

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Reuters

As debate time ended for Donald Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill", the president's [tax-cutting package](#) moved to a special session known as **vote-a-rama**. Amendments proposed by senators are voted on in succession. Mr Trump's bill is on thin ice. Republicans can only lose the support of three Senators if the bill is to pass the Senate, and appear to have already lost two.

The White House said that Mr Trump will sign an executive order lifting sanctions on **Syria**. The president [first announced](#) that he would roll them back in May, and issued a 180-day waiver temporarily allowing business with Syria's government. With his executive order, he will be able to terminate some sanctions. Repealing the most restrictive will take an act of Congress.

Mr Trump took to letter-writing to again demand that **Jerome Powell**, the chair of the Federal Reserve, [lower interest rates](#). In a note written on top of a chart displaying the rates of other countries, the president accused Mr Powell of costing America "a fortune". Mr Trump has [repeatedly pressured Mr Powell](#), whose term as chair ends next year, to step down.

Mark Zuckerberg said **Meta** would create a new division focused on "superintelligence", Bloomberg reported. **Alexandr Wang**, an

AI wunderkind in whose startup Meta invested \$14bn this month, will lead it. Mr Zuckerberg also announced [new recruits](#) poached from rivals including OpenAI and Google. In an internal memo he reportedly told employees, with trademark diffidence, “this will be the beginning of a new era for humanity.”

Inflation in **Germany** slowed to an annual rate of 2% in June, unexpectedly matching the European Central Bank’s target inflation rate. The euro-zone will release figures on Tuesday. Meanwhile, in the first review of its [policy strategy](#) since 2021 the ECB warned of an increasingly uncertain and volatile inflation environment.

**Russia’s** foreign ministry summoned Rakhman Mustafayev, the Azerbaijani ambassador, over the “unfriendly actions” of his government. Tensions between the countries, which have been poor since the end of last year, have escalated in recent days. Azerbaijan’s government cancelled several Russian cultural events in the country, after accusing Russia of the extrajudicial killing of two Azerbaijani men in Yekaterinburg, a city in Russia.

**China’s** Communist Party surpassed 100m members. Its ranks had been growing more slowly in recent years as Xi Jinping, China’s leader, [ousted slackers](#) who showed a “lack of revolutionary spirit”. That has not put off many candidates: the party is often seen as a way to get ahead, and competition to join remains fierce. Mr Xi did not succeed until his tenth attempt.

***Correction:*** *Yesterday’s figure of the day misstated the sports franchise which is being sold for \$10bn. It is the LA Lakers. Sorry for the error.*

**Figure of the day:** 14%, the proportion of young Americans who say they would consider selling content, usually adult, on OnlyFans. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Getty Images

## The Quad squad meets

On Tuesday Marco Rubio, America's secretary of state, hosts counterparts from India, Japan and Australia. It will be an opportunity for America to turn its attention to Asia and the contest with China, which is supposed to be a higher priority than wars in Europe and the Middle East. The “Quad” partnership seeks to draw India closer to America's allies in Asia, though India pursues “multi-alignment” (for example, it is friendly with Russia and Iran). The ministers will prepare for a summit of their respective leaders in Delhi this year.

They will have much to discuss besides. India is irritated by America's boast that it brokered a halt to its fighting with Pakistan in June. Australia is nervous about the Pentagon's review of the AUKUS deal on nuclear-powered submarines and other weapons. Japan is irked by pressure from America to raise defence spending. All worry about America's threats of swingeing tariffs. The guests also want to know about Mr Rubio's status: how long can he act as both secretary of state and national security adviser?



Photograph: Getty Images

## Is Russia's offensive in Ukraine faltering?

While the world's gaze was turned to the Middle East, Russia pushed on with its summer offensive against Ukraine, albeit with mixed results. Last week Ukraine's most senior commander, Oleksandr Syrsky, claimed that after two months the offensive was "faltering" and that attempts to create a buffer zone around the north-eastern territory of Sumy were "collapsing". He said Russia had failed to take the logistical hub of Pokrovsk, where it has concentrated about 110,000 troops.

Increasingly, Russian attacks are carried out by soldiers on motorbikes attempting to cause havoc behind Ukrainian lines. Few get through, most being picked off by [nimble drones](#). But Ukraine estimates that Russia is producing 66% more ballistic missiles than a year ago and that it is aiming to increase one-way attack drone production from 2,000 to 5,000 a month. On Sunday, Russia launched more than 500 aerial weapons at Ukrainian cities in its largest attack of the war. Such barrages are becoming more frequent—and deadly.



Photograph: Getty Images

## **The euro zone's inflation summit**

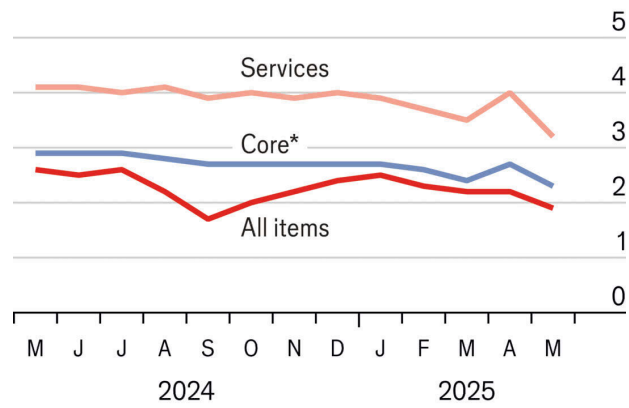
The European Central Bank's top brass, accompanied by a handful of journalists, academics and financial-market analysts, gather in Portugal's high-perched town of Sintra this week for their annual conference. Panels will discuss labour markets, trade and monetary policy. But the participants will also debate whether inflation will make a comeback in Europe, prompted by new euro-zone figures due on Tuesday.

Last week France reported a surprise uptick in its annual inflation rate in June to 0.8%. That alone is not worrying: the ECB's target is 2%. But service prices rose by 2.4% from last year, up from 2.1% previously in May. In Spain annualised core inflation accelerated to 2.2% in June. Meanwhile, it fell slightly to 2.7% in Germany, from 2.8% the previous month. Higher euro-zone figures would cast doubt on the ECB's next, and possibly final, rate cut in this cycle, much anticipated by the markets. That's plenty to chew over at lunch.

## Spikes and hikes

### Euro area, consumer prices

% increase on a year earlier



\*Excludes energy, food, alcohol and tobacco

Source: LSEG Workspace



Photograph: Getty Images

## Toppling the Shinawatras

Two court cases on Tuesday could bring down the family that has governed Thailand on and off for the last quarter of a century. The constitutional court will consider a petition to remove Paetongtarn Shinawatra, the 38-year-old prime minister, after less than [a year in office](#). She stands accused of misconduct for criticising her generals in a leaked phone call with Hun Sen, the former prime minister of Cambodia, and for calling him “uncle”. The two countries are having one of their occasional border disputes.

Ms Paetongtarn’s father will be in court, too, to answer charges of insulting the monarchy in an interview in 2015. If convicted, Thaksin Shinawatra could face up to 15 years in jail. Politics, not the law, will drive both verdicts. If conservative forces in the army and palace decide that they have had enough of the Shinawatra family’s populist and grandstanding, they are sure to be convicted.





Photograph: Getty Images

## Britain's government hands out concessions

Sir Keir Starmer will face the biggest rebellion of his career on Tuesday. The House of Commons will vote on the second reading of the Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment Bill, a piece of legislation intended to curb the surging [cost of Britain's benefits](#) by cutting payments to sick and disabled people. Sir Keir has already gutted the bill after more than 120 of his [MPS](#) turned [against him](#) last week, reducing the planned cuts from £5.5bn to £2.5bn by 2029–30.

The bill is now expected to pass the Commons, though with many [MPS](#) still voting against the cuts to future claimants. That makes for a miserable first anniversary for the government, which since its election victory on July 4th 2024 has disappointed its supporters, with public satisfaction nearing a record low for any modern Labour administration, according to a survey published by Ipsos last week. No wonder it has fallen behind Nigel Farage's Reform [UK](#) party in the polls.





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.

**Tuesday:** Plymouth, Puget and Roanoke are all examples of which geographical feature?

**Monday:** Horology is the study of what?

*Music is a hidden arithmetic  
exercise of the soul, which does  
not know that it is counting.*

---

***Gottfried Leibniz***