

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Getty Images

Donald Trump said he will lower tariffs on China from 57% to 47% following a [meeting](#) with **Xi Jinping** in South Korea. In return China has promised to continue rare-earths exports, crack down on the fentanyl trade and restart purchases of soybeans, America's president said. He also announced plans to visit China in April.

America's [central bank](#) lowered its benchmark interest rate by a quarter of a percentage point, its second consecutive cut, to 3.75-4%. The Federal Reserve suggested it was concerned about risks confronting the labour market. Stock indices briefly sank, but largely recovered, after **Jerome Powell**, the Fed's chair, said that an interest-rate cut in December was "not a foregone conclusion".

The liberal D66 party seemed to have [won](#) the most seats in **the Netherlands'** general election. The vote followed the collapse in June of a short-lived, shambolic government in which the hard-right PVV, led by Geert Wilders, was the largest party. Exit polls give D66 27 of 150 seats. Rob Jetten, its leader, will almost certainly form a coalition and become prime minister.

Mr Trump said he had instructed the Department of War to immediately start **nuclear-weapons testing** for the first time since

1992. Separately, Vladimir Putin said Russia had successfully tested Poseidon, an underwater drone with “no existing interception methods”. The [nuclear-powered](#) and nuclear-capable weapon may have a range of 10,000km, a speed of 185km per hour, and could trigger tsunamis.

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 Thursday’s trade talks between Mr Trump and Mr Xi 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.

Boeing set aside \$4.9bn to cover the cost of fresh delays to its upcoming 777x jet, the first delivery of which has been pushed to 2027. It left the planemaker with a loss of \$5.3bn during the third quarter. Revenue rose nearly 30% year on year to \$23.3bn. Boeing is also pinning its hopes on an America-China rapprochement to revive demand.

French lawmakers voted to broaden the definition of **rape**, requiring that consent be obtained before sex. Currently rape and sexual assaults are defined as acts committed using “violence, coercion, threat or surprise”. It follows a [mass-rape trial that shocked France](#): 51 men were convicted of raping Gisèle Pelicot, who had been routinely drugged by her ex-husband.

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.



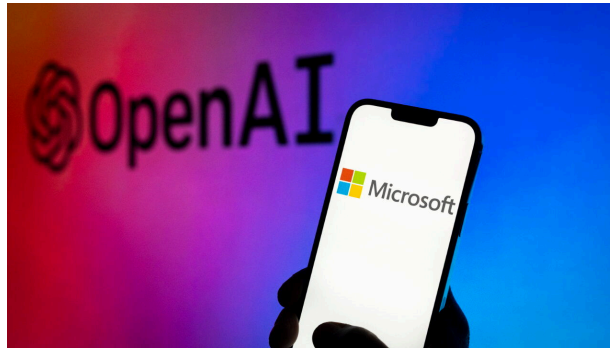
Photograph: Alamy

The Fed flies blind

The Federal Reserve's interest-rate decision on Wednesday was 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 were all but unanimous in expecting that the Fed would cut interest rates by 0.25 percentage points because it is worried about the jobs market.

The prediction proved accurate. The data remain murky. 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.

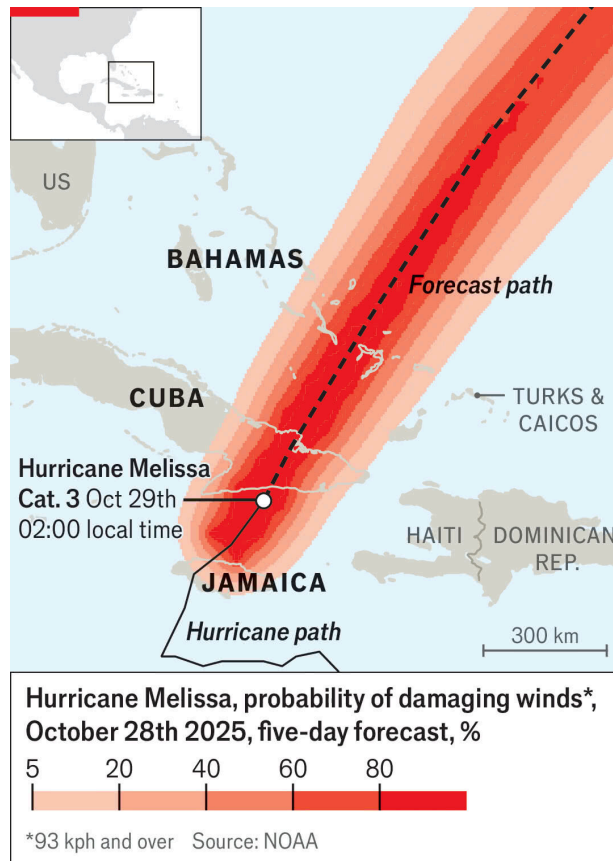


Photograph: Getty Images

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