

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Getty Images

**Israel** and **Iran** continued to trade air strikes on Wednesday, as Donald Trump called for Iran’s “unconditional surrender”. Mr Trump also said that America knows the location of Ali Khamenei, Iran’s supreme leader, but will not “take him out...for now”, adding that patience was “[wearing thin](#)”. America, which says it has not yet joined Israel’s air strikes on Iran, moved more fighter jets to the region.

The White House said **TikTok** will be granted a third, 90-day extension to continue operating in America. Last year Congress passed legislation forcing ByteDance, TikTok’s Chinese owner, to sell the app or face a ban. The [original deadline](#) was January 19th, the second was this Thursday. Scott Bessent, the treasury secretary, said TikTok was not discussed at recent trade talks with China.

Israeli forces killed at least 59 people who were waiting to receive [aid from trucks](#) near Khan Younis, a city in southern **Gaza**, according to Palestinian health officials. Reuters reported that a tank fired two shells into a crowd. The Israel Defence Forces said it was reviewing reports of injuries from “IDF fire” after a crowd approached troops.

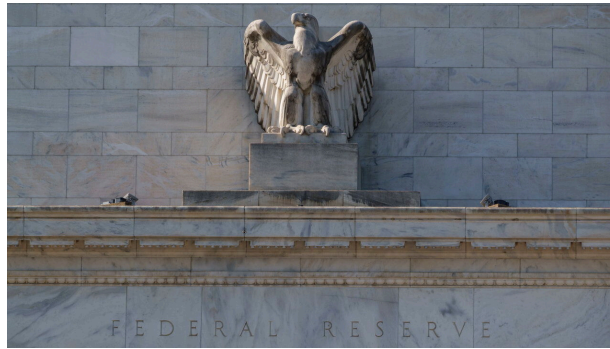
**Retail sales** in **America** fell by 0.9% during May, the second consecutive month of decline and the steepest drop since the start of the year—in April they fell by 0.1%. In March many consumers rushed to buy things ahead of [Mr Trump's tariff announcements](#). May's figures reflect the aftermath: [car and auto-part sales](#) decreased by 3.5%.

**Eli Lilly**, an American pharmaceutical company, is set to acquire **Verve Therapeutics**, a [gene-editing startup](#), in a deal worth up to \$1.3bn. Verve creates therapies to treat heart disease, which are in early-stage trials. Lilly will pay \$1bn upfront for the firm, and up to \$300m more if it meets certain clinical measures.

Dozens of flights to the Indonesian island of **Bali** were cancelled after a volcano erupted on Flores, an island to the east of the tourist hotspot. Authorities raised their highest alert and evacuated two villages near Mount Lewotobi Laki-laki. Indonesia sits on the Pacific Ocean's "ring of fire"; around 130 active volcanoes are scattered across the archipelago.

**Alfred Brendel**, one of the world's most renowned pianists, died aged 94. Born in what is now the Czech Republic and largely self-taught, he was especially noted for his performances of works by Haydn, [Mozart](#), Beethoven and Schubert. Mr Brendel insisted that the performer is the servant of the composer.

**Figure of the day:** 47, the age of Blaise Metreweli, the first female head of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service, a spy agency better known as MI6. [Read the full story](#).



Photograph: Getty Images

## The Fed stays put

When officials from America's Federal Reserve meet on Wednesday, they are expected to hold interest rates at 4.25–4.5%. Recent data offer reassurance on both sides of the Fed's mandate. Core inflation, which excludes food and energy, rose just 0.1% in May from the previous month, bringing the annual rate to 2.8%. The labour market has also shown resilience. Employers added 139,000 jobs in May and unemployment held at 4.2%, near historic lows.

Still, risks abound. Conflict between Iran and Israel threatens to lift oil prices. Donald Trump's "big, beautiful" budget bill—which cuts taxes and expands deficits—adds fiscal pressure. Tariffs could yet drive up prices. The uncertainty means Jerome Powell, the Fed's chair, will probably hold fire. But Mr Trump is [impatient](#). Last week he called Mr Powell a "numbskull" for not cutting rates. Analysts expect cuts of half a percentage point by the end of the year. The president wants more.



Photograph: Alamy

## Global living standards stall

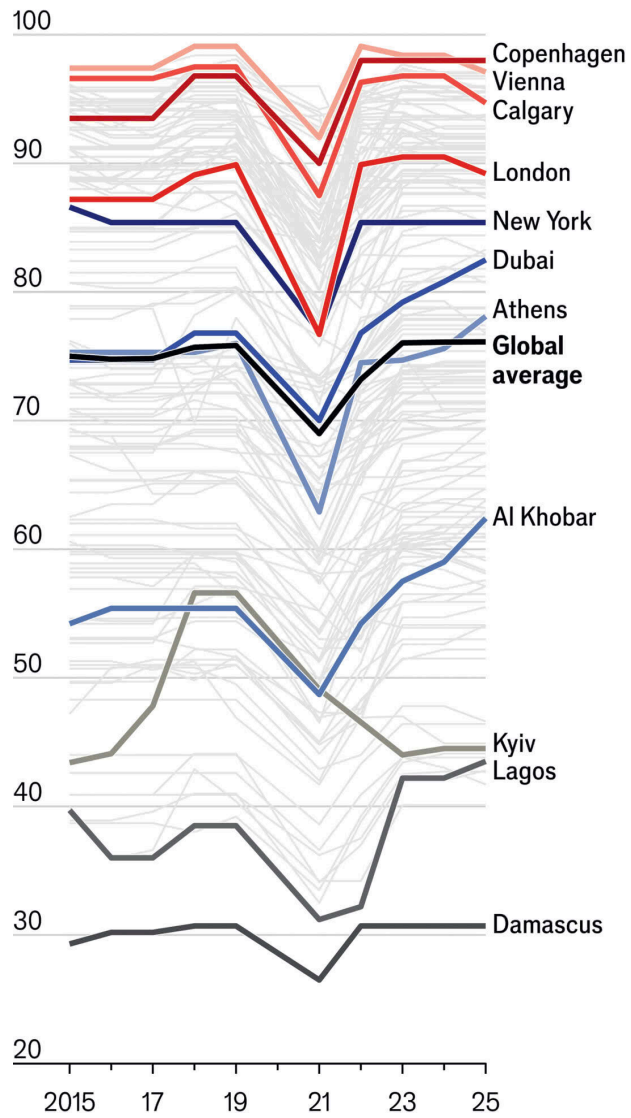
For the second year running, there has been no improvement in living conditions in the world's cities, according to the latest [liveability index](#) from EIU, our sister company. The annual survey is designed to help companies calculate hardship allowances when they relocate staff and rates 173 cities across five categories. This year, declines in the "stability" category, which quantifies the threat of military conflict, civil unrest and terrorism, cancelled out improvements elsewhere.

Vienna lost its crown as the world's most liveable city after two foiled terrorist attacks brought down its stability score. The Austrian capital now shares second place with Zurich. Copenhagen tops this year's overall ranking. Melbourne and Geneva round out the top five. Damascus remains rooted at the bottom of the ranking.

The outlook for the coming year is mixed. Inflation, which has hurt living standards over the past few years, seems to be falling. But geopolitical tensions are increasing, further threatening stability and the quality of life everywhere.

## City liveability index

100=most liveable



Source: EIU



Photograph: Getty Images

## Busy season at SCOTUS

On Wednesday America's Supreme Court will release several of its 21 remaining judgments. The Trump administration has added to the justices' usual burden with emergency pleas to lift lower-court injunctions against its policies. It has sent roughly one matter per week to the court since January 20th. Many of those emergency cases have divided the justices. In contrast, nearly two-thirds of the 36 merits rulings have thus far been unanimous.

Still, [scotusbot](#), *The Economist's* AI tool for predicting the court's rulings, reckons it will be more fractured in some of the biggest decisions to come. These include challenges to funding for Planned Parenthood, an abortion provider, and the introduction of age checks for internet pornography. The justices will also rule on medical treatments for transgender teens and Donald Trump's bid to end birthright citizenship for babies of undocumented immigrants. A weighty to-do list before the court decamps for its summer recess.





Photograph: Getty Images

## A controversial Irish rap group

The trial of Liam Óg Ó hAinmáidh, a Northern Irish rapper who performs under the name “Mo Chara”, begins on Wednesday in London. He is facing terror charges for displaying the flag of [Hizbullah](#), an Iran-backed Shia militia that is banned in Britain, during a concert in London last November.

The rapper is a member of “Kneecap”, an Irish-language group known for their support for Irish Republicanism and criticism of Israel. The band are no strangers to controversy. Britain’s prime minister, Sir Keir Starmer, criticised the group after allegations that one member said “The only good Tory is a dead Tory. Kill your local MP” in 2023.

Mr Ó hAinmáidh and the band deny supporting groups such as Hizbullah, or inciting violence. Kneecap have been removed from several festivals. But they have also witnessed a recent surge in interest in their music—the group has surpassed 1m monthly listeners on Spotify, a streaming platform.



Photograph: 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.

**Wednesday:** Paul Stanley and Gene Simmons are the two best known members of which exuberant rock band?

**Tuesday:** Acts of hostility towards people because of their race, gender or sexual orientation are generally known by which two-word term?



*It's not what a movie is about, it's  
how it is about it.*

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***Roger Ebert***