

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

American tariffs on steel and aluminium rose from 25% to 50%. Mr Trump said that the increase would stop foreign producers who “undercut the competitiveness” of American industry, thereby threatening national security. Separately Mr Trump said that President Xi Jinping is “EXTREMELY HARD” to make a deal with, after America accused China of violating their trade truce.

Lee Jae-myung of South Korea’s centre-left Democratic Party began **his presidential term** by vowing to stabilise the country and revive its economy. Mr Lee was inaugurated after Kim Moon-soo, of the conservative People Power Party, conceded in a snap election. Mr Lee won 49.4% of 35m votes cast, while Mr Kim took 41.2%. He said his “first mission is to decisively overcome insurrection” following a martial-law crisis.

Elon Musk called **Republicans’ budget bill** a “disgusting abomination”, days after **he left the government**. The White House said it would not change the president’s opinion. The legislation, which cuts taxes and increases the deficit, narrowly passed the House of Representatives but faces tougher scrutiny and more opposition **in the Senate**. Mr Musk previously said he was “disappointed” by it.

Russian forces advanced towards Sumy, **Ukrainian** officials said, bringing the northern city within range of Russian drones and artillery. That is a blow to morale following **two daring Ukrainian attacks** in recent days. Meanwhile, Volodymyr Zelensky announced a reshuffle of the Ukrainian army’s top brass.

Israel’s army warned **Gaza’s** residents not to travel to areas leading to aid-distribution centres, after Palestinian officials said at

least 27 people were shot dead by Israeli troops as they waited for food on Tuesday. The [Israel Defence Forces](#) said roads leading to the aid hubs, set up by Israel's Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, were "combat zones" and reiterated that aid must not reach Hamas.

Rachel Reeves, **Britain's** chancellor, announced £15bn (\$20.3bn) of investment in public-transport infrastructure in England. Rail, tram and bus projects in cities in the Midlands and the north of the country are set for a boost. The Labour government is keen to push good news stories, having lost popularity to the hard-right [Reform](#) party.

Aylo, a company that runs pornographic websites including Pornhub, will stop operating in France from Wednesday in response to a law requiring more age-verification checks. The firm said the regulation posed privacy risks. France is Pornhub's second-biggest market, after America. The EU recently announced an investigation into whether porn sites adequately protect children.

Figure of the day: 18%, the amount by which the average length of pop songs on the *Billboard* Hot 100 has decreased between 1990 and 2024. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: AP

The tariff rollercoaster

Starting on Wednesday, America doubled its [tariffs](#) on steel and aluminium to 50%. The increase, Donald Trump says, is intended to cut foreign producers out of the American market altogether: “At 25%, they can sort of get over that fence. At 50%, they can no longer get over the fence.”

Mr Trump’s previous round of steel and aluminium tariffs, imposed in 2018, were estimated to have created 1,000 extra jobs in steel, but at the cost of destroying 75,000 jobs in manufacturing elsewhere in the country by pushing up production costs.

Mr Trump’s 90-day pause on wider tariffs expires in July. Two courts, the Manhattan-based US Court of International Trade and a federal court in Washington, DC have both ruled that the levies overstep Mr Trump’s presidential authority. The contest is likely to eventually make it to the Supreme Court.



Photograph: Alamy

Marine Le Pen's political future

A French court has upheld a local political ban on Marine Le Pen. In March the French leader of the hard-right National Rally (RN) party was ruled ineligible to run for elected office for five years and stripped of her seat as a departmental councillor in the Pas-de-Calais, in northern France. The case involved the misuse of European Parliament funds. Ms Le Pen appealed against both decisions; on Wednesday a court in Lille ruled that the local ban stands.

Since the initial ruling, Ms Le Pen has continued with politics as usual. She was allowed to keep her parliamentary seat, and insists that she is still the RN candidate for the presidential election in 2027. To brush aside doubt, she recently took a dig at Jordan Bardella, her 29-year-old lieutenant, while on a trip to New Caledonia, suggesting he knows little about the French overseas territory. The final choice will be made in the summer of 2026, when the appeals court rules on whether to uphold her national ban.



СТРАНА COUNTRY	ВАЛУТА CURRENCY	ЗА PEN	КУПУВА WE BUY	ПРОДАВА WE SELL	СТРАНА COUNTRY	ВАЛУТА CURRENCY
САЩА USA	USD	1	1.73	1.755	МАКЕДОНИЈА MACEDONIA	MKD
ЕВРОПА EUROPE	EUR	1	1.958	1.972	МАЛАЈЗИЈА MALAYSIA	MYR
ШВЕЙЦАРИЈА SWITZERLAND	CHF	1	2.095	2.12	МАРОКО MOROCCO	MAD
ВЕЛИКА БРИТАНИЈА ENGLAND	GBP	1	2.30	2.325	МЕКСИКО MEXICO	MXN
КАНАДА CANADA	CAD	1	1.23	1.26	НОВА ЗЕЛАНДИЈА NEW ZEALAND	NZD
ШВЕДИЈА SWEDEN	SEK	1	0.15	0.178	ОБЕДИНЕНО КРАЛСТВО UNITED KINGDOM	GBP
НОРВЕГИЈА NORWAY	NOK	1	.	0.168		
ДАНИЈА DENMARK	DKK	1	.	0.25		
ЈАПАН JAPAN	JPY	100	1.22	1.2		

Photograph: Getty Images

A new recruit for the euro zone

On Wednesday the European Commission and European Central Bank confirmed that Bulgaria can adopt the euro. The currency is set to replace the Bulgarian lev, probably from the start of next year. Bulgaria has been trying to join the euro zone since it became an EU member in 2007. Yet its accession has long been delayed, most recently because of high inflation and political instability (Bulgarians voted in seven elections between 2021 and 2024).

Adopting the euro would ease trade with the rest of the EU and give Bulgaria's central banker a place on the ECB's governing council, the body that makes monetary-policy decisions. But some Bulgarians aren't happy about trading in their lev. Hard-right and pro-Russian politicians say changing currencies will cause big price rises and erode Bulgarian identity. Over the weekend more than 100 anti-euro protests took place across the country. Still, the unrest probably won't stop Bulgaria becoming the euro area's 21st member.



Photograph: Reuters

The season of the hajj

On Wednesday more than 1m people began the hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. It is one of the largest religious gatherings in the world. All Muslims are obliged to perform it once, if they are financially and physically able to do so. For many, it will be an arduous journey: [temperatures in Mecca](#) will sometimes be above 40°C. The Saudi government is keen to avoid a repeat of last year, when more than 1,300 pilgrims died amid even hotter weather.

Authorities have installed new canopies and air-conditioning units to shade and cool worshippers. They have also cracked down on unlicensed pilgrimages. The kingdom blamed many of last year's deaths on fraudulent tour operators: some pilgrims were promised air-conditioned buses but instead were left to walk for hours in the sun. Around 270,000 people have already been barred from entering Mecca this year because they lacked a permit—a good step, but also a sign of just how big the unregulated hajj business is.



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.

Wednesday: What was the name of the character who played the piano in “Casablanca”?

Tuesday: Which singer was the first lady of France from 2008 to 2012?

*Forts, cannons and foreign aid
will not help unless every man
himself knows that he is the guard
of his country.*

Carl Mannerheim