

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Getty Images

Israel's prime minister, **Binyamin Netanyahu**, requested a pardon for corruption charges from the country's president. Mr Netanyahu has been charged with fraud, breach of trust and receiving bribes, all of which he denies. He said his [long-running trial](#) "deepens rifts" in Israeli society. The president's office said it had received the "extraordinary request" and would seek legal advice before making a decision.

Senior American officials, including Marco Rubio, the secretary of state, and Steve Witkoff, Mr Trump's special envoy, began talks with **Ukrainian** negotiators in Florida to discuss America's proposal to end the war with **Russia**. Ukraine's chief negotiator, Andriy Yemak, [resigned on Friday](#) because of a corruption scandal. Rustem Umerov, the defence secretary, is leading the Ukrainian delegation in Florida.

Kazakhstan asked **Ukraine** to stop its attacks on an oil terminal linked to the Caspian Pipeline Consortium on Russia's Black Sea coast. The terminal paused operations after naval drones struck one of its moorings. Though Russian, it handles 80% of Kazakhstan's crude-oil exports. Ukraine has increased its attacks on Russian oil

infrastructure: it struck two tankers in Russia's "shadow fleet" on Friday and Saturday.

Venezuela's government described as a "colonialist threat" **Donald Trump's** warning that airlines should consider the country's airspace "CLOSED IN ITS ENTIRETY". America's president also addressed his message to "Drug Dealers, and Human Traffickers". He has threatened military action against the regime of Nicolás Maduro, Venezuela's autocrat, and ordered strikes against [alleged drug-running boats](#).

Manufacturing activity in **China** declined for the eighth consecutive month in November. The country's official purchasing-managers' index for manufacturing was 49.2. That is slightly higher than in October, but anything below 50 signals contraction. [China's economy](#) is feeling the effects of a global trade war and weak domestic demand.

Voters in **Switzerland** rejected a proposal to impose an inheritance tax of 50% on rich residents in a referendum on Sunday, according to estimates. Initial figures from the government suggested that 82% voted against the idea. The tax would have been imposed on assets worth more than SFr50m (\$62m). A left-wing party put forward the idea but the government opposed it.

Sir Tom Stoppard, one of Britain's best playwrights, died aged 88. He wrote dozens of plays, such as "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead", as well as scripts for television and films—including "Shakespeare in Love", for which he won an Oscar and Golden Globe. "Stoppardian", a reference to the wit, wordplay and philosophical themes explored in his work, was added to the Oxford English Dictionary in 1993.

Word of the week: *Nicisanak*, a Cree word for siblings, used to refer to inmates of Canada's rehabilitative prisons. [Read the full story](#).



Photograph: Reuters

Hondurans head to the polls

Honduras faces a potentially explosive presidential election this weekend. The race pits Rixi Moncada, an ally of Xiomara Castro, the president, against Nasry Asfura, a conservative, and Salvador Nasralla, a centrist. Polls say the candidates are neck and neck.

Foreign policy is a big electoral issue. Ms Castro switched diplomatic recognition from [Taiwan](#) to China in 2023; both Mr Asfura and Mr Nasralla say they would restore ties with Taiwan, a move that would anger China and put at risk Honduras's potential access to investment and cheap debt. Meanwhile, corruption scandals, poverty and gang-related violence have eroded [Hondurans'](#) faith in the political class. Opposition parties accuse the government of using state institutions to favour Mr Moncada, while the ruling party claims that its rivals are laying the groundwork to reject a loss. International observers are preparing for a messy count and allegations of fraud.



Photograph: Reuters

Authoritarianism on the ballot in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan will vote in parliamentary elections on Sunday that look certain to deliver a rubber-stamp legislature loyal to Sadyr Japarov, the [central Asian country](#)'s populist president. Kyrgyzstan has traditionally held vibrant elections that have set it apart from the rest of central Asia. But Mr Japarov has set Kyrgyzstan on an authoritarian path, closing independent media and arresting journalists and opposition leaders. More detentions took place just days before the vote. Several critics have been jailed for allegedly plotting to stir up unrest aimed at overthrowing him.

Mr Japarov himself took power in a revolution sparked by a rigged election in 2020—Kyrgyzstan's third uprising since 2005. He appears determined not to suffer the fate of his toppled predecessors. After changing the constitution to grant himself a possible second term, he is eyeing re-election in 2027. A docile parliament will help him see off challenges to his rule.



Photograph: Reuters

The fragility of Israel's ceasefires

In the week of its first anniversary, the ceasefire ending the war between Israel and Hizbullah in Lebanon was breached on November 23rd when an Israeli air strike **killed** Haytham Ali Tabatabai, the military chief of Hizbullah. Israel claims he was working to rearm the Iran-backed militia in southern Lebanon. A day earlier, Israeli strikes had killed at least 20 Gazans, including a senior Hamas commander. That attack was a response to a shooting on the “Yellow Line”, dividing Gaza into areas controlled by Israel and Hamas.

Other fronts are rumbling too. On Friday **Israel** carried out a raid in southern Syria, killing 13 in a firefight and capturing two members of Jama'a Islamiya, a Lebanese Islamist militant group. Despite a security agreement between the neighbours, brokered by America after months of negotiations, Israel continues to hold a swathe of Syrian territory. The Israeli defence minister, Israel Katz, said the country was “not on track” for a deal with Syria any time soon.



Photograph: Brett Phibbs for SailGP

Formula One of the seas

Sail Grand Prix, an international sailing league, completes its fifth season this weekend in Abu Dhabi. The tournament features national teams—participants include America, Australia, Britain and New Zealand—racing high-speed catamarans in locations spanning the globe, from Saint-Tropez to Sydney. Half a dozen fleet races will be held over two days.

SailGP began in 2019 with an ambition to become “F1 on water”. The league was co-founded by [Larry Ellison of Oracle](#), a tech giant, and Sir Russell Coutts, a New Zealand yachtsman. It has attracted deep-pocketed sponsors such as Emirates, an airline, and Rolex, a watchmaker.

The league is part of a new wave of [niche leagues and tournaments](#), driven by the financial industry’s increasing interest in sport. Others include the Baller League (indoor football), Extreme E (electric-car racing) and Unrivaled (women’s three-on-three basketball). All are vying for a share of the institutional cash that is reshaping global sport.



Photograph: Getty Images

Man's ancient companions

Before dogs, wolves may have been man's best friends. Researchers at Stockholm University and other institutions found wolf remains dating from the late Neolithic period and the Bronze Age, 3,000-5,000 years ago. The discovery was made in Stora Forvar, a cave on the [Baltic](#) island of Stora Karlso.

The remote island has no native land mammals, suggesting that humans must have brought the [wolves](#). Analysis revealed other signs of domestication. DNA analysis showed that they were smaller and had lower genetic diversity than other ancient wolves, evidence of controlled breeding. Isotopic analysis revealed that the wolves had the same diet, rich in marine protein, as the island's human inhabitants, a sign that humans fed them.

The findings suggest that the interactions between pre-historic humans and wolves were more diverse than previously thought, resembling processes that led to the domestication of [dogs](#).



Illustration: The Economist

Mini crossword

We publish a new interactive edition of our crossword daily, allowing you to enter and check the answers and see explanations. Try it [here](#).

Cryptic clues

1 across - Ms Klobuchar gets to bed down for immunity (7)

2 across - Outfit fee sounds like you and me (7)

3 across - Space and time led Dorothy initially to this city (7)

1 down - Airtight case? Ha! Crack'd by this dame (6,8)

Straight clues

1 across - Absolution or forgiveness (7)

2 across - Fancy dress; uniform (7)

3 across - Green gemstone (7)

1 down - Prolific crime writer (6,8)

Take each other for better or worse, but not for granted.

Arlene Dahl