries of aid to enter from Monday through Wednesday. They carried essentials, including baby formula, flour and medicine. But the UN says that Israel's army did not give it permission to collect the supplies from the border. They stayed, undelivered, on pallets.

Worsening hunger in Gaza has widened a rift between Israel and some allies. Britain suspended free-trade talks; Canada and France have also threatened “concrete actions” if Israel does not stop the war. Such measures probably won't compel Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, to accept a ceasefire. That would require pressure from America. Donald Trump is said to be frustrated with the war, which overshadows his [other plans in the Middle East](#). But he has not yet told Mr Netanyahu to end it.



Photograph: EPA

## **A battle between theme-park giants**

On Thursday Comcast, the parent company of Universal, opens Epic Universe, a \$7bn theme park in Orlando, Florida. Just 20 minutes drive away from Walt Disney World, it is Comcast's latest attempt to [challenge Disney's dominance](#) in the sector. The park includes five themed "lands", with attractions based on popular franchises such as "How to Train Your Dragon" and "Super Mario". Comcast hopes the park's sheer scale will keep guests on its property longer—and spending more.

For Comcast, the launch kicks off an aggressive growth push. It will open a horror-themed attraction in Las Vegas in August and a children's resort in Texas next year. A big park in Britain is also in development. Disney is expanding too, with plans for a new site in the Middle East. Theme parks are already lucrative business for both firms. A cooling American economy could keep visitors away. But for now bookings are strong—and the battle for Orlando is on.





Photograph: Getty Images

## Europe's fuzzy economic picture

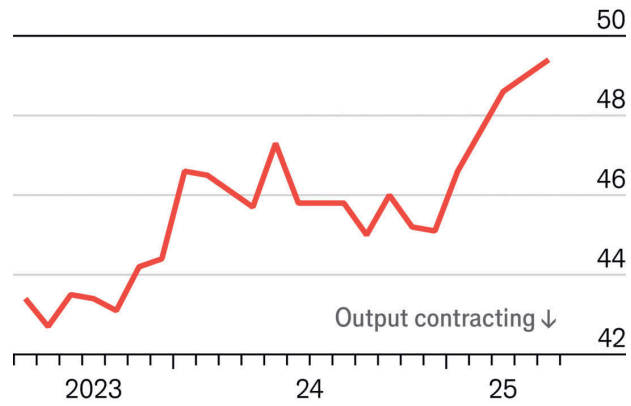
Donald Trump's [tariff turmoil](#) makes economic data volatile. That makes it hard for policymakers to reach conclusions about the state of the economy. European firms are trying to plan for a world of changing tariff rates, cancelled orders and supply-chain disruptions. That can cause erratic swings in activity.

That inconsistency comes through in the purchasing managers' index for the euro zone. According to figures released on Thursday, business activity dropped in May—from 50.4 in April, to 49.5, falling below the threshold that signals a contraction. The survey showed that manufacturing continued to stabilise, after output reached a 37-month high in April. Services kept on disappointing.

But contrast those figures with other data: consumer sentiment rose in May, despite the economic chaos. The European Central Bank, scheduled to meet in early June, will have to hope for more consistent data to judge the economic outlook.

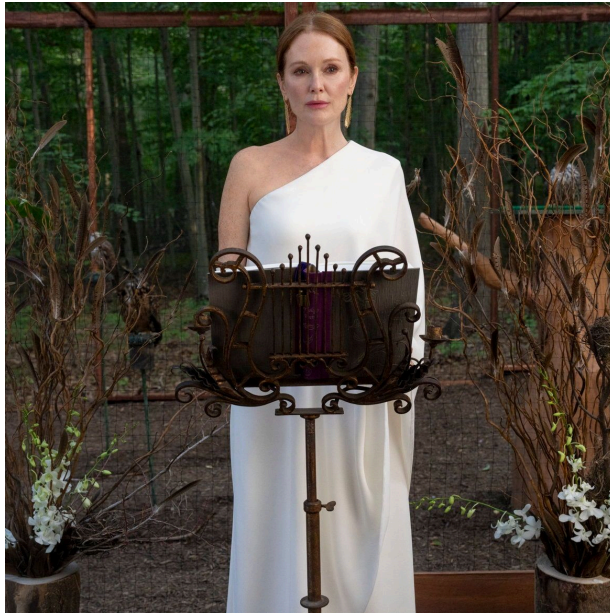
## On the edge

Euro area, manufacturing purchasing managers' index\*



\*Based on a survey of purchasing executives

Source: LSEG Workspace



Photograph: MACALL POLAY/NETFLIX

## The siren song of the super-rich

In Greek myth, sirens are beguiling creatures who lure sailors with song. In “Sirens”, a dark comedy released on Netflix on Thursday, the seductresses are a metaphor for America’s mega-rich. The mini-series follows Devon (Meghann Fahy) to an extravagant island estate where her sister (Milly Alcock) has developed a strange relationship with a bird-obsessed billionaire (Julianne Moore, pictured).

The rich lure in viewers, too. “Sirens” has echoes of previous television hits: the sunshine and NDAS of “The Perfect Couple”, a glitzy drama released last year; the yatter and yachts of “[The White Lotus](#)”, Mike White’s satirical anthology. Yet the new show’s pithy comic script and clever plot stop it feeling repetitive. And, rather than simply skewering the rich, Molly Smith Metzler, the show’s creator, probes troubled relationships between mothers, daughters and sisters. The setting’s opulence might entice viewers, but the show’s tale of seduction and power is what will keep them watching.





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.

**Thursday:** Which American painter was nicknamed “Jack the Dripper” for his style?

**Wednesday:** What was the name of the “paranoid android” in “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy” series?

*Humour is laughing at what you  
haven't got when you ought to  
have it.*

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***Langston Hughes***