

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AP

François Bayrou, **France's** prime minister, lost a confidence vote 364-194 in the National Assembly. Mr Bayrou's fall is a blow to President Emmanuel Macron, who now must appoint his fifth prime minister in two years or [bow to pressure](#) to call a parliamentary election—an unappetising prospect with Marine Le Pen's hard-right National Rally leading in polls.

Democratic lawmakers released **Jeffrey Epstein's** birthday book, including a letter allegedly signed by **Donald Trump**. The document was subpoenaed from lawyers representing the late paedophile's estate by the House Oversight Committee. Mr Trump has repeatedly denied writing the note, given to Epstein in 2003 for his 50th birthday. The president has [backtracked](#) on a campaign promise to release “secret” Epstein files, fuelling conspiracy theories about their relationship.

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 inappropriately 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.

Rupert Murdoch secured his wish to have his eldest son Lachlan succeed him as head of his media empire, protecting its conservative bent. The Murdoch family has fought a [bitter](#) internecine battle over the family trust, which includes controlling shares of News Corp and Fox. In return for a reported \$1.1bn each, three of Lachlan's siblings will relinquish their interests.

Anglo American, a mining giant, is reportedly close to acquiring **Teck Resources**, a Canadian competitor, for around \$20bn. It would be the biggest mining deal in more than a decade. Other mega-deals have been mooted in recent years but have not gone ahead. Last year [Anglo American rejected a takeover from BHP](#), the world's biggest miner.

Pete Hegseth, America's defence secretary, made an unannounced visit to **Puerto Rico**, days after the Trump administration said it would deploy fighter jets to the island to crack down on the region's drug cartels. Last week America [conducted a military strike](#) on a boat in the Caribbean which Mr Trump said was full of drugs and "narco-terrorists" from Tren de Aragua, a Venezuelan gang.

Nepal lifted a **social-media ban** that had sparked protests in which 19 people died. Thousands gathered in Kathmandu, the capital, after the government blocked 26 platforms, including Facebook and YouTube. It introduced the ban last week after the sites' owners failed to register with the communications ministry. Lawmakers removed the ban to "address the demands of Gen z", said the communications minister.

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.](#)



Photograph: Getty Images

A big show for Apple

Apple will unveil a new generation of smartphones on Tuesday, the iPhone 17, which will include an ultra-thin model called “Air”. Along with upgrades to the Apple Watch and AirPods, the launch event is expected to kick off a multi-year cycle of phone-design overhauls, including eventually a foldable iPhone.

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: 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: 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

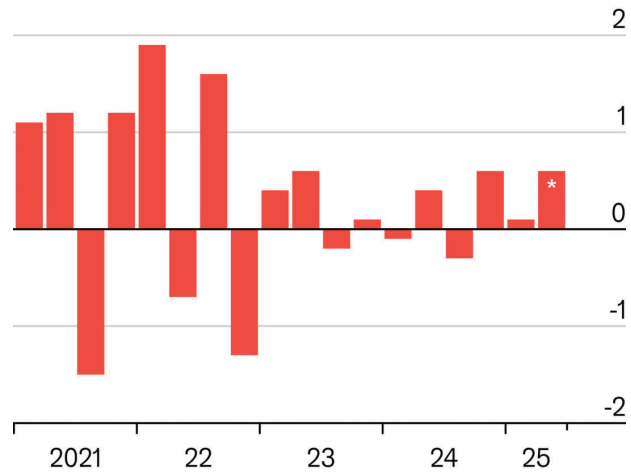
Problems old and new for South Africa

When South Africa's GDP figures are released on Tuesday, observers will be 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 may prove to be the calm before the storm. Nedbank, a bank, estimates that GDP grew 0.6% quarter on quarter in the second three months of the year, up from 0.1% in the first. Some of the rise was 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.

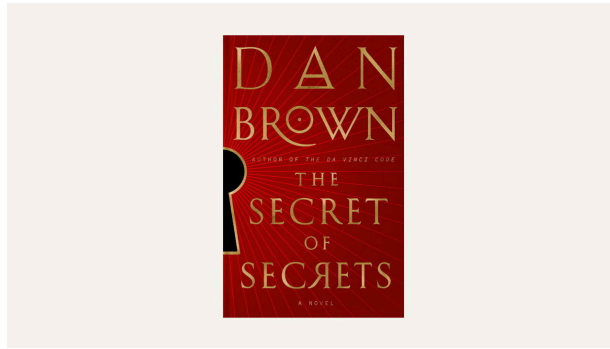
Calm for now

South Africa, GDP, % change on previous quarter



Sources: LSEG Workspace; Nedbank

*Estimate



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.

Leo Tolstoy