

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AFP

ByteDance sealed a deal that allows **TikTok**, its short-video app, to continue running in **America**. The Chinese firm will take a minority stake in a new joint venture that will run its American operations. The entity will be managed by Donald Trump's allies and will oversee the retraining of TikTok's algorithm using American data. Despite the safeguards—meant to prevent foreign manipulation—the app still [poses a danger](#).

Donald Trump filed a lawsuit against **JPMorgan Chase** and its boss, Jamie Dimon. The president accused the bank of cutting ties with him for political reasons, demanding at least \$5bn in compensation. JPMorgan said that it closes accounts only to manage legal and regulatory risk. The action adds to Mr Trump's broader campaign against what he calls politically motivated “[debanking](#)”.

America unveiled plans for a “**New Gaza**”. Under the scheme, around \$30bn would be invested into building skyscrapers, industrial complexes and data centres. The announcement came during the signing ceremony for Mr Trump's “[Board of Peace](#)”, which plans to oversee Gaza's ceasefire and post-war reconstruction. More than 20 countries, including Saudi Arabia,

Hungary and Argentina, have signed up. Western European leaders were notably absent.

Venezuela's national assembly backed a bill to [open up the oil sector](#) to domestic and foreign companies. If it passes a second vote, private firms will be allowed to solely operate oil fields and profit from exports, while paying a royalty to the state. Whether oil majors will want to invest in the sector, which is emerging from two decades of state control, is [another matter](#).

Volodymyr Zelensky said **Ukraine, Russia and America** would hold trilateral talks on Friday in the United Arab Emirates. The [Ukrainian](#) president said the discussion would be “all about the land”. Russia wants control over the entire region of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine, which Mr Zelensky has opposed. He also said his meeting with Mr Trump in Davos was “productive”, citing progress on air defences.

Paramount extended until February 20th its deadline for **Warner Bros Discovery** to accept a hostile \$108bn bid. Its offer was meant to expire on Wednesday. Warner, which has rejected Paramount's advances, said it still preferred its “superior” merger agreement with **Netflix**. To further fend off Paramount, this week Netflix switched its \$83bn offer for the Hollywood studio [to an all-cash one](#).

“[Sinners](#)” led this year’s **Oscar** nominations. The segregation-era vampire drama was shortlisted for a record 16 awards, and is the early favourite to take Best Picture. Michael B. Jordan earned a nomination for Best Actor for playing twin brothers in the film; Ryan Coogler was nominated for Best Director. Other contenders for Best Picture include “One Battle After Another”, “Frankenstein” and “Hamnet”.

Figure of the day: \$700m, the annual sum Denmark sends to Greenland’s government—around a fifth of the island’s GDP. [Read](#)

[the full story.](#)



Photograph: Getty Images

The oilmen eyeing Venezuela

When American soldiers snatched Venezuela’s dictator, Nicolás Maduro, on January 3rd, Donald Trump [promised a bonanza for Big Oil](#). American companies would “spend billions of dollars”, he said, “and start making money for the country”. So far oil majors have demurred. The boss of ExxonMobil called Venezuela “uninvestible”, despite its vast crude reserves. Decaying infrastructure and political risk—Venezuela’s regime, however cowed, remains in power—make the country’s crude unappealing.

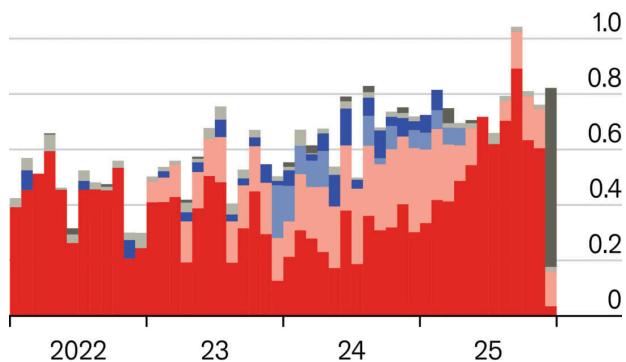
[Other companies have been more bullish](#). SLB, the world’s biggest oilfield-services company, has said it is ready to “ramp up” business in Venezuela “under the right conditions”. Investors will be listening for similar talk when SLB reports results on Friday. Its share price has risen by 21% since Mr Maduro’s capture. Oilfield-services companies do the industry’s drudge work, such as drilling wells and building pipelines. SLB is among the most risk-tolerant of the bunch. If smaller oil firms head into Venezuela, its engineers will be first in line to man the drills.

The old deals are dead

Venezuela, crude-oil exports

By destination, million barrels per day

■ China ■ United States ■ India
■ Spain ■ Cuba ■ Others/unknown



To the United States, % of total



Source: Kpler



Photograph: Getty Images

Japan's prime minister takes a gamble

Takaichi Sanae, [Japan's](#) first female prime minister, dissolved parliament on Friday in order to hold a snap election on February 8th. The campaign will be the shortest in the country's post-war history. Parliament put Ms Takaichi into office three months ago after her predecessor resigned. Currently riding high—public support for her cabinet tops 70%—she has decided to “let the people decide” if she should remain prime minister.

Even so, she's taking a risk. Ms Takaichi's personal popularity has not rubbed off on her Liberal Democratic Party, whose reputation has been damaged by repeated scandals. Meanwhile Komeito, a Buddhist-backed party and the LDP's junior partner for 26 years, has joined forces with the centre-left Constitutional Democratic Party. Komeito's grassroots organisation has long helped the LDP win tight races. Now it will work for the opposition. What the people will decide is far from certain.



Photograph: AP

European defence firms are charging ahead

On Friday one of the world's fastest-growing defence companies launched an IPO that could become the sector's biggest-ever listing. The Prague-based Czechoslovak Group—which makes radars, weapons systems and military vehicles (among other things)—has offered up to 15.2% of its shares on Euronext, a stock exchange in Amsterdam. csg's offer price of €25 (\$30) a share puts the group's overall value at €25bn. The IPO will raise €3.8bn if investors buy the whole lot.

European defence firms are enjoying a boom. [The continent is rearming](#) at its fastest rate in the post-war period in order to become less dependent on America for protection. Shares in France's Safran rose by more than 40% last year, while those in [Germany's Rheinmetall](#) more than doubled. It is no wonder that csg, a major supplier of tanks and ammunition to Ukraine, wants to cash in.



Photograph: AP

Minnesota v ICE

On Friday Minnesotans are being encouraged to participate in “ICE out day” to protest against the federal government’s immigration crackdown, which has seen some 3,000 agents making arrests across Minneapolis and Saint Paul in recent weeks. Trade unions and activist groups are urging school children, workers and shoppers to stay home. It’s not clear how many will, though more than 500 businesses and restaurants in Minneapolis and Saint Paul have said they will close. What is clear is that Minnesotans have become increasingly angry about “Operation Metro Surge” since a mother of three, Renee Good, was killed earlier this month.

Minnesotans have [other reasons for outrage](#). Local police chiefs report seeing masked agents randomly detaining non-white people, including children, pointing guns at them and demanding their papers. Videos show federal agents pepper-spraying peaceful protesters. The Trump administration isn’t backing down. The agents are going after serious criminals, it claims, and the protesters are paid “anarchists”. On Thursday J.D. Vance, the vice-president, appeared in Minneapolis to defend the crackdown.



Photograph: Reuters

France bickers over its budget

After six months of gridlock France is edging towards passing a budget for 2026. On Monday Sébastien Lecornu, the prime minister, announced his intention to force it through parliament without a direct vote, even though he had promised not to. Two no-confidence motions on the first part of the budget were immediately tabled: one by politicians from the populist right, the other by those on the hard left. Parliament will vote on both on Friday. If a majority of the lower house upholds either motion, Mr Lecornu's government will fall.

If it doesn't, it will be thanks to the Socialists and others on the left. Mr Lecornu has tried hard to appease them, extending a super-tax on big firms while abandoning proposed deficit-reduction measures, like not adjusting income-tax bands for inflation. The result, even if passed, would lower the budget deficit only a bit, from 5.4% of GDP in 2025 to 5% this year. And other no-confidence motions, attached to other parts of the budget, could follow next week.



Illustration: Sandra Navarro

Daily quiz

We 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 [\[email protected\]](mailto:). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Friday: Which actor is best known for playing Kojak in the 1970s TV series?

Thursday: Which actor played the psychiatrist who treats Micheal Myers in the first Halloween film?

Surrealism is destructive, but it destroys only what it considers to be shackles limiting our vision.

Salvador Dalí