

Catch up: inflation cools in America; WHO declares mpox health emergency



[Annual inflation](#) in **America** fell to 2.9% in July. The figure is lower than it was in June, when inflation was 3%, and came in beneath analysts' expectations: most economists had expected that the figure would hold steady. The news makes it all but certain that the [Federal Reserve](#) will begin to lower interest rates—which are currently at a 23-year high—in September.

The World Health Organisation declared the spread of **mpox**, a virus which causes flu-like symptoms and blistering, to be a global public-health emergency. Alarm was raised after a [new strain of the disease](#) spread beyond the Democratic Republic of Congo to at least 12 other African countries. Cases are up 160% compared with the same period last year and more than 500 people have died since January.

Mars agreed to buy **Kellanova** for nearly \$36bn in a deal that would combine the two food giants. The buyout is one of the biggest in America's packaged-food industry. [Mars](#), which specialises in selling chocolate bars, will hope that acquiring

Kellanova's crisp and waffle brands will help to diversify its business.

Ukraine launched a huge drone and missile attack across **Russia** as it [continued its ground offensive](#) in Kursk, a Russian border region. Russia's defence ministry said that it had shot down 117 drones, though reports suggested that others successfully struck Russian air bases in the neighbouring region of Voronezh. President Joe Biden said the operation was "creating a real dilemma" for Russia.

UBS, Switzerland's biggest bank, reported net profits of \$1.1bn in the second quarter—more than [double what analysts expected](#)—in its first earnings report since it finalised its merger with Credit Suisse, another Swiss bank, in May. Profits were driven largely by UBS's investment banking division, which thrived in the last quarter as [stockmarkets boomed](#).

A court in **Thailand** dismissed [Srettha Thavisin](#), the country's prime minister, after ruling that he violated the constitution by appointing a minister who previously served time in prison. Pichit Chuenban, a former lawyer, was convicted of contempt of court in 2008 after being accused of bribery. Thailand's parliament will appoint a successor to Mr Srettha, who spent less than a year in office.

Geologists found that the six-tonne altar stone at **Stonehenge**, a [mysterious neolithic monument in Wiltshire](#), was originally transported to the site from northern Scotland. Writing in *Nature*, a scientific journal, researchers laid out chemical evidence which supported the finding with 95% certainty. The stone was once thought to have been from Wales, which is much closer to the site.

Figure of the day: 80%, the proportion of Japanese voters that told pollsters they did not want Kishida Fumio to continue as prime minister. [Read the full story](#).

As America prepares to vote in national elections in November, keep abreast of the political news by reading [The US in brief](#), our daily update. [Sign up](#) to receive it as a newsletter each weekday.

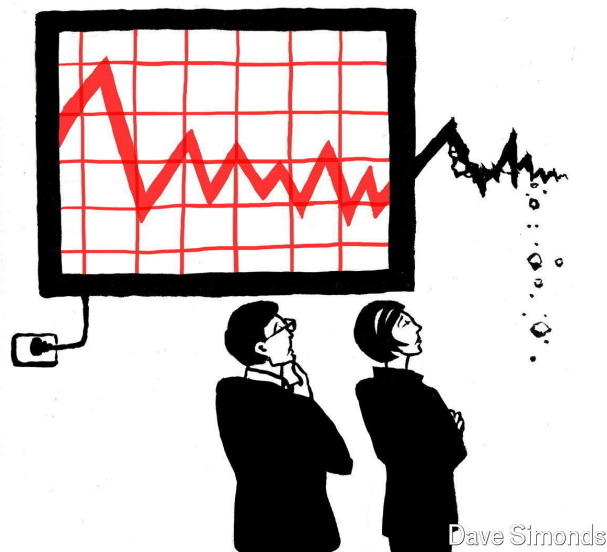
Another push for Gaza ceasefire



Mediators from America, Egypt and Qatar will gather in Doha on Thursday to discuss a [ceasefire in Gaza](#). Israel has said it will send a delegation. Hamas has not: it says there is nothing to discuss beyond the ceasefire proposal it offered in July. But the two sides still disagree on core issues, including whether Israeli troops would withdraw from Gaza completely. Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, has spent months trying to sabotage any possible deal to ensure his own political survival.

The talks in Qatar's capital are not only meant to end the ten-month war in Gaza. Mediators also want to prevent Iran and its allies from retaliating against Israel for assassinations in Beirut and Tehran last month. President Joe Biden thinks [Iran](#) will hold back if there is a ceasefire in Gaza. Some Iranian officials have made similar comments. If the talks fail, the fear is that a bigger regional war may follow.

Turbulent times in Japan



On Wednesday the prime minister, Kishida Fumio, said that he will **step down** next month, amid dismal polling numbers. On August 5th the stockmarket suffered its **biggest fall** since 1987. And the Bank of Japan, which abandoned its longstanding negative interest-rate policy in March, raised its benchmark interest rate to 0.25% in July.

The economy has had a shaky post-pandemic recovery. It shrank at an annualised rate of 2.9% in the first quarter of 2024, mainly because of sluggish private consumption. On Thursday the government will publish second-quarter GDP figures. Analysts reckon the economy grew at an annualised rate of around 2%.

But it is not just economic and political tremors that Japan fears: warnings of a mega-earthquake on its Pacific coast, even if it does not come, may put off tourists and drag down consumption. The government may end its week-long earthquake alert on Thursday. If it does, the country will breathe a sigh of relief.

Britain's university conundrum



Pupils in England, Northern Ireland and Wales receive their A-level exam grades on Thursday. If Scottish grades, released last week, are any indication, many will be disappointed: pass rates in that country have returned roughly to pre-covid levels after several years of lenient marking.

But the deepest frowns will be on the faces of [university leaders](#). Foreign students, who pay higher fees than natives, seem to have cooled on Britain: the number of applications for study visas was 15% lower in July than a year earlier. The government has frozen tuition fees paid by British students, so incomes to universities are falling in real terms. The new Labour government seems disinclined to raise fees. That would anger students and could increase the cost to the state, since most students pay for tuition by taking out subsidised loans, and not all of the money is paid back. Expect loud, eloquent grumbles.

A new bridge and old problems in Kashmir



Kashmir has long stood apart from the rest of India. That is partly down to geography: its valley, where most of its residents live, lies deep in the Himalaya mountains. It is inaccessible to India's vast railway network.

That will change on Thursday, when the first train will enter Kashmir via the Chenab Bridge, timed to mark India's 78th independence day. Opened earlier this year by Narendra Modi, India's infrastructure-obsessed prime minister, the structure, which stands 359 metres above the Chenab river, is the world's highest rail bridge. It is meant to attract greater trade and tourism to the region.

Locals, however, have more pressing concerns. Militancy in the region has surged in the past month. Three soldiers were killed in attacks this week. In 2019 Mr Modi's government controversially took over the administration of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, partly to promote [peace and stability](#) there. Recent events suggest that might be a bridge too far even for Mr Modi.

Brussels in biennial bloom



For just four days starting on Thursday something remarkable will sprout in the Belgian capital. Close to a million fresh blooms will be laid out in the city centre to form the Brussels Flower Carpet. Created every two years since 1986, the brightly-coloured display of dahlias and begonias celebrates Belgian traditions of flower cultivation and decorative design.

Viewed from the tower of the Gothic town hall that dominates the city's main square, the 70-metre-long floral arrangement looks like a lush carpet. Previous editions have featured designs that evoked African tribal art, pre-Columbian Mexico and Turkish kilims. This year's pattern, created by Océane Cornille, a Belgian street artist, is a tribute to Brussels itself. Titled "Rhizome", it references Art Nouveau, the playful, swirling and plant-like decorative style that first flourished in the city before taking hold in fin-de-siècle Paris and [Edwardian London](#).

Daily Quiz



The Economist

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 QuizEspresso@economist.com. We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Thursday: *Primum movens*, a Latin term sometimes used to argue for the existence of God, has what meaning in English?

Wednesday: Which character played by Samuel Jackson, is the director of SHIELD in the Marvel movies?

80%

The proportion of Japanese voters that told pollsters they did not want Kishida Fumio to continue as prime minister.

Read the full story.

**There is a thin line between politics and
theatricals.**

Julian Bond