

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Donald Trump asked America's attorney-general to release testimonies submitted to the grand jury trial of Jeffrey Epstein, as [controversy](#) surrounding the dead paedophile continued to engulf the president's administration. Earlier the *Wall Street Journal* published details of what it called a "bawdy" birthday message that Mr Trump allegedly sent to Epstein in 2003. The president rejected its authenticity and promised to sue.

America's House of Representatives passed legislation regulating **stablecoins**, cryptocurrency tokens [backed by safe assets](#). More than 100 Democrats joined Republicans to approve the bill, which Mr Trump is expected to sign into law. Tighter rules may encourage more people to invest in the technology. It is also a victory for crypto lobbying firms, which have found a [champion in Mr Trump](#).

Netflix reported better-than-expected revenue of \$11.1bn in the second quarter, around 16% higher than last year. The streaming giant also raised its full-year revenue forecast for 2025. Its release of the third season of "Squid Game", a South Korean dystopian drama, helped to swell subscriptions. [Netflix](#) has also benefitted from a weakening greenback, boosting overseas earnings in dollar terms.

Israel bombed the only Catholic church in **Gaza**, killing at least three people and wounding ten more. Among the injured was the parish priest, whom the late Pope Francis had [phoned daily](#) to speak to Gaza's Christians. Hundreds of people—Christians and Muslims—were sheltering in the church. Israel issued a rare apology for the strike, expressing “deep sorrow” for civilian casualties and building damage.

Uber reached a deal with Lucid, an electric-vehicle manufacturer, and Nuro, a tech firm, to launch a **robotaxi** fleet. The world's biggest ride-hailing company agreed to invest \$300m in Lucid and deploy 20,000 of its vehicles. Meanwhile, Waymo, a division of Alphabet, announced plans to more than double the area covered by its [robotaxis](#) in Austin, a city in Texas.

Britain's government said it would lower the voting age to 16. The proposed change will face scrutiny in Parliament. Reform UK, which leads in opinion polls but has just four MPS, opposes the idea. Only a handful of countries, including Austria and Brazil, have extended the franchise to 16-year-olds. Over-16s in Wales and Scotland can already vote in local elections.

Felix Baumgartner, an Austrian skydiver who once jumped to earth from the edge of space, died in a paragliding accident. Mr Baumgartner's stunt in 2012 won him worldwide fame, after he descended 24 miles from a balloon, at one point faster than the speed of sound. The 56-year-old “God of the Skies” said that “standing there on top of the world” had made him feel humble.

Figure of the day: 600,000, the number of people killed by cancer in America each year. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Getty Images

The world braces for Trump's tariff storm

Trade talks between Japan and America are intensifying ahead of a tariff deadline on August 1st. Donald Trump has warned that, without a deal, America will probably keep tariffs of 25% on Japanese imports. On Friday Ishiba Shigeru, Japan's prime minister, will meet Scott Bessent, America's treasury secretary. Mr Trump wants Japan to buy more American weapons, food and cars. But Japan has ruled out any deal that might harm its farmers or carmakers. Japan has proposed a tariff formula based on how much countries invest in America's car industry, a sector in which Japanese companies invested a lot. America is yet to bite.

Japan is not alone. Over the past fortnight Mr Trump has sent letters to more than 20 countries threatening high tariffs. Some are exploring joint retaliation; others are paying up. Indonesia avoided steeper tariffs by pledging to buy more than \$19bn of American energy and farm products. The clock is ticking. Mr Trump shows [no signs of chickening out](#).



Photograph: Reuters

Growing repression in El Salvador

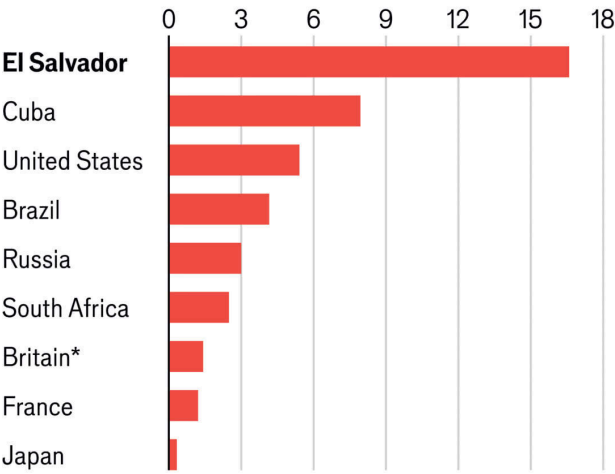
Cristosal, an NGO that promotes human rights in Central America, is shutting down its operations in El Salvador. The move comes as President Nayib Bukele [intensifies his crackdown on dissent](#). Ruth López, who led Cristosal's anti-corruption investigations, was arrested in May and remains in detention. She helped document abuses in the country's overcrowded prisons and had accused the government of misusing pandemic funds.

Mr Bukele remains popular, mainly because his government has greatly reduced gang violence. Human-rights defenders have criticised his method—mass incarceration without trial. Of late Mr Bukele has become more repressive. Ms López's arrest was a turning point: since it happened journalists, lawyers and activists, fearing similar treatment, have left the country.

Cristosal was one of the few independent organisations still monitoring the government. Its departure, and the exodus of journalists, will make it even harder to challenge El Salvador's authoritarian turn.

Slammer crammer

Prison population per 1,000 people
Selected countries, 2024 or latest available



*England and Wales
Source: World Prison Brief



Photograph: AP

America's housebuilding slowdown

America's economy is [growing despite Donald Trump's trade war](#). Even so, economists will scrutinise June's data on housing starts, out on Friday, for signs of weakness. In May new construction activity was at a five-year low. It probably didn't rise much in June.

High borrowing costs are one reason. Thirty-year fixed mortgage rates are around their highest level in two decades, hurting demand for new homes. Mr Trump has pressed the Federal Reserve to lower interest rates. But the president's tariffs have made the housing slowdown worse; America imports lots of construction materials. Deportations of workers who entered America illegally could also raise labour costs. Many housebuilders are not starting developments because of the uncertainty. Mr Trump will be hoping that the housebuilding slowdown is temporary—and not a sign of rot in the economy's foundations.



Photograph: Alamy

Peak migration politics in Bavaria

As a site for what is billed as a “summit”, it is hard to beat: on Friday the interior ministers of France, Poland, Austria, the Czech Republic and [Denmark](#) will convene on the Zugspitze in Bavaria, Germany’s highest mountain, at the invitation of their German counterpart, Alexander Dobrindt (pictured). The ministers’ “Zugspitze declaration” will propose reforms to the European Union’s rules on irregular migration, including easing the deportation of failed asylum-seekers.

Happily for the ministers, Europe’s asylum problem has become less acute. After a post-pandemic spike, asylum claims in the EU have been falling for almost two years. A toughened-up EU asylum pact is anyway due to take effect next year. Meanwhile, Mr Dobrindt may have some explaining to do: controls he has implemented at Germany’s borders have undermined the EU’s passport-free Schengen zone, and potentially violated domestic law. The Poles in particular are angry. Placating them may be an uphill struggle—even at 3,000 metres.



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 detective first appeared in the story “The Mysterious Affair At Styles”?

Thursday: Which martial arts star appears in “Bloodsport”, “Universal Soldier” and “Timecop”?



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:

Brenda Boere, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

Jaime Jean, Mexico City, Mexico

Andrew Narracott, London, Britain

They all gave the correct answers of junta, Anglo, Earth and [JPMorgan Chase](#).

*There are times when a leader
must move ahead of his flock.*

Nelson Mandela