

# 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 the countries 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 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.

With 68% of votes counted in **Honduras's** presidential election, Salvador Nasralla, a centrist, had a slim lead over Nasry Asfura, a conservative rival backed by Mr Trump. Delays prompted America's president to allege electoral fraud. Earlier Juan Orlando Hernández, a former president of Honduras, was released from

prison in America following a pardon from Mr Trump. He had been serving a 45-year sentence [for drug-trafficking](#).

**HSBC** said Brendan Nelson, its interim chairman, would assume the position on a permanent basis—a day after the bank’s chief executive, Georges Elhedery, claimed Mr Nelson did not want to serve a full term. A tumultuous search process had left the top job open for a year. Mr Nelson is a surprising choice: he lacks experience in Asia, where HSBC makes most of its profit.

**Sam Altman**, the boss of **OpenAI**, reportedly called for urgent improvements to be made to ChatGPT, its AI chatbot, 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 [erode OpenAI’s dominance](#). Last month Google launched **Gemini 3**, a large-language model that outperforms OpenAI on most benchmarks.

Mr Trump said he would nominate a new chair of America’s **Federal Reserve** “early next year”. He did not reveal his choice, but Kevin Hassett, a partisan economic adviser in favour of low interest rates, is widely considered the favourite—despite his [risible track record](#). America’s president has clashed with Jerome Powell, the current chair, over his refusal to lower interest rates more quickly.

**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.

**Figure of the day:** €150bn (\$174bn), the size of the EU’s loan programme for funding defence investments. [Read the full story](#).

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Photograph: Alamy

## Emmanuel Macron visits China

France's president, Emmanuel Macron, arrives in China on Wednesday for a three-day state visit. The last time he made the trip, in 2023, he went with Ursula von der Leyen, the head of the European Commission. This time he will go alone. The French president will nonetheless convey a crucial message from the EU to China: that it cannot be "treated as a variable in the tensions or relations between China and the US", according to a presidential official. One consequence of this, which Mr Macron will raise, is the wave of cheap Chinese imports [crippling the union's manufacturing industry](#).

On Friday Xi Jinping will accompany Mr Macron on a private visit to the city of Chengdu. During their bilateral talks in Beijing they are also expected to discuss Ukraine. The French president will urge China to put pressure on [Russia](#) to end the war, as he did so on his previous visit. That attempt, however, proved fruitless.



Photograph: Getty Images

## Marco Rubio goes AWOL

There will be one notable absentee from the meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Brussels on Wednesday. At a critical time for both Ukraine and the [military alliance](#), America's secretary of state, Marco Rubio, will be elsewhere. It is all the odder because Mr Rubio was not among the delegation—which included Steve Witkoff, Donald Trump's special envoy, and Jared Kushner, his son-in-law—to Moscow to discuss the [19-point Ukraine peace plan](#) with Vladimir Putin.

Mr Rubio's deputy, Christopher Landau, will take his place in Brussels. But other foreign ministers will struggle not to see it as a deliberate snub by Mr Rubio. He may have wanted to avoid a grilling about the American peace proposal, which, in its original version, caused outrage in Europe for its [pro-Kremlin tilt](#). Mr Rubio's absence will mark the first time that an American secretary of state has skipped the bi-annual meeting since the height of the Iraq War in 2003.



Photograph: Getty Images

## Can Salesforce survive the AI revolution?

Software once ate the world. Now investors worry that software as a service will be eaten by AI. Salesforce, a big marketing- and sales-software company, may be [the next victim](#). Its stock is down nearly 30% since the start of the year.

Salesforce has been trying to [integrate AI](#) into its products. The firm is betting on Agentforce, its own AI-powered tool for customer service and early-stage sales, to deliver internal savings of \$100m each year. In June Marc Benioff, its CEO, claimed AI was doing 30-50% of the company's work. Last quarter's projected sales growth was underwhelming, however, suggesting Salesforce's AI push isn't yet paying off.

Lacklustre results have fuelled investors' doubts that Salesforce can keep pace with its peers. While the tech-heavy NASDAQ 100 is up 12% this year, software-as-a-service stocks have fallen by more than 6%, according to Morgan Stanley, a bank. Investors may need convincing that the software industry can withstand the [AI frenzy](#).



Photograph: AP

## North America's trade pact approaches a tense review

Jamieson Greer, the United States' trade representative, will open a three-day hearing on Wednesday to review the [United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement](#). The hearing is part of a statutory assessment ahead of a mandatory review of the agreement in 2026, during which any of the three countries can seek renegotiation—or even withdrawal.

In the case of Canada, [tensions](#) are already high. In late October, Donald Trump suspended trade discussions in response to an advertisement (purchased by the government of Ontario) that criticised tariffs. Like Canada, Mexico [secured a partial reprieve](#) from 25% tariffs on medium and heavy trucks, which now apply only to the value of non-American components. Even so, its manufacturers remain wary that the rules governing continental supply chains could shift again during the review. This week's hearing will hint at whether the coming review steadies North America's trade pact, or pushes it into another period of turbulence.



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

**Wednesday:** Dr Sidney Russell invented what night-time heating device in 1912?

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

*The saints are the sinners who  
keep on trying.*

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***Robert Louis Stevenson***