

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



**America's Senate** narrowly voted to advance a bill that would cement Donald Trump's tax cuts and ramp up immigration and defence spending. Two Republicans voted against the controversial "Big Beautiful Bill"; several who earlier declined to back Mr Trump fell into line. **Senate** Republicans aim to pass the bill before July 4th, but it still faces significant hurdles.

The head of the United Nations' nuclear watchdog said that **Iran** could start producing enriched uranium again "in a matter of months". Rafael Grossi told CBS News that while it was clear American **strikes** against Iran's nuclear facilities had caused "severe damage", it was "not total". Mr Trump insists Iran's nuclear programme was "obliterated" and "set back decades".

**Russia** launched one of its biggest drone and missile **attacks** deep inside **Ukrainian** territory. A Ukrainian F-16 fighter jet was lost while helping to fend off the overnight assault; the pilot was killed after failing to eject. Ukraine's armed forces said that they had downed 436 drones and 38 missiles, while six apparently got through.

Israel's army told residents in Gaza City and several other neighbourhoods in northern **Gaza** to evacuate and head south. An

Israel Defence Forces spokesman said it was “operating with extreme force in these areas” and that operations were about to escalate. Hopes of a ceasefire may rest with Mr Trump, and his newly won leverage over Israel’s prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu.

Donald Trump claimed that he has found a group of “very wealthy people” to buy **TikTok**. A federal law requiring the Chinese social-media platform to be sold (to a non-Chinese buyer) or banned (on grounds of national security) was paused by Mr Trump soon after he took office. Mr Trump said he would reveal the group in about two weeks.

**Yoweri Museveni**, Uganda’s long-serving, authoritarian president, announced that he would contest next January’s election. If he wins (which is not really in doubt), the 80-year-old will extend his rule to over 50 years. His ruling party has twice changed the constitution to allow Mr Museveni more terms of office. Human-right groups have often accused him of using the security forces to vanquish opposition to his rule.

**Viktor Orban** accused the EU of orchestrating an LGBTQ+ Pride march in Budapest on Saturday that he described as “repulsive”. Offering no evidence, Hungary’s hard-right prime minister said the EU had encouraged opposition politicians to turn the event into one of the biggest anti-government demonstrations of his rule. An estimated 100,000 participants defied a police ban to join the demonstration.

**Word of the week:** Sato, Japan’s most common surname. Marriage laws require couples to share a name, raising fears that soon everyone could be a Sato. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Getty Images

## Another blow to Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement

Next year marks the 20th anniversary of the League of Social Democrats, one of Hong Kong's last pro-democracy parties. However, "we will not survive to see that day," the party said in a press release on Friday. It will formally announce its disbandment on Sunday.

The LSD is the latest casualty in [the government's war on democracy](#). Almost five years ago Beijing imposed a national-security law that smothered dissent following widespread pro-democracy protests. Since then scores of political and civil-society groups have been forced to dissolve. In February the Democratic Party—the city's oldest and largest pro-democracy party—said it would wind down; the Civic Party did so in 2023. Like all opposition groups the LSD was in effect barred from politics in 2021. But it continued to show small acts of defiance—including public commemoration of the Tiananmen Square massacre, despite it being banned. Now even those will be snuffed out.



Photograph: Getty Images

## India cools on a trade pact with America

India was once thought to be a front-runner to sign an “interim” deal with America to shield it from Donald Trump’s reciprocal tariffs, which were introduced in April before being paused for 90 days. But as the deadline of July 9th approaches, [confidence is fading](#). Talks in Delhi this month reportedly ended in deadlock. America’s demands are maximalist: deep tariff cuts, lowering other barriers to trade in politically sensitive sectors like agriculture, and looser foreign-investment and data rules.

For India’s prime minister, Narendra Modi, accepting such terms risks angering powerful lobbies at home. They include farming, which employs almost half of India’s workforce; India’s business tycoons, who fear foreign competition; and Mr Modi’s Hindu-nationalist patrons, who want India to respond to Mr Trump’s threat by doubling down on protectionism. Meanwhile some suspect Mr Trump is bluffing about raising levies again on July 9th. For now, India will probably drag its heels.



Photograph: Getty Images

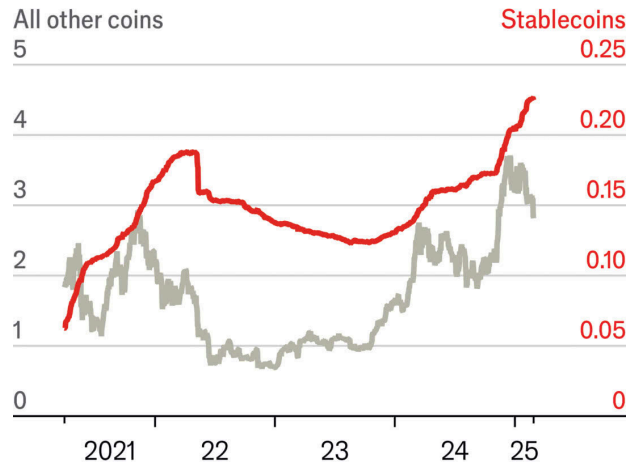
## Central bankers v stablecoins

The Bank for International Settlements, the central bankers' bank, releases its annual report on Sunday. One chapter, released early, has already garnered a lot of attention for its criticism of stablecoins, cryptocurrencies pegged to a stable asset, usually the dollar. The BIS argues that they are a poor substitute for real money.

In developing countries, where local currencies are weak and dollars are scarce, [stablecoins have boomed](#). They offer a fast, cheap way to send remittances and store value in a currency that holds up better than the local one. In Turkey stablecoin purchases were worth more than 4% of GDP in the year to March 2024. But growing adoption brings risks, warns the BIS. If stablecoins replace domestic money they could limit central banks' control over the economy. Criminals are avid users. And stablecoins can fail in times of economic stress. If confidence in a major issuer like Tether falters, the effects would ripple well beyond crypto markets.

## The divide

Cryptocurrencies, total market capitalisation, \$trn



Sources: DefiLlama; CoinGecko



Photograph: Center for Whale Research, NMFS NOAA Permit 27038

## How Orcas stay smooth

Many animals use rocks and sticks as tools. A few go further, forging objects into more complex instruments like spears, blades and hooks. Until now, this elite club was thought to consist only of land animals like chimpanzees, capuchin monkeys and New Caledonian crows. New research suggests orcas deserve a place, too.

While observing the [population of resident orcas](#) near Seattle, Michael Weiss, of the Centre for Whale Research in Washington, noticed a curious behaviour: the whales would tear stems from kelp and pass them to one another, rolling them gently across their bodies.

Orcas have been seen playing games with objects before, but Dr Weiss argues in *Current Biology*, a journal, that something else is going on. He believes that the orcas are using the kelp stems to remove encrusting animals that irritate their skin. Cosmetic exfoliation was first recorded in ancient Egypt. But orcas, it seems, got there first.





Photograph: Alamy

## **A romantic classic returns to cinemas**

When Wong Kar-wai's "In the Mood for Love" was released in 2000, it became an instant classic. It won a slew of awards. Tony Leung became the first Hong Kong actor to receive the best-actor award in Cannes. The film returns to cinemas in Britain and America this weekend, its 25th anniversary.

Its premise is simple: a man and a woman move into neighbouring apartments on the same day in 1962, and discover that their spouses are having an affair. They form a bond, but never consummate their relationship. The tension between what the characters feel and what they do creates one of the most beautiful, romantic films ever made. Mr Leung and Maggie Cheung deliver stylish, restrained performances, and the cinematography is subtle and elegant. Shake out your grey flannel suits and silk dresses, and get ready for a good cry.





Illustration: The Economist

## Mini crossword

We now publish an interactive edition of our crossword twice a week, allowing you to enter and check the answers, and see explanations, instantly. Try it [here](#). Or, if you prefer to do things the old-fashioned way, use the grid below.

Our crossword has two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers, all of which feature in articles in this week's edition of *The Economist*:

### Cryptic

*1 across* Ex-leader trapped in labyrinth, as in antiquity (6)

*2 across* Country I thought a little yucky, initially (5)

*3 across* The male principle, uncrowned, won city in Myanmar (6)

*1 down* A wish for the setter, perhaps: cheerful and strangely dry habit (5,8)

### Factual

*1 across* Bangladesh's despotic former ruler (6)

*2 across* Where the ultra-rich have begun relocating (5)

3 across Where Aung Sang Suu Kyi spent her periods of house arrest (6)

1 down What legal same-sex marriage is not having in America (5,8)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am GMT on Monday to [\[email protected\]](#). We will pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners in next week's edition.

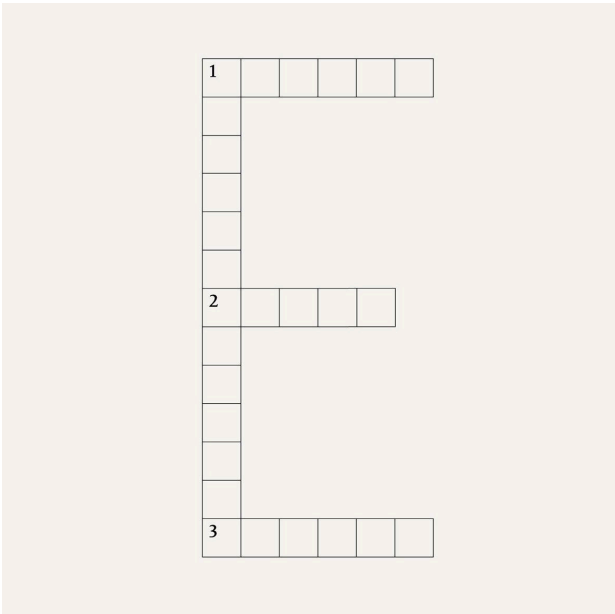


Image: .



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:

**Raymond Martin**, Tampa, Florida, America

**Teresa Stewart**, Nashville, Tennessee, America

**Panagiotis Saragiotis**, Angelochori, Greece

They all gave the correct answers of: a flood, search engines, Doris Day, a foot and the Flash. The theme is they are all types of light: floodlight, searchlight, daylight, footlight and flashlight.

The questions were:

**Monday:** Chapters 6 to 9 of Genesis describe which type of catastrophe?

**Tuesday:** DuckDuckGo and Startpage are types of what kind of software programme?

**Wednesday:** Which actress starred alongside Rock Hudson in a series of comedies (such as Pillow Talk) in the late 1950s and early 1960s?

**Thursday:** Which imperial measurement is equal to 0.3048 metres?

**Friday:** Ezra Miller starred as which DC action hero?

*Man is born free, and everywhere  
he is in chains*

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***Jean-Jacques Rousseau***