

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Reuters

## Listen to the briefing



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The **White House** said an [Israeli attack](#) aimed at **Hamas** leaders in **Qatar** “does not advance Israel or American goals”, and that “such a thing will not happen again” in the Gulf state. The Trump administration claimed it informed Qatar about the strike in advance; a Qatari spokesperson said communication came “during the sound of explosions”. Hamas said its leadership survived but six people, including a Qatari officer, were killed. The group said it held America “jointly responsible”.

Emmanuel Macron, **France’s** centrist president, named **Sébastien Lecornu** as the new prime minister—the fifth in two years. Earlier [François Bayrou](#) resigned from the role, a day after losing a confidence vote 364-194 in the National Assembly. Mr Lecornu was appointed defence minister in 2022. He faces an unsympathetic parliament that wants fresh elections.

**America's Bureau of Labour Statistics** said the economy added 911,000 fewer jobs in 12 months to March than earlier estimates suggested. The agency previously reckoned that American employers had added 1.8m jobs during that period. The big downward revision adds to pressure on the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates when it meets next week.

**Anti-corruption protesters** in **Nepal's** capital, Kathmandu, stormed and set fire to the parliament building. The unrest has intensified despite the resignation of the prime minister, KP Sharma Oli. His government's short-lived attempt to introduce a ban on 26 social-media platforms, including Facebook and Youtube, sparked the demonstrations. At least 22 people have died since Monday.

A **Russian** strike in eastern **Ukraine** killed at least 24 people and injured 19 others. The bomb hit a crowd of elderly people collecting their pensions. Ukrposhta, Ukraine's postal service, said it would rethink how it distributes pensions and other services to front-line regions. Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's president, said the "brutally savage" strike should prompt an outcry from America and other **allies**.

**Thailand's** Supreme Court ruled that **Thaksin Shinawatra**, a former prime minister, must serve a year in jail. The court ruled that he had avoided a previous prison sentence by being unnecessarily hospitalised. It is a further blow for the Shinawatras; Paetongtarn, Mr Thaksin's daughter, was **ousted as prime minister** in August. Anutin Charnvirakul, a populist construction tycoon, replaced her last week.

**Ethiopia** inaugurated **Africa's largest hydropower source**. The \$5bn dam on the Blue Nile was turned on in 2022, but it only reached full capacity on Tuesday. It will generate almost 6,000 megawatts of electricity, doubling Ethiopia's output before the project. The dam has led to tensions with Egypt and Sudan over how to share the water of the Nile's tributary.

**Figure of the day:** 95%, the share of organisations that are getting “zero return” from investments in generative AI, according to researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. [Read the full story.](#)

*Wars in Gaza, Ukraine and Sudan are reshaping the world. Stay informed with the [War Room](#), our weekly newsletter on international security.*



Photograph: Getty Images

## A big show for Apple

On Tuesday Apple unveiled its next generation of smartphones, the iPhone 17, which includes an ultra-thin model called “Air”. At the launch event Apple also detailed upgrades to the Apple Watch as well as to its AirPods, which will be able to monitor users’ heart rates.

The company hopes new models can revive flagging excitement among consumers. Sales volumes of its phones are predicted to be fairly flat next fiscal year. Investors are more eager for Apple to use the opportunity to raise iPhone prices for the first time in many years, and to update its approach to artificial intelligence. An American antitrust ruling this month [allowed Google to continue payments to Apple](#) to position its search engine prominently on the iPhone; the two may be working on a plan to partner on AI-related search. That ruling started a revival in Apple’s share price, which has lagged its big-tech peers this year.



Photograph: Getty Images

## American science in the crosshairs

On Tuesday a hearing of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee of America's Senate will intensify the battle between the Trump administration and researchers in science and medicine. The session appears to be an attempt by Republicans to blame scientists for declining vaccine uptake in the country. Its title is "How the corruption of science has impacted public perception and policies regarding vaccines".

Most scientists would retort that the Trump administration is the problem. Last week America's health secretary, Robert F. Kennedy junior, took part in a contentious hearing before a different committee in Congress. He has cancelled grants for research on [mRNA technology](#) and ended the recommendation that pregnant women receive covid jabs. Meanwhile, he fired the head of the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and all the experts on an important vaccine committee. His efforts to undermine vaccines in America look set to grow.



Photograph: Getty Images

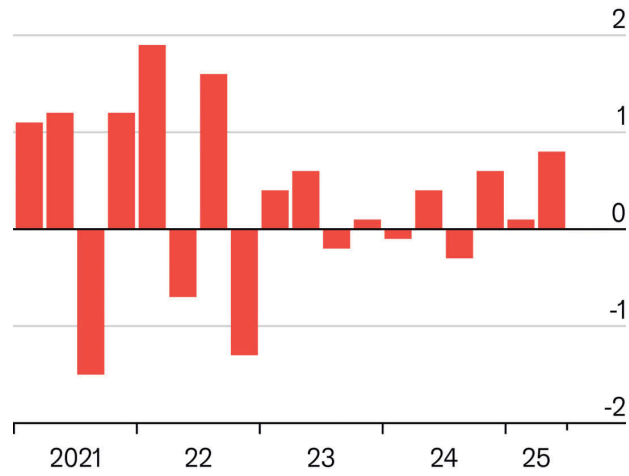
## Problems old and new for South Africa

When South Africa's GDP figures were released on Tuesday, observers were looking for evidence that [Donald Trump's vendetta against the country](#) is hurting the economy. America has imposed 30% tariffs on the grounds that South Africa's government is biased against white people at home. The Trump administration has also called South Africa's foreign policy "aggressive" towards America and its allies.

Yet this release looked to be the calm before the storm. GDP grew 0.8% quarter on quarter in the second three months of the year, up from 0.1% in the first. Some of the rise may have been the result of exporters shipping goods before the imposition of tariffs in early August. So the rest of the year could be more disappointing. But Mr Trump is not the main cause of South Africa's problems. Real GDP growth has been weak for most of the past two decades, because of corruption, red tape and bureaucratic incompetence.

## Calm for now

South Africa, GDP, % change on previous quarter



Sources: LSEG Workspace; Nedbank



Photograph: Reuters

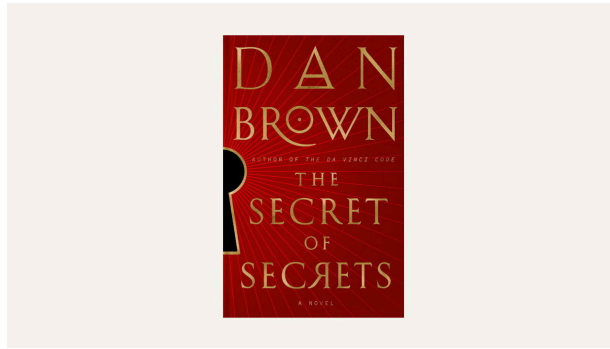
## Turmoil in Indonesian markets

Indonesia's president, Prabowo Subianto, fired his finance minister on Monday, risking a showdown with markets already nervous after two weeks of sometimes [violent street protests](#). Sri Mulyani Indrawati had been an icon of Indonesian economic governance in the quarter-century since the Asian financial crisis, leading the finance ministry for nearly 14 years across two stints during that period.

When Mr Prabowo became president in October 2024, he kept her in office. That helped reassure investors that Indonesia's economy would be managed competently despite the leader's quixotic and costly policy initiatives, such as a free school-lunch programme and a new sovereign-wealth fund.

Yet soon after the announcement Indonesia's main capital market sank by 1.3%. The rupiah, Indonesia's currency, tumbled by more than 1%, prompting the central bank to intervene in an attempt to stabilise it. All this could deepen a sense of economic and political crisis in the country and bring protesters back onto the streets.





Photograph: Bantam

## **The sleuthing symbologist returns**

There is nothing secret about the release of “The Secret of Secrets”, which is published on Tuesday. It is the sixth instalment in Dan Brown’s franchise about Robert Langdon, a code-cracking professor who rushes around European cities sporting a Mickey Mouse watch and a Mickey Mouse degree (in “symbology”). It is already the fourth-most-popular book on Amazon.

That is no surprise. Mr Brown’s books, the most famous of which is “The Da Vinci Code”, have sold more than 250m print copies in 56 languages. The author’s fans have had to wait longer than usual for more of his good-natured tosh: “The Secret of Secrets” is his first novel in eight years. Its protagonist capers through castles and underground passages, defeating evil and the English language at every turn. It does not take a symbologist to decipher that “The Secret of Secrets” will be a hit.



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:** What title did Napoleon Bonaparte assume in December 1804?

**Monday:** Which Austrian dignitary was assassinated, along with his wife, in Sarajevo on June 28th, 1914?

In last week's quiz we published the wrong questions on Thursday and Friday. Sorry. The answers to the three correct questions were: purple, doves and Kiss. The theme, which a majority of those who wrote in with the correct answers nonetheless figured out, was songs by Prince: Purple Rain, When Doves Cry, and Kiss.

The questions were:

**Monday:** Which colour, generated from a dye made from sea snails, became associated with Roman emperors?

**Tuesday:** Which birds are sometimes released at weddings and funerals as signs of love and peace?

**Wednesday:** Paul Stanley and Gene Simmons were founding members of which rock band?

*Everybody thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.*

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***Leo Tolstoy***