

## Catch up: Scholz loses confidence vote; Canada's finance minister resigns



**Olaf Scholz**, Germany's chancellor, lost a [confidence vote](#). It came about after Mr Scholz [ended](#) his dysfunctional three-party coalition last month, leaving his Social Democrats leading a minority government. The outcome is not a surprise; Mr Scholz had asked the Bundestag to kick him out of [the job](#). Germany now faces a snap election in February.

**Justin Trudeau**, Canada's prime minister, will reportedly replace **Chrystia Freeland**, the finance minister who abruptly resigned on Monday, with Dominic LeBlanc, the public-safety minister. Ms Freeland said she had rejected the prime minister's attempt to move her into another cabinet role, adding that they were "at odds" over the path forward for Canada. Mr Trudeau faces [probable defeat](#) in next year's general election.

A social-media account connected to the Syrian presidency posted a statement reportedly authored by **Bashar al-Assad**. In the unverified message [the ousted dictator](#) claimed he had not planned to leave **Syria** and said the country had "fallen into the hands of

terrorism”. Meanwhile Binyamin Netanyahu, **Israel’s** prime minister, vowed to expand Israeli settlements in the occupied [Golan Heights](#).

**Masayoshi Son**, [SoftBank’s](#) founder, said in a joint announcement with **Donald Trump** that he would invest \$100bn in American projects related to AI over the next four years, to create at least 100,000 new jobs in the field. The pledge doubles the one that Mr Son made ahead of the president-elect’s first term, when he promised to invest \$50bn in American companies.

**South Korea’s** top court began reviewing the [impeachment](#) of **Yoon Suk Yeol**, the country’s president, following his attempt to impose martial law. The court has up to six months to decide whether to remove him. Earlier **Han Dong-hoon**, who had supported Mr Yoon’s impeachment, resigned as leader of the ruling People Power Party, saying his position was untenable.

At least 54 people were killed and 203 wounded during Israeli strikes on **Gaza**; a “terrorist meeting point” in Beit Hanoun was among the targets, the Israel Defence Forces said. Meanwhile Gaza’s health ministry reported that the total death toll in the enclave had passed 45,000. Israel has previously claimed that 17,000 of those deaths were  [Hamas militants](#).

The parent company of **Royal Mail**, Britain’s state-owned postal service, was sold for £3.6bn (\$4.5bn) to EP Group, which is owned by [Daniel Kretinsky](#), a Czech billionaire. The British government approved the deal on Monday after the bidder agreed to “legally binding” concessions related to Royal Mail’s ownership and delivery schedules. The government will retain a “golden share” in the company.

**Figure of the day:** 90,000, the number of drug-overdose deaths in America in the 12 months to July this year, a reduction of around a sixth. [Read the full story](#).

# The new Syria at the UN



On Tuesday the UN Security Council publicly discusses Syria for the first time since the [fall of Bashar al-Assad](#). Eyes will be on the Syrian delegation, appointed by the Assad government but thus far kept in post, and the old regime's ally, [Russia](#). The Kremlin's diplomats are said to be co-operative; Russian media now call Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the dominant rebel force, an "armed" rather than a "terrorist" group. Nevertheless, America is wary of letting Russia use its veto power to shape the transition to its liking. Antony Blinken, the secretary of state, has called for an "inclusive" and "non-sectarian" government.

The council cannot be entirely sidelined. Resolution 2254, agreed on in 2015, sets the terms for a "Syrian-led" transition. Moreover, the mandate of the UN's observer mission on the Golan Heights is due to be renewed this week. International criticism may turn from Russia to [Israel](#), which has been seizing more of the Golan Heights and bombing Syrian army equipment.

# Canada's Trump problem



Figures released on Tuesday are expected to show that Canada's annual inflation rate remained around 2% in November. That should satisfy the country's central bankers, who view a steady 2%—in the middle of their target range—as confirmation that inflation has eased without triggering recession. Unemployment hit 6.8% in November, the highest rate since September 2021. But the growth outlook is improving. The Bank of Canada had forecast GDP growth of 0.4% in 2024; it now expects 1.2% or more.

All calm, then? Not exactly. Many worry about what Donald Trump's return will mean for Canada's economy. He has threatened to [impose a 25% tariff](#) on everything Canada exports to America unless it does more to secure their shared border. Pressure is mounting on [Justin Trudeau](#), the prime minister. His finance minister and deputy prime minister, Chrystia Freeland, resigned on Monday, saying they were “at odds” over how to get Canadians through difficult economic times without adding to Canada's growing budget deficit.

# Georgia's political crisis



For weeks protests have rocked Georgia. In October the Russia-friendly ruling party, Georgian Dream, which faced mass demonstrations earlier this year over its growing illiberalism, claimed victory in a dodgy parliamentary election. Then on November 28th it paused Georgia's application to join the European Union, [sparking another bout of unrest](#), which enters its 20th day on Tuesday. So far police have arrested some 460 protesters—an unprecedented number in Georgia's democratic history.

The country faces a constitutional crisis. On Saturday an electoral college, dominated by the ruling party and boycotted by the opposition, voted for Mikheil Kavelashvili, a far-right former footballer, to become president at the end of the month. He would replace Salome Zourabichvili, the last pro-Western figure in high office, who is refusing to step aside. If she is forced out, anti-government protests could intensify. But Georgian Dream is preparing for a fight. On Friday it passed tough anti-protests laws—and is planning to roll out more.



## More gloom for Germany's economy



ZEW, a German research institute, publishes its widely watched Indicator of Economic Sentiment on Tuesday. Donald Trump's victory in America's presidential election dampened expectations in last month's survey, as did the collapse of Germany's governing coalition. This month's results will probably be no better.

Other data look grim, too. The Kiel Institute for the World Economy now forecasts that Germany's GDP will stagnate in 2025, rather than grow by 0.5% as it thought in the autumn. The think-tank attributed the downward revision to the expected imposition of American tariffs on German goods and problems in the manufacturing sector. It expects GDP to shrink by 0.2% this year; it predicts a moderate recovery only in 2026. No wonder, then, that the economy will be a [central theme](#) of the federal election in February. The next chancellor, probably Friedrich Merz, of the centre-right Christian Democrats, will face a gargantuan task to restore the German economy to its former glory.

## A crypto-sponsored golf bonanza



The boundaries between the sport and entertainment industries continue to erode. Netflix, for instance, recently made another foray into live sport—the once-fearsome Mike Tyson’s capitulation in the boxing ring to Jake Paul, a YouTuber. Netflix claimed the fight was the most streamed sporting contest in history.

On Tuesday attention will be a one-off golf event in Nevada, dubbed “The Showdown”. Two of the finest players on America’s PGA Tour, Rory McIlroy and Scottie Scheffler, will take on two of the best players from the [Saudi-funded LIV Golf](#), Bryson DeChambeau and Brooks Koepka, in a single round split into three segments with different rules. For golf the event may herald a new era: the PGA and LIV competitions are reportedly close to [finalising a merger](#). Moreover the players could win some \$10m in prize money paid in cryptocurrency, according to reports in American sports media. That compares favourably with most events on the PGA Tour.

## Daily quiz



*The Economist*

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 character marries Bella Swan in the Twilight book and film series?

**Monday:** Which famous singer died on Christmas Day 2016?



**Beauty surrounds us, but usually we need  
to be walking in a garden to know it.**

*Rumi*