

Catch up: turmoil in Venezuela; protesters storm Israeli base



Protests broke out across **Venezuela** after [Nicolás Maduro](#), the country's autocratic ruler, claimed an implausible presidential-election victory. By any reckoning but the regime's, Edmundo González trounced Mr Maduro. [María Corina Machado](#), the main opposition leader, was barred from standing. But Ms Machado rallied round Mr González, who on Monday claimed to possess voting tally sheets that "demonstrate our victory".

Israeli protesters stormed an army base near Beersheba, a city in the south of the country, in support of soldiers who are accused of severely abusing a Palestinian prisoner. The protesters were joined by [far-right MPs](#) from Israel's governing coalition. Herzi Halevi, the head of Israel's armed forces, said the protests were "extremely serious and against the law".

Giorgia Meloni, Italy's prime minister, pledged to "relaunch" her country's ties with China, after meeting [Xi Jinping](#), China's ruler, in Beijing. Italy left the Belt and Road initiative, China's overseas investment programme, in December. Ms Meloni, on her first visit

to [China](#) since taking office two years ago, described her host as an “important interlocutor” and discussed the war in Ukraine with Mr Xi.

Emmanuel Macron said that **France** recognised **Morocco’s** claim to the disputed territory of [Western Sahara](#). In a letter to Morocco’s king, Mohammed VI, the French president said that delivering “autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty” could resolve the territory’s status. Morocco and the Polisario Front, a pro-independence group, have fought over Western Sahara since the end of Spanish rule in 1975.

BP, a **British oil giant**, raised its dividend after announcing profits of around \$2.8bn in the second quarter of 2024, up almost \$200m from the same quarter in 2023. BP said the profits came in part from “lower taxation” and despite “significantly lower” refining margins. [Big oil’s coffers](#) have grown in recent years as a result of high energy prices.

In a speech in Austin, Texas, **Joe Biden** outlined his plans to reform the Supreme Court after its ruling that Donald Trump and other former American presidents are largely [immune from prosecution](#). Mr Biden said “we are a nation of laws, not kings and dictators”. His proposed measures include term limits for justices and a constitutional amendment scrapping presidential immunity. The reforms are unlikely to pass the House of Representatives.

The men’s triathlon event at the **Olympic Games** in Paris was postponed after pollution levels in the [River Seine](#) were found to be unsafe. The past two days of training in the river were also cancelled after heavy rain caused sewer systems to overflow. France has spent some €1.4bn (\$1.5bn) on improving infrastructure to make the Seine safe for swimming.

Figure of the day: \$105bn, the total value of chips and other AI equipment that Nvidia is expected to sell this year. [Read the full](#)

story.

In the run-up to America's presidential election, we've launched [The US in brief](#)—a daily update to help you keep on top of the political stories that matter. [Sign up here](#) to receive it as a newsletter, each weekday, in your inbox.

A reboot for Spain's battered judiciary



On Tuesday the 20 members of the General Council of the Judiciary, which appoints [Spain's judges](#), will choose their new president. That is no longer a routine matter. The council, whose membership must be approved by a three-fifths majority of parliament, has become a political prize. For five years the opposition People's Party blocked its renewal. It took the mediation of the European Commission to strike a deal in June between the PP and the governing Socialists. They each proposed ten names for a combined list.

The new council has work to do to restore the judiciary's reputation. The opposition thinks that a controversial amnesty for Catalan separatists pushed through by Pedro Sánchez, the prime minister, undermines the rule of law. The separatists and the Socialists call the accusations against them “lawfare”. Spain is not Hungary, whose populist leader, Viktor Orban, controls the courts. But the council will need to prove it is not swayed by the politicians.

Will Microsoft's AI strategy pay off?



Technology companies have had a rough week. After disappointing earnings from Alphabet and Tesla on July 23rd, investors in tech firms started to fret about whether investments in artificial intelligence will pay off. The next day the tech-heavy NASDAQ composite index fell by 4%, its biggest one-day drop since 2022.

On Tuesday all eyes will turn to [Microsoft](#), which reports its quarterly earnings. The software giant is betting big on AI—which has helped to propel its share price upward by 77% since the start of 2023. But the initial costs are enormous. Capital spending is expected to jump by a fifth in the next year to \$53bn, much of which will be spent on AI. During its last earnings call in April Microsoft said that the technology had helped to boost sales from its cloud-computing business by roughly \$1bn. Investors will be watching for further promising signs this time.

America's strategy in the Philippines



In Manila on Tuesday, the [Philippine](#) foreign and defence ministers held joint talks with their American counterparts. America is strengthening its network of alliances in Asia to counter China's rising military power and its "grey-zone" intimidation of neighbours.

The American defence secretary, Lloyd Austin, and secretary of state, Antony Blinken, announced \$500m in military aid and a further \$128m to upgrade Philippine bases to which American forces now have access. The American duo held equivalent talks in Tokyo on Sunday, announcing plans to create a warfighting American military command in Japan. They will also meet their Australian counterparts next week.

President Joe Biden's administration has been creating a "lattice-work" of new security arrangements on top of old alliances in Asia. That will reassure the Philippines and Japan that America is, for now, committed to their security. But that may well change if Donald Trump is elected president.

Europe's uneven growth



Economic growth in Europe stalled last year but [picked up again](#) during the first quarter of 2024. On Tuesday came news that growth continued at the same pace. Euro-zone GDP expanded by 0.3% in the three months through June, largely thanks to better-than-expected growth in France and Spain.

Economists had been worried. In July the euro zone's services and manufacturing sectors expanded at the lowest pace in five months, according to a composite index based on a survey by S&P Global, a research firm. In Germany the index was below 50, which signals a contraction. The data published on Tuesday showed that the German economy shrunk by 0.1% in the second quarter compared with the previous one.

The figures will give the EU's monetary policymakers something to ponder before they next meet in September. The European Central Bank cut interest rates from 4% to 3.75% in June and left them unchanged in July. The challenge will be to set rates at a level that works for both fast- and slow-growing countries in the euro zone.

West Side BAAND-Aid



The fourth annual edition of the BAAND Together Dance Festival begins on Tuesday at New York City's Lincoln Centre. Over five days the city's leading companies will perform in sequence, each showcasing a different style of ballet. The joint extravaganza will involve five companies: the Ballet Hispánico, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, the American Ballet Theatre, the New York City Ballet, and the Dance Theatre of Harlem. The idea is to display both their spectacular talents and the cultural diversity of a city that embraces both modern and classical dance.

The inspiration for a joint performance came during the covid-19 pandemic, when idled artistic directors would meet to cheer each other up. The choreography will be by names well-known in the industry: George Balanchine, Hans van Manen, William Forsythe, and Annabelle Lopez Ochoa. But the work of up-and-coming choreographers, such as Brady Farrar, known for a stint on "Dance Moms", a TV show, will feature too.

Daily quiz



The Economist

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 GMT on Friday to QuizEspresso@economist.com. We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Tuesday: In which Florida resort did Ernest Hemingway own a house, which is now a museum to his memory?

Monday: Who is the only man to win 100m and 200m running gold medals at three consecutive Olympics?

\$105bn

The total value of chips and other AI equipment that Nvidia is expected to sell this year.

Read the full story.

Laws are like sausages, it is better not to see them being made.

Otto von Bismarck