

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Reuters

**Volodymyr Zelensky**, Ukraine's president, told the Swedish parliament via video that he was working with America to find “compromises that strengthen not weaken us” regarding America's plan for peace in Ukraine. On Sunday **Marco Rubio**, America's secretary of state, said an emergency meeting in Geneva of American, Ukrainian and European officials to discuss the peace plan was “[arguably the best](#)” yet. Meanwhile Russian strikes killed at least four people in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city.

**Israel** killed Haytham Ali Tabatabai, a top **Hizbullah** commander, in an air strike on Beirut, Lebanon's capital. Mahmoud Qamati, another official from the Iran-backed militant group, said that the attack crossed a “red line” and that Hizbullah's leaders would decide whether to respond. It was the first [Israeli](#) strike on Beirut since June. Lebanon's health ministry said that five people were killed.

At least two suicide bombers attacked the headquarters of **Pakistan's** civilian paramilitary force in Peshawar, near the country's border with **Afghanistan**. The blast killed three people and wounded at least 11 others, according to reports. No group has claimed responsibility. Earlier this month the [Pakistani Taliban](#)

carried out a suicide bombing that killed 12 people in Islamabad, the capital.

Shares in **Novo Nordisk** fell by as much as 11% after it reported that [semaglutide](#), the active ingredient in Ozempic, failed to treat **Alzheimer's disease** in late-stage trials. The Danish drugmaker had hoped the drug might slow the progression of the disease, which slowly destroys cognitive function. It is the latest [setback](#) for Novo Nordisk, whose shares have plunged nearly two-thirds over the past year.

**German business confidence** fell in November, according to the Ifo institute. The research centre's closely watched index dropped to 90.6 from 91.6; analysts had expected it to hold steady. Firms were slightly more upbeat about current conditions but pessimistic about the months ahead, especially in manufacturing. The drop suggests higher government spending has yet to lift [Germany's struggling economy](#).

**BHP**, the world's largest mining company, walked away from a takeover bid for **Anglo American**, a competitor. BHP had tried and failed to buy the firm last year, but made a new approach after Anglo American announced plans to acquire Teck Resources, a Canadian company. That tie-up would create a copper-mining giant just as demand for the metal rises and [supply dwindles](#).

**Jimmy Cliff**, a Jamaican singer-songwriter, died aged 81. Born in 1944, he shot to fame as a teenager with his song "Hurricane Hattie", and later made over 30 albums to become the most successful Jamaican musician since Bob Marley. Mr Cliff is said to have introduced reggae to the world, and will be remembered for such classics as "The Harder They Come" and "Vietnam".

**Figure of the Day:** 279,300, the Galápagos visitor count in 2024—ten times the number of locals and six times the tally in 1993. [Read the full story here](#).





Photograph: EPA/Shutterstock

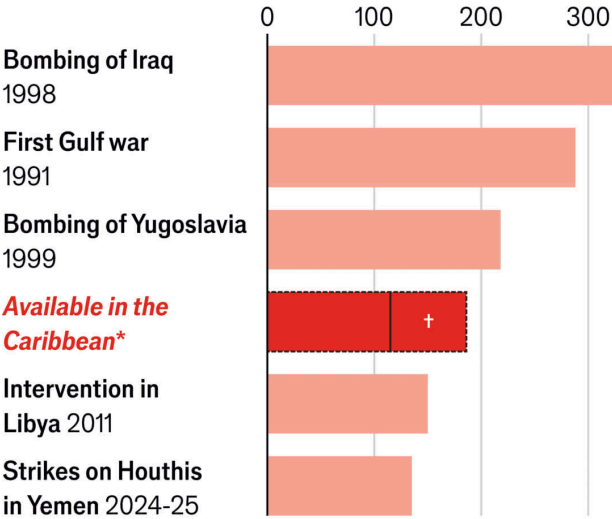
## Building a case to strike Maduro

America keeps turning the screws on Venezuela. On Friday it warned airlines to “exercise caution” when flying in, out or over the country, prompting some to cancel flights. On Saturday it let slip that it would soon start a new phase of operations against the regime of [Nicolás Maduro](#), without giving details. On Monday, the Cartel de los Soles, an ill-defined group of senior regime figures, supposedly headed by Mr Maduro himself, will officially become a “foreign terrorist organisation”.

The designation makes it a criminal offence to give “material support” to the group, but does not give President Donald Trump new powers for military operations. America is already bombing alleged drug-running boats, and has deployed many warships off Venezuela’s coast, including an aircraft-carrier. All this seems aimed at intimidating the Venezuelan army into toppling Mr Maduro. But if the sabre-rattling doesn’t work, labelling him a narco-terrorist will [bolster the political case](#) for escalation, such as air strikes on Venezuela’s soil.

**The biggest war for a while**

US Tomahawk missiles used in past campaigns



\*Available at Nov 21st 2025, estimate

†Missiles on Gerald R. Ford carrier strike group

Source: CSIS



Photograph: Getty Images

## Africa and Europe's missed opportunity

A gathering of two continental blocs—the African and European Unions—will kick off Africa's latest diplomatic summit on Monday in Luanda, Angola. They have plenty to discuss. Europe is Africa's largest export market, as well as a source of development and military [aid](#). Africa is a supplier of much-needed critical minerals and energy, as well a vital partner on migration.

But this summit, the 7th since the first installment in 2000, risks highlighting the blocs' shortcomings. In recent years, the AU has stood aside as [coups and wars](#) broke out across the continent. The EU talks of a partnership with Africa but its focus is often squarely on paying willing allies to crack down on illegal migration. Big promises on infrastructure and security co-operation have proved paltry in practice. Meanwhile both sides risk being left behind in a world increasingly influenced by America, [China](#) and rising middle powers. There is much to talk about in Angola, but whether that dialogue will translate to action is less clear.



Photograph: Getty Images

## Singapore's economy powers on, for now

Global trade has had a brutal year. Donald Trump's tariffs have shattered the rules-based system on which many countries depended. Yet [exporters have adapted](#) fast. Last week Singapore, one of the world's most trade-dependent economies, reported that its non-oil domestic exports grew by 22% year on year in October, well above estimates. Shipments, particularly of electronics, to other Asian countries are more than offsetting declining sales to America. The city-state's inflation rate for October, released on Monday, was 1.2%—the highest rate since December 2024. That suggests economic momentum is growing.

Even so, trouble lies ahead. One reason is that a front-loading effect, whereby sales have been brought forward to avoid impending tariffs, will probably diminish. Meanwhile, planned American [levies on semiconductors](#) may soon hit Singapore hard. And if AI stocks crash, as some fear, Singapore's tech-reliant economy will feel the pain more than most.





Photograph: dpa

## The threat to Germany's coalition

Friedrich Merz, Germany's chancellor, is struggling to keep his fragile coalition with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) together. The latest dispute is [over a draft pension bill](#), which is expected to be passed next month. The proposals would keep pensions at 48% of pre-retirement salaries beyond 2031. But a group of at least 18 young, conservative parliamentarians from Mr Merz's Christian Democratic Union and the Christian Social Union are refusing to vote for the legislation.

They argue the measures will mean additional costs of €120bn (\$139bn) between 2032 and 2040, unfairly burdening the young. The bill is a priority for the SPD, even as elements of the party believe that arguments against it hold merit. With a majority of only 12 in parliament, [Mr Merz](#) must respond carefully. He could try to negotiate concessions from a stubborn SPD, or attempt to placate his party's mutineers. He could also postpone the vote, kicking the can down the road.





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 BST on Friday to [\[email protected\]](#). We'll pick three winners at random and crown them on Saturday.

**Monday:** Which long-serving Canadian prime minister won elections in 1968, 1972, 1974 and 1980?

*Without an informed society,  
science is going to be considered  
an enemy.*

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***Stanford Robert Ovshinsky***