

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AFP

American **tech** stocks suffered their **worst week** since April amid concerns over a possible AI **bubble** and weak economic data. The NASDAQ Composite, a tech-heavy index, fell by 3% since the end of last week, while the market value of eight big AI-related firms, including Nvidia and Meta, plunged by \$800bn. Meanwhile, consumer confidence in America fell to its lowest level since June 2022, according to closely watched data from the University of Michigan.

**Donald Trump** said no **American** officials would attend the upcoming G20 summit in **South Africa** because Afrikaners are being “killed and slaughtered” there. The Trump administration has long claimed that the **white South African minority** is being persecuted by its government. Cyril Ramaphosa, South Africa’s president, has dismissed the allegations as “completely false”. Mr Trump also wants South Africa to be thrown out of the G20.

As many as 20% of **flights** could be cancelled over Thanksgiving if **America’s government shutdown** continues, warned Sean Duffy, the transport secretary. Air-traffic controllers are currently working without pay. Hundreds of **flights** were cancelled on Friday after regulators ordered 40 big airports to cut routes. Neither

Republicans nor Democrats yet seem ready to back down in negotiations to agree on a government-spending bill.

**Inter** IKEA, which supplies the [Swedish furniture franchise's](#) stores, suffered a 26% drop in annual operating profit. It fell to €1.7bn (\$2bn) in the 12 months to August 31st, from €2.3bn the previous year. The company blamed the drop on rising commodity prices linked to Mr Trump's tariffs and price cuts it made to counter falling demand.

**America** lifted terrorism sanctions against [Ahmed al-Sharaa](#), Syria's president, as well as the country's interior minister. The United Nations and Britain removed similar sanctions on both men this week; the European Union will, too. Mr Sharaa is due to meet Mr Trump in Washington on Monday. America's president [removed sanctions against Syria](#) in May to give the country "a chance at greatness".

**First Brands**, an American car-parts firm that managed to borrow \$10bn before [collapsing in September](#), won approval from a bankruptcy court to fully tap a \$1.1bn rescue loan. A bankruptcy judge in Texas said that the financing, which some creditors had previously opposed, "allows the parties to continue to work" to eventually sell the business and allow creditors to be repaid.

**James Watson**, a Nobel Laureate who co-discovered the structure of DNA, died aged 97. The biologist was 25 when he published his findings with [Francis Crick](#), earning the reputation of a pioneer. But his offensive views about race later [ended his career](#); fellow scientists condemned his belief that black people are less intelligent than white because of their genetics.

**Word of the week:** "Lafufus", knock-off versions of the Labubu, a popular Chinese toy doll. [Read the full story](#).

**Correction:** Previously, we said Zohran Mamdani was New York City's youngest ever mayor. This was incorrect. Hugh J. Grant was the youngest. Sorry.



Photograph: EPA

## **Bolivia's new president plays the Trump card**

Rodrigo Paz will become [Bolivia's president](#) on Saturday. The centrist senator will end 20 years of almost uninterrupted rule by the left wing Movement to Socialism (MAS). Now he must deal with the mess the MAS leaves behind. First he must find the fuel and dollars to keep the economy running (the central bank all but ran out of greenbacks in 2023). Then he must begin to trim a fiscal deficit of more than 10% of GDP—all while rejigging the economy to boost production and exports. The glow of his election victory won't last long.

But Mr Paz is playing to the Trump administration's intense interest in Latin America. He and his team were recently in Washington rekindling relations that were put on ice when one of his predecessors, Evo Morales, kicked America's ambassador out of Bolivia in 2008. Mr Paz must hope his efforts will be rewarded with more than just a handshake and a photo.



Photograph: Getty Images

## Mamdani's balancing act

After winning New York City's mayoral election this week, Zohran Mamdani delivered a rousing victory speech. He quoted Eugene Debs, an American socialist, and challenged Donald Trump to “turn the volume up” on [threats to cut the city's funding](#). By the next day, however, his tone had softened. After campaigning in poetry, he acknowledged that the “beautiful prose of governing” had begun.

Mr Mamdani will not be able to deliver his expensive campaign promises—a rent freeze, free buses and universal child care—without buy-in from the state legislature. The 34-year-old Democratic Socialist also needs to convince sceptics that he can manage the city's 300,000-member workforce and \$116bn budget. He announced a transition team of women who have worked for previous mayors (and a president). He has asked Jessica Tisch, the police commissioner not beloved by progressives, to stay on. And, perhaps realising that provoking Mr Trump will not help him solve the city's problems, the mayor-in-waiting said he looked forward to speaking with the president.



Photograph: Alamy

## Saudi Arabia: holiday hotspot?

This weekend [Saudi Arabia](#) hosts the United Nations Tourism General Assembly. Attending member states will discuss the role of [artificial intelligence](#) in the future of tourism, as well as the sustainability of the industry. It is the first time the summit will be hosted by a Gulf country.

Saudi Arabia has [invested heavily in tourism](#) as part of efforts to eventually wean its economy off oil. The sector is an important part of Vision 2030, the government's economic-reform plan. It hopes tourism will make up 10% of GDP by 2030. So far overnight stays have risen from 63m in 2016, when the plan was announced, to more than 116m in 2023.

But the bulk of those are Saudis enjoying a staycation. The kingdom wants to bring in more foreigners, but has an image problem: many still consider it oppressive and closed off. It will take more than luxury hotels and AI to change their minds.



Photograph: Scott Garfield/Sony Pictures Classics/Sky TV

## **A sobering retelling of the Nuremberg trials**

The trial of Nazi criminals at Nuremberg began 80 years ago this month. “Nuremberg”, [a new film](#) directed by James Vanderbilt, is a timely reminder of the stakes of holding villainy to account. Based on a book by Jack El-Hai, it explores the relationship between Hermann Göring, Hitler’s second-in-command, and his prison psychiatrist, Douglas Kelley.

Kelley, played by Rami Malek, wants to “dissect evil”. But a strange friendship develops in consultations preceding and during the trial. The film does not make the Americans heroes. Kelley is egotistical, driven by his ambition to be the “great scholar of the Nazis”, yet allows Göring to manipulate him. Nor does it portray the Nazis as devils. Göring, played by Russell Crowe, is a man who committed ghastly atrocities while visibly cherishing his own family. Even before the judge delivers his verdict, Kelley delivers his own, damning one. “What sets them apart from us?” he asks. “Nothing.”





Photograph: AP

## **Weekend profile: Hemedti, the warlord, power-broker and new sultan of Darfur**

After an 18-month siege, on October 27th Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces [took el-Fasher](#), the largest city still in the army's hands in Darfur. Thousands have been killed; the RSF proudly posted films of their atrocities online.

The leader of the RSF, Muhammad Hamdan Dagalo, better known by the mononym Hemedti, is now in control of his own statelet that in effect encompasses the entire west of the country. He will have a decisive role in determining the future of Sudan's two-year civil war, [the world's worst humanitarian disaster](#).

No one knows exactly where Hemedti was born or when (although he is about 50 years old). His family is part of the Arabic-speaking Riseigat ethnic group. Hemedti briefly attended school in south Darfur, but spent much of his youth as a camel-trader, or a camel-thief, depending whom you ask. His break came in 2003 with the start of [an armed rebellion in Darfur](#) against the misrule of the central government in Khartoum. To suppress the insurgency, the government, mostly ethnic Arab themselves, recruited Arab militiamen to form the Janjaweed, the forerunner of the RSF. Hemedti's uncle, Juma Dagalo, was one of those militiamen, and probably recruited him.



The Janjaweed massacred and burned whole villages home to the Muslim but non-Arab Fur and Masalit (among other indigenous groups). The International Criminal Court subsequently issued [indictments for genocide](#) and other crimes against the president, Omar al-Bashir, and local Janjaweed commanders.

In 2013 Mr Bashir turned the Janjaweed militias into the RSF and put the ambitious Hemedti in command. To fund his rise—and the RSF’s—Hemedti seized control of Darfur’s largest “artisanal” gold mine. By the time he turned on the president during a [people’s revolution in 2019](#), Hemedti had leveraged his bullion empire and the violent threat of the RSF to become Sudan’s power-broker.

People who have dealt with Hemedti describe him as a pragmatist, ready to cut deals with anyone who can help him consolidate power. Equally, he throws aside allies as soon as they no longer serve his purposes—as Mr Bashir discovered. After the revolution, Hemedti turned violently on the transitional democratic movement.

Many sources argue that the UAE is the main military backer of the RSF, although the UAE strenuously denies this. In 2019, after the revolution, Hemedti paid \$6m to a public-relations firm in Canada to give his image a makeover abroad. Conscious of how he looked and dressed, he learned to ingratiate himself with Western diplomats.

Today he is an amoral, independent-minded warlord backed by a battle-hardened army of what some estimate could be 100,000 men, as well as plenty of money and useful friends abroad. However repulsive his methods, his appeals to Sudanese sick of military rule resonates in some quarters. Sudan is probably in for more suffering.



Illustration: The Economist

## Mini crossword

We publish a new interactive edition of our crossword daily, allowing you to enter and check the answers and see explanations. Try it [here](#). Or, if you prefer, use the grid below.

There are two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers.

### Cryptic clues

*1 across* - In ye olde fen certain protection hides (7)

*2 across* - Now I grow hungry, though first it's very dark (5)

*3 across* - Nitrogen and uranium combine with crystalline atomic substance (7)

*1 down* - Cor! Bad nations, ie broken, get to reduce nasty emissions (15)

### Straight clues

*1 across* - American government department that has recently become more bellicose (7)

*2 across* - When stars appear (5)

*3 across* - Type of weapons tests Donald Trump wants America to restart (7)

*1 down* - The process of reducing harmful emissions, which China is going through (15)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am GMT on Monday to [\[email protected\]](#). We will pick three winners at random and crown them in Tuesday'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:

**Teresa Stewart**, Nashville, America

**Carlos Sangil**, Madrid, Spain

**Wei Shi**, Espoo, Finland

They all gave the correct answers of: beam, warp, Enterprise, Captain Robert Scott, and kirk. The theme is the original series of Star Trek; characters are beamed up to the ship, which travels at warp speed, and is called the Enterprise. The chief engineer is Montgomery Scott, who is commanded by Captain Kirk.

The questions were:

**Monday:** Cantilever, continuous and overhanging are all types of what?

**Tuesday:** Horizontal threads on a loom are called weft. What are the vertical threads called?

**Wednesday:** Which rental car company, which also owns the Alamo and National brands, is the largest in the us?

**Thursday:** Which British explorer died in 1912 after leading an expedition that failed to be the first to reach the South Pole?

**Friday:** What word, with Norse origins, is the Scottish term for a church?

*He who destroys a good book kills  
reason itself.*

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***John Milton***