

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AP

Global markets continued to rally after the Senate voted to advance a bill to end **America's** longest-ever **federal shutdown** on Sunday. In response to the breakthrough, the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq opened 1% and 1.6% higher respectively. In Europe the Stoxx 600 rose by as much as 1.5% before markets closed, marking its best gain since May, following similar rises across Asia.

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.

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.

Typhoon Fung-wong killed at least eight people and forced more than 1.4m to flee their homes in the **Philippines**. Heavy rain caused floods and landslides, and left almost 3m people without power across the country. Several airports remain closed. The super-typhoon was downgraded to a typhoon on Monday morning. It is forecast to hit **Taiwan** on Wednesday.

Singapore announced the world’s first **green-fuel** tax from next year. Air passengers leaving the city-state will be charged between S\$1.00 (\$0.77) and S\$41.60, depending on flight distance and cabin class. The tax revenue will be used to buy [sustainable fuel](#), which Singapore hopes will make up 3-5% of all fuel used in its airports by 2030.

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

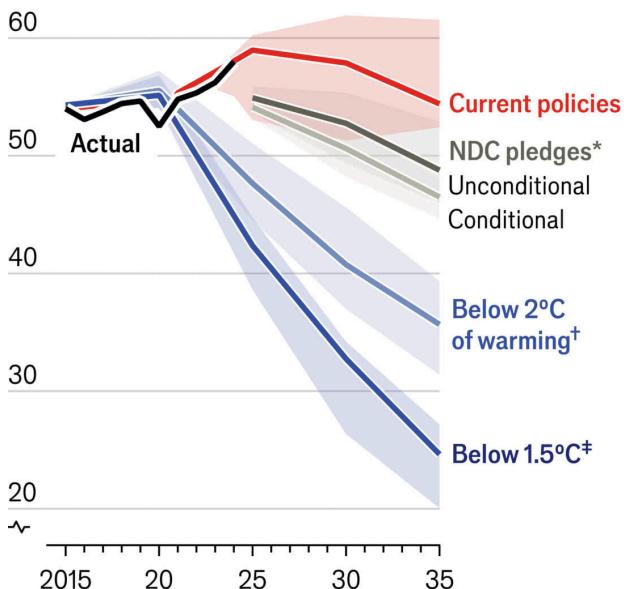
Brazil hosts a “COP of truth” in the Amazon

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 will be a scene unthinkable just a year ago. On Monday [Ahmed al-Sharaa](#), the Syrian president, will meet 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 set to become 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. Congress is also debating a repeal of the Caesar Act, a 2019 law that placed tough sanctions on Syria's construction, energy and finance sectors. The Senate has already voted to rescind it (the House has not).

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

Who will win 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. The winner will be revealed at a ceremony on Monday.

Bookmakers have Kiran Desai’s “The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny”, which tells the story of two young Indians trying to make it in America, as the frontrunner. (Ms Desai previously won the Booker in 2006 for “The Inheritance of Loss”.) Another favourite is Andrew Miller’s “The Land in Winter”, which follows two pregnant neighbours during one of the coldest winters on record in Britain.



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