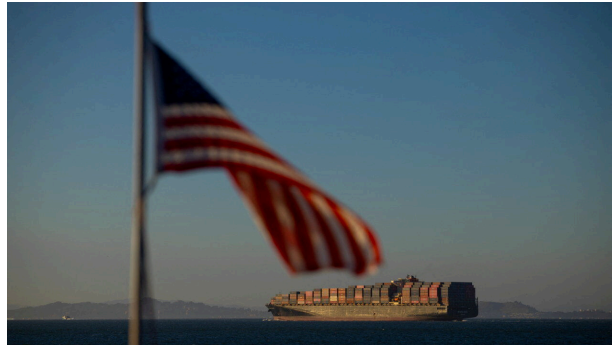


The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Reuters

America's trade deficit fell 16% year on year in June to \$60.2bn, its lowest level in nearly two years, as imports of consumer goods dropped sharply. The gap with China shrank by a third to \$9.5bn, its narrowest since 2004. America's average [tariff rate](#) has surged to 18%, the highest since 1934. Donald Trump said that a new deal with China is "very close".

Muhammad Yunus, the interim leader of **Bangladesh**, said the country would hold an election in February. It would be the first poll since a student-led uprising toppled Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh's autocratic prime minister, last year. Mr Yunus's government has banned her party, the [Awami League](#). His government had been coming under growing pressure to schedule the poll.

Mr Trump said that **Scott Bessent**, America's treasury secretary, had told him that he did not want to be the next chair of the **Federal Reserve**. Mr Trump, who has urged the Fed to cut interest rates, is considering several candidates, including his economic adviser. [Jerome Powell](#), the Fed's chair, is set to step down when his term ends in May.

OpenAI released its first open artificial-intelligence models in six years. The company said that the “open-weight” models would be free to use and “deeply customisable”. The move is a big shift for the American firm, which has largely focused on developing closed models. It comes [six months after DeepSeek](#), a Chinese company, caused a stir by releasing an impressive open-source model.

Apollo's assets under management rose to a record \$840bn in the second quarter, a 21% increase year on year. The American [private-equity](#) titan also reported that earnings from fees rose to \$627m, an increase of 22% on the year, beating analysts' expectations. The firm also attracted \$61bn in capital as it sought to profit from market turmoil caused by Mr Trump's tariffs.

Norway's government told the country's sovereign-wealth fund to review its investments in Israeli firms owing to public anger over its links to companies involved in [the war in Gaza](#). This week a Norwegian newspaper reported that the \$1.9trn fund had raised its investment in a firm that services Israeli warplanes. Norway's prime minister, Jonas Gahr Store, said he was “very worried” by the report.

Prosecutors in **Taiwan** arrested six people accused of stealing secrets from **Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company**. Taiwanese authorities began the investigation last month after TSMC, which manufactures nearly all of the world's most [advanced chips](#), suspected that company files had been accessed without authorisation. The firm said it is investigating whether any information was shared outside the company.

Figure of the day: 25%, the proportion of Delhi's residents with Type 2 diabetes. [Read the full story](#).



Photograph: Reuters

Big Oil's big squeeze

[Saudi Aramco's profits](#) fell for the tenth consecutive quarter, dropping by 19% year on year between April and June. Weaker oil prices are to blame. The Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, a cartel, is increasing supply. Donald Trump's tariffs threaten to slow global growth, dampening demand. Saudi Arabia's government, Aramco's main shareholder, is also frustrated that it is cutting its dividend by nearly a third this year. In response, the company is reportedly negotiating a \$10bn deal with BlackRock, an American investment giant, to offload gas-related assets.

There was better news for Aramco's rival, BP. The British oil giant reported better-than-expected profits, which it credited to strong operations. BP's investors will have been buoyed by its announcement on Monday of its biggest oil-and-gas discovery in 25 years in Brazil. But the field may take years to begin large-scale production. Until then BP, like Aramco, may have to content itself with rummaging for spare cash.

Crude awakening

Brent crude oil price, \$ per barrel



Source: LSEG Workspace



Photograph: Alamy

A billionaire brawl

Donald Trump and Rupert Murdoch have much in common. They are both right-wing billionaires who see themselves as populists. Out of this shared sensibility have come shared interests. Mr Trump's public persona came to life in Murdoch-owned media outlets—first in the *New York Post*, then on Fox News.

Yet their interests sometimes diverge. Recently Mr Trump sued Mr Murdoch and the *Wall Street Journal* for publishing a story about his relationship with the late Jeffrey Epstein, a convicted child-molester. When News Corp, the *Journal*'s parent company, reports earnings on Tuesday, investors will want to know whether it plans to fight or settle. The [likely answer is fight](#). Mr Murdoch is believed to trust the accuracy of the reporting and may see little reason to pay up—unlike Disney and Paramount, which each paid \$16m to settle lawsuits brought by the president. That points to another thing Mr Trump and Mr Murdoch have in common: neither likes to be told no.



Photograph: Getty Images

Bangladesh's uneasy anniversary

Bangladesh marked the first anniversary of the student uprising that toppled Sheikh Hasina, the country's autocratic leader. The caretaker government led by Muhammad Yunus, a Nobel peace-prize winner, held a day of festivities. It included songs, processions and prayers, and culminated in the "July Declaration", a symbolic recognition of the uprising signed by various parties.

Since Sheikh Hasina left office and fled to India, Bangladesh's political parties have struggled to reach a consensus on its democratic future. Human Rights Watch has accused the interim government of targeting Ms Hasina's supporters in actions that "mirror" her authoritarian regime. Yet on Tuesday Mr Yunus announced that they had reached an agreement to hold an election in February. Mr Yunus had favoured holding the poll in April, but other groups, including the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, pushed for the vote to be held ahead of Ramadan.



Photograph: Alamy

Can the world rein in plastic pollution?

For three years 175 countries have been trying to negotiate an international treaty on plastic pollution, which will dictate how the material is produced, used and disposed of. But the talks have been fraught. What was supposed to be the final round ended without agreement in South Korea in 2024.

Starting on Tuesday in Geneva, negotiators will have another go. The scale of the problem is clear. Some 350m tonnes of plastic are thrown away each year, of which a sizeable portion is never collected and left to pollute the environment. Microplastics, the residue of such waste, are suspected of posing serious health risks. But the benefits of plastic are immense, too. It is [instrumental](#) in food supply chains, health care and construction, especially in poor countries. Any agreement must be able to balance these trade-offs—as well as satisfy plastic-making countries, including Saudi Arabia and Russia, which oppose limiting production.



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.

Tuesday: Which song by Jennifer Lopez, from the “This is Me... Then” album, is about her desire to remain true to her roots in the Bronx?

Monday: What was the title of Martin Scorsese’s 2005 documentary about Bob Dylan?

Our memory is a more perfect world than the universe: it gives back life to those who no longer exist.

Guy de Maupassant