

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Alamy

Senators have been voting on amendments to the **“One Big Beautiful Bill,”** a [budget measure](#). In a special **“vote-a-rama”** session, they are debating and voting on numerous changes to the bill, which is nearly 1,000 pages long. Republicans hope that Congress will pass the legislation before July 4th. But in the Senate they can afford to lose the support of just three legislators. They appear to have lost two so far.

Mr Trump signed an executive order lifting most sanctions on **Syria**. He [announced](#) in May that he would roll them back, and issued a 180-day waiver temporarily allowing business with Syria’s government. Sanctions on Bashar al-Assad, the ousted former president, will remain. So will measures targeting anyone backing Syria’s armed forces, which cannot be lifted without action by Congress.

Standard Chartered was slapped with a \$2.7bn lawsuit in Singapore in the latest push to recover stolen funds in the 1MDB scandal. The British bank has been accused of helping hide money siphoned out of Malaysia’s sovereign wealth fund and laundered more than a decade ago. The outflow between 2009 and 2013 has been estimated at \$4.5bn.

Mr Trump blasted **Japan**, calling it “spoiled” for refusing to buy American [rice](#). Japan is trying to persuade America not to raise tariffs on Japanese goods from July 9th. Mr Trump hinted that Japan’s reluctance to buy rice from America, despite a [rice shortage](#), would provoke America to increase import tariffs. Meanwhile, a White House official said that America would announce several trade agreements after July 4th.

Mark Zuckerberg said **Meta** would create a 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 revealed that he had [poached talent](#) 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.”

The Trump administration’s **foreign-aid cuts** could cause 14m deaths by 2030, according to a study published in the *Lancet*, a medical journal. Using mortality data from 133 countries, it assesses the impact of America’s retreat from global health programmes. The study finds that USAID, America’s aid agency, helped prevent 92m deaths between 2001 and 2021.

Europe is sweltering in this summer’s first [severe heatwave](#). France, Belgium and Croatia are among several countries to issue “red” health warnings in certain regions; Paris has closed the top of the Eiffel Tower. Portugal and Spain recorded their highest ever temperatures for June at the weekend (46.6°C and 46°C respectively). Two people died in Italy from heat stroke.

Figure of the day: 14%, the proportion of young Americans who would consider selling content on OnlyFans, a website that specialises in pornography. [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

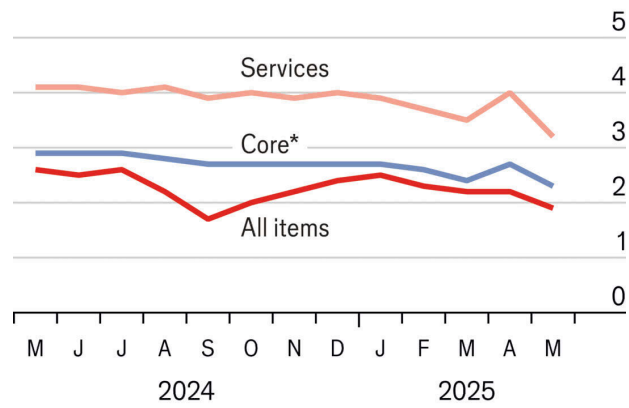
The European Central Bank's top brass, accompanied by a handful of journalists, academics and financial-market analysts, gather in Portugal's high-perched town of Sintra this week for their annual conference. Panels will discuss labour markets, trade and monetary policy. But euro-zone inflation estimates released on Tuesday will divert attention, as the annual rate crawled up to 2% in June, from 1.9% in May.

The new figures alone are not worrying: the ECB's target is 2%. But an uptick has come as a surprise in some countries, including France, which reported service prices rising by more than expected, to 2.4% from last year, up from 2.1% 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. The higher euro-zone figures 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 in Thailand threaten to unseat the family that has governed on and off for the last quarter of a century. On Tuesday, the constitutional court suspended Paetongtarn Shinawatra, the 38-year-old prime minister, after less than [a year in office](#). She was 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. Senators filed a petition asking for her removal.

Ms Paetongtarn’s father was 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, are driving both verdicts. If conservative forces in the army and palace decide that they have had enough of the Shinawatra family’s populist 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