

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AP

Discussions between **Russia** and **America** about an American [plan](#) to end Russia's invasion of **Ukraine** proved fruitless. After the high-level meeting in Moscow, attended by Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff, the Kremlin said they were "no closer" to an agreement. Earlier Mr Putin accused European leaders of sabotaging American peace efforts and said Russia was ready for war with Europe if that was what it wanted.

The Trump administration halted all **immigration** applications from people in 19 countries. It cited the shooting of two National Guard members in Washington, DC. The suspect is an Afghan refugee. Since returning to office Mr Trump has toughened immigration policy, supposedly to reduce crime. In fact, immigrants are [less likely](#) to commit crimes than native-born Americans.

Juan Orlando Hernández, a former president of **Honduras**, was released from prison in America following a pardon from Mr Trump. Mr Hernández had been serving a 45-year sentence for drug-trafficking. Mr Trump, however, considered it a "Biden administration set-up". Meanwhile the vote-count in the Honduran

election reached the final stage; Mr Trump has backed the candidate from Mr Hernández's National Party.

David Lammy, Britain's justice minister, announced plans to reduce the number of **jury trials**, to ease [a growing backlog](#) of nearly 80,000 delayed cases. Hearings for crimes that carry a prison sentence of up to three years will be tried solely by a judge. Opposition leaders have criticised the plans for removing the historic right to a trial by one's peers.

Sam Altman, the boss of **OpenAI**, reportedly called for urgent improvements to be made to ChatGPT, declaring a "code red" in a memo to staff. Other products and initiatives would be delayed in the meantime, he said. His note comes as competitors [catch up to OpenAI's dominance](#). Last month Google launched **Gemini 3**, a cutting-edge large-language model that outperforms OpenAI on most benchmarks.

Ukrainian authorities arrested a **British** man on suspicion of [spying for Russia](#). Ross David Cutmore, a former British army soldier, had been volunteering as a military instructor in Ukraine. The state security service accused him of offering to carry out assassinations for money, and revealing Ukrainian troop positions. If found guilty, he could be sentenced to up to 12 years in prison.

Michael and Susan **Dell**, a billionaire couple, pledged to contribute \$6.25bn to tax-advantaged investment accounts for American children, so-called "**Trump accounts**", [a new government scheme](#). Their donation will seed 25m American children with \$250 each, expanding the government programme from newborns to most children aged ten and under. Mr Dell, a computer tycoon, said the donation was "not intended" to be partisan.

Figure of the day: 70%, the rise in the price of onions in Iran this year. [Read the full story](#).



Photograph: AP

Mr Witkoff goes to Moscow (again)

Donald Trump's special envoy, [Steve Witkoff](#), and son-in-law, Jared Kushner, are in Moscow, where Mr Witkoff will update Vladimir Putin on the [19-point peace plan for Ukraine](#). The proposal will reportedly walk back some of the most pro-Kremlin clauses of an earlier 28-point document which prompted dismay across Europe. The discussions follow a meeting in Florida on Sunday between American and Ukrainian negotiators.

Notably, Marco Rubio, America's secretary of state, will not attend the talks. He was present at the discussions in Florida and is seen as the most pro-Ukrainian member of the administration. European officials are concerned that Mr Witkoff and Mr Kushner—who are businessmen rather than experienced diplomats—see a peace deal as a way to secure American-Russian joint-ventures in energy and minerals, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. If those claims are true, both Mr Witkoff and Mr Kushner can expect a friendly welcome in Moscow.



Photograph: AP

Another chance for a political upset

America's last special election of the year—Tuesday's contest in Tennessee's seventh congressional district—is shaping up as yet another chance for Democrats to ride [a wave of gains](#) they have enjoyed since Donald Trump returned to the presidency. Aftyn Behn, the Democratic candidate, is hoping to flip the ruby-red district, which stretches west from Nashville into the rural heartland. Drawing on the populist playbook, she is reminding the district, which went for Mr Trump by 22 points a year ago, that grocery prices haven't dropped and that health-care costs will soon rise.

Her Republican opponent, Matt Van Epps, leads the polls, but the gap is closing. The unusually tight race is making Republicans nervous. MAGA Inc, Mr Trump's super PAC, has spent nearly \$1.2m on the election. The president himself turned to Truth Social to encourage “America First Patriots” to vote. If Ms Behn does pull off an upset, expect Republicans' anxiety to deepen.



Photograph: Getty Images

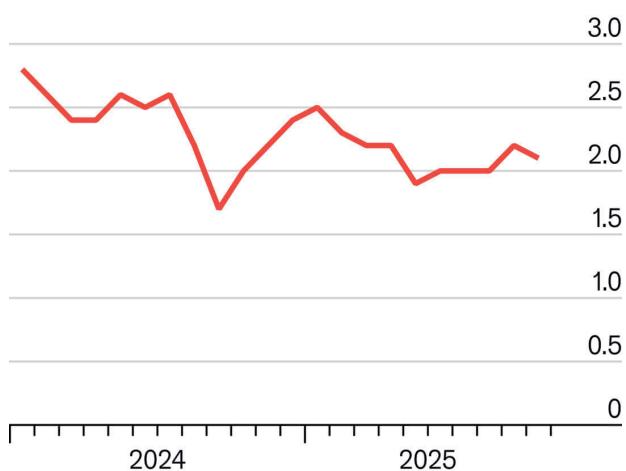
Europe is not counting on a rate cut just yet

Figures published on Tuesday showed that annual inflation in the [euro zone](#) rose unexpectedly to 2.2% in November, up from 2.1% the previous month, exceeding the European Central Bank's target of 2%. The bank's top brass thus have little flexibility to cut interest rates when they meet later in December. Initial data releases in Germany, Spain and France had shown inflation largely unchanged, giving rise to expectations that the ECB would lower rates.

The ECB began its rate-cutting cycle last year, announcing eight cuts between mid-2024 and mid-2025. More recently, it has paused that cycle—and for good reason. Underlying inflation, which strips out volatile costs such as those for energy, is on the rise in Spain, for instance. And while output-price inflation is low, firms reported rising operating expenses again in November, which could mean higher prices in future. If this trend continues, those hoping for a rate cut to boost the economy will be disappointed.

Inflation watch

Euro area, consumer prices,
% increase on a year earlier



Source: Haver Analytics



Photograph: Reuters

Apple faces an EU court

On Tuesday the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that a massive class-action suit against [Apple](#) could be held in a Dutch court. The technology company had challenged the Amsterdam District Court's jurisdiction, claiming that alleged harm done to App Store users who accused it of uncompetitive practices did not technically occur in the Netherlands. The CJEU disagreed, ruling that as the App Store was designed for the Dutch market, uses the Dutch language and has Dutch users, claims for damages can go through a Dutch court.

The precedent could be significant. The CJEU also ruled that claims from users across the Netherlands can be consolidated in one court, rather than needing to go through local courts first—a fallback objection Apple had also made. An adverse ruling would have fragmented claims, creating a serious procedural headache. But with Tuesday's decision, similar collective-action cases seeking damages for the harm done by big tech to consumers will be easier to put together.



Photograph: Getty Images

The media scandal rocking America

Olivia Nuzzi, a journalist at the centre of a media firestorm, will tell her side of the story in “American Canto”, a memoir which is being published on Tuesday. Ms Nuzzi’s account will follow the meteoric rise of her professional career. A correspondent for the *Daily Beast* at just 21, she became Washington correspondent for *New York* magazine three years later.

Her downfall has been equally intense. Ms Nuzzi left the magazine last autumn after news broke of an inappropriate romantic relationship with [Robert F. Kennedy junior](#), whom she had profiled and who is now America’s health secretary. Adding to the scandal, Ms Nuzzi’s ex-fiancé has alleged that she had an affair with Mark Sanford, another prominent politician (Ms Nuzzi’s lawyer denies the claim). *Vanity Fair*, which subsequently hired her, is now “looking at all the facts”.



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 [\[email protected\]](mailto:). We'll pick three winners at random and crown them on Saturday.

Tuesday: Which Wes Anderson film stars Gene Hackman as the eccentric patriarch of a gifted family?

Monday: What was the nickname of Jennifer Grey's character in the movie "Dirty Dancing"?



Illustration: The Economist

The winners of the mini crossword

Thank you to everyone who took part in our crossword, published on Saturday. The winners, chosen at random, were:

Ozlem Sumnu, Barcelona, Spain

Amelia Cheng, Coquitlam, Canada

Hasit Raja, Nairobi, Kenya

They all gave the correct answers of [Agatha Christie](#), [amnesty](#), [costume](#) and [emerald](#).

*The breath that sharpens life is
life itself.*

Philip Larkin