

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AP

Global markets rallied after **America's** Senate voted to advance a bill to end the longest-ever [federal shutdown](#) on Sunday. The S&P 500 and the Nasdaq closed 1.5% and 2.3% higher respectively on Monday. Indices across Europe and Asia rose. The bill must still clear several procedural hurdles. The speaker of America's House of Representatives urged members to return to Washington "right now".

Donald Trump threatened to sue the BBC for \$1bn in damages if it did not retract a "defamatory" documentary that [appeared to selectively edit](#) one of his speeches, as well as apologise and pay compensation. Earlier the British public broadcaster's chair apologised for an "error of judgment" over the documentary, which was about the Capitol insurrection. The BBC's director-general resigned on Sunday.

America's Supreme Court rejected an attempt to overturn the legalisation of same-sex marriage. The case was brought by a Kentucky official, who refused to grant marriage licenses to gay couples on the grounds of religious freedom. The court ruled 5-4 against the appeal, thereby protecting the constitutional right that has come under [increased attacks](#) by Republican lawmakers.

A court in **Paris** released **Nicolas Sarkozy** from prison after the former French president had served just 20 days of his five-year sentence. Mr Sarkozy was [convicted](#) in September of “criminal conspiracy” in the illicit financing of his 2007 campaign by Muammar Qaddafi, the late Libyan dictator. He will await the verdict of his appeal from home under judicial supervision.

At least eight people were killed and 20 injured after a vehicle exploded near Red Fort, a historic landmark and popular tourist spot in **Delhi, India's** capital. Officials are yet to determine the cause of the blast; government buildings, train stations and a nearby airport were put on high alert. Amit Shah, the home minister, said it was “premature to draw any conclusions”.

Thailand suspended its American-brokered ceasefire agreement with **Cambodia** after two Thai soldiers were injured by a landmine near its border with Cambodia. The ceasefire deal, which was signed on October 26th, had set out steps to end a [senseless border war](#) between the two countries. Anutin Charnvirakul, Thailand’s prime minister, said “everything must be stopped.” This will include a planned prisoner exchange.

“Flesh” by **David Szalay**, a Hungarian-English writer, won the **Booker prize**. The novel chronicles the life of István, a lonely Hungarian man who grows up in poverty and becomes wealthy as an adult. The prize’s organisers described the book as “a meditation on class, power, intimacy, migration and masculinity”. This year’s judges included Roddy Doyle, a former winner, and Sarah Jessica Parker, an actress.

Figure of the day: £9bn (\$11.5bn), the value of Britain’s legal-services exports last year, up from £6.3bn in 2020. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: EPA

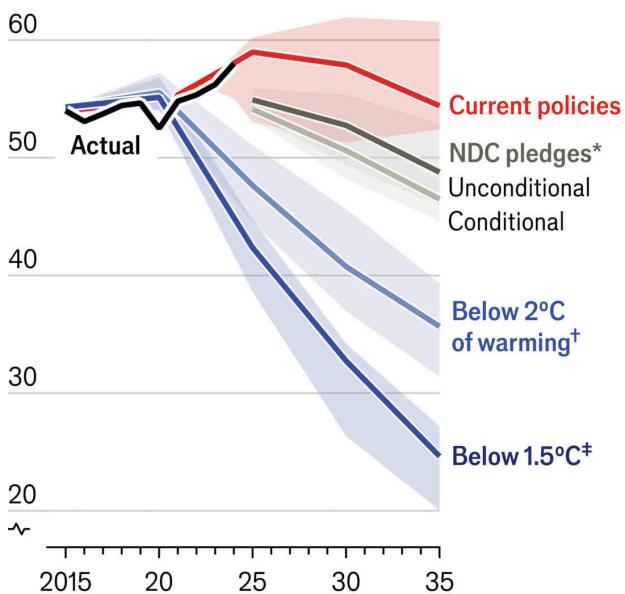
Brazil hosts a “COP of truth” in the Amazon

In 1992, Brazil hosted the Rio “Earth Summit” which produced the UN’s convention on climate change and its system of annual meetings. This year’s conference, COP30, returns to Brazil—but to Belém, a city in the Amazon. The hosts hope that being amid one of the world’s most vital ecosystems will promote cooperation.

Last week the UN admitted, for the first time, that the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels is [no longer achievable](#). Brazil’s president promised a “COP of truth” at which countries actually delivered on past promises. These include reducing emissions and transitioning away from fossil fuels more quickly, and the commitment made at COP29 to provide poor countries with at least \$300bn for climate mitigation and adaptation by 2035. But such arguments have snarled climate negotiations for three decades. And appetite for climate action in America and Europe has [dwindled drastically](#). Progress will require far more than symbolic scenery.

Off-target targets

Greenhouse-gas emission trajectories,
gigatonnes of CO₂ equivalent



*Nationally Determined Contributions
under the Paris Agreement

†A 66% chance by 2100

‡A 50% chance by 2100 (at least a 33%
chance over the course of the next century)

Source: UNEP Emissions Gap Report, 2025



Photograph: Alamy

Syria's rehabilitation abroad

It was a scene unthinkable just a year ago. On Monday [Ahmed al-Sharaa](#), the Syrian president, met Donald Trump in Washington. As recently as December Mr Sharaa had a \$10m American bounty on his head for his role as an al-Qaeda commander. Now he is the first Syrian president to visit the White House.

Ahead of the visit, America's Treasury removed the Syrian president and his spy chief from its sanctions list. On Monday it said it would suspend some restrictions under the Caesar Act, a 2019 law that placed tough sanctions on Syria's construction, energy and finance sectors, for 180 days. Fully overturning the bill requires approval from Congress, which is currently weighing the measure.

At home, some Syrians are growing frustrated with Mr Sharaa's insular rule and [tight inner circle](#). Still, many admire his transformation abroad.



Photograph: Getty Images

India's poorest state goes to the polls

India's ambition to become rich depends heavily on Bihar, the eastern state that is home to about a tenth of its population. Per-person income there is only 66,000 rupees (\$800) a year, less than a third of the national average. That makes the [state's election](#), which concludes on Tuesday, hugely consequential. The result, due on Friday, will also test the popularity of the Bharatiya Janata Party, which runs India and is part of the ruling coalition in Bihar. And it will reveal how well the opposition can unite.

On the campaign trail politicians made vague promises about bringing growth to the state, but they also played up caste identities, which are particularly entrenched in Bihar. Parties have picked candidates according to their ability to rally particular communities, rather than for their ideas for development or their performance on the stump. It is an old pattern, and one reason the state remains India's poorest.



Photograph: Booker Prize Foundation

The winner of the Booker prize

After judging the Booker prize in 1985, Joanna Lumley, a British actor, concluded that the “so-called bitchy world of acting” was a “tea party compared with the piranha-infested waters of publishing”. (Ms Lumley had described Keri Hulme’s “The Bone People” as “over-my-dead-body stuff”. The book won anyway.)

This year’s judges—who include Roddy Doyle, a former winner, and Sarah Jessica Parker, another bibliophile actor—no doubt had many lively debates and disagreements about the novels in the running for the coveted annual award for fiction in English.

Bookmakers had Kiran Desai’s “The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny” and Andrew Miller’s “The Land in Winter”, as the favourites to win. In the end the prize was awarded to “Flesh” by David Szalay, a Hungarian-English writer. The novel chronicles the life of István, a lonely Hungarian man who grows up in poverty and becomes wealthy as an adult. Organisers described the book as “a meditation on class, power, intimacy, migration and masculinity”.



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 GMT on Friday to [\[email protected\]](mailto:). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Monday: What city is home to the La Brea tar pits?

*The mark of mediocrity is to look
for precedent.*

Norman Mailer