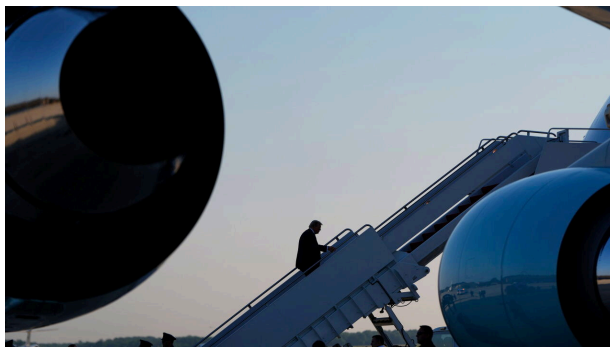


# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AP

**Donald Trump** said America won't do any business with Russia until its war with Ukraine is "settled". The American president made the comments en route to Alaska, where he will meet **Vladimir Putin** for [a crucial summit](#). Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's president, said his country was "counting on America". He was not invited to the talks.

Naim Qassem, the leader of **Hizbullah**, said the Iranian-backed militia was prepared to fight against [efforts to disarm it](#). Last week, the new Lebanese government approved an American-backed disarmament plan for it to begin seizing the militia's weapons. Hizbullah was severely weakened during its war with Israel last year and until now has done little to defend its weapons.

**China's** factory output expanded by 5.7% in July compared with a year earlier, the smallest increase in eight months. Official data also showed that retail sales, a gauge of consumption, grew by 3.7%, the slowest pace since December. The indicators may compel policymakers to boost efforts to stimulate the economy. The world's second-largest economy faces pressure from America's [trade policies](#) and a weak property sector.

International talks to control **plastic pollution** failed to produce an agreement. Representatives from 184 countries discussed several draft treaties at the UN-backed meeting, but disagreements over curbs on production and controls on toxic chemicals created an impasse. Officials from the European Union, however, said the talks, the sixth round of negotiations since 2022, would provide a good basis for another meeting.

**BlackRock**, the world's largest asset manager, agreed an \$11bn deal with Saudi Aramco to lease natural-gas processing facilities. Officials at **Saudi Arabia's** state-owned oil giant said the deal highlighted the firm's attractiveness to foreign investors. Saudi Arabia is under growing fiscal strain and has been [trying to attract foreign capital](#). Still, it has struggled to garner interest outside its energy sector.

Flash floods and landslides killed at least 194 people in **Pakistan** and Pakistan-administered **Kashmir**. The disasters were caused by cloudbursts, sudden downpours which are common during monsoon season. Authorities have declared several disaster zones and said they expect heavy rainfall to continue until August 21st. Earlier this week, flooding killed at least 60 people in a part of Kashmir controlled by India.

To celebrate Independence Day, **India** will unveil a 200ft-high flagpole at the Mahavir-Sadqi frontier in Punjab on Friday—some 200m away from a 165ft-high flagpole across the border in **Pakistan**. The nuclear-armed rivals, who in May fought [a four-day battle](#) that threatened to escalate into full-blown war, are now competing over who has the bigger flag. Size, apparently, really does matter.

**Figure of the day:** \$88m, the value of sales last year of Nin Jiom Pei Pa Koa, a 400-year-old Chinese cough syrup that is increasingly popular amongst westerners. [Read the full story](#).



Photograph: AP

## **All eyes on Anchorage**

Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin meet in Anchorage on Friday for a [summit](#) that may be a catastrophe or a damp squib. Ukraine's allies are bracing for either scenario; Mr Trump's torrent of words has proven more confusing than clarifying.

On Monday he hailed Russia's victories against Napoleon and Hitler and talked of the inevitability of "land swapping". But on Wednesday he warned Russia of "severe consequences" if it did not end the war, while downplaying the summit as merely an initial meeting. He spoke of bringing the sidelined Ukrainian leader, Volodymyr Zelensky, into the next round of talks and reportedly suggested America could offer Ukraine security guarantees to seal a ceasefire.

By Thursday Mr Trump was optimistic about a deal. Mr Putin, meanwhile, praised his "energetic and sincere efforts", dangling a possible nuclear arms-control agreement. What might be the consequences of failure, or terms of success? It depends on which Mr Trump steps off Air Force One.



Photograph: Reuters

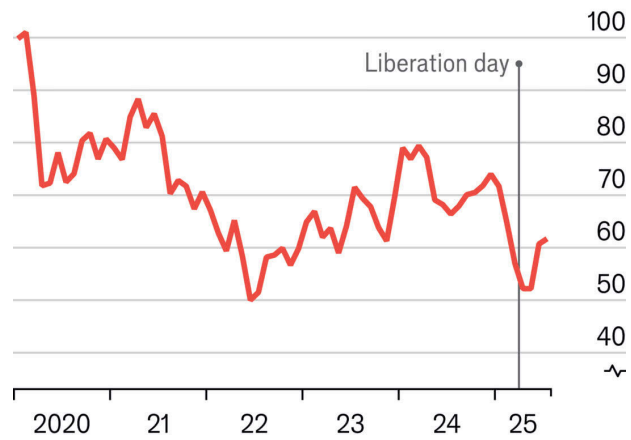
## America's wary consumers

America's economy had a messy and tariff-addled first half to 2025. Annualised GDP growth was just 1.2%, the weakest in years, and progress getting inflation to its 2% target stalled. All eyes are now on whether the economic damage of [Donald Trump's tariff barrage](#) will be fleeting, or persistent and painful.

One of the first indicators to collapse around the big tariff rises on "Liberation Day" in April was consumer confidence, which then improved slightly in June and July. However on Friday the University of Michigan's consumer-sentiment index showed that confidence unexpectedly fell back again in August. Household inflation expectations, which the closely watched survey also measures, grew worse too. Separate retail-sales figures did provide some better news: sales grew 0.5% in July, continuing a rebound in June. Still, the picture looks mixed at best.

## Mood killer

United States, consumer-sentiment index  
Q1 1966=100



Source: University of Michigan



Photograph: Reuters

## **Prabowo's flashy plans for Indonesia**

On Friday Indonesia's president, [Prabowo Subianto](#), delivered a state of the nation address. He vowed to take on corruption and talked up his economic plans. Those include reducing Indonesia's reliance on imports for energy and food and expanding a programme of government handouts. The government wants to reach a target for GDP growth of 5.4% next year.

Mr Prabowo's first year in office combined growing authoritarian control with populist spending. The former general has expanded the influence of the armed forces, boosting defence spending and making it easier for officers to take roles in the civilian bureaucracy. Meanwhile he has pursued three signature economic policies: free school lunches, co-operatives to run rural amenities and the creation of a new sovereign wealth fund. These programmes have boosted his popularity, but do little to drive long-term growth and risk straining the budget. Only 15m people have benefited from the school-meals, well below the government's target of 83m. Corruption and food-poisoning cases have also plagued the rollout.



Illustration: The Economist/Getty Images

## The end of the second world war, 80 years on

Friday marks 80 years since the end of the second world war. Emperor Hirohito's surrender was broadcast to Japan on August 15th 1945. "Now the carnage and destruction can cease," wrote *The Economist*. "The creative energies of mankind can be withdrawn from slaughter and battle and be devoted to the rebuilding of a decent world."

*The Economist* has been [republishing excerpts](#) from its archive, recounting the war's final year. Modern Asia's geopolitics was forged in 1945. Earlier this month Japan, now an American ally, commemorated the anniversary of America's nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On Friday North and South Korea mark the anniversary of the peninsula's liberation from Japan. And next month China's leader, Xi Jinping, will host Vladimir Putin, Russia's president, for a sabre-rattling Victory Day parade. Mr Xi wants China ready to capture Taiwan, a self-governing island that Japan occupied during the war, by 2027. At perhaps the most dangerous time since 1945, it pays to look back.





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.

**Friday:** Who starred as John Connor in “Terminator 2: Judgment Day”?

**Thursday:** What does the **L** stand for in EFL and NFL, two sports competitions?





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:

**Catherine Oikonomou**, Altadena, California, America

**Jaime Jean**, Mexico City, Mexico

**Joel Shapiro**, Toronto, Canada

They all gave the correct answers of gorgon, Manila, revise and [gerrymander](#).

*From the sublime to the ridiculous  
is but a step.*

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***Napoleon***