

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: EPA

President Donald Trump met Lee Jae Myung, his **South Korean** counterpart, during the final leg of his Asia tour. Mr Trump said that a trade deal between the two countries to ease American tariffs on South Korean goods was “pretty much finalised”. The two leaders also agreed to work more closely on artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies. On Thursday Mr Trump will [meet Xi Jinping](#), China’s leader.

Nvidia became the world’s first \$5trn company after reporting strong sales, including \$500bn in confirmed orders for its artificial-intelligence chips. Investors believe that upcoming trade talks between Donald Trump and Xi Jinping could help restore the firm’s access to China. The chipmaker’s stock has soared during the AI boom—it was valued at \$4trn just three months ago.

Israel said it would maintain its [ceasefire](#) in **Gaza** after air strikes killed more than 100 people overnight, including dozens of women and children, according to Palestinian officials. The raids followed the killing of an Israeli soldier, which the army blamed on Hamas. Both sides accused each other of breaking the truce, brokered by America to end the two-year war.

Hurricane Melissa made landfall on **Cuba's** southern coast on Wednesday as a Category 3 storm, bringing winds of almost 200kph and severe flooding. Authorities ordered around 500,000 people to evacuate. Earlier the hurricane [crossed Jamaica](#), with reports of extensive damage left in its wake. At its peak the storm brought winds of almost 300kmh, making it one of the most powerful hurricanes ever recorded.

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.

Pakistan's defence minister warned that his country could destroy **Afghanistan's Taliban** regime following the collapse of peace talks between the neighbours in Istanbul. The negotiations, brokered by Turkey and Qatar, broke down after Pakistan accused the Taliban of sheltering militants who attacked its forces. Despite a ceasefire agreed on October 19th, [cross-border clashes](#) have killed dozens over the past month.

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".

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.



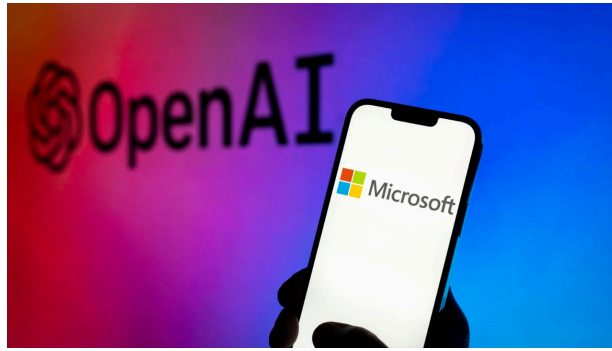
Photograph: Alamy

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.

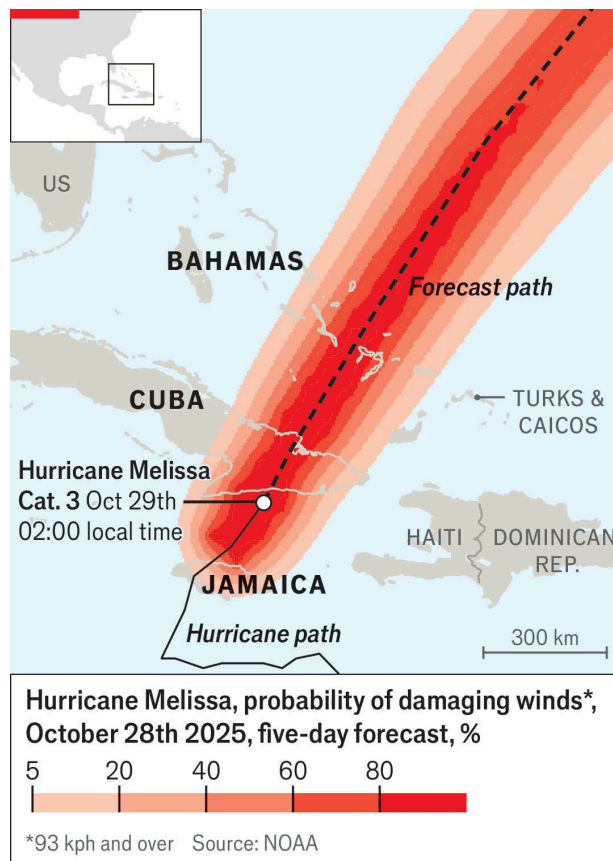


Photograph: Getty Images

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. On Wednesday Hurricane Melissa made landfall near the coastal town of Chivirico on [Cuba](#)'s southern coast as a Category 3 storm, weakened by Jamaica's Blue Mountains, which rise 2,200m behind Kingston. The storm still poses a threat of flooding, crop damage and power outages as it moves across the island. Cuba's fragile electrical grid suffered an island-wide collapse after Hurricane Rafael hit the island 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