

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Getty Images

Consumer spending in **America** unexpectedly fell in May by 0.1% compared to April. Meanwhile the personal-consumption expenditures index, the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation measure, rose by 2.3% year on year, despite fears inflation would sharply increase as a result of [Donald Trump's trade war](#). The S&P 500 index soared to an all-time high, as investors were buoyed by the prospect of rate cuts.

Israel blocked aid going into northern Gaza, after Binyamin Netanyahu accused Hamas of stealing food. Local clan leaders claimed that armed men who had been seen on the aid trucks were protecting the supplies. Aid is [still arriving](#) in the south. On Thursday Pedro Sánchez, Spain's prime minister, called the situation in Gaza a "genocide"—the strongest accusation yet by a European leader.

Chinese and **American** officials revealed new details of a trade agreement signed on Wednesday, including measures to speed up exports of critical minerals. The deal comes ahead of a July 9th deadline, when America's higher "reciprocal" tariffs are set to return; the country is rushing to secure deals with the EU, Japan and [India](#).

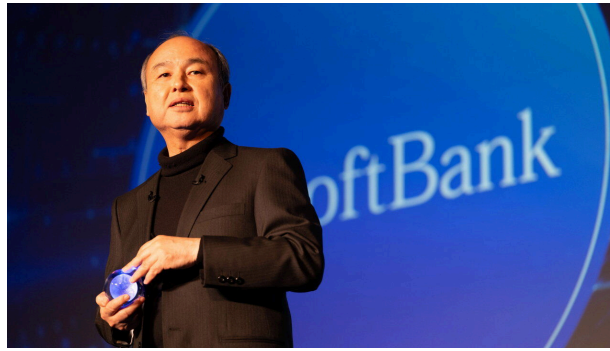
Sir Keir Starmer, **Britain's** prime minister, came to an agreement with rebels within his party over planned welfare cuts. Some 120 Labour MPs had threatened to vote against a reduction in disability benefits. The cuts will now only affect future claimants, not current ones. Sir Keir, who swept to power a year ago, has lurched from [crisis to crisis](#).

Profits at **China's** industrial firms plunged by 9.1% in May from a year earlier, the steepest decline since October, according to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics. Carmakers saw a drop of 12% from January to May as American tariffs hit. Weak consumer demand and fierce competition among firms have been [pushing prices down](#).

Novo Nordisk said it would begin a partnership with **WeightWatchers** to sell Wegovy, its weight-loss jab. The deal could help WeightWatchers compete with booming weight-loss drugs—and help Novo [reach American consumers](#). This week the Danish pharmaceutical firm terminated a separate collaboration with Hims & Hers, an American online pharmacy, accusing it of selling knock-off versions of the injection.

Dame Anna Wintour stepped down as the editor-in-chief of **American Vogue** after 37 years in charge. She will remain at Condé Nast, the company that owns the fashion magazine, to oversee its global editions. The British-born fashion mogul was made a dame by Queen Elizabeth in 2017. She has organised the Met Gala since 1995.

Figure of the day: \$4.3bn, the value of all the illegal gold that Peru exported last year, according to the Peruvian Institute of Economics. [Read the full story](#).



Photograph: Alamy

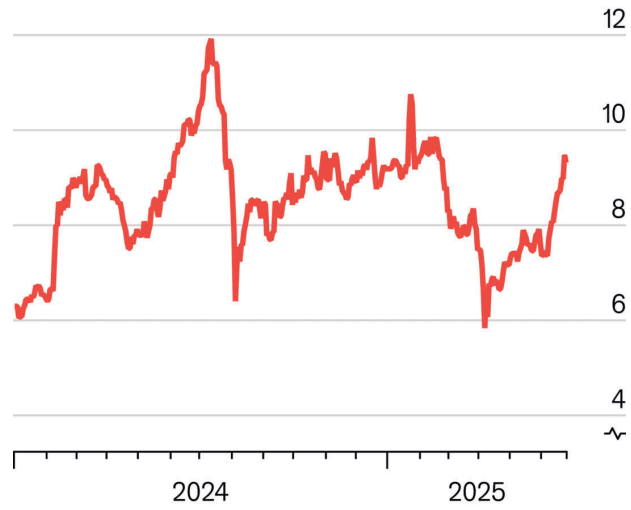
SoftBank dreams big

SoftBank Group held its annual shareholder meeting on Friday. Masayoshi Son, the firm's founder, focused heavily on artificial intelligence. Earlier this year the Japanese conglomerate announced a joint venture with OpenAI, an American firm, to bring advanced AI tools to Japanese companies. It is also backing "Stargate", a \$500bn AI-infrastructure project in America, alongside OpenAI and two other American firms, MGX and Oracle.

In May he suggested that the governments of America and Japan should establish a joint sovereign-wealth fund to invest in semiconductor plants and data centres, a scheme he has reportedly discussed with senior officials. Mr Son is keen to forge deeper ties with America: he (and other tech executives) stood beside Donald Trump at his inauguration in January. SoftBank's boss is known for making **bets that are bold**, but not always successful. At the AGM, he said he was considering handing over his position to someone else in the group. Before he does, he seems determined to make an impact with AI.

Swings of fortune

SoftBank Group, share price, ¥'000



Source: LSEG Workspace



Photograph: Reuters

SCOTUS's big last day

On Friday America's Supreme Court wraps up a tumultuous term by releasing decisions in six consequential cases. Culture-war issues dominate. The justices will decide whether Texas and 23 other states can require adults to verify their age [before viewing online porn](#). They will also rule on whether the Affordable Care Act, which overhauled American health care, must continue covering a long list of preventative services. And they will decide whether parents can shield their children from LGBT-themed books in public schools.

Another case could decide the number of majority-black (and thus Democratic-leaning) districts in [Louisiana's congressional map](#). *FCC v Consumers' Research* could reshape how America funds rural broadband. And in *Trump v CASA* the justices will weigh in on Donald Trump's attempt to [rescind birthright citizenship](#) for babies born to undocumented immigrants—as well as on nationwide injunctions, the tool lower-court judges have used to stymie many of Mr Trump's policies.

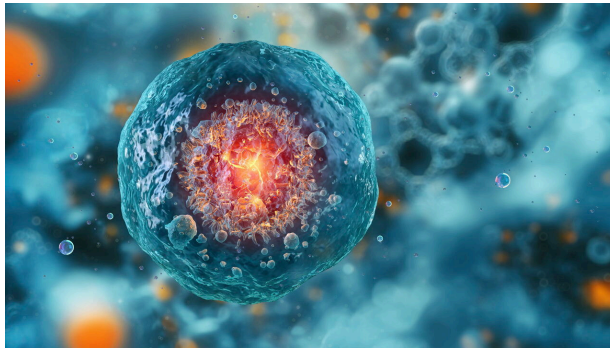


Photograph: AFP

A fragile deal in Congo

Foreign ministers from the Democratic Republic of Congo and [Rwanda](#) are due to sign a deal in Washington on Friday which could end a [devastating conflict](#) that threatened to become a regional war. Rwanda-backed M23 rebels launched an offensive in eastern Congo in late 2021, capturing swathes of territory. Fighting escalated in January, days after Donald Trump's inauguration, when the rebels, supported by Rwandan troops, captured Goma, the largest city in eastern Congo. They seized another big city, Bukavu, the following month.

The Trump administration, keen to secure a minerals agreement with Congo, has pushed hard to end the fighting. The sides reached the deal after months of secret talks. But big questions remain. Congo's army is too weak to hold territory. And Rwanda is unlikely to withdraw its troops unless it receives something in return. Even if it does, the M23 rebels, who claim to act independently, may not follow.



Photograph: Getty Images

Can AI solve one of biology's biggest problems?

The Arc Institute, a non-profit research institute in California, has launched a competition to encourage the use of [artificial intelligence](#) to solve one of biology's biggest problems. The Virtual Cell Challenge seeks to improve virtual-cell models, which are machine-learning tools that predict the behaviour of cells in response to drugs, immune signals or gene changes. These models are generating excitement among techies and scientists because they could help discover treatments for complex diseases. The competition is sponsored by prominent firms, including Nvidia and 10x Genomics.

Contestants will use the Arc Institute's virtual-cell model, [STATE](#), released this week, to create an AI model that predicts how cells will respond to genetic perturbations (changes to their DNA). The goal is to foster innovation, build better datasets and set benchmarks to measure progress. The competition will run annually and winners will be announced in December.



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.

Friday: Ezra Miller starred as which DC action hero?

Thursday: Which imperial measurement is equal to 0.3048 metres?



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:

Anuradha Bhasin, New Delhi, India

Jane Ferreira, São Paulo, Brazil

Tumisang Gololo, Johannesburg, South Africa

They all gave the correct answers of [civil](#), [Kenya](#), [yimby](#) and [Chuck Berry](#).

*Man is a creation of desire, not a
creation of need.*

Gaston Bachelard