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The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

Updated less than 1 hour ago

Donald Trump was charged with four federal counts related to his [efforts](#) to overturn the 2020 presidential election and the January 6th attack on the Capitol. The charges—brought by Jack Smith, an independent special counsel—accuse the former president of conspiring to defraud America, to obstruct an “official proceeding” (the certification of the vote) and to deprive people of their right to vote and have their vote counted. Mr Trump dismissed the charges as a “Fake Indictment”.

Russian drones damaged a Ukrainian port in Izmail, a city on the Danube river near the border with Romania. In July Russia withdrew from an agreement under which it allowed Ukraine to export grain across the Black Sea; since then its air force has been [targeting Ukrainian ports](#). Wheat futures in Chicago, the global benchmark, rose 4% following the strike.

Fitch downgraded **America’s credit rating** from AAA to AA+. The rating agency cited a “steady deterioration” in fiscal governance, including repeated fights over the [debt ceiling](#), and expectations that the government’s deficit would rise further. Janet Yellen, the treasury secretary, said the downgrade was based on outdated data that have improved under the Biden administration.

China unveiled tax-relief measures designed to help the country’s small businesses, which are struggling to cope with weak domestic consumption. Meanwhile, an exemption from value-added tax for companies that take in

less than 100,000 yuan (\$13,900) a month in sales was extended until 2027. After an initially buoyant recovery from the pandemic, China's [economy has faltered](#) in recent months.

Pheu Thai, the party that came second in **Thailand's** [election in May](#), has nominated as prime minister Srettha Thavisin, a businessman and party member. The coalition would exclude the party which came first, Move Forward, whose leader, Pita Limjaroenrat, has twice since tried to become prime minister, only to be vetoed by the military-appointed Senate.

Around 8,000 soldiers and police surrounded the province of Cabañas in **El Salvador** as part of a raid against gangs. [Nayib Bukele](#), the country's authoritarian president, said the siege would not be lifted until "all the criminals" were caught. More than 71,000 people have been arrested since Mr Bukele launched a [massive crackdown](#) on gangs in 2022.

Kyriakos Mitsotakis, **Greece's** prime minister, said that tourists who fled **wildfires** on Rhodes this summer would be given a free holiday next year. Last week temperatures in Greece rose above 40°C (104°F). Blazes killed five people and destroyed vast tracts of forest; over 30,000 tourists and locals were evacuated from the islands of Corfu, Evia and Rhodes. That has threatened Greece's [tourist economy](#).

Figure of the day: 107,000, the number of Americans who died of drug overdoses in 2021. The vast majority were linked to heroin or fentanyl. [Read the full story](#).

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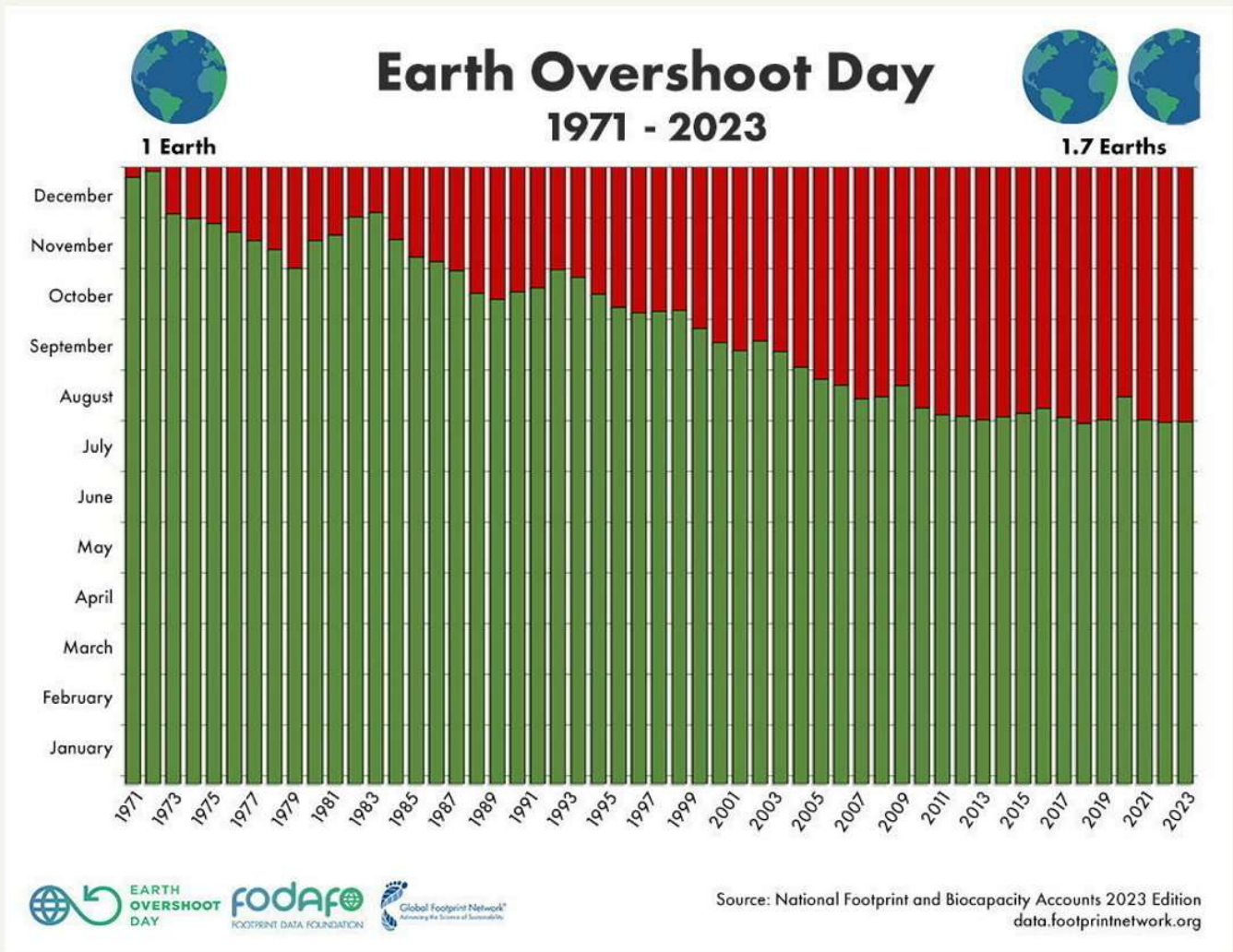


PHOTO: EARTH OVERSHOOT DAY

Humans tip into an ecological overdraft

Wednesday marks Earth Overshoot Day, the day on the calendar on which humans have used more resources than ecosystems can generate for the whole year. From now until January 1st 2024 humanity will be using more natural resources—

including fish stocks, fibres and medicines provided by plants and the ability of forests to sequester carbon, among many other things—than the planet can supply this year.

By consistently overspending its biological budget, humanity is reducing the biodiversity on which its survival depends. The overshoot date, calculated by the Global Footprint Network, a think-tank, using data collected by the UN, has been coming earlier almost every year since 1971.

Rich countries, unsurprisingly, are the most profligate. A study published in 2022 in *Lancet Planetary Health*, a journal, found that America and the EU were respectively responsible for 27% and 25% of the overuse of natural resources. The global south was responsible for just 8%.



PHOTO: ALAMY

Profits from processed food

Big packaged-food sellers have done reasonably well in tumultuous times. Sales were buoyant during the pandemic, which kept consumers out of restaurants. Even now sales are strong. Buyers seem unwilling to give up the convenience of

eating at home. Food makers have been able to pass on to them higher costs of inputs, caused in part by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. As inflation comes down,

companies may benefit: their costs may fall more quickly than the prices they charge to consumers.

Kraft Heinz, a big American multinational that owns such brands as Heinz ketchup and Oscar Mayer sausages, reports its quarterly earnings on Wednesday. Earnings per share last quarter exceeded expectations, as did revenue. Expectations are even higher this time.

But trouble is simmering. A backlash against ultra-processed foods is becoming more intense. Some activist investors want food firms to sell more wholesome grub and to be more transparent about the "health profile" of products. That might not go down well in the boardroom.



PHOTO: AP

Niger's descent into disaster

In Niger, where soldiers toppled the president a week ago, the chaos could get worse. The Economic Community of West African States, the regional bloc, gave the junta until Sunday to reinstate Mohamed Bazoum. If the soldiers do not, it says

it may intervene with force. The generals running the neighbouring jihadi-hit countries of Mali and Burkina Faso responded that this would be a declaration of war on them, too. On Wednesday the defence chiefs of the bloc began a lengthy meeting to discuss plans.

Despite an attempt by the president of Chad to mediate, the junta is not backing down. Instead it arrested more politicians. On Tuesday France, the former colonial power whose embassy was attacked by protesters brandishing Russian flags, began to evacuate Europeans. Expect the junta to call for more demonstrations to try to show ECOWAS that any intervention would meet popular opposition—and guarantee civilian bloodshed.





PHOTO: ALAMY

Kashmir's status under scrutiny

Nearly four years ago India's government split Jammu & Kashmir, a northern state, into two federally-run territories. The decision thrilled the Hindu-nationalist supporters of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. They had long resented the extra

autonomy granted to India's only majority-Muslim state, which had its own constitution and flag.

India's government insists that the reorganisation has brought an "unprecedented era of peace and progress" to the region. But it required gutting an article of the national constitution that gave J&K its special status. Activists and lawyers immediately challenged the legality of that in the Supreme Court.

On Wednesday five judges finally began hearing that case, as well as petitions related to media freedom, internet shutdowns and political imprisonment in the region. Kashmiris, who chafe under the yoke of 500,000 soldiers in the territory, hope that the Supreme Court's verdict will provide them with some relief.

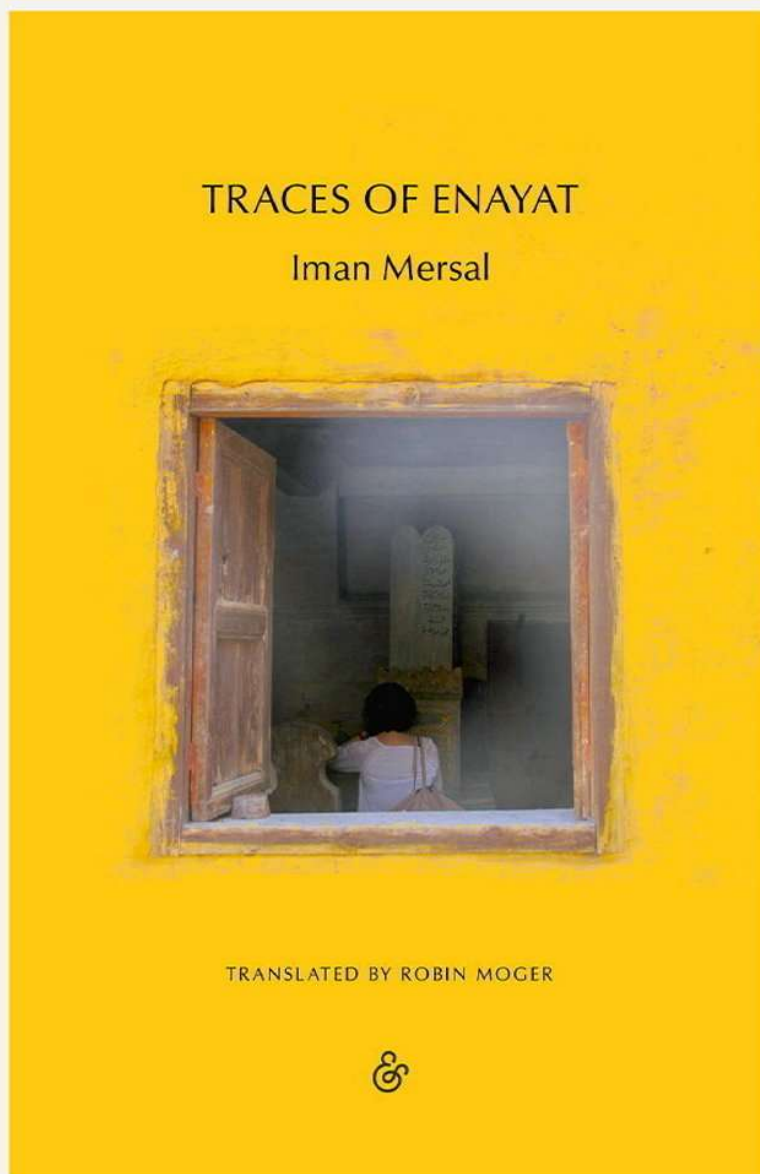


PHOTO: AND OTHER STORIES

Searching for a forgotten author

Enayat al-Zayyat, an Egyptian writer, penned only one book. She never got to see it published. In her mid-twenties she took her own life. Her contemporaries whispered that a publisher's rejection of her novel had driven her to despair. The

vulnerable, semi-autobiographical debut, “Love and Silence”, was published posthumously in Arabic in 1967. It was widely, but briefly, praised. And then it was forgotten.

Almost three decades later Iman Mersal, an Egyptian poet, came across a rare copy of “Love and Silence” in a market in Cairo. Drawn to the writing, she decided to do research into Zayyat’s life, spending years speaking to those who knew her and uncovering the tragedies and joys of her short life in 20th-century Egypt.

“Traces of Enayat”, which was published in Arabic in 2019 and in English this week, is the culmination of those efforts. But the book is not quite a biography. It is, rather, an account of Ms Mersal’s feverish attempts to retrace the steps of a lost author.



Daily quiz

Our baristas 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 QuizEspresso@economist.com. We'll pick randomly

from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Wednesday: Which businessman served as Secretary of commerce during the Trump administration?

Tuesday: In the post-war era, who was the first African-American to play major league baseball?

“ The price one pays for pursuing any profession or calling is an intimate knowledge of its ugly side.

James Baldwin

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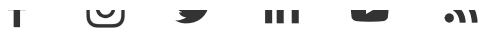
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