

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: EPA/Shutterstock

**Ukraine's** president, **Volodymyr Zelensky**, unveiled a revised version of a [peace proposal](#) drawn up by his country and America. The 20-point plan envisages a withdrawal of Russian forces from some occupied territory to create a demilitarised zone in eastern Ukraine; Mr Zelensky said Ukraine would be willing to pull back troops. Russia has so far been unwilling to soften its position.

A car-bomb killed three people, including two traffic police officers, in **Moscow**. Russian investigators said that an explosive device detonated when officers approached a “suspicious person”. The blast occurred near the site in the [Russian capital](#) where **Fanil Sarvarov**, a senior general, died in another car-bombing earlier this week. Investigators are examining possible links. Officials blamed Ukraine, which did not comment.

America's **stockmarkets** went into Christmas in good heart: the S&P 500 index rose by 0.3%, closing for the holiday on a record high. Investors were cheered by data showing that fewer people than expected filed for unemployment benefits last week. Not all stocks joined the festive mood. **Intel's** shares fell after [Nvidia](#) paused trials of its chipmaking technology, denting expectations that Intel could secure an important new customer.

**America's** Department of Justice said it uncovered more than 1m additional documents potentially linked to **Jeffrey Epstein**, a dead sex offender. The discovery will delay the full release of the [Epstein files](#) required under a law passed by Congress last month. Officials said they need weeks to review the material and make redactions to protect victims. Lawmakers have criticised the slow release and extensive redactions.

Authorities in **Honduras** declared **Nasry Asfura**, of the right-wing National Party, the winner of the country's presidential election. Mr Asfura edged out Salvador Nasralla of the centre-right Liberals. Donald Trump had [threatened](#) to cut off aid to Honduras if Mr Asfura was not elected—and recently pardoned Juan Orlando Hernández, an ex-president from Mr Asfura's party imprisoned in America for conspiring with drug gangs.

**Democratic senators** warned **Mr Trump** that his recent decision to recall nearly 30 ambassadors risks hollowing out American diplomacy. The administration says the move is meant to ensure that embassies follow the president's policy agenda. Democrats say the mass recalls are unprecedented and could help rivals such as Russia and China to deepen their influence.

**BP** agreed to sell a 65% stake in **Castrol**, which makes lubricants for cars and industrial machinery, to Stonepeak, an American investment firm. The deal values Castrol at about \$10bn. The British oil giant said it would use the proceeds to cut debt. The sale reflects a shift back towards BP's core oil-and-gas business after years of weak share-price performance and [disappointing returns](#) from renewables.

**Figure of the day:** 80%, the reduction in radio programming entering North Korea from outside since May. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Reuters

## Mark Carney's remarkable victory

*We are looking back on 2025. Today, elections around the world*

In April Canadian voters handed Mark Carney and the Liberals a fourth straight term in power—an outcome few thought possible weeks earlier. The former central banker, who became party leader only in March, pulled off [a remarkable comeback](#) for a government languishing at record lows under Justin Trudeau.

His campaign was characterised by defiance. Facing threats and insults from Donald Trump, Mr Carney cast himself as the defender of Canada's sovereignty. His warning that “America wants our land, our resources, our country” struck a chord with anxious voters. The Liberals fell just short of a majority but still won decisively, while the Conservatives—once leading by 24 points—collapsed. Their leader, Pierre Poilievre, lost credibility after failing to distance himself from Mr Trump’s bombast.

Mr Carney’s victory rested more on competence than on charisma. A technocrat who guided two central banks through crises, he must now shield Canada’s economy from Mr Trump’s tariffs and reset relations with its dominant neighbour.



Photograph: Getty Images

## Poland's political pendulum swings again

Poland's presidential election in June epitomised Europe's deepening divide between liberal centrists and nationalist populists. Rafal Trzaskowski, Warsaw's liberal mayor, supported by Donald Tusk's pro-European government, faced Karol Nawrocki, a nationalist historian and former boxer endorsed by the populist Law and Justice party. After a bitter contest, Mr Nawrocki [won narrowly](#), with 50.9% of the vote.

His victory dealt a heavy blow to Mr Tusk. The new president has vowed to veto government bills, threatening to stall efforts to restore judicial independence and liberalise social policy. With no parliamentary supermajority to override Mr Nawrocki, Mr Tusk's coalition—an uneasy mix of progressives and conservatives—may struggle to survive.

Mr Nawrocki's election has tilted Poland back towards nationalism and Euroscepticism. Backed by Hungary's Viktor Orban and sceptical of support for Ukraine, he seems intent on undoing his prime minister's efforts to re-anchor Poland in Europe.



Photograph: AP

## Tanzania's Tiananmen moment

Tanks, not cheers, marked Samia Suluhu Hassan's second inauguration as president of Tanzania in November. Officially she won 98% of the vote. But her regime was reeling. Days earlier Tanzania had been convulsed by the biggest protests in its history, after the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) banned opposition parties, jailed their leaders and rigged the October election. The government's response was brutal. Security forces opened fire, killing hundreds—perhaps thousands—of demonstrators.

The violence has [ended Tanzania's reputation](#) as one of Africa's most peaceful states. Internet blackouts, mass arrests and disappearing activists followed. Even the usually docile Southern African Development Community admitted that voters had been denied a free choice.

Mrs Samia, once seen as a cautious reformer, now rules through fear. Within CCM, rivals are already circling, seeing her as a liability. Tanzania's longest-ruling party may cling to power for now. But it has lost something harder to regain: legitimacy.



Photograph: AP

## Habemus papam Americanum

White smoke rose above the Sistine Chapel in May—and for the first time it signalled [an American pope](#). The cardinals chose Robert Prevost, a Chicago-born missionary who spent many years in Peru, to lead the Catholic Church as Pope Leo XIV.

Leo's election breaks taboos but not traditions. His papal name nods to Leo XIII, pope from 1878 to 1903, the author of *Rerum Novarum* and father of modern Catholic social teaching. Like his namesake, Leo XIV preaches balance: peace, justice and a church “open to all.”

His politics have unsettled MAGA Catholics. Leo's first major pronouncements described protecting migrants, fighting inequality and tackling global warming as sacred obligations. He denounced America's “inhuman” deportations, blessed a chunk of Greenland ice and said death-penalty supporters could not call themselves pro-life. Conservatives fumed at [the “woke pope”](#). Leo looks set on a progressive course that puts him at odds with the world's increasingly successful conservative populists.



Illustration: The Economist

## Daily quiz

We will serve you a new question each weekday. All five have a common theme. We won't pick any winners this week; normal service will return next week.

**Wednesday:** *Rangifer tarandus*, an animal sometimes referred to as a caribou, is more generally known by what name?

**Tuesday:** Which orchestral piece, composed by Leroy Anderson, was turned into a hit song by the Ronettes in 1963?

*The free thinking of one age is the common sense of the next.*

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**Matthew Arnold**