

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

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.

American tariffs on steel and aluminium rose from 25% to 50%. Duties on Britain's materials will stay at 25% following a trade deal. Last week a court found that Mr Trump lacked the necessary authority for imposing most of his levies, though an appeals court overruled that decision. The initial [ruling](#) did not affect those introduced using a different law.

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. On Monday Russia and Ukraine held a brief second round of peace talks—but progress was scant.

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, is expected to announce £15bn (\$20.3bn) of investment in public-transport infrastructure in England on Wednesday. Rail, tram and bus projects in cities in the Midlands and the north of the country look 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 will double its [tariffs](#) on steel and aluminium to 50%. The increase, Mr 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

[Marine Le Pen](#) could be facing an immediate local political ban. 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 will decide whether to uphold the local ban.

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 | | |
| ДЕНИМАРКА 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 are expected to confirm that Bulgaria can adopt the euro. The currency would 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 will begin 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