

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: DPA

Donald Trump said he had a “very friendly” call with European leaders, including **Ukraine’s** president, Volodymyr Zelensky, ahead of his [summit with Vladimir Putin](#) on Friday. Germany’s chancellor, Friedrich Merz, said they agreed with the American president on a strategy for negotiations, adding that Ukraine must be invited to future discussions. The American president said **Russia** would face “very severe”, though unspecified, consequences if it did not agree to end the war after their meeting.

America’s treasury secretary, Scott Bessent, said the Federal Reserve should start reducing **interest rates**, with an initial cut of half a percentage point in September. He told Bloomberg that benchmark rates should be at least one and a half percentage points lower than their current range, of 4.25% to 4.5%. Global stocks rallied after data showed that America’s annual inflation rate held steady at 2.7% in July.

The **Israel Defence Forces** said its chief of staff has approved the “main concept” of Binyamin Netanyahu’s plan to attack and seize **Gaza city**, after objecting to the proposed expansion of the war. For three days Israel has carried out intense air strikes on Gaza

City; the Hamas-run health ministry said on Wednesday that 123 people were killed in the past 24 hours.

China said that it “drove away” an **American** destroyer that had sailed too close to the disputed **Scarborough Shoal** in the [South China Sea](#). Both China and the Philippines, an American ally, claim the atoll, which is frequently a flashpoint. A spokesperson for the US Seventh Fleet said that the *USS Higgins* was merely conducting a “freedom of navigation operation”.

Shares in **Bullish**, a cryptocurrency exchange, more than tripled before closing up by 84% during its **initial public offering** in New York.” The company raised over \$1.1bn and had a market capitalisation of over \$13bn. Bullish, founded in 2021, said a “slew” of other crypto firms would be following it in going public; they include Gemini and Grayscale Investments.

Peru's president, Dina Boluarte, signed a law pardoning security officials accused of committing human-rights abuses [during the country's internal conflict](#), from 1980 to 2000. Nearly 70,000 people died or disappeared in clashes between the government and leftist rebel groups. The **amnesty** law, which Latin America's human-rights court opposed, will stop hundreds of pending trials and overturn more than 150 sentences.

The lower house of **Uruguay's** parliament voted to legalise **assisted dying** for adults with terminal illnesses. After a lengthy debate, 64 out of the chamber's 99 deputies voted in favour of the bill, which will now proceed to the upper house. Uruguay would be the fourth country in Latin America to allow some form of [assisted dying](#), after Colombia, Cuba and Ecuador.

Figure of the day: \$200bn, the annual revenues generated globally by Britain's gaming sector. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Getty Images

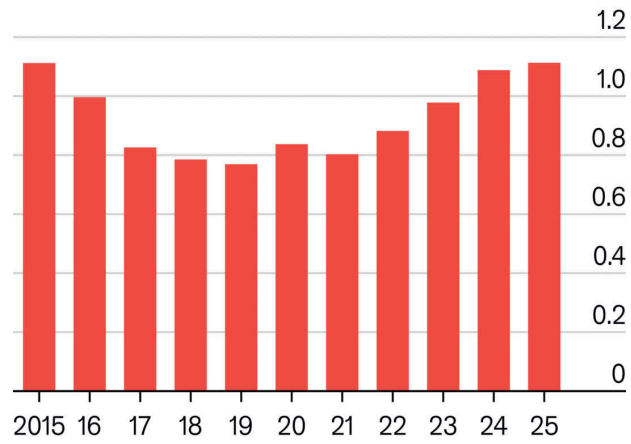
Mexico's progress on poverty

On Wednesday Mexico's statistics agency, INEGI, published figures on poverty for the past two years. The data, which look at income as well as access to health care, education and other services, were more positive than expected. The proportion of the population in poverty fell from 36.3% in 2022 to 29.6%; the level of those in extreme poverty decreased from 7.1% to 5.3%.

A recent survey reported that household incomes rose by nearly 11% between 2022 and 2024, and about 16% over the first term of Morena, the incumbent party, from 2018 to 2024. The new data suggests this has translated into real improvements in poverty. The government credits its much-lauded cash transfers for the drop in poverty. [These have helped](#), and made Morena highly popular, but rising wages very likely played a bigger role in boosting incomes. To make lasting progress, Mexico needs more than handouts. Better public services and more formal, better-paid jobs are essential to reduce poverty further.

The trillion peso giveaway

Mexico, cost of government transfer payments, trn pesos, 2025 prices



Source: México Evalúa



Photograph: Getty Images

Norway's wealth fund cuts ties with Israeli firms

Officials from Norway's Norges Bank will meet publicly on Wednesday to discuss the purpose of the country's \$2trn oil fund. Earlier this week they announced that the sovereign-wealth fund, the world's largest, was selling its stakes in some Israeli companies and pulling money from Israeli asset managers over the war in Gaza and conditions in the West Bank. The fund, which also announced that it grew 6.4% in the second quarter, said companies singled out for divestiture carried "unacceptable risk" linked to their operations in the region.

The review followed a request by Norway's finance ministry; it also comes as Western governments have hardened their stance on Israel's military campaign. Australia, Britain, Canada and France all recently indicated that they intend to recognise a Palestinian state in September. Germany has halted exports of military equipment to Israel that could be used in Gaza. And earlier this week, eight European states condemned Israel's plan to intensify its [occupation of Gaza City](#).



Photograph: ROPI

Europe's plea to Trump on Ukraine

Will Donald Trump sell out Ukraine when he [meets Vladimir Putin in Alaska](#) on Friday? That is the great fear of Europeans. In a last-ditch attempt to limit the damage, Friedrich Merz, Germany's chancellor, has convened a virtual summit on Wednesday to bring together Europe's most important leaders with Mr Trump and J.D. Vance, his vice-president, as well as Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's president. They will hope to steel America's president for his encounter with his manipulative Russian counterpart, and to present a united European front.

Specifically, the Europeans want to ensure that Mr Trump, who has called gnomically for "land swaps", does not bow to Russian demands for chunks of Ukrainian land it occupies before Mr Putin agrees to a ceasefire, and to convince him that Ukraine will need iron-clad security guarantees to safeguard a peace. Mr Merz is also keen to secure a last-minute invite for Mr Zelensky to join the Alaska powwow. Mr Trump seems sceptical about that prospect. But America's president is nothing if not unpredictable.



Photograph: Atsushi Nishijima/A24

Can money buy love?

“Marriage is a business deal,” declares Lucy (Dakota Johnson), a professional matchmaker at a splashy agency in New York. She is dismissive of romance—calling herself an “eternal bachelorette”—until she gets caught in a love triangle with John (Chris Evans), her penniless ex-boyfriend, and Harry (Pedro Pascal), a charming millionaire.

“Materialists” is a candid romantic comedy released this weekend in Britain and already out in America. It was written and directed by Celine Song, whose debut film, “Past Lives”, was nominated for best picture at the Oscars in 2024. With ruminative restraint, the film examines the vacuousness of dating. Lucy is torn between her desire for material assets and for adoration. Money and love have long been entwined, and often at odds, in tales of romance. As [Jane Austen](#), the doyenne of the genre, wrote in “Pride and Prejudice”: “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.”



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.

Wednesday: Which country music star is noted for hits such as “One More Last Chance” and “I Still Believe In You”?

Tuesday: Which Fleetwood Mac song, with its well-known bass line, opens side 2 of the Rumours album?

*What is drama but life with the
dull bits cut out.*

Alfred Hitchcock