

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Getty Images

Volodymyr Zelensky promised to hold wartime elections within three months if America and Europe “ensure security” for the vote. On Tuesday Donald Trump again accused **Ukraine’s** president of clinging onto power. Meanwhile, following his summit with European leaders earlier this week, Mr Zelensky said he would present a “refined” [peace plan](#) to America “in the near future” .

China’s consumer-price index rose to 0.7% in November, compared with a year earlier, its highest level for nearly two years. The uptick will be welcomed by policymakers; the country has been battling [persistent deflation](#). Nonetheless, the producer-price index, which measures prices at the factory door, fell for a 38th month straight, dropping by 2.2%.

Cambodia withdrew from the Southeast Asian Games as its [border conflict](#) with **Thailand**, the host of the sporting event, intensified. Some 500,000 people have fled from provinces on either side of the border. America’s secretary of state urged de-escalation. China’s government similarly cautioned restraint. Cambodia signalled it was open to talks on the condition of “mutually agreed goodwill”.

Japan scrambled jets to observe two **Russian** bombers that joined **Chinese** planes on a “long-distance joint flight” around the country, according to Japan’s defence ministry. It said it had detected three other Russian planes in the Sea of Japan. Japan’s defence minister called it “a show of force against our nation”. Tensions between China and Japan [are on the rise](#).

The **price of silver** rose above \$60 per troy ounce, a record, as investors anticipated that the Federal Reserve would cut interest rates on Wednesday. The cost of silver has doubled since the start of the year; gold has risen by 58%. Both metals are considered a good hedge against inflation. As demand for silver is rising, [supply is falling](#).

In a crunch parliamentary vote, **France’s** lower house narrowly approved the social-security bill that forms the first half of the government’s budget for 2026. It includes a suspension until 2027 of President Emmanuel Macron’s pension reform. It was a [needed win](#) for Sébastien Lecornu, the prime minister, in the run-up to the vote on the main budget bill, which must be passed by December 23rd.

The **European Commission** began investigating whether **Google’s** roll-out of [AI-generated summaries](#) on its search engine breached antitrust laws. The watchdog suggested the tech giant may have given itself a competitive advantage by using material published on websites and YouTube to train its models without offering authors appropriate payment or the ability to opt out. Google said the EU’s probe “risks stifling innovation”.

Figure of the day: 500,000, the number of hours police in England and Wales spend on unnecessary paperwork annually. [Read the full story](#).



Photograph: Getty Images

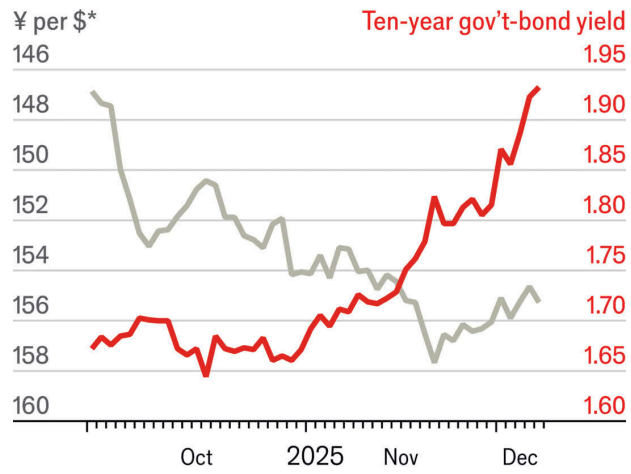
Takaichi's big spending

On Tuesday Japan's parliament began debating a supplementary budget put forward by Takaichi Sanae's government. At ¥18.3trn (\$118bn), it is the largest since the covid-19 pandemic and far above last year's ¥13.9trn. Nearly half the spending aims to help households cope with rising prices (annual inflation is hovering around 3%). The proposals include handouts of ¥20,000 per child and scrapping a provisional gasoline tax. The package will also allocate funds to industries such as semiconductors, and raise [defence spending](#) to 2% of GDP.

Voters seem to back Ms Takaichi's big spending. Her cabinet's approval rating is around 70%. Markets, though, are [less convinced](#). Critics warn the stimulus could fuel inflation. Most of the budget is financed through new government bonds, which worries fiscal hawks, given the country's enormous public debt. Meanwhile, the package risks further weakening the yen, which could push up import costs and hurt the households Ms Takaichi claims to support.

This might hurt

Japan



Source: LSEG Workspace

*Inverted scale



Photograph: Reuters

The Indian future of German steel

Thyssenkrupp, a German industrial giant, reported net profit of €532m (\$590m) for the fiscal year on Tuesday, but expects to record a net loss in the next one. The group is in the midst of an overhaul of its five business units under the stewardship of Miguel Ángel López Borrego, the chief executive. The firm supplies parts for the car industry, builds ships and makes green technology. Yet it is best known for its steel-making unit, one of the biggest in Europe, which is battling high energy costs, competition from Asia and lower domestic demand. To improve performance, the steel business is cutting jobs, among other restructuring measures.

It may also get a boost from abroad. In September Naveen Jindal, an Indian tycoon, made a surprise bid for the unit. He is a prominent backer of low-carbon “green steel”, which, thanks to federal- and state-government subsidies, is an increasingly big part of Thyssenkrupp’s business. The question facing him and the company is whether Germany will continue to pay these subsidies under foreign ownership.



Photograph: AP

America's execution surge

Mark Gerald's has done something unusual. Convicted of a murder in Panama City, Florida, in 1989, he sat on death row for decades before Ron DeSantis, the state's governor, signed his death warrant last month. Unlike most prisoners facing execution, Mr Gerald's said he would not appeal the order. He is set to be killed by lethal injection on Tuesday.

Mr Gerald's will be the 18th person that Florida has killed so far in 2025, already making it the state's deadliest year on record and pushing the national tally to a [nearly two-decade high](#). The reason for the surge? Some Republican politicians think executing people is good politics—and the Supreme Court, reshaped by Donald Trump, is letting them go ahead with it. Years ago the court routinely blocked states from executing people too fast, or in ways deemed too cruel. Now, it rarely does so. Perhaps Mr Gerald's understands that eleventh-hour appeals are not the saving grace they once were.



Photograph: Getty Images

More budget chaos in France

In a crunch parliamentary vote, France's lower house narrowly approved the social-security bill, which forms the first half of the government's budget for 2026, by just 13 votes. It includes a suspension until 2027 of [President Emmanuel Macron's pension reform](#), which since 2023 has been gradually increasing the legal minimum retirement age from 62 years to 64. The prime minister, Sébastien Lecornu, agreed to freeze its implementation as a way of securing support from the Socialists for his minority centrist government.

Some of the prime minister's own supporters rebelled. Most of the 34 deputies of Édouard Philippe's (Mr Macron's first prime minister) small centrist party abstained; only nine voted in favour. But other centrists and conservatives backed it. It was a [needed win](#) for Mr Lecornu in the run-up to the vote on the main budget bill, which must be passed by December 23rd.



Photograph: Getty Images

A timid Turner prize

The Turner prize is Britain's most prestigious, and controversial, contemporary-art award. Many shortlisted works have sparked uproar. Think of Damien Hirst's installation of a tiger shark preserved in formalin in 1992, and Tracey Emin's unmade bed in 1999. A bold shortlist would be especially fitting this year: it is the 250th anniversary of the birth of J.M.W. Turner, the visionary painter for whom the prize is named.

Alas, the 2025 shortlist is unimpressive. Nnena Kalu makes cocoon-like sculptures; Rene Matic, the second-youngest nominee ever, takes documentary-style photographs; Zadie Xa paints colourful, abstract canvases. If you go to the Cartwright Hall Art Gallery in Bradford, the host of this year's prize, you might feel you've seen it all before. That is until you notice the work of Mohammed Sami, the favourite to win the prize. His paintings of war and loss are unusual and unsettling.



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 GMT on Friday to [\[email protected\]](#). We'll pick three winners at random and crown them on Saturday.

Tuesday: Roy Harold Scherer found fame as an actor under which stage name?

Monday: The experiences of the marooned Alexander Selkirk were the reported inspiration for which famous novel?

*If you want to get an idea across,
wrap it up in a person.*

Ralph Bunche