

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

Donald Trump said he would lift American sanctions on **Syria** to give it “a chance at greatness”. Western sanctions were introduced to isolate **Bashar al-Assad**, Syria’s fallen dictator, and have **hobbled** the new government’s attempts to reconnect the country to the global economy. Mr Trump met Ahmed al-Sharaa, Syria’s president, in Saudi Arabia. Earlier Mr Trump signed a “strategic economic partnership” worth \$600bn with Muhammad bin Salman, Saudi Arabia’s de facto ruler.

Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine’s president, said he would travel to Turkey for **peace talks** with **Russia** on Thursday even if Vladimir Putin does not join. Mr Zelensky warned that the Russian president’s absence would mean “that he does not want to end the war”. Mr Putin had called for **the negotiations** over the weekend, but he has yet to say whether he will attend.

Fidesz, **Hungary’s** ruling party, introduced a bill in parliament that could curb donations to non-governmental organisations accused of “threatening Hungary’s sovereignty” and freeze their assets. Viktor Orban, Hungary’s prime minister and Fidesz’s leader, is trying to **stifle opposition** ahead of next year’s elections. Fidesz was recently overtaken in the polls by **Tisza**, an anti-corruption party.

China criticised the **recent trade deal** between **America** and **Britain**, suggesting it was to the “detriment” of China’s interests. The agreement includes strict security requirements for Britain’s steel and pharmaceuticals industries, which could affect Chinese products in British supply chains. Speaking to the *Financial Times*, China’s foreign ministry said the “basic principle” in any trade deal is not to target other countries.

Cyril Ramaphosa angrily denounced a group of 59 white **South Africans** who left to resettle in America as “cowards”. Donald Trump [granted them refugee status](#), alleging that they faced racial discrimination in their own country. But South Africa’s president argued that they left because they were not “favourably disposed” towards efforts to reverse the inequities of apartheid.

Andrew Witty, the boss of **UnitedHealth**, resigned after the firm suspended its annual forecast because of rising medical costs. It has been a difficult few months for America’s biggest private health insurer, and not only financially. In December Brian Thompson, a senior executive, was [killed](#) by a gunman in New York. Mr Witty cited “personal reasons” for his stepping down. UnitedHealth’s shares fell to a four-year low.

José Mujica, the president of **Uruguay** from 2010 to 2015, died aged 89. A former left-wing guerilla, he spent much of the 1970s and 1980s in prison; he was released in 1985, when military rule ended. As president, Mr Mujica lived in a humble farmhouse instead of the presidential palace and drove a Volkswagen Beetle. His political protégé, [Yamandú Orsi](#), became president in March.

Figure of the day: 17%, the proportion of British travellers going on holiday by themselves in 2024, up from 6% in 2011. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Getty Images

Could Ukraine get Taurus missiles?

The meeting of NATO members' most senior military officers in Brussels on Wednesday will focus on strengthening deterrence against Russian aggression and on continuing support for Ukraine. General Chris Cavoli, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe (a role reserved for Americans), is expected to update the situation report he recently gave to a Senate committee. General Cavoli said that [Ukrainian defensive capabilities](#) had improved and that this year Russia has suffered extraordinary losses for minimal territorial gains. But he warned that Ukraine remains dependent on external support.

Although the Trump administration last week approved the transfer of American-made weapons from Germany to Ukraine, nobody expects Donald Trump to ask Congress for a new military-aid package. However, on Saturday Germany's new chancellor, Friedrich Merz, announced that Germany would stop disclosing arms supplies to Ukraine to avoid tipping off the Russians. That suggests that if Russia ignores demands for a ceasefire, Ukraine could soon receive the powerful Taurus cruise missiles that the previous chancellor had refused to send.



Photograph: Alamy

France's prime minister faces abuse cover-up allegations

France's centrist prime minister, [François Bayrou](#), has passed a budget and outlasted his short-lived predecessor, Michel Barnier, in the job. On Wednesday he faces a different test when he appears before a parliamentary inquiry into violence in French schools. It will include questions about abuse at Notre-Dame de Bétharram, a private Catholic school near Pau, where Mr Bayrou has long taken part in local politics. Lawmakers want to know whether he knew about the abuse and did not respond.

Last month Mr Bayrou's adult daughter, Hélène Perlant, said that she was among the pupils beaten by a priest at the school, but stressed that she never told her father. Two of the prime minister's other children also went to the school. Some 200 legal complaints about Notre-Dame de Bétharram have now been filed, covering the period from 1957 to 2004; roughly half involve sexual assault. He has denied ever being told about any violence or sexual abuse at the school.



Photograph: Alamy

Argentina's tough trade-offs to tame inflation

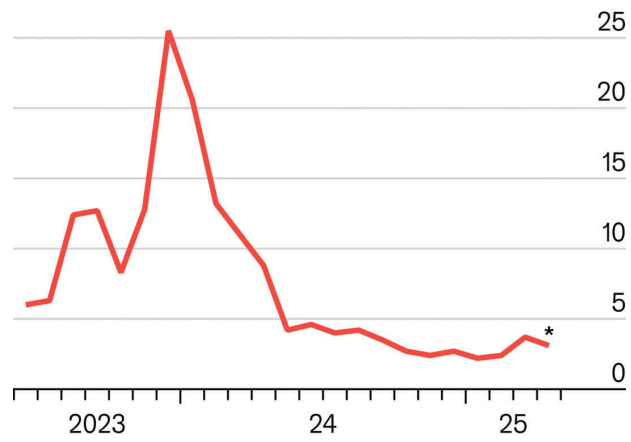
On Wednesday [Argentina](#) releases April's inflation data, the first report since the country partially floated the currency, adopting an exchange rate of between 1,000 and 1,400 pesos to the dollar. Analysts forecast a drop to 3.2% month on month.

Inflation has slowed mainly because the peso has depreciated less than expected. The government is trying to strengthen it. Interest rates in pesos are high, encouraging a carry trade, when people buy pesos to profit from high rates before eventually switching back to dollars. And the central bank has said it will not buy dollars until the exchange rate hits 1,000.

But because the peso remains historically strong, this could risk a later depreciation when conditions are worse. And the central bank is not accumulating net reserves. It needs almost \$5bn by mid-June to meet the terms of the IMF loan issued in April. The government may instead borrow dollars to do so.

Peso setting

Argentina, consumer prices,
% increase on previous month



Source: LSEG Workspace

*Forecast



Photograph: Getty Images

Hope for a ceasefire in Gaza

There seems a glimmer of hope for a ceasefire in [Gaza](#). First came Sunday's surprise announcement that Hamas would release Edan Alexander, a dual citizen of America and Israel. The next day Donald Trump set off on a four-day tour of the Middle East, where Arab leaders will urge him to end the war. On Tuesday Israel sent negotiators to Qatar to discuss a possible deal. Mr Trump will arrive there on Wednesday night.

The question, as ever, is whether America's president is willing to press Binyamin Netanyahu. Israel's prime minister says he might accept a brief truce to free more hostages, but not a permanent end to the war. But most Israelis want the fighting to end. The army will struggle to mobilise reservists for an expanded offensive. After two and a half months of Israeli blockade, people in Gaza are going hungry. If there was ever a moment for Mr Trump to strong-arm Mr Netanyahu, this is it.



Photograph: Julia Fullerton-Batten

London's big photography show returns

This week Photo London returns to Somerset House to mark its tenth anniversary. A special exhibition, *London Lives*, has been curated by Francis Hodgson, a British photography critic. Among the highlights is work by Julia Fullerton-Batten, whose painterly portraits of London life set the tone for the show. The exhibition brings together around 30 of the city's leading artists, including David Bailey, Mary McCartney (Sir Paul McCartney's daughter) and Nick Turpin—whose “On the Night Bus” series captures Londoners in fleeting nocturnal moments.

Michael Benson and Fariba Farshad, the founders of the fair, say they are excited to welcome “a strong group of international galleries”, including several that have been exhibiting since Photo London began. This year also marks the 25th anniversary of Somerset House, built in the 18th and 19th centuries, as a cultural institution. Once housing the central register for births, marriages and deaths—it is now home to one of Britain's largest artistic communities.



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 GMT on Friday to [\[email protected\]](#). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Wednesday: Roger Ailes was the long-term head of which cable news network?

Tuesday: What was the last film made by James Dean before he was killed in a car crash?

*The most violent element in
society is ignorance.*

Emma Goldman