

Catch up: America plans \$8bn arms sale to Israel; China boosts its infrastructure



America is proposing to sell arms to **Israel** worth \$8bn. The State Department notified Congress on Friday of the planned consignment, which requires approval by committees in both the House and the Senate. It includes air-to-air missiles and artillery shells among other materiel. With President Joe Biden due to leave office before the end of the month, the move constitutes something of a [late show of support](#).

China announced a plan to integrate rail, air, river and sea [infrastructure](#) in its western provinces, which comprise around two-thirds of the country's land area but have seen slower economic growth than coastal areas. The country will launch a package of 15 measures to develop international air hubs, including Chengdu, Chongqing, Kunming, Xi'an and Urumqi, and expand port infrastructure.

Austria's chancellor, **Karl Nehammer**, resigned after talks to form a new government collapsed. The centre-right chancellor had been tasked with pulling together a ruling coalition without the hard-

right [Freedom Party](#) which came first in the parliamentary elections in September. But Mr Nehammer admitted that “negotiations have ended” and he would “enable an orderly transition”. Austria faces a possible snap election.

Thousands of **South Koreans** took to the streets in Seoul, with some protesting against Yoon Suk Yeol, the [impeached president](#), and others rallying in his support. Mr Yoon is being investigated for alleged insurrection after he briefly declared martial law in December. Authorities sought to detain him on Friday but were thwarted by his security service. The one-week arrest warrant expires on Monday.

Russia vowed retaliation after claiming to have shot down eight American-supplied ATACMS missiles fired by **Ukraine** at the border region of Belgorod. It also claimed to have taken control of Nadiya, one of the few villages in the Ukrainian region of Luhansk it had not captured. Joe Biden only recently gave Ukraine permission to fire the ATACMS into Russia. Donald Trump says he is vehemently opposed.

The judge overseeing **Donald Trump’s hush-money case** said he would sentence the president-elect on January 10th, but added that Mr Trump would probably not face prison time. Mr Trump had argued that [his conviction](#), on 34 felony counts, should be dismissed, because the proceedings would impede his presidential transition. The judge wrote that tossing the jury verdict would “undermine the Rule of Law in immeasurable ways”.

Itooka Tomiko, the world’s oldest person, died recently at the age of 116. A statement released today by the mayor of Ashiya, outside Osaka, confirmed that she passed away last weekend. Ms Itooka, who was born in May 1908, became the world’s oldest person in September on the death of 117-year-old Maria Branyas Morera of Spain.

Word of the week: *Knödelexpress*, a fond German nickname for a Prague-Berlin train, meaning “dumpling express”. [Read the full story](#).

Saudi Arabia's infrastructure spree



The sixth and final line of Riyadh's new subway is expected to open on Sunday. The \$25bn system, which started operations last month, is Saudi Arabia's second metro (the first, in Mecca, opened in 2010). Like everything in the kingdom these days, it invites superlatives: developers tout it as the longest driverless metro in the world. They hope it will accommodate 1.2m passengers a day.

[Saudi Arabia](#) is spending enormous sums on infrastructure, particularly in Riyadh. The metro is a good investment: the capital's population has grown by more than 20% in the past decade and its traffic jams are epic. Other projects are more dubious. The airport is being supersized to handle 120m passengers a year, up from 15m now. Billions of dollars are being spent to build Qiddiya (an entertainment park that is to house the world's biggest roller coaster) and Mukaab (the world's largest building by volume). Whether enough people will flock to these projects to justify them is unclear.

New York's price of entry



After years of false starts, multiple lawsuits and a pre-election pause, [congestion pricing](#) is set to begin in New York City on Sunday. Drivers of cars entering Manhattan at or below 60th Street, one of the busiest parts of the city, will pay \$9; those of big lorries will pay \$21.60. The money will pay for much-needed improvements in the subway. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which runs public transport as well as some tunnels and bridges, expects 17% fewer vehicles on New York's jammed streets. The MTA claims the traffic congestion costs the city \$20bn a year in "wasted time and lost productivity".

A legal battle with neighbouring New Jersey, whose drivers already pay a toll to enter the city, nearly slammed the brakes on the scheme. But a federal judge gave pricing the green light. Boston, Chicago and Los Angeles, which are considering pricing, are hoping New York City motors ahead rather than stalls again.

Toyosu's top tuna



Sunday sees the first tuna auction of the year at [Toyosu](#), the biggest fish market in the world. The sprawling complex to the south of Tokyo shifts more than a quarter of all the fish sold in Japan, worth ¥2bn (\$12.9m) on an average day. The top tuna sold there on the year's first day of business can fetch an eye-watering price. The record, set in 2019, is ¥333.6m (\$3.1m).

The priciest tuna of last year's first auction stayed close to home, after it was sold to a Michelin-starred sushi restaurant in Tokyo. But increasing numbers of Toyosu fish head abroad, with chefs from Europe, America and Australia paying handsomely. Built before the second world war, Toyosu's predecessor, Tsukiji, boomed along with Japan's wealth and population. Today that population is falling and eating less fish, so exports are increasingly important—not what might be expected of a place once known as “Tokyo's pantry”.

The dark side of parenthood



“Playing Nice”, a four-part psychological drama released on Sunday on ITVX, a British streaming platform, centres on two sets of parents caught in a predicament. They are told that their babies were accidentally swapped in hospital, and so their children, now toddlers, are not biologically their own. The families try to resolve the dilemma reasonably, before falling prey to their most atavistic impulses.

The story is set in the present day. But the baby-swap motif has a long history in literature and melodrama. It features in two of Gilbert and Sullivan’s comic operas; Mark Twain deployed it to satirise race divisions and slavery in his work “Pudd’nhead Wilson”, published in 1894. Further back in time, European folklore describes the changeling, a creature left by sprites in place of a stolen child. “Playing Nice” reflects a primal fear about parenthood that lives on despite the rarity of contemporary baby-swap cases.

Hollywood's other awards ceremony



The Golden Globes, which take place on Sunday in Los Angeles, differ from their more prestigious cousin, the Academy Awards. They include television as well as film—and maintain separate categories for comedy and drama. The gongs are given out by entertainment journalists rather than industry insiders. And the event is notoriously boozy, meaning that winners and losers can behave in unpredictable ways.

Bookmakers reckon “The Brutalist” will prevail in the Best Director and Best Actor categories, and that [“Shogun”](#) will win Best Television Series (Drama). Yet there are usually upsets. Zoe Saldña is favourite to win Best Supporting Actress (Motion Picture Musical or Comedy) for her role in “Emilia Pérez”, a musical crime thriller. But Ariana Grande has been earning plaudits for her turn in “Wicked”. Whoever triumphs, historically the Golden Globes have not been a great predictor for winners at the Oscars. Better to keep an eye on the Critics’ Choice Movie Awards, which take place on January 12th.

Weekly crossword



Our crossword has two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers, all of which feature in articles in this week's edition of *The Economist*:

Cryptic clues

- 1 down* Song that sounds like you didn't see a silver lining (2,10)
- 1 across* King gnome confused Asian flower (6)
- 2 across* Set point lost? Grow up! (5)
- 3 across* Magnate quit yet keeps value (6)

Factual clues

- 1 down* Hit by The Killers that is perennially popular in Britain (2,10)
- 1 across* Transboundary river in East Asia (6)
- 2 across* A collection of like-minded individuals (5)
- 3 across* Ownership interest in a property or company (6)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am GMT on Monday to crossword@economist.com. We will pick

randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners in next week's edition.

**Sorrow is a sitar that cuts the maestro's
finger just to test the sharpness of its
strings.**

Khondakar Ashraf Hossain