

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Getty Images

America's **Department of Justice** asked a federal judge to unseal grand-jury testimony about **Jeffrey Epstein**, as controversy over the convicted paedophile [continued to engulf Donald Trump's](#) administration. Such material is usually kept secret. Meanwhile Mr Trump sued the ***Wall Street Journal*** and Rupert Murdoch, as well as the paper's parent companies, a senior executive and two journalists, for libel over a story claiming he wrote a risqué birthday note to Epstein in 2003 (which the president denies).

**Israel** and **Syria** agreed to a ceasefire, according to America's envoy to Turkey. On Wednesday Israel struck Damascus, Syria's capital, and began attacking government forces in the south-west following [an outbreak](#) of sectarian violence in the predominantly Druze province of Suwayda. Earlier on Friday Israel said it would allow Syrian forces limited access to the area for two days so they could try to restore stability there.

**Meta** rejected signing the **European Union's** code of practice for general-purpose AI, a voluntary set of rules instructing companies how to comply with the [bloc's AI law](#). Joel Kaplan, Meta's global-affairs boss, said that the code exceeded the law's scope. Other

firms, such as Airbus, have said they won't sign the code, but Meta is the first tech giant to pass.

**ExxonMobil**, the world's biggest independent energy company, lost its bid to block its rival **Chevron** from acquiring **Hess**, an oil and gas firm. An arbitration panel rejected Exxon's argument that it had a contractual right of first refusal to lucrative assets that Hess owns in Guyana. The victory clears the way for Chevron to complete the \$53bn takeover deal it struck in 2023.

**El Salvador** sent home over 250 **Venezuelans** [who had been detained there](#) after **America** deported them. In exchange, Venezuela released dozens of political prisoners, including ten Americans. Marco Rubio, the secretary of state, announced the Americans' homecoming. An earlier attempt to reach a deal was reportedly botched when Mr Trump's envoy to Venezuela conducted his own negotiations separately from Mr Rubio.

**Binyamin Netanyahu** called **Pope Leo** a day after **Israel** struck the only Catholic church in Gaza. The attack killed three Palestinians and wounded ten people, including the parish priest, whom the late Pope Francis had [phoned daily](#) during the war. On Thursday Mr Trump called the Israeli prime minister to convey his displeasure; Israel issued a rare apology.

**Astronomer**, an American tech company, launched an investigation and suspended its boss, Andy Byron, after a clip of a couple embracing at a Coldplay concert went viral. The pair abruptly hid after they appeared on a giant screen at the Boston gig. Internet sleuths quickly claimed to have identified them as Mr Byron and one of his senior executives—both of whom are believed to be married to other people.

**Word of the week:** *Erinnerungskultur*, Germany's "memory culture" which has built up over decades. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: AP

## America's legislative cheat code

Republicans in America's Congress this week clawed back \$9bn of funding for [foreign aid](#) and public broadcasting. They may end up regretting it.

Congress spends money using “appropriation” bills, which require 60 votes to pass the Senate. Bipartisan compromise is usually required. But the president can ask Congress to cancel funds it previously approved. These “rescission” requests need only a simple majority. That allows the party in power to pull a bait-and-switch, ditching all the compromises it offered the other side in the original negotiation process.

Chuck Schumer, the Democratic leader in the Senate, accused Republicans of doing just that as they forced through their “rescissions” package—the aforementioned broadcasting and aid money. He said that, in future, it would be “absurd” to expect Democrats to help pass any bill to fund the government, when they would simply be hoodwinked later. Yet Republicans must soon pass such bills—the federal government runs out of money on September 30th.



Photograph: Reuters

## Waiting for the Patriots

Earlier this week Donald Trump and Mark Rutte, NATO's secretary-general, [struck a deal](#) to send American weapons to Ukraine. But America will not donate them—European partners will send arms from their own stocks, then buy American replacements. At least eight NATO countries have signed on. Ukraine's most urgent need is for more Patriot air-defence batteries to protect its cities from Russian ballistic and cruise missiles. It will become clearer over the coming days and weeks whether NATO's arrangement can deliver them.

Ukraine and its supporters welcome the [change in tone](#) from Mr Trump. He appears at last to want to put pressure on Vladimir Putin, Russia's president, to negotiate a ceasefire. But Ukraine needs more than Patriots. Will Mr Trump's reversal extend to the Pentagon committing to complete the arms deliveries promised by the Biden administration? About \$3.86bn of presidential drawdown authority still remains.



Photograph: Getty Images

## Boxing champions meet again

On Saturday, heavyweight champions Oleksandr Usyk and Daniel Dubois face off in London. The pair last met two years ago, for a title fight in Poland. In the fifth round Mr Dubois, of Britain, felled his Ukrainian opponent with a punch directly on the belt line. The referee, somewhat controversially, ruled it a low blow and allowed Mr Usyk time to recover. He went on to knock out the Brit in the ninth round. (Mr Usyk also landed more punches.)

Mr Usyk went on to defeat another Briton, Tyson Fury, becoming the [first undisputed heavyweight champion](#) since Lennox Lewis in 1999. Mr Dubois has since won three fights, most recently humbling Anthony Joshua, to earn a second shot at Mr Usyk. Although the 38-year-old Ukrainian remains the favourite, Mr Dubois has pointedly commented on their ten-year age difference. While his opponent is nearing the end of his career, the 27-year-old challenger could just be entering his prime.



Photograph: Richard Foreman/A24

## 2020 vision in Ari Aster's "Eddington"

This summer cinemas are packed with films about [superheroes](#), dinosaurs and dragons. Among such fantastical fare "Eddington", released in America this weekend, stands out. The film is set in Eddington, a desert town in New Mexico, during the covid-19 pandemic. Yet despite its down-to-earth setting, it turns out to be as strange and sprawling as any of its special-effects-laden competitors. The result is a rambunctious, feverish state-of-the-nation satire.

Joaquin Phoenix stars as Eddington's hapless sheriff. His marriage to an anxious wife, played by Emma Stone, is already tense. So is his relationship with Eddington's entrepreneurial, liberal mayor, played by Pedro Pascal. When the town is hit by lockdowns and protests following the murder of George Floyd, "Eddington" turns from a western-cum-comedy into a dark, violent and unpredictable thriller. Ari Aster, the film's writer and director, made his name with two enigmatic horror films, "Hereditary" and "Midsommar". "Eddington" turns the culture wars and conspiracy theories that have consumed American politics into horrors all of their own.





Photograph: Alamy

## **Weekend profile: Tamaki Yuichiro, Japan's upstart who wants to be prime minister**

The image Tamaki Yuichiro wants to convey is of upward mobility. His campaign poster shows him grinning, arms extended and fingers pointing skyward. The slogan beneath is hardly revolutionary: "Increase take-home pay." But Mr Tamaki has turned this into a rallying-cry among younger voters.

The 56-year-old leader of the Democratic Party For the People (DPFP), an opposition upstart, is disrupting Japan's ossified politics. In last year's lower-house election, Mr Tamaki's party quadrupled its number of seats to become the fourth-largest force. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was left leading a minority government, and needing Mr Tamaki's help to pass legislation. On July 20th voters will elect a new upper house. Mr Tamaki hopes to become prime minister at the head of a new coalition.

The LDP has long dominated Japanese politics, having governed almost uninterrupted for seven decades. But a [messier era of politics](#) has begun. The LDP-led government is shaky and the prime minister, Ishiba Shigeru, is floundering. Mr Tamaki has emerged as an appealing alternative, drawing support from unaffiliated voters and disillusioned moderates. He considers himself a champion of Japan's young and working-age population. Their prospects are bleak: disposable incomes have barely

increased in decades. Mr Tamaki calls them the “forgotten people”. One recent poll showed his DFPF to be more popular than the LDP among voters under 40.

Mr Tamaki grew up among rice fields in Kagawa, a rural prefecture on the southern island of Shikoku. He is a former track athlete and, by his own estimation, a fine singer. He had the early career of a future member of the elite: after studying law at the University of Tokyo he joined the Ministry of Finance and later spent a year at Harvard. He first ran for office in 2005 with the main centre-left opposition party. In 2018 he broke away to co-found the DFPF.

Mr Tamaki styles himself an economic-policy otaku, or obsessive. His signature policies include slashing the consumption tax and introducing “education bonds” to fund spending on children and social programmes. Mr Tamaki represents a distinctively Japanese kind of populism, built on social-media performance and fiscal promises. His Instagram reels mix bite-sized policy explainers with lighthearted posts—about food, for instance.

Meanwhile, another disrupter threatens to overshadow him. The Do It Yourself Party (Sanseito), a hard-right outfit founded just five years ago, is rising in the polls with its “Japan First” messaging. Immigration, long a fringe issue in Japanese politics, has moved to the centre ahead of the upper-house election.

Mr Tamaki, though occasionally labelled as “right-leaning”, has resisted the xenophobic impulse. He is pragmatic on foreign affairs and supports building up the armed forces in the face of increasing threats from China and North Korea. But he has progressive positions on social issues; he favours, for example, allowing married couples to retain separate surnames. He sees economic malaise, not foreigners, as the true source of Japanese voters’ frustrations.





Illustration: The Economist

## Weekly crossword

We now publish an interactive edition of our crossword twice a week, allowing you to enter and check the answers, and see explanations, instantly. Try it [here](#). Or, if you prefer to do things the old-fashioned way, use the grid below.

Our crossword has two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers, all of which feature in articles in this week's edition of *The Economist*:

### Cryptic clues

*1 across* Lawful member takes note back (5)

*1 down* Midfielder turns pro. I love this team! (9)

*2 across* Contestant found in Missouri valley (5)

*3 across* Straight flush whatever way you look at it (5)

### Factual clues

*1 across* In accordance with the law (5)

*1 down* England's most successful football team (9)

2 across Competitor or opponent (5)

3 across Flat, smooth or even (5)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am BST on Monday to [\[email protected\]](#). We will pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners in next week's edition.

1					
2					
3					



Illustration: The Economist

## **The winners of this week's quiz**

Thank you to everyone who took part in this week's quiz. The winners, chosen at random, were:

**James and Diane McGinnis**, Delaware, America

**Mike O'Sullivan**, London, Britain

**Hans Olsson**, Lund, Sweden

They all gave the correct answers of: Eddy Merckx, René Magritte, Hergé (Georges Remi), Jean-Claude van Damme and Hercule Poirot. The theme is that they are all Belgian.

*Genius will live and thrive  
without training, but it does not  
the less reward the watering pot  
and pruning knife.*

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***Margaret Fuller***