

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Getty Images

Paramount made a \$108bn all-cash offer to buy **Warner Bros Discovery** in an attempt to thwart **Netflix's** bid. The streaming giant is seeking regulatory approval [to buy much of the Hollywood studio](#) for \$83bn, but Donald Trump has sounded sceptical about the deal. Mr Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, is part of the Paramount bid through his private-equity firm. Paramount, another studio, was bought this year by [David Ellison](#), the son of Larry Ellison, a tech billionaire.

Conservative justices at America's **Supreme Court** signalled they would side with Mr Trump's dismissal of Rebecca Slaughter from the **Federal Trade Commission** in March. A lower court previously ordered Ms Slaughter to be reappointed to the [independent regulator](#), citing decades-old removal limits. A ruling is expected by June. A win for Mr Trump could grant him—and future presidents—sweeping control over dozens of executive agencies.

Sir Keir Starmer, Britain's prime minister, hosting **Volodymyr Zelensky** for talks in London, said that Europe's leaders would “support” Ukraine in its war against Russia and through ongoing peace negotiations. He added that any ceasefire needs to be “just

and lasting”—an apparent criticism of [American-brokered talks](#) which have largely favoured Russia. Friedrich Merz, Germany’s chancellor, and Emmanuel Macron, France’s president, also attended the meeting.

Mr Trump is due to announce a \$12bn aid package for **farmers**, following calls from Republican legislators. American farmers have suffered from the consequences of [the administration’s trade policies](#), including retaliatory tariffs from countries targeted by Mr Trump. China also cut billions of dollars-worth of soybean orders when trade tensions between the two countries escalated.

Warren Buffett announced changes in leadership at **Berkshire Hathaway**, his investment firm, as he [prepares to retire](#). Among other moves, Todd Combs is stepping down as investment manager and CEO of Geico, a subsidiary of Berkshire, to join JPMorgan Chase, a bank. Mr Buffett has run Berkshire for over 50 years; his successor, Greg Abel, will take over on January 1st.

Alina Habba resigned as **New Jersey’s** chief prosecutor. Last week an appeals court ruled that she could not serve in the position, deeming it unlawful because the Trump administration reinstated her after her interim appointment ended without Senate confirmation. Several federal attorney appointees face similar legal challenges. Ms Habba said she will instead become an adviser to Pam Bondi, America’s attorney-general.

A magnitude 7.6 **earthquake** shook **Japan’s** north-east on Monday night, prompting evacuation orders for 90,000 people as well as tsunami advisories. Several injuries and power outages were reported, according to a government official. Japan is [especially vulnerable](#) to natural hazards because it is situated in [an earthquake-prone area](#) around the Pacific Ocean known as the “ring of fire”.

Figure of the day: 3bn tonnes, the amount of iron ore at the Simandou mine in Guinea. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Reuters

Ukraine confers with its allies

Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's leader, arrived in London to meet Britain's Sir Keir Starmer, France's Emmanuel Macron and Germany's Friedrich Merz. Top of the agenda is their plan to unlock around €165bn (\$192bn) in frozen Russian assets, mostly held in a Belgian clearing-house, for a reparations loan. Few things are more important for helping Ukraine resist American pressure to agree to a peace deal that favours Russia. Ukraine's finances are weakening and it needs to buy more weapons.

But Europe is divided. On Friday Mr Merz and Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, met Bart De Wever, the Belgian prime minister, in Brussels to convince him to agree to the scheme. He worries that unfreezing the assets could expose Belgium to legal action. It should become clearer over the next few days whether Belgium's concerns can be addressed in time for the plan to be finalised at the European Union's summit on December 18th.



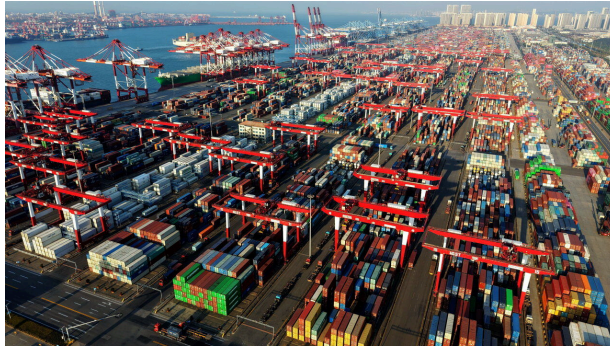
Photograph: Getty Images

Can Donald Trump fire at will?

On Monday America's [Supreme Court](#) considered whether Donald Trump can remove Rebecca Slaughter from her seat on the Federal Trade Commission. By statute, members of the FTC may be sacked only for “inefficiency, neglect of duty or malfeasance”. The president cited none of these when notifying Ms Slaughter of her dismissal in March. She must go, he wrote, because her work did not align with his “administration’s priorities”.

A precedent from 1935, *Humphrey’s Executor*, supports Ms Slaughter. In that case, the court upheld removal limits, reversing Franklin Roosevelt’s dismissal of an FTC commissioner. But Mr Trump’s lawyers argue that Article II of the constitution “concentrates ‘the executive power’ in one person”, giving him the authority to oversee and remove “those who execute federal law”.

During oral arguments the conservative justices signalled they would side with the president. A ruling for Mr Trump could grant presidents sweeping control over dozens of executive agencies. The court will probably make an exception for the Federal Reserve, preserving its independence while subjecting all other agency heads to presidential whim.



Photograph: ROPI

China's exporters bolster its economy

One mystery of 2025 is why China's government did not try harder to rescue the [property market](#), which has entered its fifth year of decline. According to Larry Hu of Macquarie, a bank, the government held back because it could. Despite plummeting investment in new housing, China's economy will probably meet its official growth target of "around 5%" this year. Partly, that is thanks to surprisingly strong demand for Chinese goods abroad.

Figures on Monday showed that China's exports grew by 5.9% in November, compared with a year earlier. China's leaders hope this strength can continue in 2026. But if America suffers a tech bust, the world economy will stumble. China will then be forced to bolster domestic demand. That might include doing whatever it takes to revive the property market, argues Mr Hu. In that sense, China's housing policy is made in America.



Photograph: Getty Images

Nicolas Sarkozy's prison notebooks

[Nicolas Sarkozy](#) spent just 20 days in solitary confinement in jail after being convicted of “criminal conspiracy” in a trial over illicit campaign funding. But this week, a month after being released, the former French president will publish his diary about the experience. “In prison there is nothing to see, and nothing to do,” he writes, according to an extract from “A Prisoner’s Diary” published in the French press. Other insights include: “The noise is alas constant. But, just like the desert, inner life is fortified in prison.”

Unusually, judges sentenced Mr Sarkozy to immediate imprisonment even while awaiting his appeal. His lawyers secured his release after making the case that the ex-president, who says he is innocent, was not at risk of flight, nor of recidivism. He has been forbidden from leaving France, and from contact with Gérald Darmanin, the justice minister, pending his appeal, which is due to be heard in the spring.



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.

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

The great aim of education is not knowledge but action.

Herbert Spencer