

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: MEGA

In an unabashed volte-face, **Donald Trump** called on Republican lawmakers to vote for the release of the so-called **Epstein files**, insisting he had “nothing to hide”. Mr Trump is [dogged](#) by speculation that he is implicated in documents pertaining to Jeffrey Epstein, a deceased sex offender. The president calls that a “Democrat hoax”, and had unsuccessfully been trying to persuade House Republicans to vote against the files’ release.

Ukraine signed a deal to buy up to 100 French-made fighter jets and announced plans to acquire new air-defence systems and drones. The agreement came after a meeting between Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine’s leader, and Emmanuel Macron, his French counterpart, near Paris. Meanwhile a **Russian** missile strike on Balakliia, a city in Ukraine’s [Kharkiv region](#), killed three people and wounded 15, according to officials.

A federal judge said “government misconduct” may have “tainted” criminal proceedings against **James Comey**, America’s former FBI director, and ordered the justice department to turn over grand jury materials to his lawyers. Mr Comey, a critic of Mr Trump, [was indicted in September](#) for allegedly lying to Congress and

obstructing an investigation. He denies the charges and is seeking to dismiss the “vindictive” case.

China’s vice-premier, He Lifeng, and **Germany’s** finance minister, Lars Klingbeil, vowed to ease tensions over trade during the first visit to China by a minister in Germany’s current government. Chinese export restrictions on [rare earths](#) and semiconductors have disrupted German manufacturers and fuelled debate over “de-risking” in the country. The two economies remain deeply intertwined: each exported roughly \$100bn of goods to the other in 2024.

Britain’s government announced policies toughening its treatment of **asylum seekers**. The amount of time [refugees](#) can stay in the country before needing to renew their claim has been reduced from five years to 30 months. The government will also aim to deport more failed applicants and has threatened visa bans on countries that resist taking back criminals and illegal immigrants.

A special tribunal in **Bangladesh** sentenced **Sheikh Hasina** to death for crimes against humanity. The verdict came at the end of a months-long trial investigating the former prime minister’s role in suppressing student-led protests last year. Around 1,400 people were killed during the demonstrations, [which toppled](#) Sheikh Hasina’s government and forced her to flee to India. She did not attend the trial and denies all charges.

America will designate **Cartel de los Soles** as a terrorist organisation from November 24th. The Trump administration alleges that the Venezuelan drug cartel is led by Nicolás Maduro, Venezuela’s president. It is weighing whether to [take military action](#) inside the country, which it claims would help stop trafficking. Mr Trump said “Venezuela wants to talk,” but did not say when that might happen.

Figure of the day: 320,000, the UN's estimate of the number of homes destroyed or damaged in Gaza during the war. [Read the full story here.](#)



Photograph: Getty Images

An economic balancing act for Japan's new prime minister

Japan released its GDP figures for the third quarter of 2025 on Monday. The data showed a contraction of 1.8% at an annualised rate—far weaker than the previous quarter and marking the first decline in six quarters. The slump is largely explained by technical factors. Exports will have shrunk as a result of Donald Trump's tariffs, with exporters rushing shipments forward before the levies took effect.

But personal consumption is thought to have remained almost flat, with high prices weighing on household spending. [Inflation](#) in September stood at 2.9% at an annual rate, well above the Bank of Japan's 2% target. Containing inflation has become a central issue in Japanese politics. Populist upstarts are gaining ground with fiscally expansive promises, such as slashing the country's 8% consumption tax on food. For Takaichi Sanae, the new prime minister, whether she can tame inflation and support households will determine her political longevity. A snap election could reportedly come as early as January.



Photograph: Reuters

Congress gets back to work

With America's longest [government shutdown now over](#), legislators returning to Capitol Hill face a daunting in-tray. The immediate order of business will be to pass full-year funding appropriations beyond the current stopgap period, which ends on January 30th. Only three of the 12 appropriations bills that will fund federal agencies through 2026 have passed. Congress must also decide the fate of the health-care subsidies that were at the heart of the shutdown fight. Republicans have promised to hold a vote on extending them at some point in mid-December. Meanwhile, a large backlog of judicial and cabinet nominees needs to be cleared.

But this is Washington, so derailment is likely. The House is already bogged down in squabbling about whether to force a vote to compel the Department of Justice [to release its file on Jeffrey Epstein](#), a deceased sex offender with links to Donald Trump and many others. The shutdown is over, but partisanship will persist.



Photograph: AFP

The threat of a new war in Africa

Africa's next war may soon erupt in Tigray, Ethiopia's northernmost region. A peace deal [signed three years ago](#) between Ethiopia's prime minister, Abiy Ahmed, and Tigray's ruling party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front, is unravelling. Earlier this month the TPLF accused the Ethiopian government of "openly breaching" the deal by launching drone strikes against Tigrayan targets. This followed clashes between Tigrayan forces and pro-government militias. Mr Abiy, accusing Tigray's government of spending scarce resources on troops and arms, has halted federal funding to the region.

For now, both sides seem keen to de-escalate. A new war in Tigray would almost certainly suck in neighboring Eritrea, whose forces were involved in the last war, between 2020 and 2022, in which hundreds of thousands are thought to have died. Tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea are rising just as hostilities between Mr Abiy and the TPLF mount. [Pressure from powerful outsiders](#) is urgently needed to prevent a full-blown regional war.





Photograph: Alamy

A reckoning on the National Guard at SCOTUS

On Monday final briefs are due in *Trump v Illinois*, President Donald Trump's emergency plea to deploy National Guard troops in Chicago. In October he ordered about 700 troops from Illinois and Texas into federal service, citing protests near Chicago's immigration-enforcement facilities. The governor of Illinois, J.B. Pritzker, sued, calling the deployment unlawful. Lower courts blocked it, [prompting the government's turn to the Supreme Court](#).

Mr Trump invoked a 1908 statute allowing the Guard to be called up when "the regular forces" cannot uphold the law. Illinois argues that the phrase refers to the standing military—not, as Mr Trump claims, to civilian law enforcement. The justices' request for extra briefing on that question suggests doubts about the president's reading, though not about his claim that protests against immigration agents qualify as a "rebellion". If he loses, Mr Trump might turn to the Insurrection Act of 1807—but that law applies only when government authority collapses. And it's a description that hardly fits Chicago.



Photograph: Getty Images

A mammoth breakthrough in ancient biology

Scientists have reconstructed the genetic makeup of many extinct animals using fragments of [ancient DNA](#). This has revealed that woolly mammoths had no sweat glands, and that the dodo resembled a Nicobar pigeon. DNA shows which genes an animal had, but only its cousin, [RNA](#), reveals which of those were “turned on”—that is to say, how the animal responded to its environment.

A new paper in *Cell*, a journal, describes the discovery of RNA inside the frozen tissue of a woolly mammoth that died 39,000 years ago. By reconstructing the RNA—the oldest ever recovered—researchers found that genes for muscle contraction and stress response were turned on in the mammoth, proving an earlier hypothesis that it had been attacked by cave lions before it died. Until now, such insights seemed impossible, because RNA is so delicate. The findings could lead to more discoveries about life on earth, and may prompt some people to ponder how the mammoth would fare, if it were brought back to life.



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.

Monday: A man who decided to become a Cistercian or Carthusian would have chosen what profession?

*Political correctness is the natural
continuum from the party line.*

Doris Lessing