

THE WORLD THIS WEEK

The world this year 2025

2025 saw Donald Trump's second term profoundly reshape domestic and international politics, withdrawing from climate accords, tightening border security, and dismantling diversity programs. His "Liberation Day" tariffs caused significant stock market drops, though the global economy remained resilient. A major AI industrial policy was launched, featuring a \$500bn "Stargate project" and government stake in Intel, while Chinese firm DeepSeek's low-cost AI model caused investor doubts. Geopolitical events included a fragile Gaza ceasefire orchestrated by Trump, an Israeli bombing of Iran, and increased terrorist attacks globally. Regional conflicts intensified in Sudan and DR Congo, alongside a severe India-Pakistan military clash. Domestic upheavals in America included a government shutdown, the ousting of South Korea's president, Japan's first female prime minister, and an earthquake in Myanmar. Political changes also occurred in Europe, and the US economy remained strong, with the Federal Reserve cutting interest rates late in the year.

The weekly cartoon

This section directs readers to dig deeper into the subject of the week's cartoon, which centers on America's support for Ukraine. It lists related articles suggesting that America gives Ukraine hope, Europe must pay to save Ukraine, and Vladimir Putin lacks a winning plan. The cartoon is part of The Economist's weekly editorial content.

LEADERS

China proved its strengths in 2025?and Donald Trump helped

2025 was a strong year for China and Xi Jinping, largely due to Donald Trump's policies. China resisted Trump's tariffs, showcasing its industrial dominance in manufacturing, green technology, and AI, even leading in many scientific research fields. Trump's focus on bilateral tariffs and his undermining of American science and immigration played into China's hands, alienating allies and hindering US innovation. While China holds a short-term advantage due to its "chokeholds" on global supply chains, its rigid politics and economic issues like deflation and overcapacity could stifle its dynamism long-term. The article suggests that Trump's ethno-nationalist approach risks squandering America's greatest advantages?universal values and alliances?while China's challenges may stem from its lack of internal change.

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Two months in, the Gaza ceasefire is floundering

Two months after its signing, the Gaza ceasefire is failing, leaving Gazans in dire conditions and the world's interest waning. The first phase, which included a halt to fighting, hostage-prisoner exchanges, and some aid, has stalled, with Hamas refusing to disarm. Donald Trump's promised "board of peace" for post-war Gaza has not materialized, and no country has committed to an international stabilization force. Instead, focus has shifted to building "planned communities" in Israeli-controlled Gaza, which would only house a tiny fraction of the population and signal the broader peace plan's failure. The article urges America and its allies to act faster, appoint necessary leadership, and ensure adequate aid and media access to Gaza, warning that the ceasefire's failure undermines US credibility in other peace efforts, like Ukraine.

The Economist's country of the year for 2025

The Economist annually selects a country that has improved the most, politically or economically. This year's contenders included Canada for electing a technocrat and resisting US pressure, Moldova for rejecting pro-Russian influence, South Korea for recovering from a coup attempt, and Brazil for punishing a former president's coup attempt and slowing Amazon deforestation. The two strongest candidates were Argentina, for its impressive economic reforms under Javier Milei, and Syria, for transforming from a brutal dictatorship to a more peaceful, functional state under Ahmed al-Sharaa. Despite Milei's flaws and Syria's lingering challenges, the editorial awards Country of the Year to Syria, citing its dramatic shift towards peace and relative normalcy, which has encouraged millions of refugees to return.

What Novo Nordisk, OpenAI and Pop Mart have in common

Novo Nordisk, OpenAI, and Pop Mart illustrate that rapid success brings significant challenges beyond just meeting demand. The first pitfall is scaling production to match unpredictable, soaring demand; OpenAI, for instance, faces a colossal \$1.4trn spending commitment for AI infrastructure. Second, underinvestment can foster shadow markets, as seen with Novo Nordisk's weight-loss jabs, where "compounding" pharmacies replicated its drug during shortages, and Pop Mart battling counterfeit dolls. Finally, overnight success creates a "first-mover disadvantage," allowing competitors like Eli Lilly and Google to learn from pioneers' triumphs and failures, offering improved products or leveraging existing infrastructure to quickly overtake the initial leaders. The article concludes that enduring success stems from a difficult-to-replicate business model that continuously evolves, rather than a single hit product.

Your Well Informed guide to surviving Christmas

This "Well Informed" guide offers evidence-based advice for navigating Christmas indulgence. To manage alcohol, it suggests building muscle mass, choosing clear spirits, sipping slowly, alternating with water or sports drinks, and stopping drinking before bed to avoid sleep disruption. For festive food, incorporating viscous fiber from almonds, oats, or apples can block

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cholesterol absorption. The guide also advises against sugary fruit juices in favor of whole fruit or fruitcake, as consuming sugar with fats, protein, and fiber prevents glucose spikes. Finally, it acknowledges the psychological upsides of light drinking for sociability and stress reduction, but emphasizes moderation, including moderation itself, to enjoy the holidays responsibly.

How the young can make sense of the news

The Economist Educational Foundation, an independent charity, is helping young people develop critical thinking and media literacy skills in an age of misinformation and polarization. Through lessons on topical issues, such as gun crime or luxury goods, the Foundation encourages students to discuss complex subjects, evaluate sources, and disagree respectfully. It aims to reach 1 million schoolchildren by the end of 2026, focusing on low-income backgrounds, with programs like Topical Talk and the "Leadership for Change" prize. The initiative is praised by teachers for re-energizing their classrooms and by former participants for fostering confidence and respect in public discourse, underscoring its vital role in preparing informed citizens for democracy.

LETTERS

Europeans should be worried by America's new national security strategy

Readers express concern over America's new national security strategy under Donald Trump, seeing it as a continuation of long-standing US impatience with European defense spending. Letters highlight Europe's historical "freeloading" and inadequate response to threats like Russia's aggression, despite Trump's perceived brashness. Some argue that Trump's strategy, which includes cultivating internal resistance to European leadership, creates a pincer movement, urging European decision-makers to strengthen institutions and avoid political expediency. One writer draws a parallel between Trump, Xi Jinping, and Vladimir Putin, suggesting their actions align with Orwell's "1984" in creating perpetual states of emergency. Another letter criticizes The Economist's recommendation for Europe to pivot to services in response to Chinese trade, arguing it would deepen strategic dependencies and hinder rearmament efforts. Other correspondence covers word usage, political party comparisons, media misinformation, the decline of paper, Santa and AI, and interpretations of Homer's "The Odyssey" and "The Wizard of Oz."

UNITED STATES

Will California try to block Hollywood's next megadeal?

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States are increasingly asserting their antitrust powers, with California's Attorney-General, Rob Bonta, emerging as a potential spoiler for Hollywood's next megadeal. This trend follows successful state-led challenges against mergers, like Kroger's acquisition of Albertsons, which ultimately scuttled the deal despite federal action. Currently, Netflix and Paramount are vying to acquire Warner Bros Discovery, a transaction that federal regulators and President Trump are scrutinizing. However, Mr. Bonta, a Democrat considering a gubernatorial run, has expressed skepticism about further consolidation in key markets and may challenge any merger, even if approved federally, appealing to powerful Hollywood unions concerned about fewer buyers for their work. States like Colorado are also strengthening their antitrust laws and enforcement, signaling a growing willingness to act independently of Washington.

Toll roads are spreading in America

Toll roads are proliferating across America due to a decline in petrol tax revenue, which traditionally funded highway maintenance. States like Indiana are exploring raising tolls on existing interstates, a move that could be widely adopted if successful. The original federal ban on tolls for interstates was based on drivers already paying through fuel taxes, but fuel-efficient cars and political resistance to raising gas taxes have created a massive deficit in road maintenance funds. Tolls are seen as a fairer way to fund infrastructure, as out-of-state drivers contribute to road upkeep, and they also help alleviate congestion through variable pricing, as demonstrated by California's State Route 91. While many tolling projects enjoy bipartisan support, populist Republicans, including Donald Trump, have begun to oppose them, advocating for free roads and public acquisition of private toll assets.

More schools in America are adopting a four-day week

More than 2,100 schools across America are adopting four-day weeks, a trend expanding beyond rural areas, with proponents citing benefits for attendance, behavior, and mental health. Teachers and parents largely favor the schedule, which often extends the remaining four days by less than an hour. While some studies show minimal impact on academic results, others suggest students may fall two to seven weeks behind. However, educators report improved classroom atmosphere and reduced discipline problems, though overall morale and attendance don't always differ significantly from full-time schools. The policy offers modest budget savings but is primarily motivated by teacher recruitment and retention challenges, though broader studies indicate it doesn't significantly improve retention in rural areas, while concerns remain for children in single-parent families who may lose a day of childcare.

The race for an AI Jesus is on

The app "Text with Jesus," built with OpenAI's ChatGPT, allows users to engage with a virtual Jesus avatar for personal and theological counsel. With 150,000 users, it's popular in major American and South American cities, despite criticism for being "palatable to the itching ears of 21st-century users" and not unequivocally affirming Jesus's divinity. Pope Leo and others have

cautioned against inferring wisdom from aggregated data, reflecting wider concerns about AI's role in spiritual guidance. The app also offers consultations with other biblical figures, including an optional Satan feature for subscribers.

A vote against gerrymandering shows why political courage is rare

Republican state senators in Indiana demonstrated rare political courage by rejecting a bill to redraw congressional districts for partisan benefit, despite pressure from Donald Trump and threats of primary challenges. Their decision, driven by common sense and constituent opposition, highlights a principled stand against gerrymandering, a practice intensifying polarization and cynicism in American politics. The article draws parallels to John F. Kennedy's "Profiles in Courage," noting that while expediency often serves principle, genuine courage in public life is increasingly scarce, especially when politicians succumb to party pressures. The Indiana senators' actions, however, offer a hopeful example of dissent, suggesting that principled opposition may become more common in Trump's second term, particularly as primary deadlines approach.

THE AMERICAS

An oil boom where the Amazon meets the Atlantic

Oiapoque, a sleepy town in Brazil, is set to become an oil boomtown after Petrobras received a license to explore for oil in the Equatorial Margin, a region rich in biodiversity near the Amazon estuary. President Lula pushed for this decision to revive Brazil's depleting oil reserves, despite his green platform, aiming to secure trillions in revenue and create 350,000 jobs. Locals are largely enthusiastic, hoping for economic development, but environmentalists and some indigenous groups worry about the high risks of drilling in a sensitive ecological area.

Javier Milei loosens his grip on the peso

Argentine President Javier Milei has cautiously allowed the peso to float more freely, widening its monthly movement band to combat overvaluation and aid foreign reserve accumulation. This move, welcomed by the IMF and investors, caused Argentine stocks and dollar bonds to jump, despite earlier insistence from Milei not to alter the exchange-rate regime. The previous policy of keeping the peso strong hindered exports and depleted reserves, prompting US Treasury backing to avert a financial crisis before midterm elections. While a full float is yet to come, this adjustment is a significant step in Milei's economic reforms.

ASIA

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Can Australia defend itself against jihadist murderers?

Australia is grappling with a surge in antisemitic attacks following a deadly terrorist shooting at Sydney's Bondi Beach, which killed 15 people at a Hanukkah celebration. The attack, carried out by a father and son with links to Islamic State, revealed that one perpetrator was known to intelligence services, raising questions about prevention. The pair had recently traveled to Mindanao in the Philippines, a known area for Islamist militancy. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has pledged to toughen hate-speech laws, enhance gun controls, and establish a national firearms register, as Jewish leaders demand stronger action against rising antisemitism and public sentiment towards Jewish people declines.

Why has the border between the Koreas fallen silent?

The border between North and South Korea has fallen silent, reflecting a new conciliatory approach by South Korean President Lee Jae Myung. Lee, a left-winger, ordered the cessation of K-pop and news broadcasts into the North, prompting Pyongyang to turn off its own loudspeakers. South Korea's state spy agency also stopped its radio broadcasts, significantly reducing uncensored information entering the North, which the regime views as a major threat. This gesture aims to coax North Korean leader Kim Jong Un back to negotiations, though Kim, backed by China and Russia, seems more focused on extracting concessions from America, especially with the prospect of a second Trump-Kim summit.

The botched response to a devastating storm infuriates Indonesians

Cyclone Senyar's devastation in Sumatra, which killed over 1,000, damaged 150,000 homes, and displaced nearly 1 million, has infuriated Indonesians due to the government's botched response. President Prabowo Subianto's administration declined to formally designate it a national disaster, impeding foreign aid, and insisted Indonesia didn't need outside help, leading to slow and poorly coordinated relief efforts. Environmentalists blame deforestation for worsening the floods, pointing to widespread forest loss for palm-oil plantations and illegal logging, and question the government's sincerity despite suspensions of some firms. As climate change increases extreme weather events, Indonesia's vulnerability and inadequate disaster preparedness are a growing concern.

CHINA

Jimmy Lai's judgment day

Jimmy Lai, Hong Kong's most famous media mogul and a British citizen, was found guilty of foreign collusion and sedition, facing potential life imprisonment, a verdict few expected to be otherwise given the high conviction rate in national-security trials. His trial highlighted his long history of supporting democratic causes and outspoken newspapers like Apple Daily, which

closed after his 2020 arrest. The judgment claimed Lai sought to undermine Hong Kong and Beijing, continuing "international lobbying" even after the national-security law (NSL) was introduced, a claim his defense disputed. With recent low election turnout, a devastating fire, and increased scrutiny on international media, his case is a stark symbol of Beijing's tightening control over Hong Kong and the erosion of its civil liberties, drawing criticism from abroad but little action from leaders keen to avoid provoking China.

The Christmas-industrial complex centres on Yiwu

Yiwu, in eastern China, is the world's Christmas capital, with vast wholesale markets dedicated to festive decorations, though it quiets down by December as goods are shipped globally. China's record \$1trn trade surplus in 2025 was partly fueled by these exports, but US imports of Christmas trinkets from China declined by \$940m this year due to Donald Trump's tariffs. Traders are shifting focus to European markets, with exports to Germany and the Netherlands rising, and some use creative tactics like dismembering goods for reassembly in Southeast Asia to circumvent American tariffs. The city's merchants, who also produce decorations for other festivals, express frustration with unpredictable US trade policies and the global impact of the war in Ukraine and Middle East tensions.

MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

Donald Trump's peace plan is faltering in the chaos of Gaza

Donald Trump's ambitious peace plan for Gaza is faltering amidst the strip's chaos, two months after a ceasefire, with American officials maintaining a public optimism despite grim realities on the ground. Rafah, once a major city, lies devastated, and Israel's engineering projects for tunnel destruction and "planned communities" are viewed skeptically by IDF officers. The crucial second phase of the plan ? deploying an International Stabilisation Force, establishing a technocratic government, and disarming Hamas ? has not materialized, leaving Hamas reasserting control and reconstruction stalled. Disagreements between Israel and America over implementation, particularly Turkey's inclusion in the ISF, are deepening, with Trump losing patience and set to press Netanyahu for concessions.

Just 74 intensive-care beds remain in Gaza

Gaza's health-care system is shattered, with only 18 of 35 hospitals partially functioning, leaving just 74 intensive-care and 215 emergency-room beds for a devastated population. Essential supplies are scarce, MRI machines are non-existent in northern Gaza, and basic infrastructure like sanitation and electricity is unreliable. Over 1,700 health-care workers were killed during the war, and thousands of patients await evacuation for critical treatments, with many dying while waiting. Israel's "dual use" restrictions prevent entry of vital medical equipment, and telemedicine, while offering some relief, cannot replace the need for rebuilding

homes and schools to address the severe trauma suffered by every child. The enormous task of reconstruction, estimated at \$7bn-8bn, is stalled by the ongoing political instability and the unresolved issue of Hamas's disarmament.

Ethiopia wants to build Africa's biggest airport

Ethiopian Airlines plans to build Africa's largest airport near Addis Ababa, aiming to cement Ethiopia's status as the continent's air-travel hub and support national development. The \$10bn project, expected to handle 110m passengers annually, is backed by ET and the African Development Bank, attracting interest from America and China. Despite ET's strong profitability and a compelling business case due to its current airport's strain and Addis Ababa's high altitude, the project faces skepticism due to the massive debt, ongoing civil strife, and increasing competition from Gulf airlines and Istanbul airport. Government interference in ET's affairs, a shift from its historical operational independence, also raises concerns about the project's long-term viability and potential displacement of local populations.

EUROPE

Ukraine scrabbles for handholds against Russia's massive assault

Ukraine achieved a rare tactical victory by liberating most of Kupiansk from Russian forces, demonstrating creative thinking and effective drone warfare. However, elsewhere, Russia is making slow but steady gains in Donbas and Zaporizhia, advancing faster than at any point since the war began, due to its superior manpower and materiel. Ukrainian forces are retreating, facing significant casualties and a struggle to replace them, while Russian drone units effectively strike logistics behind the front lines. Despite the grim overall outlook and the prospect of continued Russian pressure until February, the success in Kupiansk offers a glimpse of Ukrainian strength when organized.

Italy is using the Winter Olympics to appeal to the ultra-wealthy

Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo are leveraging the 2026 Winter Olympics to attract ultra-wealthy individuals to Italy, a strategy bolstered by tax breaks for the rich. Milan, hosting skating events, has seen a boom in luxury clubs and private schools, but also soaring property prices and construction scandals that have stalled housing projects. Cortina, a ritzy Alpine resort, is a key partner in this effort. The influx of "ultra-high-net-worth individuals" is transforming these cities, leading to a complex mix of economic growth and challenges like gentrification and strained local services.

Why German cities feel like war zones on New Year's Eve

German cities transform into "war zones" on New Year's Eve due to intense firework battles,

causing fatalities, injuries, fires, and overwhelming emergency services. Despite polls showing most Germans favor extending the year-round ban on fireworks to the three days around New Year's, many politicians consider it an inviolable national tradition. Much of the damage is caused by illegal "Kugelbomben" smuggled from neighboring countries. While campaigners like Environmental Action Germany push for a ban, the federal law and resistance from some politicians make it difficult, though the Netherlands' recent decision to outlaw private fireworks offers some hope for change.

Charlemagne

European gastronationalism is thriving, demonstrating that while the continent is united by treaties, it remains divided by recipes, often more passionately than by political issues. Italy's agriculture minister, Francesco Lollobrigida, epitomized this by expressing outrage over ready-made carbonara sauce in the European Parliament containing cream, highlighting a common disdain for perceived culinary imitations. This phenomenon, where Europeans denigrate neighbors' cuisines as a sign of patriotic virility, reflects historical stereotypes and cultural differences in cooking styles and ingredients, particularly between the butter-using North and olive-oil-loving South. The EU's protection of "geographic indications" for foods like feta and Parmesan further entrenches these culinary divisions, underscoring that even in a globalized world, food remains a powerful, if sometimes comical, marker of national identity.

BRITAIN

How to heal the trauma from Northern Ireland's killings

Northern Ireland continues to grapple with the trauma of the Troubles, 27 years after the Good Friday Agreement, with government attempts at reconciliation failing to provide closure. The new Labour government plans to ditch the previous Conservative administration's de facto amnesty, instead focusing on "information recovery" through commissions to reinvestigate deaths, though prosecutions will be rare and limited to two-year sentences. This shift comes amid ongoing divisions, with unionists fearing retrospective legitimization of violence and some ex-paramilitaries glamorizing their past actions, perpetuating cycles of violence and myth-making. The high-profile acquittal of "Soldier F" for Bloody Sunday killings, despite judicial acknowledgment of unjustified actions, further highlights the deep-seated conflict over historical narratives and the immense challenge of achieving true reconciliation.

Britons are becoming obsessed with pet photography

Britons are increasingly obsessed with pet photography, posting three times as many photos of their pets on Instagram as of their partners or themselves, with demand for professional pet portraits surging, especially before Christmas. This trend is linked to the growing affluence of "pet parents," with a higher percentage of new cat owners being managers or professionals, and

a greater number of pet social media profiles in wealthier London boroughs. Professional pet photographers face unique challenges, including managing unpredictable animal subjects. The phenomenon reflects deeper societal shifts, as pets become integral family members and luxury consumer spending on them rises.

A portrait of Britain's aristocrats

Britain's aristocracy, though numerically small (794 hereditary peers), retains a significant cultural and physical presence, owning a third of the land and influencing language. However, their political power is ending, with the House of Lords set to remove its last hereditary peers in 2026, marking the close of a thousand years of influence. Modern aristocrats, like the 12th Earl of Sandwich, now grapple with financial pressures, turning their stately homes into public attractions to cover costs. While critics decry their historical privilege and societal snobbery, many Britons appreciate the preservation of national heritage embodied by these grand homes, supported by organizations like Historic Houses and the National Trust.

All sides have learned a lot from Extinction Rebellion's co-founder

Roger Hallam, co-founder of Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil, has influenced a broad spectrum of protest movements, with his methods of mass civil disobedience and deliberate arrests becoming a "omnistrategy" across the left. Hallam, recently released from prison, advocates for martyrs to amplify causes, a tactic now mirrored by the right, which is developing its own "martyrs" like Tommy Robinson and Lucy Connolly. This "Roger Hallam extended universe" has shifted street politics, making "catastrophism" a potent selling point for both climate activism and anti-immigration movements. The article suggests that while Westminster politicians often dismiss street protests, these movements have proven effective in influencing policy and exposing the fragility of traditional political structures, pushing Britain towards a millenarian turn where radical ideas become rational.

CHRISTMAS SPECIALS

A journey into the world's most mysterious rainforest

The Congo basin, the world's second-largest tropical rainforest, remains largely mysterious but is yielding startling discoveries in climate science, ecology, and archaeology. Researchers have mapped its vast peatlands, a major carbon sink, and are using lidar technology to study its unique biodiversity, including forest elephants as "ecosystem engineers." The basin's mysterious forest clearings, serve as ecological meeting places for diverse animals. Additionally, archaeological finds, like Neolithic tools and salt pans, are shedding light on the Bantu expansion and ancient human migrations. However, this vital "green lung" is under severe threat from logging, mining, oil, and population growth, with deforestation rates raising concerns that it may soon emit more carbon than it absorbs.

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What The Economist discovered at dating bootcamp

Dating manuals, from ancient Ovid to modern "pick-up artist" guides, are a peculiar genre primarily aimed at men, reflecting persistent male struggles with social interaction. This is partly due to women generally being more emotionally intelligent and selective, as evidenced by a famous 1978 experiment on sexual propositions. A Miami dating bootcamp, costing \$10,000, teaches men formulaic techniques like "DHV" (demonstrate higher value) and "negging" (backhanded compliments) to attract women. While critics condemn its misogyny, the structured approach, forcing men to practice social skills, can improve confidence and lead to more interactions. The article suggests that modern dating advice is evolving, with a growing emphasis on listening to women's individual needs rather than relying on one-size-fits-all formulas.

How humankind's 10m-year love affair with booze might end

Humankind's 10-million-year love affair with alcohol, which shaped human history from our ancestors' foraging for fermented fruit to the cohesion of early societies, may be ending. Our unique ability to process ethanol evolved when apes descended from trees and found fallen fruit. Later, intentionally brewed alcohol fostered social bonds and cooperation in large groups, amplifying pleasure and reducing anxiety by triggering endorphins and neurotransmitters. However, alcohol abuse causes 1.8m deaths annually, and recent studies suggest even moderate drinking is harmful, leading to its classification as a Group 1 carcinogen. Sales are declining in rich countries, especially among the young, who prefer social media and gaming. The rise of weight-loss drugs like Ozempic, which reduce alcohol's appeal, and the development of non-alcoholic and "functional" drinks offering similar mood-altering effects without the downsides, point to a soberer future.

The tariffs that nearly stole Christmas

Donald Trump's 2025 "Liberation Day" tariffs, particularly the 145% rate on Chinese imports, nearly ruined Christmas for American toymakers, who rely heavily on Chinese manufacturing. The tariffs caused stock market swoons and forced toy firms to absorb costs or lay off staff, leading to supply chain chaos. While a 90-day pause offered a reprieve, many businesses like The Queen's Treasures faced bankruptcy. The situation highlights how global trade has shifted, with most toy manufacturing moving out of the US due to cost, and how firms like Lego are now building factories closer to customers, partly influenced by new protectionism. Toymakers continue to adapt by exploring other markets and circumvention tactics, with the Supreme Court expected to rule on the legality of Trump's tariffs, potentially offering a significant refund to affected businesses.

From honeycomb curry to blood fry: India's untouchable cooking

India's Dalit cuisine, born from cruelty, scarcity, and shame due to the caste system, offers a rich and largely invisible culinary tradition featuring ingredients like honeycomb curry and

blood fry, shunned by upper-caste Hindus. Dalits, historically marginalized and performing "degrading" jobs, turned to affordable meats like pork, beef, and offal, and foraged wild greens, creating quick, flavorful dishes. Despite caste discrimination being outlawed, prejudice persists, with "cow vigilantism" and "pure vegetarian" rental policies targeting meat-eating minorities. While Dalit food is rarely found in mainstream restaurants, a growing movement by historians and artists like Sri Vamsi Matta is working to bring awareness and pride to this cuisine, fostering a new appreciation among younger Dalits and even some upper-caste Hindus.

The battle to stop clever people betting

Sports-betting firms actively block winning gamblers, or "sharps," using sophisticated "player-profiling" strategies to restrict their wagers to mere pittance. The Economist's data journalist experienced this firsthand, being limited by Ladbrokes to a £5 bet. Firms aim to protect profit margins, which are as low as 4.5%, and often woo high-rolling losers, or "whales," with VIP treatment. Sharps, who use statistical models to find advantageous odds, employ various tactics to evade detection, including using multiple devices, exploiting obscure markets, and even employing "beards" (proxies) to place bets on their behalf. This subterfuge, sometimes involving "priming" accounts with intentional losing bets to appear reckless, highlights the cat-and-mouse game between bookmakers and professional gamblers, with few jurisdictions successfully limiting betting restrictions.

Adam Smith is misinterpreted and his influence overstated

Adam Smith, often hailed as the "father of economics" and symbol of free-market liberalism, is widely misinterpreted, and his influence overstated, as his work contains fewer novel ideas and more weaknesses than commonly assumed. While known for advocating self-interest and the "invisible hand," a closer reading of his "Theory of Moral Sentiments" reveals he championed empathy and cooperation, arguing that markets civilize people by encouraging them to consider others' advantages. Smith's "invisible hand" is rarely mentioned and never refers to the price mechanism, and he often supported government intervention, such as education and legal caps on interest rates. Furthermore, his "Wealth of Nations," published 250 years ago, is criticized for its readability, errors like the labor theory of value (which influenced Marx), and its failure to invent concepts like GDP or free trade, suggesting his revolutionary status is more about method than entirely original ideas.

What street talk reveals about Anglophone civilisation

Slang, far from being trivial, offers a rich insight into Anglophone civilization, with roots stretching back a millennium, as evidenced by words like "arse" and "bollocks." Historically, slang served to baffle outsiders and circumvent taboos, evolving from "beggar books" to sophisticated dictionaries compiled by lexicographers like Eric Partridge and Jonathon Green. Modern slang lexicography faces new challenges with social media accelerating the lifespan and diffusion of new terms, making language harder to pin down and subcultures generating

their own rapidly changing patois. Despite the perception of slang as "less than real language," scholars argue it is "more" expressive, carrying nuanced meanings about identity, emotion, and perception, continually enriching the linguistic landscape.

America's fight back against China starts in Los Angeles in flip-flops

El Segundo, near LAX, known as "Gundo," is emerging as a critical hub for America's high-tech arms race against China, becoming a "Silicon Valley of hard-headed patriotism." Once an aerospace manufacturing powerhouse, Gundo's industrial heft declined but is now being reborn by startups like HydraWedge, General Matter, and Rangeview, aiming to reclaim industrial supremacy from China. These firms, often founded by ex-SpaceX employees and backed by venture capital, prioritize hardware innovation, patriotic capitalism, and a countercultural aversion to Silicon Valley's "bits" over "atoms." They are quietly building a defense manufacturing base, exemplified by Neros, a drone manufacturer stripping Chinese technology from its products, reflecting a bottom-up effort spurred by President Trump's ambitions to revive American manufacturing.

The long, strange journey of a temple from profane to sacred

The Jain Centre of Southern California houses a magnificent wooden temple, an intricately carved replica that embarked on a century-long journey from India to America, transforming from a commercial exhibit to a sacred object. Commissioned by British tea planters for the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair to promote tea, the "Jewel of Palitana" was a cynical confection mixing Islamic and Jain iconography. It then became the "Gateway to Luck" at the Castaways casino in Las Vegas, a totem for gamblers. Discovered by Jain migrants in the 1970s, who found its placement among slot machines an "insult," the temple was eventually donated to the Jain Centre in Buena Park. Though unsuitable for traditional worship due to fire safety and fragility, it became a focal point for the small, assimilating American Jain community, reinforcing their identity and attracting donations for religious education.

What if the best way to learn about history is by playing with it?

Historical video games like Paradox Interactive's "Europa Universalis 5" and Civilization are changing how people learn history by offering immersive simulations where players control historical states and shape alternate timelines. These complex games, which track everything from diplomacy to economics, provide "procedural rhetoric," subtly conveying historical ideas and assumptions through their rules. They offer a hands-on learning experience that passively reading books cannot, allowing players to grasp concepts like the "security dilemma" by experiencing its consequences. While academic historians may be skeptical of "alternate histories" and games have flaws, they are a powerful tool for making history appealing and encouraging critical thinking among a new generation of self-taught history buffs.

How two explorers, a mother and a baby made America

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The Lewis and Clark expedition, ordered by President Thomas Jefferson in 1803 after the Louisiana Purchase, was a pivotal moment in American expansion, supported by both "great man" and "small baby" views of history. Lewis and Clark, along with a diverse Corps of Discovery including Clark's slave York and the Shoshone woman Sacagawea and her infant son Pompey, mapped vast new territories, identified species, and established relations with Native Americans. Pompey's presence was crucial, reassuring tribes of the expedition's peaceful intentions, potentially averting disaster. The expedition's detailed journals and maps provided invaluable guidance for westward migration, and despite tragic fates for some members, their discoveries and Jefferson's vision cemented America's transcontinental power.

The gigantic task of catering on the world's biggest cruise ship

Catering on the Star of the Seas, the world's largest cruise ship with 7,600 guests and 2,350 crew, is a monumental task overseen by Chef Gary Thomas and his 344 chefs and 1,700 front-of-house staff. They prepare 100,000 meals daily while at sea, butchering meat, filleting fish, and baking bread from scratch, operating with military discipline inspired by Auguste Escoffier. The ship's inventory manager, Randy Nicolas, manages 25,000 items, including \$1.5m worth of ingredients for a week-long cruise, using AI-powered software to predict demand and minimize waste. Despite the strenuous 7-day-a-week work for international crew, the operation prioritizes food safety to prevent outbreaks, making meticulous preparation essential for passenger satisfaction.

How wolves became dogs

The deep symbiosis between humans and dogs, unique in the animal kingdom, began over 14,000 years ago, predating agriculture, with evidence suggesting Eastern Eurasia as the origin point. This transformation from dangerous grey wolf to domestic companion involved an ecological meshing of societies and genetic changes, likely driven by wolves scavenging surplus food from hunter-gatherer camps. The "survival of the friendliest" hypothesis suggests wolves gradually developed "dognition," a suite of psychological adaptations for human approval, including extreme friendliness and the ability to read human minds. Genetic research has identified mutations linked to this, and dogs evolved unique features like the "puppy-dog-eye" muscle. Later, humans deliberately shaped dog evolution through breeding, leading to the vast diversity of modern breeds for specific tasks and, increasingly, for companionship.

A journey along East Asia's hidden artery

The Kuroshio (Black Stream), a powerful ocean current, has profoundly shaped East Asia for millennia, transporting nutrients, sustaining fisheries, and influencing societies along its path from the Philippines to Japan. This "hidden artery" of interconnectedness also facilitated early globalization, with Spanish sailors using it for trade routes in the 16th century. Its clarity belies rich fisheries, attributed to deep-water upwelling, though poorly understood. Indigenous Tao

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people on Orchid Island near Taiwan demonstrate deep cultural ties to the current, which also plays a strategic role in military operations, with China and Japan studying its movements. The Kuroshio has also influenced ancient human migrations to the Ryukyu islands and Japanese cultural roots, but is now being shaped by human activity, with warming waters causing increased stratification, shifting currents, and more chaotic weather patterns like record snowstorms.

How Jane Austen revealed the economic basis of society

Jane Austen, born 250 years ago, rigorously exposed the economic underpinnings of 19th-century society in her novels, using quantitative precision to illustrate financial necessity for happiness. Her works, like "Sense and Sensibility" and "Persuasion," often begin with economic setbacks, and she rarely introduces a major character without detailing their finances. Austen's grasp of income gradations revealed that even her "less fortunate" characters were often wealthier than the majority of society. Despite writing for amusement, she acutely understood the value of money, lamenting poor book sales and learning harsh lessons from publishing deals. Austen's insights anticipated economic theories, from Malthus's population principles to Friedman's permanent income hypothesis, and she subtly critiqued both misers and profligates, championing a "cheerful confidence in futurity" and the economic dynamism of "Enthusiasts" like Mr. Parker in her unfinished "Sanditon."

Was Mr Darcy the richest of all Jane Austen's characters?

While Mr. Darcy is widely known for his wealth, a common comparison suggests Mr. Rushworth from "Mansfield Park" surpassed him with £12,000 a year to Darcy's £10,000. However, these comparisons are complicated by rapid inflation during the Napoleonic Wars, which Austen herself was aware of, leading her to revise incomes in her novels. Economic historians calculate that due to the rising cost of living between the settings of "Pride and Prejudice" (around 1793-94) and "Mansfield Park" (1808-1812), Mr. Rushworth's fortune would have been worth significantly less than Mr. Darcy's in real terms. Thus, by accounting for inflation, Mr. Darcy remains the superior catch.

The most friendless place on earth

Contrary to popular belief, loneliness is more prevalent in poor, collectivist societies than in rich, individualistic ones, with Africa being the loneliest region. In southern Madagascar, a poverty-stricken area, an astonishing 60% of people reported feeling lonely, despite visible social interactions. Poverty exacerbates loneliness by limiting social time and straining relationships, as individuals spend countless hours on drudgery or migrate for work, leaving loved ones isolated. Cultural expectations in collectivist societies can also lead to dutiful but unsatisfying relationships, causing shame when obligations are unmet. Interventions like "social prescribing" in England's Frome, which reduced hospital admissions by fostering community connections, and "friendship benches" in Zimbabwe, offer models for directly combating

loneliness in both rich and poor countries.

Two centuries ago, Russian revolutionaries tried to change the world

Two centuries ago, on December 26th, 1825, the Decembrists, a group of aristocratic military officers inspired by Western liberal ideals, staged a failed coup in St. Petersburg, hoping to bring emancipation and representative government to Russia. Their revolt, occurring during a moment of succession uncertainty, was quickly suppressed by Tsar Nicholas I, resulting in casualties, imprisonment in Siberia, and the execution of five leaders. Despite their failure, the Decembrists became a powerful myth, viewed by admirers as champions of a "new life" for Russia and inspiring later generations of dissidents, including Lenin, Herzen, and Navalny. Even in Putin's era, their legacy continues to be debated, with some seeing them as heroic martyrs and others as traitors, underscoring their enduring role as a beacon of individual dignity against tyranny.

The rise and fall and rebirth of lapsang souchong

Lapsang souchong, the grand progenitor of black tea, was born over 400 years ago in China's Wuyi hills and became a sensation in the West, particularly Britain, for its smoky aroma. Legend holds that its distinctive smoky flavor originated from soldiers curing tea leaves over fires, a method later adopted for long sea journeys. However, its popularity in the West is fading, with major brands like Twinings discontinuing it due to declining demand and a preference for cheaper, often chemically smoked, versions. Meanwhile, in China, the authentic, meticulously produced zhengshan xiaozhong, often unsmoked and far superior, thrives as a luxury item for wealthy customers, especially new varieties like Jin Jun Mei. China is also asserting economic muscle to protect the "geographic indication" of its teas, ensuring that only Wuyi-sourced, pinewood-smoked tea can be sold as "lapsang souchong" in the EU, preserving its status as a niche, upper-class symbol.

How magicians stay relevant in the age of AI

Magicians today face new challenges in an age of shrinking attention spans, social media's proliferation of tricks, and technology's dulling effect on wonder, forcing them to adapt much like Harry Houdini, who masterfully monetized mystery and guarded his secrets. Modern magicians like Justin Flom leverage social media by "illusion-shattering," sometimes revealing how tricks are done to generate viral content and hook viewers. While some magicians fear this exposure diminishes magic, others, like Asi Wind, subvert the act of revelation itself to preserve mystique. Technology also provides new tools for cheaper, more complex shows, though concerns remain about a potential shortage of magicians capable of immersive live performances. Despite AI actors and the ease of online content, the demand for live magic, offering a unique "hiccup in the texture of everyday life," persists, with skilled conjurors integrating technology while maintaining the core elements of wonder and human connection.

INTERNATIONAL

Ditch textbooks and learn how to use a wrench to AI-proof your job?

Generation Z is increasingly questioning the value of university degrees and turning to skilled trades, seeing them as "AI-proof" and offering better job security and pay. Many, like former college student Jacob Palmer who became an electrician, find vocational training offers immediate income and high demand, with median salaries for lift technicians and top electricians often exceeding those of many arts and humanities graduates. Despite university graduates still generally earning more, a significant portion are underemployed, while industries like chip manufacturing and defense face critical shortages of skilled blue-collar workers. Countries like Switzerland offer a model for permeable vocational paths, but in America and Britain, degree apprenticeships are emerging as a solution, combining on-the-job training with higher education, proving highly attractive and beneficial for both trainees and employers.

How to survive abandonment by America

East Asian allies, particularly South Korea, are planning for a harsher world under a potentially isolationist Trump administration, which demands more self-reliance while prohibiting deeper ties with China. America's envoys insist allies take greater responsibility for their security and commit vast investments to the US, while also expecting their support in any US-China conflict. South Korea's President Lee Jae Myung has adopted a pragmatic approach, striking trade deals with Trump and increasing defense spending, while public opinion remains strongly negative towards China. The prospect of America withdrawing its nuclear umbrella has pushed discussions of South Korea acquiring nuclear weapons into the mainstream, a move Trumpworld seems surprisingly receptive to. Former South Korean diplomats advocate for closer ties with like-minded partners like Japan to navigate this uncertain geopolitical landscape.

BUSINESS

The plan to rescue Novo Nordisk

Novo Nordisk is undergoing a major transformation to recover its lead in the weight-loss drug market after being overtaken by Eli Lilly's Zepbound. Despite pioneering Wegovy, Novo vastly underestimated demand, leading to shortages and compounding pharmacies replicating its drug. Lilly learned from Novo's missteps, ensured ample supply for Zepbound's launch, and adopted a direct-to-consumer sales model that Novo was slow to emulate. Following a leadership shake-up, Novo's new CEO, Maziar Mike Doustdar, plans to launch a new oral Wegovy and a higher-dose injection, while expanding direct sales channels and embracing external ideas for its drug pipeline. The company also announced significant job cuts and a narrower focus on

diabetes and obesity, reflecting a "ruthless" commitment to regaining market share amidst fierce competition and upcoming patent expirations.

Retreating from EVs could be hazardous for Western carmakers

Western carmakers are hitting the brakes on their electric vehicle (EV) transition as customer demand slows and governments like the EU and the US roll back incentives. The EU softened its 2035 petrol car ban to a 90% emissions cut, allowing petrol and hybrid sales to continue, while Ford wrote down \$19.5bn and ended its all-electric F-150 pickup. This retreat, however, risks ceding market share to fast-growing Chinese EV brands, which already control a significant portion of the European market, particularly in hybrids. While EVs are expected to become cheaper eventually, Western carmakers must balance current profits from petrol cars with sufficient investment in EVs to remain competitive, or risk being left behind.

Job apocalypse? Not yet. AI is creating brand new occupations

Despite fears of AI-driven job losses, the technology is actively creating new occupations requiring uniquely human skills. These include high-paid "data annotators" specializing in fields like finance and medicine to train advanced AI models, and "forward-deployed engineers" (FDEs) who blend development, consulting, and sales to integrate AI tools into organizations. The rise of AI also necessitates "AI risk-and-governance specialists" to ensure system integrity and "chief AI officers" to oversee strategic implementation. As AI takes over coding tasks, human personality, emotional intelligence, and the ability to handle complex human-facing interactions are becoming premium skills.

Luxury handbags may be shoddier than you think

Luxury handbags, once central to brand success and growth, are now facing increased scrutiny over quality, contributing to a slump in the broader luxury market. Online videos exposing loose stitching and melting dyes on expensive items from brands like Goyard are gaining traction, while Chinese manufacturers falsely claim to make luxury bags for pennies. Brands like Chanel and Prada raised prices significantly post-pandemic, inviting closer examination of their craftsmanship. This, combined with the rise of secondhand luxury markets and high-quality "superfakes," presents a growing challenge for the industry. In contrast, brands like Hermès, which maintain traditional artisanal production, continue to see strong sales, suggesting that genuine craftsmanship still commands value.

How to conduct a job interview

Job interviews, despite their often awkward and predictable nature, are surprisingly the most useful part of the selection process when conducted correctly. Research indicates that structured interviews featuring standardized, job-related questions scored consistently have the highest predictive value for job performance, far surpassing unstructured ones. However, even structured interviews account for less than 20% of actual job performance, emphasizing the

need for supplementary assessments like personality tests and work samples to achieve a 30-40% prediction accuracy. The article highlights that while interviewers may resist structured approaches due to a perceived loss of agency, a rigorous process, combined with realism about its limitations, is essential for effective hiring.

SpaceX, OpenAI, Anthropic and their giga-IPO dreams

SpaceX, OpenAI, and Anthropic, once exclusively funded by private capital, are reportedly exploring initial public offerings (IPOs) at staggering valuations, potentially among the largest ever. This pivot to public markets stems from their immense capital needs? SpaceX developing Starship, OpenAI needing \$1.4trn for computing power? amidst a plateauing private investment market and growing risk concentration among private backers. However, a public listing presents significant challenges: SpaceX's corporate governance under Elon Musk is a concern, while OpenAI and Anthropic are burning billions and not expected to be profitable for years. The discerning public markets, unlike private investors, will likely test these lofty valuations with impatience for profits, especially as competition intensifies and technological gaps narrow.

FINANCE & ECONOMICS

Where America's most prominent short-sellers are placing their bets

America's prominent short-sellers, Jim Chanos, Carson Block, and Andrew Left, offer mixed views on whether current stock market highs and AI exuberance constitute a bubble, agreeing that its prediction is impossible. Chanos sees exuberance akin to 2021, while Block is more sanguine, citing solid earnings growth, and Left believes the market is too "thick and exciting" for a crash but warns of deflation. They anticipate weakness in the AI story from cancelled orders or failure to convert technology into profits, with a sharp rise in unemployment as a key indicator for a bear market. Concerns include shareholder losses from AI uncertainty, American households' record stock ownership, and the defanging of short-sellers by law enforcement, potentially leaving future market wrongdoing undiscovered.

Meet the American investors rushing into Congo

American investors, including Josh Goldman's KoBold Metals, are now rushing into the Democratic Republic of Congo, defying its conflicts and corruption, to access its vast critical mineral deposits like lithium, cobalt, and copper. This influx is spurred by Donald Trump's "Washington Accords" with Congo and Rwanda, promising peace oversight in exchange for facilitating American investments to diversify critical mineral supply away from China. KoBold, backed by Bill Gates, insists it can operate lawfully, buoyed by US government interest, which has eased permit acquisition and tax agreements. However, challenges remain, including ongoing fighting in M23-controlled areas, lingering corruption, and existing Chinese mining dominance, raising questions about whether Trump's profit-first diplomacy can deliver

sustained peace and displace Chinese influence.

This Christmas, raise a glass to concentrated market returns

Bank of America and Cisco recently surpassed their 2006 and 2000 share price peaks, respectively, highlighting the phenomenon of long-term laggardly stocks despite overall global market growth. A surprising 36% of major listed companies that existed before the 2007 financial crisis remain below their pre-crisis share prices, with even higher percentages in markets like Germany, Britain, and Hong Kong. This trend underscores the powerful force of concentrated returns, where a small number of "magnificent" stocks like Apple, Nvidia, and Netflix account for the vast majority of shareholder wealth creation. While many firms live in the shadow of their former greatness, for most investors, the performance of a few key companies dictates overall market gains.

Crypto's real threat to banks

The crypto industry is challenging Wall Street's traditional political dominance within the Republican Party, supplanting banks' privileged position. While banks benefited from deregulation under Trump, crypto's growing influence, fueled by substantial political action committee funds, is shifting the balance of power. Key developments include stablecoin regulation loopholes that allow "rewards" to stablecoin users, undermining bank deposits, and a banking regulator's approval of national bank-trust charters for digital-finance firms like Circle and Ripple, granting them custody for assets nationally despite bank opposition. These moves, perceived as small individually, cumulatively pose a significant threat to traditional banks' central role in the financial system, forcing them into unusual alliances with Democratic senators and center-left groups to oppose crypto firms.

Watch who you're calling childless

The common measure of fertility, the total fertility rate (TFR), has been dropping in Western countries, leading to concerns about population decline, but it may be misleading. TFR calculates a hypothetical woman's lifetime births based on current age-specific rates, often incorrectly assuming young women won't "catch up" on delayed births. A different measure, the completed fertility rate (CFR), which tracks average births by the end of child-bearing years, shows that America's CFR has remained stable over the past two decades, suggesting women are deferring, not forgoing, childbirth. Historical examples from Sweden further support that TFR can drop sharply due to delayed childbearing before recovering, indicating that Western populations might not face the severe decline implied by TFR alone.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

A debate is raging over the origins of an elusive cousin to modern

humans

A debate is intensifying over the origins of Denisovans, an elusive cousin to modern humans, following the analysis of the Harbin skull, a large ancient cranium from China. DNA evidence from the skull confirms it belonged to a Denisovan, but its morphology (physical features) suggests an evolutionary history at odds with genetic data. Geneticists argue Denisovans and Neanderthals shared a common lineage that split from modern humans hundreds of thousands of years ago, with Denisovan DNA found in modern Asian and Oceanian populations. However, the Harbin skull's shape suggests its lineage split from sapiens after Neanderthals, potentially placing the origin of the sapiens lineage outside Africa, challenging conventional palaeontology. Scientists remain optimistic that more fossils and advanced DNA/protein extraction techniques will eventually resolve this paradox.

Saudi Arabia wants to host the world's cheapest data centres

Saudi Arabia aims to host the world's cheapest data centers for artificial intelligence (AI), leveraging its abundant, low-cost solar electricity and ample land. This national priority, part of its "Vision 2030" to diversify from fossil fuels, is spearheaded by Humain, led by Tareq Amin. The strategy relies on cutting inference costs by providing cheap power and efficient chips, initially through a \$1.5bn deal with Groq. A crucial step was a meeting between MBS and Donald Trump, which secured a license for 35,000 Nvidia chips, a reversal of earlier US restrictions. Humain plans to sell output tokens at half the market price and is already implementing Arabic-language AI models for civil servants, with ambitions to build a global AI operating system, aiming for Saudi Arabia to be a top-five AI hub within seven years.

How dogs make teens feel less anxious

Dogs have a beneficial relationship with humans, notably reducing anxiety and improving sociality in teenagers, a phenomenon now linked to changes in gut microbiota. Research by Kikusui Takefumi at Azabu University found that dog owners have distinct gut microbes, specifically higher levels of *Streptococcus* and *Prevotella* 7 bacteria, which correlate with reduced aggression, delinquent behavior, and social withdrawal in teens. Mouse experiments further supported this, showing that mice infused with microbes from teen dog owners exhibited more social behavior. These findings suggest that microbial transfer from dogs to humans may influence brain function in healthy ways, indicating that a healthier mind might involve a nuzzle and a few licks from a canine companion.

Are some types of sugar healthier than others?

When it comes to sugar, the type—be it refined white, raw, or honey—makes no significant difference to health; rather, how it is consumed is key. Most sugars contain fructose and glucose, with glucose causing blood spikes followed by hunger dips, and excess fructose being converted to fat by the liver. Consuming sugar slowly is beneficial, as is avoiding sugary drinks like fruit juice, which, despite its "natural" image, contains as much sugar as Coca-Cola without

the fiber. Eating sugar with fiber, protein, or fat, such as in cakes with nuts, slows absorption and promotes fullness, making these combinations a smarter way to indulge during the holidays.

CULTURE

What goes into raising the turkey on your holiday table

Raising domesticated turkeys for holiday tables involves a demanding, year-long process by small farmers, exemplified by Baffoni's Poultry Farm in Rhode Island. Unlike their wild counterparts, farmed turkeys lack survival instincts and are bred for quick growth and meaty breasts, making them susceptible to disease and reliant on human care. The farm, now run by Adam Baffoni, receives day-old poults in staggered batches to provide various sizes for Thanksgiving and Christmas. The labor-intensive process includes slaughtering, eviscerating, and preparing thousands of birds daily, a scale vastly different from large industrial farms. Despite the unglamorous work and competition from cheaper brands, local farms like Baffoni's, which experienced a resurgence of popularity, play a vital role in cherished holiday traditions.

And 2025's winners are?Timothée Chalamet and Sydney Sweeney

Timothée Chalamet and Sydney Sweeney emerged as Hollywood's big winners in 2025, proving their star power is crucial for cinema's future. Chalamet's manic performance in "Marty Supreme" and enigmatic portrayal of Bob Dylan cemented his status as a talented actor deserving of Oscar buzz. Sweeney, despite a "vaguely peeved disdain" as her default expression, captivated audiences with her screen charisma in "The Housemaid" and "Christy," and sparked widespread debate with a clothing advert. Both stars skillfully manage their public personas, creating mystique while engaging with the publicity machine. Their ability to draw audiences to cinemas, amidst the rise of streaming and action franchises, positions them as key figures in sustaining big-screen storytelling against the new threat of artificial intelligence.

The best podcasts of 2025

This section lists the best podcasts of 2025, covering a diverse range of topics. "Articles of Interest" explores the history of clothes, connecting weaving to early computing. "Final Thoughts: Jerry Springer" delves into the political career of the late talk show host. "Fela Kuti: Fear No Man" is a 12-episode series on the Nigerian musician who pioneered Afrobeat. "Flesh and Code" passionately recounts stories of people forming relationships with AI companions. "Heavyweight" tackles life's unresolved moments, from a former bank robber's atonement to honoring dying wishes. "Missing in the Amazon" investigates the disappearance of a British journalist and indigenous activist. "Past Present Future: Politics on Trial" examines lawfare through historical comparisons. "The Protocol" traces the history of transgender

medicine for young people. "Shell Game" explores how AI might change the workforce using an AI-staffed startup. "The Wargame" simulates Britain's response to a Russian naval base explosion, questioning its readiness for war.

ECONOMIC & FINANCIAL INDICATORS

Economic data, commodities and markets

No significant coverage this issue.

OBITUARY

Iain Douglas-Hamilton fought to save the beasts he loved

Iain Douglas-Hamilton, a pioneering zoologist, dedicated his life to studying and saving African elephants, a mission he pursued until his death at 83. His ethological approach, inspired by Niko Tinbergen, focused on understanding elephants as individuals, a method greatly enhanced by using a Cessna plane to count populations with precision. His research revealed the devastating impact of ivory poaching, driving him to advocate tirelessly, testifying to the US Congress and helping pass conservation acts. He masterminded anti-poaching patrols in Uganda, laying groundwork for elephant population recovery there. Though successful in increasing savannah elephant numbers, he later shifted focus to the more endangered forest elephants, continually adapting his conservation efforts while enduring direct attacks from both poachers and the very bees he used to protect his beloved pachyderms.