

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AP

Hurricane Melissa [crossed Jamaica](#), with reports of extensive damage left in its wake. The Category 5 storm brought winds of almost 300kmh, making it one of the most powerful hurricanes ever recorded in the Atlantic. The National Hurricane Centre, an American agency, warned that “catastrophic flash flooding and numerous landslides” would continue to hit the island throughout Tuesday night. Melissa has now weakened slightly and is heading towards Cuba.

Microsoft’s market value breached \$4trn, after the tech giant announced a deal with **OpenAI**. The agreement overhauls the AI firm’s ownership structure, lifting restrictions from its original non-profit status and allowing it to raise more investment as a for-profit company. It is seen as a step towards an eventual [stockmarket listing](#). Microsoft remains its largest external investor, with a 27% stake worth about \$135bn.

President Donald Trump arrived in **South Korea** where he will meet Lee Jae-myung, his South Korean counterpart, to finalise a trade agreement. Negotiators have been deadlocked over the details of a pledge made by South Korea to invest \$350bn in America. On

Thursday Mr Trump will [meet Xi Jinping](#), China's leader, to end his Asian tour.

Nvidia, a chipmaker, revealed plans to invest \$1bn in **Nokia**, a telecoms operator. The funding would allow Nokia to use [Nvidia's AI chips](#) to upgrade its wireless networks, making them faster and more efficient. Nokia's shares surged by 21% after the announcement. Nvidia also unveiled deals with CrowdStrike, a cybersecurity company, and Eli Lilly, a pharma giant, to help them integrate AI into their operations.

Israel launched air attacks on **Gaza city**, reportedly killing at least two Palestinians, after Binyamin Netanyahu accused Hamas of violating the [ceasefire deal](#). The Israeli prime minister ordered "forceful strikes", accusing the militant group of handing over the wrong remains of a hostage; in response Hamas said it would delay the return of another body.

At least 64 people were killed in **Brazil** during police raids targeting a drug cartel. Around 2,500 security officers were deployed in the operation, making it the biggest to take place in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Officials said at least 50 of those killed were "indicated by police as suspected of being criminals", but the UN expressed its dismay and called for "effective investigations".

Mr Trump's net approval rating fell to -18%, [according to The Economist's tracker](#). It is the lowest it has been since his inauguration and three percentage points lower than at any point during his first term. Mr Trump's decline in popularity has been steeper than that of any of his recent predecessors.

Figure of the day: \$1.2bn, the value of ramyeon that South Korea exported in 2024, an increase of 31% from the previous year. We explain why [hunger for the spicy dish](#) is intensifying.



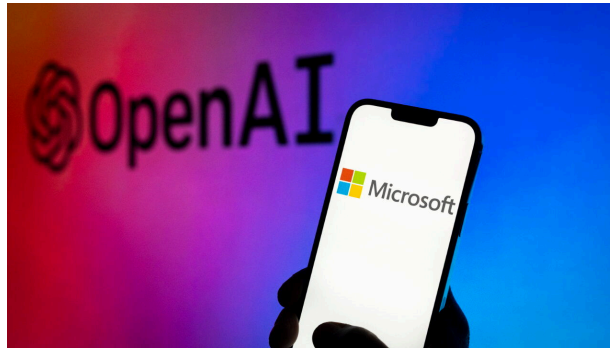
Photograph: Alamy

The Fed flies blind

The [Federal Reserve's](#) interest-rate decision on Wednesday will be a peculiar one. America's government has been shut down for nearly a month, blocking publication of nearly all the official data that the central bank typically relies on. Still, analysts are all but unanimous that the Fed will cut interest rates by 0.25 percentage points because it is worried about the jobs market.

What data are available are tough to interpret. One estimate from ADP, a payment-software company, indicates that employment shrank in September. Revelio Labs, a workforce-intelligence company, suggests the opposite—a strong rebound. Among the only official data to emerge during the shutdown were September's [inflation](#) figures, which were weaker than expected.

The term of Jerome Powell, the Fed's chair, ends in May. This week the treasury secretary, Scott Bessent, announced five finalists for the job, including several Trump picks who favour looser [monetary policy](#). That decision will matter far more than the outcome of the next few rate-setting meetings for determining where America's economy goes next.



Photograph: NurPhoto via Getty Images

Microsoft's cloud results to bring another ray of sunshine

Microsoft's earnings on Wednesday are likely to show fast growth in its Azure cloud business, reinforcing faith that the artificial-intelligence boom is more than hype. This week the tech giant announced a revised partnership with [OpenAI](#) that includes a commitment from the maker of ChatGPT to spend \$250bn on Azure by 2032.

Some [Wall Street](#) banks think Azure grew by 39% year on year in the last quarter. Investors will look out for signs that a broad range of business customers, not just OpenAI, is responsible for that growth.

Results from Alphabet on Wednesday are also expected to show healthy growth at Google Cloud Platform (GCP)—of around 32% year on year. It, too, is benefiting from a partnership with an AI lab. [Anthropic](#) has just announced a contract to rent GCP's chips that it says could be worth tens of billions of dollars. For now, cloud is king.

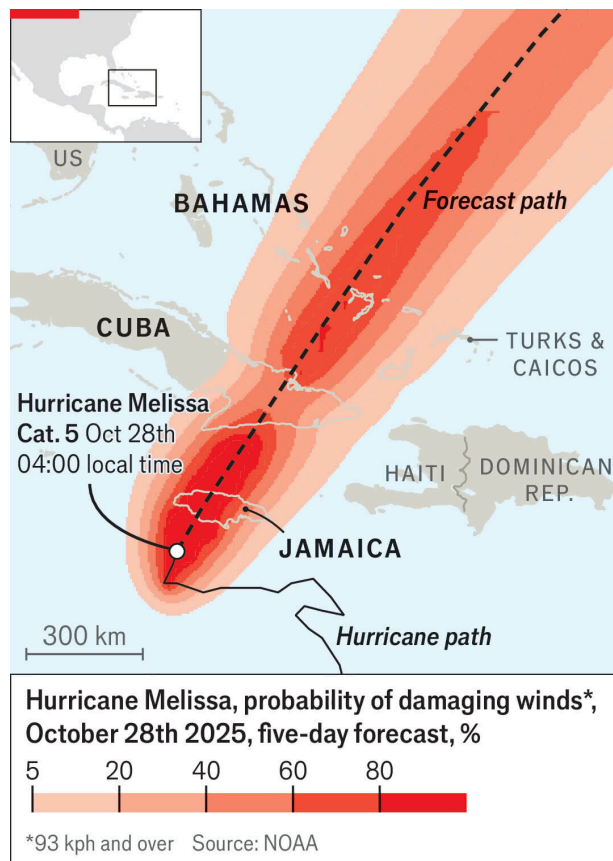


Photograph: Getty Images

Hurricane Melissa's wake of devastation

One of the most powerful Category 5 storms to ever hit a Caribbean island made landfall in south-west Jamaica on Tuesday. [Hurricane Melissa](#) brought life-threatening winds of more than 300kph and massive three-metre storm surges to popular tourist beaches in the resorts of Negril and Montego Bay, as well as flooding in the capital, Kingston.

Although Kingston escaped the worst of the storm, Melissa will probably devastate the productive agricultural region of St. Elizabeth Parish, known as the island's breadbasket. Residents of south-eastern [Cuba](#) are also bracing for impact from slow-moving Melissa, which is expected to be weakened on Wednesday by Jamaica's Blue Mountains, which rise 2,200m behind Kingston. Cuba can still expect at least a Category 2 or 3 storm with the potential to cause flooding, crop damage and power outages. The island's fragile electrical grid suffered an island-wide collapse after Hurricane Rafael last year.





Photograph: Alamy

The Netherlands returns to the polls

Voting opened in the Netherlands on Wednesday in its third general [election](#) in five years. In 2023 the anti-Muslim Party for Freedom of Geert Wilders won the most seats and—after lengthy coalition negotiations—led the country’s most right-wing government since the second world war.

It was divided and ineffective. After less than a year Mr Wilders withdrew his party from the coalition, [bringing down](#) the government in June. His party continues to lead the polls but lacks the necessary votes to secure a majority, and other parties refuse to govern with him.

Voters’ chief concerns are a housing shortage and sky-high [immigration](#). The Dutch are dissatisfied with the democratic process and the electorate is polarised. Still, congenial centrists like Henri Bontenbal of the Christian Democrats and Rob Jetten of the progressive liberal D66 party are doing well, as is Frans Timmermans of the GreenLeft-Labour alliance. With 15 parties currently in parliament, voters have plenty to choose from.



Photograph: Reuters

Australia's cricket winning streak

As the Women's Cricket World Cup reaches the semi-finals this week, the big question is: can anyone stop [Australia](#)? The team has won all six of their group matches. Their trademark has been resilience. After struggling against Pakistan, they won convincingly. Similarly, against England they turned a near-disaster into a comfortable six-wicket win.

In the first semi-final on Wednesday England is favoured to defeat [South Africa](#). On Thursday Australia will go up against the hosts, India. Two Herculean feats have given Australia a massive psychological advantage: chasing down a mammoth score set by India in the group stage and bowling South Africa out for just 97. An eighth World Cup championship, out of 13 tournaments, is within touching distance.



Illustration: The Economist

Daily quiz

We will serve you a new question each weekday. On **Friday** your challenge is to give us all five answers and tell us the theme. Email your responses (and your home city and country) by 1700 BST on Friday to [\[email protected\]](#). We'll pick three winners at random and crown them on Saturday.

Wednesday: Which university did Prince William and his wife, Kate, attend?

Tuesday: What British word for a toboggan is also a verb that describes the tactic of insulting sporting opponents?

*Talking much is a sign of vanity,
for the one who is lavish with
words is cheap in deeds.*

Sir Walter Raleigh