

## Catch up: Trump's cabinet picks; Germany's election date



**Donald Trump** was reportedly on the verge of appointing **Mike Waltz** as his national security adviser. **Mr Waltz** wants to roll back American aid for Ukraine. Mr Trump is also expected to tap **Marco Rubio**, a senator for Florida, as secretary of state. Both potential appointees are known to **loathe China's Communist Party**. Meanwhile **Stephen Miller**, who crafted a hard-line **immigration policy** in Mr Trump's first term, will probably be named deputy chief of staff.

**Germany** will hold an **early election** on February 23rd. The ruling Social Democrats and the main opposition party, the Christian Democratic Union, agreed to the date after days of quarrelling. **Olaf Scholz**, the chancellor, had originally proposed holding elections in March; the CDU preferred an earlier date to avoid uncertainty. Germany's coalition government collapsed last week after Mr Scholz sacked his finance minister.

**North Korea** ratified a defence treaty with **Russia** which commits each country to "immediately provide military and other

assistance” if the other is at war. The countries’ leaders, Kim Jong Un and Vladimir Putin, agreed the deal at a summit in June. Last month [North Korea](#) sent an estimated 11,000 troops to help Russia wage war against Ukraine.

**Shell** won an appeal against a [climate ruling](#) that had called on it to dramatically cut its carbon emissions. In 2021 a Dutch court said that the British oil giant must reduce its emissions by 45% by 2030, compared with 2019 levels. But an appeals court in The Hague ruled there is “insufficient” scientific consensus on whether a company should adopt such a “specific reduction percentage”.

Gideon Sa’ar, **Israel’s** foreign minister, said progress had been made towards a ceasefire with **Hizbullah**. But Israel Katz, Israel’s defence minister, ruled out making such a deal with the [Lebanese militant group](#). Hizbullah denied that it had received a new ceasefire proposal and warned of a “difficult political climate” after Donald Trump’s win in America’s presidential election.

**SoftBank Group**, a Japanese tech and telecoms giant, reported net profits of \$7.7bn in the third quarter, more than four times higher than expectations. The firm’s investments in booming Indian startups helped boost earnings. It has also recently invested in artificial-intelligence companies, including \$500m in OpenAI. (Although Masayoshi Son, SoftBank’s boss, looks [hopelessly late](#) in doing so.)

American airlines suspended flights to **Haiti** after gunmen fired at a Spirit Airlines plane as it neared the country’s international airport. The attack prompted the airport to temporarily close. The American embassy said that gangs were trying to block travel. The unrest came as Alix Didier Fils-Aimé was sworn in as Haiti’s prime minister—the latest in a [succession](#) of unelected officials.

**Figure of the day:** 3.5m, the number of people living in Ukraine’s occupied regions (excluding Crimea). [Read the full story.](#)

# China's growing military strength



The biennial Zhuhai air show opened in China on Tuesday. The six-day event is an opportunity for the People's Liberation Army to show off its kit in the 75th year of the People's Republic of China. This year's star is the J-35A, a stealth fighter jet that bears a striking resemblance to America's F-35. It is the latest indication that China's armed forces are **growing in size and sophistication**.

China's latest air-to-air missiles are now among the best in the world and the country's ability to produce jet engines—an area where it was once decades behind the West—is quickly improving. The Chinese navy, which flaunted its two aircraft-carriers a few weeks ago, will also get in on the action at Zhuhai. It will display a prototype of a new drone ship, a futuristic-looking trimaran called the JARI-USV—or, more evocatively, the “Killer Whale”. China's armed forces have not fought a war in decades. Still, their technological achievements will make Western onlookers sit up and take notice.

# Sudan in anguish



The disaster in [Sudan](#) tops the agenda at the UN Security Council again on Tuesday. During the 18-month-long civil war about 150,000 people have been killed and 11m displaced. Britain, which holds the Security Council presidency for November, will introduce a resolution to better protect civilians and speed up aid deliveries. Both are needed urgently.

Atrocities in the western region of Darfur continue. The Rapid Support Forces, a paramilitary group, is accused of slaughtering 124 civilians in a village in the state of Gezira on October 25th. The fear of widespread famine grows, particularly as an agreement between the UN and the Sudanese authorities to use the Adre border crossing with Chad to bring in supplies is due to expire in mid-November. And after malnutrition comes disease. Last week the UN reported 28,000 cases of cholera from July to October, with 836 deaths. Instances of dengue fever have also surged. Whatever happens at the UN, the country's anguish will surely continue.



# Trump puts his legal woes behind him



Donald Trump has been handed a get-out-of-jail-free card by voters. Before America's presidential election on November 5th, he was facing several criminal cases. One had already yielded a guilty verdict. A conviction in any of the other three could have meant prison time.

But Mr Trump's victory has changed the picture. On Tuesday a judge in Manhattan may decide to throw out the president-elect's conviction in a [hush-money case](#). Judge Juan Merchan has to consider whether the Supreme Court's ruling on [presidential immunity](#), released after the trial, invalidated some of the prosecution's evidence. The judge could toss the verdict, or decide that the conviction stands and proceed to sentencing. Mr Trump would be comfortable with either outcome. Even if the verdict holds, a prison sentence—a remote prospect for an elderly first-time offender—is vanishingly unlikely now he has won back the White House. Moreover the other cases against him will disappear or be frozen for four years.

## An early win sets the stage for COP29



Host countries of the United Nations climate conference, or COP, like to put on a show of leadership by pushing through a big deal early on. Azerbaijan, whose capital, Baku, is the site of COP29, is no different. The conference began on Monday with a decision on Article 6, a clause of the Paris Agreement meant to create an international carbon market. Negotiations over the issue at COP28 last year collapsed, in part because countries could not agree on what counts as “offsetting” carbon emissions.

Azerbaijan’s solution was unorthodox. On the first day of the conference, rather than continuing to negotiate how to trade carbon credits, countries were presented with a list of standards drawn up by a supervisory body ahead of time. These included prescriptions against using indigenous people’s land without their consent, and a mechanism to use some of the proceeds to fund climate adaptation. Many countries felt they had no choice but to approve them (and did so reluctantly). Whether the progress was worth the discord may not become clearer until later in the conference.

**Correction:** *An earlier version of this piece said that Azerbaijan unilaterally drew up standards and persuaded other countries to agree to them. In fact those standards were agreed by a supervisory body. Sorry.*

# The top contenders for the Booker prize



On Tuesday the judges of the Booker prize, the most prestigious award for fiction written in English, will reveal this year's winner. Whoever prevails will get £50,000 (\$64,000) in prize money as well as a significant boost in sales. In 2023 sales of “Prophet Song”, Paul Lynch’s [dystopian vision](#) of an authoritarian Ireland, surged by 1,500% in the week after it won the award.

The six authors on the shortlist come from America, Australia, Britain, Canada and the Netherlands. Bookmakers reckon two titles have the best chance of winning: “Orbital” by Samantha Harvey, which follows astronauts on the International Space Station as they go about their daily routines, and “James” by Percival Everett, a retelling of Mark Twain’s “Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” from the perspective of Jim, a slave. Both authors have been in the running before. Ms Harvey was longlisted for the Booker in 2009; Mr Everett was shortlisted in 2022.



## 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 [QuizEspresso@economist.com](mailto:QuizEspresso@economist.com). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

**Tuesday:** Which medal was the award for bravery in the German army from 1871 to 1945?

**Monday:** The life of which medieval Spanish warrior was made into a 1961 film, starring Charlton Heston?

**3.5m**

*The number of people living in Ukraine's occupied regions  
(excluding Crimea).*

*Read the full story.*

**A little credulity helps one on through life  
very smoothly.**

*Elizabeth Gaskell*