

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AFP

Vladimir Putin said [American proposals](#) to end **Russia's** war in **Ukraine** could inform “future agreements”. However, he insisted Ukraine would have to surrender territory in any deal. At a summit in Kyrgyzstan, Russia’s president also rubbished suggestions that Steve Witkoff, Donald Trump’s envoy, was showing Russia favour. Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine’s president, said Mr Putin had “scorned” efforts for peace. Mr Witkoff will meet Mr Putin in Moscow next week.

Donald Trump said a **National Guard** member [shot near the White House](#) had died. Another guardsman remains in hospital. Earlier John Ratcliffe, head of the CIA, said the suspect was a 29-year-old Afghan man who had worked with the spy agency in Afghanistan. He was shot by another Guard member and is in hospital. In response to the attack America’s government stopped processing immigration requests from Afghans.

Britain's government watered down a measure to shield **workers** from unfair dismissal from their first day on the job. Instead the Labour government proposed stronger protections after six months, down from two years currently. The decision should allow its employment-rights bill to move through Parliament. This week

Labour presented a [bodge-job budget](#) that raises taxes while doing little to encourage economic growth.

Rescue crews neared the end of their search of seven high-rise residential towers in **Hong Kong** that went up in flames on Wednesday. The death toll from the inferno rose to 128. Authorities said that styrofoam panels used during renovation work had allowed the blaze to spread. John Lee, Hong Kong's chief executive, also pledged to end the use of bamboo scaffolding.

Mark Carney, **Canada's** prime minister, announced a deal with the province of Alberta to build a 1,100km pipeline connecting the country's northern oil-producing region to the Pacific coast. The project will help Canada ship more oil to Asia and is part of the country's [pivot away from America](#), where it currently sends most of its oil exports. Environmental groups condemned the plan.

Major General Horta Inta-a became **Guinea-Bissau's** interim president, a day after a [military coup](#). The general said his forces had stepped in to save the country's democracy from a plot by "narco-traffickers". He added that his government would be in place for a year. The African Union and the European Union condemned the putsch, which was the ninth in five years in west Africa.

Floods and landslides in **Sri Lanka** killed 56 people, and more [heavy rain](#) is expected over the coming days. Twenty-one people died in a landslide that engulfed a village in the country's mountainous tea-growing area. At least 80 people were killed in **Indonesia** by flooding and landslides. Thailand reported 55 flood-related deaths.

Figure of the Day: 5,400, the number of foreign couples that got married in Copenhagen in 2024. [Read the full story here.](#)



Photograph: Reuters

Retailers brace for an unpredictable Black Friday

Black Friday, a post-Thanksgiving shopping fest, is here. Although [retailers](#) have been spreading out their discount offers (and many have already begun), they are banking on this weekend and Cyber Monday, a shopping event next week, to boost their revenues.

American consumers, however, are sending [mixed signals](#). They say they are feeling dour, even as spending figures remain strong. The National Retail Federation expects retail sales in November and December to grow by up to 4.2% year on year. Yet tariffs, a shaky job market and slow wage growth for low-paid workers make it difficult to predict whether shoppers will spend with their usual seasonal zeal. Inflation is also a worry.

The divergence between spending and indicators of consumer sentiment, which normally move together, makes the direction of the [American economy](#) less certain. Even so, companies hope that markdowns entice cash-strapped Americans to shop away their anxiety.



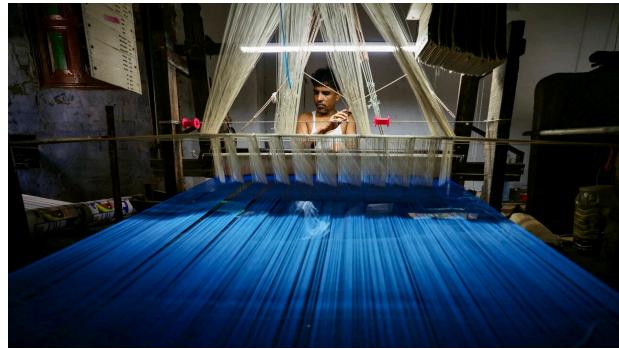
Photograph: AP

Hong Kong mourns after a devastating fire

On Wednesday a fire broke out in an apartment block in [Hong Kong's](#) Wang Fuk Court housing complex. It licked its way up 31 storeys before leaping to six surrounding buildings. Soon, nearly the entire complex was an inferno. By the next day 128 people were confirmed dead, including a firefighter, making the blaze one of the deadliest in Hong Kong since the second world war. Dozens were still missing.

The cause of the fire is unknown. But officials said it began on a section of bamboo scaffolding. Police said some materials compromised fire-safety standards. On Thursday they arrested three members of the construction firm on suspicion of manslaughter.

The blaze is already drawing comparisons with one that killed 72 people at [Grenfell Tower](#) in London in 2017. Combustible cladding caused both fires to quicken. Each took place in a poor building within a rich city. A similar public outcry and political backlash will probably follow, too.



Photograph: Getty Images

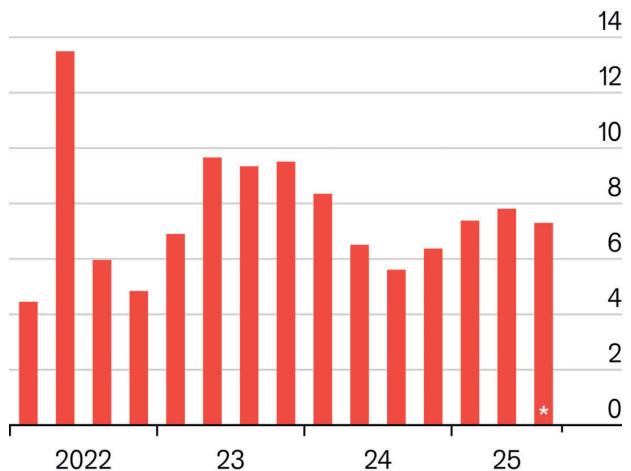
India's year of cheer

India has had a testing year. In May it took part in a brief but alarming conflict with its neighbour, Pakistan. Since August it has been coping with extortionate American tariffs. Still, economic growth has been stronger than expected, as Friday's quarterly GDP figures are expected to show. India is forecast to remain the world's [fastest expanding](#) major economy, with growth of 6.5% this financial year.

The size of India's economy makes it more resilient to external shocks. The stockmarket is booming and its balance of payments is strong. Inflation has been kept under control; the central bank looks likely to cut interest rates next month. Ordinary Indians lament the poor pace of job creation, but the government is pressing ahead with a [major liberalisation](#) of labour laws that will make India an easier place to do business. Meanwhile officials hope to conclude a trade deal with America, which would ease pressure on exporters. As the year draws to an end, Indians have reasons for cheer.

High note

India, GDP, % increase on a year earlier



Source: LSEG Workspace

*Estimate



Photograph: © Saab AB

Poland bulks up its navy

Keen to beef up its naval [power](#), Poland is laying the groundwork for a major modernisation of its fleet. Its government announced on Wednesday it would purchase three A26 submarines from Saab, a Swedish aerospace and defence company, in a deal thought to be worth some \$2.7bn. The submarines will not be surfacing in Polish harbours soon. The first is expected to be delivered around 2030.

The country's navy, which currently only has one operational submarine (and an old one at that), needs new ones to monitor and protect Poland's [energy](#) infrastructure in the Baltic Sea from hybrid or conventional attacks by Russia and its proxies. Among Poland's most important assets are a string of natural-gas terminals, pipelines and offshore wind farms, representing billions of dollars in investment. Recent damage to pipelines and cables on the Baltic seabed, suspected to be the work of the Russians, shows the threat lurking beneath the surface.



Photograph: John Wilson/Netflix

A laugh-a-minute murder mystery

A spookily remote setting: check. A seemingly impossible crime: check. A brilliant detective and an endearing sidekick: check. In “[Wake Up Dead Man](#)”, in cinemas now and streaming on Netflix on December 12th, Rian Johnson, the director, revels in the tropes of the murder-mystery formula. In this third instalment of the “Knives Out” franchise, Jud Duprencia, a hoodlum-turned-priest (played by Josh O’Connor) is sent to an isolated church in upstate New York. Its tyrannical overlord (Josh Brolin) is elaborately murdered. Jud is the prime suspect.

Enter Benoit Blanc ([Daniel Craig](#)), the nattily dressed investigator with a Southern drawl. At the heart of this delightful romp is the tension between reason and faith that has powered the genre since its 19th-century beginnings. But Mr Johnson, who lays on plenty of stars, laughs and twists, never forgets an unwritten rule of screen mysteries, namely: have fun!



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 [\[email protected\]](mailto:). We'll pick three winners at random and crown them on Saturday.

Friday: Which relay race in track cycling shares its name with one of America's founding fathers?

Thursday: Who starred as "Rick Grimes" in the long-running cable TV series "The Walking Dead"?

*The road of denial leads to the
precipice of destruction.*

John Bunyan