

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Getty Images

During a meeting at the White House **Lee Jae-myung**, South Korea's president, asked **Donald Trump** for help “establishing peace” in the Korean peninsula. Mr Trump suggested he would soon meet **Kim Jong-un**, North Korea's dictator. Earlier, Mr Trump claimed a “purge or revolution” was happening in South Korea and threatened to reassess doing business there. Mr Lee was elected in June **after months of political turmoil**.

Two **Israeli attacks** on Nasser Hospital in southern Gaza killed at least 20 people, **including five journalists**, according to Palestinian health authorities. The Israel Defence Forces said it “regrets any harm to uninvolved individuals”. Israel signalled a readiness to partially pull out of southern Lebanon if the country's army took “necessary steps” to disarm Hizbullah, the Iran-backed militant group.

American officials again detained **Kilmar Abrego Garcia**, an undocumented immigrant who was **wrongfully deported to El Salvador by the Trump administration** in March. The government brought him back to **America** in June only to face criminal charges, releasing him from custody last week ahead of a trial. Mr

Garcia now faces possible removal to Uganda, which his lawyer is appealing against.

Elon Musk's artificial-intelligence startup, xAI, sued **Apple** and **OpenAI**, the maker of ChatGPT, accusing the tech firms of behaving like “monopolists”. Apple recently announced [a deeper partnership with OpenAI](#) that bakes ChatGPT into its devices and programming tools; xAI alleges such deals prevent other “innovators” from competing. Last year Mr Musk sued OpenAI to [block its conversion](#) into a for-profit company.

Almost 600,000 people were evacuated as **Typhoon Kajiki** made landfall in eastern Vietnam, raising the risk of flash floods and landslides. Airports and ports have suspended traffic. It is the country's most powerful storm this year. It is expected to match last year's Typhoon Yagi, the strongest storm in the South China Sea in three decades, according to local authorities.

François Bayrou, France's [centrist prime minister](#), said he will hold a confidence vote next month over his plan to slash the budget by €44bn (\$51bn). Opposition parties said they will vote against the cuts, putting Mr Bayrou's minority government at risk of collapse. In December Michel Barnier, **France's** previous prime minister, was [ousted in a no-confidence vote](#) after trying to force his budget through parliament.

A memoir by **Virginia Giuffre**, a vocal accuser of [Jeffrey Epstein](#), will be published this autumn. She said that the late disgraced financier trafficked her to [Britain's Prince Andrew](#) at 17 years old. (He denies this.) Ms Giuffre took her own life in April, at 41. Her publisher, Alfred A Knopf, said she had requested that “Nobody's Girl” be published posthumously.

Figure of the day: 4.6%, the average fiscal deficit in the OECD as a share of GDP last year, up from an average of 2.9% in the four years before the covid-19 pandemic. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Getty Images

South Korea's leader courts Trump

When [Lee Jae-myung](#), a progressive populist, became South Korea's president in June, some wondered whether he would be able to manage the relationship with Donald Trump and America. So it was striking when, shortly after taking office, Mr Lee declared that he would “crawl under Trump's legs” if it served the national interest. On Monday, after a visit to Tokyo, he will meet Mr Trump in Washington for the first time.

Security will top the agenda. The two countries are expected to discuss ways to “modernise” their alliance. America stations tens of thousands of troops in South Korea, but Mr Trump is pressing the government to shoulder more of the burden of defending the country from North Korea. Both leaders now view China as a growing threat.

Trade will also feature. America recently said it would impose [tariffs](#) of 15% on imports from South Korea—lower than the 25% it had threatened. That's an important concession for South Korea. Exports plus imports are worth nearly half its GDP.

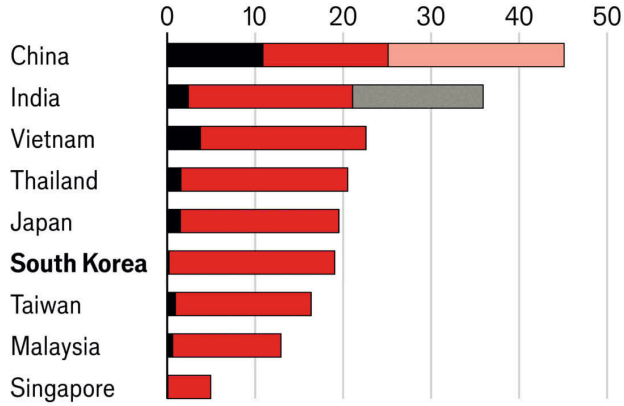
Favoured treatment

United States, effective tariff rate, %
Weighted by 2024 imports

■ 2024 rate

Increase in 2025, by type

■ Reciprocal and
sectoral ■ Fentanyl
duties ■ Penalty for Russian
oil purchases



Sources: US Census Bureau; US Customs and
Border Protection; *The Economist*



Photograph: EPA

A turning point in Thailand

This week could prove decisive in [Thai politics](#). The constitutional court is expected to rule on Friday on whether to permanently remove the suspended prime minister, Paetongtarn Shinawatra. She has been charged with violating ethical standards because she criticised Thailand's armed forces during a call with Hun Sen, Cambodia's authoritarian leader.

A ruling against Ms Paetongtarn would bar her from politics and could end the Shinawatra family's long-standing role at the centre of Thai politics. She may yet resign before the verdict, which would force the court to drop the case. That would help keep the family's political prospects alive.

If she steps down, three candidates are expected to vie for her position. They include Prayuth Chan-ocha, a general who ousted her aunt, Yingluck, in a coup in 2014. As a last resort Ms Paetongtarn could call a snap election. But her party is unpopular following a brief [war with Cambodia](#) last month, and would be unlikely to fare well.



Photograph: Reuters

Ukraine takes the war deep into Russia

While Russia's slow advances in [Ukraine's](#) Donetsk region have drawn the spotlight, Ukraine's increasingly effective strikes deep inside Russian territory have gone largely unnoticed. In recent weeks Ukrainian forces have launched around ten attacks on oil refineries. They have also hit drone-manufacturing and storage sites. The *Financial Times* has reported that Russia is suffering from fuel shortages and record-high petrol prices and has suspended refined-petroleum exports.

The [pressure](#) is set to rise. On August 17th images emerged of Ukraine's new FP-5 "Flamingo" cruise missile. The weapon has a range of 3,000km and a 1,150kg payload, and can reliably strike within 14 metres of its target. Its turbofan engine gives it a terminal speed of 950km per hour. Fire Point, its manufacturer, says it produces 30 a month—and will increase output sevenfold. It is too soon to call this a game-changer. But if Ukraine can scale up production, the Flamingo could become one of its most powerful tools for striking the heart of Russia's war machine.



Photograph: Eyevine

America puts the book down

Americans are reading for pleasure far less than they once did. An analysis by the University of Florida and University College London finds that the share of people who read for enjoyment on a given day fell from 28% in 2004 to 16% in 2023.

The American Time Use Survey, which tracks how 236,270 participants spent every minute of a given day, reveals widening disparities. Reading fell most among black Americans, those with lower income or education levels and people living outside metropolitan areas. Women and highly educated adults remained the most voracious readers. Among those groups time spent reading increased from 83 minutes per day in 2003 to 97 minutes in 2023.

The researchers blame digital distractions, shrinking leisure time and limited library access for the overall decline. They said that longer library hours and early-childhood reading initiatives could help reverse the trend.



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.

Monday: In 2008, who pointedly asked “Why did nobody notice it?” when given an explanation about the origins of the global financial crisis at the London School of Economics?

*Liberty of any kind is never lost
all at once.*

David Hume