

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AP

America's **Senate** quickly approved legislation that would force the Justice Department to [release its files](#) on **Jeffrey Epstein**, a deceased sex-offender. The manoeuvre—called unanimous consent—automatically sends the bill to Donald Trump's desk without a roll-call vote. Earlier it passed the **House of Representatives** by 427-1. In a dramatic reversal this week the president, who insists Epstein is a “Democrat problem”, said he would sign the bill.

Meta, a social-media giant, won an [antitrust case](#) against America's Federal Trade Commission. A federal judge ruled that Meta did not illegally maintain a monopoly by buying Instagram and WhatsApp, two smaller rivals. The FTC first brought the case against the tech firm in 2020. The trustbuster had asked the judge to force Meta to divest from the companies.

Mr Trump said that **Muhammad bin Salman** “knew nothing” about the murder in 2018 of **Jamal Khashoggi**, a journalist. “Things happen,” he said. That contradicted an earlier [American intelligence report](#) that Saudi Arabia's crown prince authorised his killing. Meanwhile Prince Muhammad, on his first trip to Washington in seven years, claimed his country would increase its planned investments in America from \$600bn to \$1trn.

Japan's government warned its citizens in **China** to take extra precautions for their safety as a dispute between the two countries worsened. The spat began last week when [Takaichi Sanae](#), Japan's new prime minister, said her government might defend Taiwan from a Chinese invasion. China's state media has attacked Ms Takaichi, and the government has urged its citizens not to travel to Japan.

Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, called for Hamas's expulsion from Gaza—a demand that goes beyond Mr Trump's plan for peace in the enclave. On Monday the UN **Security Council** approved Mr Trump's proposal, which includes establishing an international stabilisation force in Gaza. Hamas rejected the resolution, saying the international force would become “a party to [the conflict](#) in favour of the occupation”.

Poland said it suspected that two Ukrainian citizens working for **Russia** were behind a recent **sabotage attack** on the country's railway. Over the weekend tracks leading to the border with Ukraine were wrecked by an explosion; cables were damaged in another incident on Monday. Donald Tusk, Poland's prime minister, warned that [Russian sabotage attacks](#) were “gaining momentum” across Europe.

A global outage at **Cloudflare**, an online-security company, brought down services across the internet. Users were unable to access sites including X, Elon Musk's social-media platform, and [OpenAI's](#) ChatGPT. The company said the outage was caused by a “spike in unusual traffic”, which it is investigating. Last month an outage at Amazon Web Services, a cloud provider, brought down thousands of sites.

Figure of the day: Ten, the number of feet at which Target employees are instructed to wave and smile at a customer. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Getty Images

Trump welcomes Saudi Arabia's crown prince

Muhammad bin Salman arrived at the White House on Tuesday for his first visit in seven years with a long wish-list. Saudi Arabia's crown prince asked Donald Trump for a defence pact, a nuclear-cooperation agreement, and a deal to purchase F-35 fighter jets.

Mr Trump said that America will sell F-35s to Saudi Arabia, and that the two countries had “pretty much” reached an agreement on defence. That is a testament to the [kingdom's](#) improved standing in Washington. Joe Biden once promised to make Prince Muhammad a “pariah” because of the war in Yemen and the murder by Saudi Arabia of Jamal Khashoggi, a journalist. On Tuesday Mr Trump claimed Prince Muhammad “knew nothing about” Khashoggi's killing, contradicting [American intelligence reports](#).

In recent years the Saudis have pursued a pragmatic foreign policy and promised to invest enormous sums in America, placating some of their harshest critics (it does not hurt that they are doing deals with Mr Trump's family, too). Prince Muhammad is not ready to normalise ties with Israel, a goal Mr Trump hopes to achieve during his second term. But the kingdom's relationship with America is thriving anyway.



Photograph: Getty Images

Uncertainty in Bangladesh after a historic verdict

In 2009 Sheikh Hasina established a tribunal in [Bangladesh](#) to investigate war crimes committed during the war of independence in 1971. Now the former prime minister herself has become the most famous person to feel the weight of the court's justice. On Monday it sentenced Sheikh Hasina to death *in absentia* for her role in clamping down on [protests](#) that ousted her government last year, forcing her to flee to India. She has called the trial “biased and politically motivated”.

Many Bangladeshis celebrated, but there are still tensions within Bangladesh, which is due to hold elections in February. Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League retain pockets of support; it is unclear how those loyalists will respond to the sentence. It is unlikely to be carried out. During her increasingly autocratic 15-year rule she forged close relations with India, which is now sheltering her. India said it has “noted” the verdict, but has so far ignored requests for extradition.



Photograph: Getty Images

America's statistical hangover

In the end, America's government shutdown lasted 43 days—the longest on record. Undoing the damage from switching off the machinery that [measures the economy](#) will take far longer. Only now are the first trickles of official data about to resume. The Census Bureau will publish delayed August manufacturing data on Tuesday. The September jobs report, originally due in early October, will be released three days later.

September's numbers are relatively easy to salvage: most data had already been collected before the shutdown, and only processing was interrupted. October is a different story. Households and firms never received surveys, and the Bureau of Labour Statistics' price-collectors were unable to work. Karoline Leavitt, the White House press secretary, said last week that October's releases may never appear; recreating them retrospectively could be impossible. And the calendar keeps moving: the first batch of November data is due in just a few weeks.



Photograph: Alamy

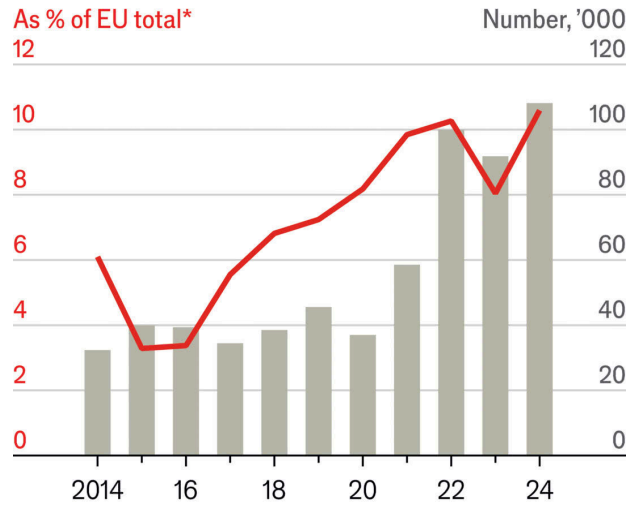
Britain braces for another migration battle

Britain's struggling government announced an overhaul of its [asylum system](#) on Monday. Shabana Mahmood, the home secretary, said the government would no longer grant refugee status indefinitely and would send [refugees](#) to their home countries if it judges them to be safe. She also warned that Britain will stop issuing visas to citizens of Angola, Namibia and the Democratic Republic of Congo if their governments fail to help remove rejected asylum claimants.

The Labour government is acting because it has failed to halt the flow of people on small boats over the English channel—and because of the growing popularity of Reform UK, a right-wing populist party. Ms Mahmood says that illegal migration is “causing huge divides” in Britain, but Labour is also divided. Despite a majority of 169 in Parliament, it is unclear whether the government can pass the legislation. The proposals were denounced by some Labour MPs as draconian, and criticised by the Green Party, which hopes to attract voters put off by Sir Keir Starmer's increasingly illiberal tone.

Channel hopping

Asylum applications in Britain



*Including Britain

Sources: Eurostat; Home Office



Photograph: Ubisoft

A Saudi instalment of “Assassin’s Creed”

From Tuesday players of “Assassin’s Creed: Mirage”, a suspenseful video game, will be able to download a free new set of missions set in Al Ula, a historic city that Saudi Arabia is promoting as a tourist destination. The update follows reports that Ubisoft, the game’s French developer, has struck a partnership with Saudi Arabia’s state-owned gaming-investment company.

It is the latest sign of the kingdom’s [push into gaming](#). Its sovereign wealth fund is part of a group buying Electronic Arts, the maker of series like “Madden” and “FC”. Saudi Arabia already owns the gaming arm of Niantic, maker of the Pokémon mobile games, and large stakes in companies including Nintendo and Take-Two.

The kingdom sees entertainment as a way to create jobs and diversify the economy. But it is also a tool of soft power. Hollywood spread American influence in the 20th century. Whoever dominates gaming may reap similar rewards in the 21st.



Illustration: The Economist

Daily Quiz

We will serve you a new question each weekday. On Friday your challenge is to give us all five answers and tell us the theme. Email your responses (and your home city and country) by 1700 BST on Friday to [\[email protected\]](#). We'll pick three winners at random and crown them on Saturday.

Tuesday: Farrah Fawcett, Kate Jackson and Jaclyn Smith were the original cast members of which TV show?

Monday: A man who decided to become a Cistercian or Carthusian would have chosen what profession?

*The culture of any country is
gauged first by its progress in art.*

Ignacy Jan Paderewski