

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Getty Images

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

The **Federal Reserve’s** rate-setting committee will meet on Wednesday. Economists have predicted that it will cut the central bank’s headline interest-rate range by a quarter of a percentage point, to 3.5-3.75%. The *Financial Times* reported that Mr Trump has narrowed the field of potential successors to Jerome Powell as Fed chairman to four, and will hold final interviews this week. [Kevin Hassett](#) is supposedly the favourite.

China’s consumer-price index rose by 0.7% in November, compared with a year earlier, the fastest rate 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% year on year.

Brazil's lower house passed a bill that could shorten **Jair Bolsonaro's** sentence by as much as 25 years. The hard-right former president is serving 27 years in prison for plotting a coup against his left-wing successor, **Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva**. The bill will now go to the Senate; even if it passes, it could be struck down by the country's Supreme Court.

The boss of **Coupang**, South Korea's largest [online retailer](#), resigned after a big **data leak**. Attackers are believed to have gained access to personal information about more than 33m South Koreans—nearly two-thirds of the population. **Kim Min-seok**, South Korea's prime minister, said the government would investigate the breach. Earlier, police raided the company's headquarters.

America said **China's** aiming of radars at **Japanese** planes in the South China Sea was “not conducive to regional peace”. It is the Trump administration's first criticism of China since the incident last week. Tensions between Japan and China [have escalated](#) over the last month. Earlier, Japan scrambled jets to observe two Russian bombers that joined Chinese planes on a “long-distance joint flight” that circumnavigated the country.

Sophie Kinsella, the pen-name of Madeleine Wickham, author of the “Shopaholic” novels, died from brain cancer at 55. Her bestselling series, which followed the professional and romantic entanglements of a spendthrift journalist, captured a millennial zeitgeist. It was the basis for a hit film starring Isla Fisher in 2009. Ms Kinsella wrote more than 30 books, selling more than 50m copies in 60 countries.

Figure of the day: Two-thirds, the rough share of consumers in rich countries who say they plan to use AI for holiday shopping this year. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Alamy

A divisive time at the Federal Reserve

With only six months left as the chair of the [Federal Reserve](#), Jerome Powell is presiding over an increasingly divided central bank. Markets are now fairly sure the bank will cut interest rates by a quarter of a percentage point on Wednesday, bringing them down to 3.5-3.75%. Those in favour of lower rates worry about a wobble in America's jobs market. Some lay-off data have jumped in recent months and the unemployment rate, while low in historical terms, has been rising.

But some rate-setters are cautious. They argue stockmarkets are booming, growth looks solid and the annual inflation rate remains well above 2%, the bank's target. The Fed's previous meeting in October had a rare three-way split: those who voted for a quarter point cut eventually won the day, but some wanted to hold rates steady and others to make a deeper cut of half a percentage point. Opinion will probably be divided again this time.



Photograph: Getty Images

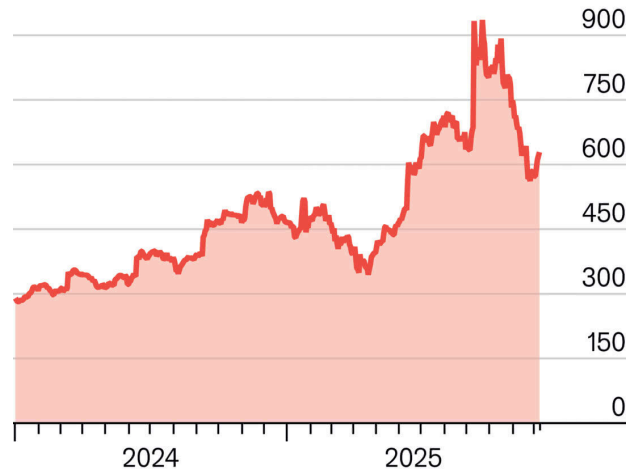
The Ellisons take on the world

Larry Ellison, the 81-year-old founder of Oracle, a technology giant, has had a busy year. As well as being part of a group hoping to buy TikTok's American operations, he is helping to fund an attempt by his son's Hollywood studio, Paramount Skydance, [to buy Warner Bros Discovery](#), a bigger rival. Investors will hope he hasn't taken his all-seeing eye off Oracle, which reports results for the three months to November on Wednesday. The cloud-computing company has benefited from the artificial-intelligence boom. Revenue at its cloud-infrastructure division grew by 55% year on year in the previous quarter, to \$3.4bn. In September Oracle forecast annual cloud revenue of \$144bn by 2030—that briefly lifted its valuation to \$935bn.

It has since fallen by nearly a third. Investors are uneasy about colossal spending on data centres. Oracle's net debt has more than doubled over four years, to \$80bn. And they worry about the reliability of cloud revenue from customers such as OpenAI, which is burning through cash itself.

Head in the cloud

Oracle, market capitalisation, \$bn



Source: LSEG Workspace

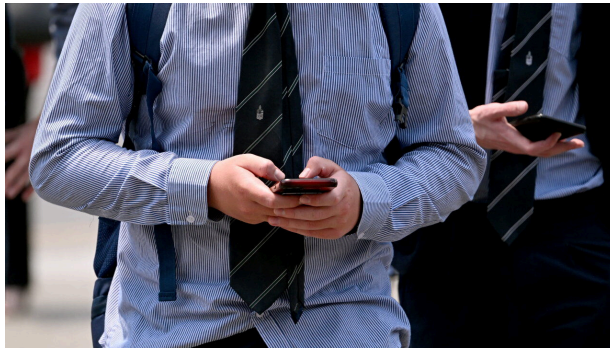


Photograph: Getty Images

The return of war between Thailand and Cambodia

At a rally in Pennsylvania on Tuesday night, President Donald Trump said he would make a call on Wednesday to get Thailand and Cambodia to stop [shooting at each other](#). Hundreds of thousands of civilians have fled since fighting between the Thai and Cambodian armies spread along their shared border this week. The skirmishes have left at least 12 people dead. Each side blamed the other for firing the first shot.

Mr Trump brokered a truce to end five days of fighting earlier this year by threatening to hike tariffs on them to intolerable levels. But his efforts did little to resolve the underlying causes of the dispute. Now, neither side appears willing to back down. “If you want the fight to stop, go tell the aggressor,” Anutin Charnvirakul, Thailand’s prime minister, told reporters on Monday. Cambodia, for its part, says that it must respond to Thai attacks.

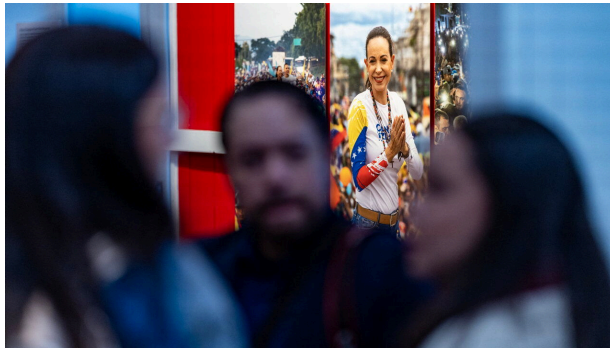


Photograph: Getty Images

Australia bans social media for teens

Parents may rejoice and teenagers groan on Wednesday as Australia introduces some of the world's [strictest limits on children's screen-time](#). Those under 16 will be forbidden from using social media, a category that includes video apps like YouTube and social networks like Instagram. The list does not include messaging platforms such as WhatsApp or social video games like Roblox, though it could be updated. Companies that fail to check ages face steep fines.

Other countries are watching, as fears grow everywhere about social media's harm to mental health. Australia's measures may help. But there are risks. Children will still be able to use the apps while logged out of their profiles, meaning a less personalised (and less age-appropriate) experience. And they may switch to less well policed apps too small to be covered by the ban. Some children's charities argue the solution is to make the internet safer, not rule it to be unsuitable for kids.



Photograph: Getty Images

A Nordic celebration for Venezuela's opposition

On Wednesday María Corina Machado's daughter will receive the Nobel peace prize on behalf of the Venezuelan opposition leader at a ceremony in Oslo. Organisers had hoped that Ms Machado would attend in person, but announced that would not be possible hours before the event. She has been in hiding for months. The regime of Nicolás Maduro, Venezuela's dictator, has said she would have been considered a "fugitive" from justice if she had travelled to Norway, and indicated she would have been arrested were she to return.

Ms Machado was banned from standing in last year's presidential election. She instead organised the campaign for Edmundo González, who was the real winner. She received the Nobel for "her struggle to achieve a just and peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy". The peace laureate has since become an unapologetic supporter of Donald Trump's use of military pressure to persuade Mr Maduro to stand down.

[Read María Corina Machado's guest essay](#) for The Economist on the future of Venezuela's opposition.



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.

Wednesday: A Chinese resistance movement against foreign powers between 1899 and 1901 is generally known by what name?

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

*We turn not older with years, but
newer every day.*

Emily Dickinson