

Catch up: Vance accepts VP nomination; Biden down with COVID



J.D. Vance formally accepted the **Republican nomination for vice-president**. At the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, Donald Trump's running-mate gave a confident and impassioned speech, stressing his "working-class" upbringing and promising to be "a vice-president who never forgets where he came from". Mr Vance also bashed President Joe Biden's immigration policies, attacked China and promised to **stop "catering to Wall Street"**. He repeatedly appealed to battleground states: Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Mr Trump looked pleased with his heir apparent throughout.

Nancy Pelosi, a former House speaker, told **Mr Biden** last week that she worries he is dragging down Democrats, reported Politico, a news website. Earlier **Adam Schiff**, an influential Democratic congressman, called on the president to **end his re-election bid**. Meanwhile Mr Biden tested positive for **covid-19** and cancelled a campaign event in Las Vegas. He is apparently experiencing "mild symptoms" and will self-isolate in Delaware.

Israel's latest aerial assault on **Gaza** killed at least 81 Palestinians, according to the territory's health ministry. Tanks also conducted a limited advance into the north of Rafah, a southern city. Meanwhile the Pentagon said an American-built pier **delivering aid** to Gaza had completed its "mission" and will be dismantled. Mr Biden

previously said it would provide a “massive increase” in supplies; in fact, it was quickly damaged by rough seas.

Blackstone, the world’s biggest [private-equity firm](#), said that its distributable earnings rose by 3% year on year in the second quarter of 2024. The company’s [real-estate business](#) failed to overcome a slump that has persisted due to high interest rates, though its losses were offset by increased earnings elsewhere, especially from its credit arm. Blackstone also said it had increased its investments in anticipation that the [Federal Reserve](#) would cut interest rates later this year.

Anglo American, a multinational mining conglomerate, said that its diamond-mining division, [De Beers](#), would curtail production. De Beers previously implemented production cuts of 10%, which caused sales to fall from 6.9m carats in the first quarter to 6.4m carats in the second quarter of this year. Falling demand from consumers in countries such as China, which was previously an important market, has forced the [diamond industry](#) into a steep downturn.

The **yen** climbed to a six-week high following reports that the **Bank of Japan** had intervened to support [the currency](#). Data released by the BoJ suggest that it bought nearly 6trn yen (\$38bn) last week to shore up its value after it sank to a 38-year low against the American dollar.

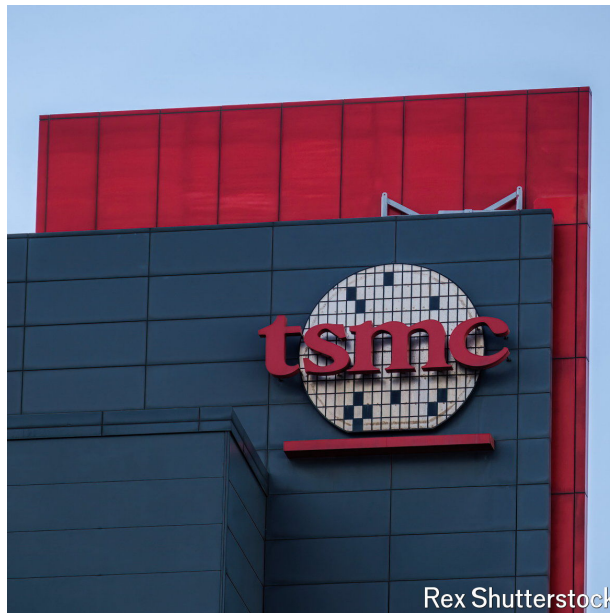
“Shogun”, a sweeping [historical drama](#) about feudal Japan, was nominated for 25 **Emmy Awards**. “The Bear”, a suspenseful comedy about a restaurant in Chicago, garnered 23. Netflix, meanwhile, secured 107 nominations—the most of any network or streaming platform. Winners will be announced at a glitzy ceremony on September 15th.

Figure of the day: 4.5%, the amount that China’s house prices fell in June compared with a year earlier—the steepest drop for nine

years. [Read the full story.](#)

In the run-up to America's presidential election, we've launched [The US in brief](#)—a daily update to help you keep on top of the political stories that matter. [Sign up here](#) to receive it as a newsletter, each weekday, in your inbox.

Can TSMC join the trillionaires' club?



TSMC, [Taiwan's semiconductor giant](#), reported on Thursday that second-quarter profits rose by 36% to T\$247.8bn (\$7.6bn), beating expectations. It is one of the world's biggest beneficiaries of the boom in generative artificial intelligence. Excitement over its role in producing AI chips for big tech firms, like Nvidia and Apple, recently made it the first Asian company to come close to a valuation of \$1trn on American stockmarkets. Strong bottom-line growth, more bargaining power and the possibility of higher spending to build new foundries for cutting-edge chips could propel it higher.

Although [TSMC](#) will probably hit \$1trn eventually, geopolitics could prove a problem. In an interview published this week by Bloomberg, Donald Trump sounded half-hearted about defending Taiwan from Chinese aggression. Shares in TSMC fell by more than 2%. Moreover, a strong earnings report on Wednesday from ASML, which sells extreme ultraviolet lithography equipment to TSMC, was overshadowed by news that the Biden administration may impose further curbs on the Dutch firm's business in China.

Von der Leyen's pitch for a second term



Having recently been picked by the European Union's 27 national leaders to keep leading its powerful executive arm, Ursula von der Leyen on Thursday will have to convince the European Parliament to back her in order to secure the job. The German needs 361 votes in the 720-strong chamber to ensure a second five-year term as head of the European Commission in Brussels.

In theory the vote should be a formality. The coalition of mainstream parties that backs [Mrs von der Leyen](#), including her centre-right European People's Party, the Socialist bloc and Liberals, control over 400 seats. In practice it could be close. The ballot is secret and some centrists have already balked at supporting Mrs von der Leyen. Her pitch to MEPs meeting in Strasbourg? Failure to back me would land the EU in an institutional crisis in the midst of war in Ukraine and the prospect of Trumpism rebooted.

France's messy new parliament



The 577 members of France's lower house of parliament sit for the first time on Thursday, following the country's [final legislative vote](#) on July 7th. The National Assembly will elect a new president, and deputies choose their official political groups. This will reveal the exact balance of power between the three main blocs: a left-wing alliance (the New Popular Front), centrists and Marine Le Pen's hard right.

France, however, does not yet have a new government. On Tuesday Gabriel Attal, the outgoing prime minister, formally resigned. But Emmanuel Macron, the president, has kept him on as caretaker. No bloc is close to having a parliamentary majority. The four-party NFP has failed to agree on a single candidate for prime minister. Even if it does, it is not clear that it could run a stable government. Mr Macron, meanwhile, hopes that a coalition could be formed around his centrists. Even as the country gears up to host the Olympics, political uncertainty prevails.

The ECB's inflation dilemma



Inflation in the euro zone is edging downwards towards the European Central Bank's target of 2%. In June the annual inflation rate fell to 2.5%, from 2.6% in the previous month. Core inflation—which strips out volatile prices for energy and food—remained at 2.9%. Some worry that euro-zone inflation has been stuck at about the same level since February. On Thursday the [ECB](#) will decide whether to cut interest rates again.

The bank started lowering rates by 0.25 percentage points in June. Markets expect just 0.4 percentage-points-worth of further cuts by the end of this year. The ECB's top brass will probably pause this time, and wait for more data. Services inflation, at 4.1%, is still too high for their liking. Wage growth, according to data from Indeed, a hiring website, has recently picked up again in Europe. For Europe's economic recovery, that is bad news.

Golf's steely gentleman



Scottie Scheffler is having a great season. [The American golfer](#) has already won the Masters in Augusta, the Players Championship and four of the PGA Tour's eight signature events. (No one else has won more than one.) Mr Scheffler is the favourite to take the Open in Royal Troon, Scotland, which began on Thursday.

His statistics demonstrate his superiority. Of the PGA Tour's 177 players, he takes the fewest shots per round, and makes the most birdies (completing a hole in one under par). Only his putting could be improved, as it is merely a little better than the average of the world's best players.

Mr Scheffler has an even temperament, and a strong religious faith. After he was arrested by traffic police on his way to the PGA Championship in May, he was able to keep his focus and finish in the top ten. (Charges against him were later dropped.) His calm demeanour makes him a formidable opponent.

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

Thursday: The 2,000 guineas, 1,000 guineas, the Oaks, the Derby and the St Leger Stakes are given what title in the English horse racing calendar?

Wednesday: Which bean, often used for flavouring, is best known for its Madagascar variety?

80%

The increase in the nominal market value of America's S&P 500 index of stocks since the start of 2020

Read the full story

The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid.

Jane Austen