

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AFP via Getty Images

Tim Walz, **Minnesota's** governor, urged Donald Trump to withdraw federal agents from the state “before they kill another American in the street”, following the [shooting of Alex Pretti](#) in Minneapolis. A district court judge ordered federal agents not to destroy evidence after local officials accused them of blocking access to the scene. Mr Pretti is the second person federal agents have shot dead in the city this month.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported that **China's** top general, Zhang Youxia, is accused of leaking secrets about the country's nuclear-weapons programme to America. Earlier Chinese media accused General Zhang of enabling corruption and challenging the authority of Xi Jinping, China's leader. It levelled the same charges at General Lui Zhenli, the army's chief of staff. The [pair were put under investigation](#) on January 24th.

Syria's army extended a ceasefire with the **Syrian Democratic Forces**, a Kurdish-led militia, for 15 days. The truce was due to expire on January 24th. Syria's government wants the group to give up its weapons and integrate into the armed forces. America, which [backed the SDF during Syria's civil war](#), reportedly urged Syria's government not to attack the militia's remaining strongholds.

Two people were killed and four wounded by Israeli forces in **Gaza**, according to local health officials. On January 24th Steve Witkoff, Donald Trump's envoy, and Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law, met Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister. They reportedly urged him to co-operate with America's plan for the [second phase of the ceasefire in Gaza](#), which involves Israel's withdrawal from the territory.

Britain's ruling Labour Party barred Andy Burnham, the mayor of Greater Manchester, from standing as its candidate in a forthcoming by-election. Figures on the party's left strongly criticised the decision. Mr Burnham, who has repeatedly criticised Sir Keir Starmer, the prime minister, is widely seen as a [contender to challenge him](#) for the party's leadership.

More than 100,000 people were left without power after **Storm Fern** dumped snow and ice across a swathe of America, from New Mexico to Maine. Some 15,000 flights were grounded. Around a foot of snow fell in places. More than 20 states declared a state of emergency.

[Alex Honnold](#) successfully scaled **Taipei 101**, one of Asia's tallest skyscrapers, without ropes or a safety net. The American's 508-metre ascent was broadcast on Netflix, sensibly with a ten-second delay, and took an hour and a half. Standing atop the building's spire, Mr Honnold proclaimed his achievement to be "sick".

Word of the week: *Ecce Mono*, Spanish for "Behold the Monkey", coined online after Cecilia Giménez's botched restoration of *Ecce Homo* turned Christ into an internet meme. [Read the full story.](#)

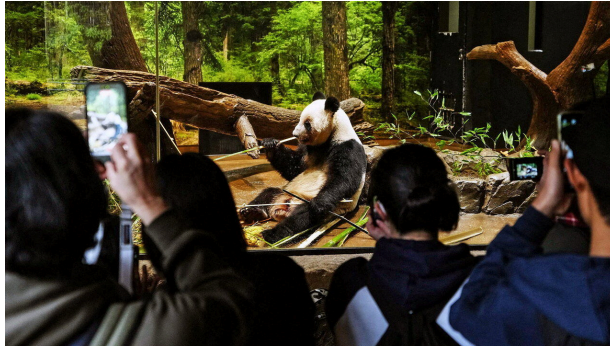


Photograph: EPA

What next for Iran

The protests have stopped. The sabre-rattling has not. On Thursday Donald Trump said an American “armada” was heading towards Iran, “just in case” it was needed. The Pentagon has already deployed extra F-15 fighter jets to the region. Additional air power is on its way; so is the *USS Abraham Lincoln*, an aircraft-carrier, which should arrive this weekend. The build-up suggests Mr Trump still intends to strike Iran, as he threatened to do when its regime cracked down on protests earlier this month.

Iranians are still [counting their dead](#). One human-rights group has confirmed more than 5,000 deaths, with thousands more under investigation. At least 26,000 people have been detained; state television has already broadcast forced confessions. More than two weeks after authorities disconnected the internet, Iran is still largely cut off from the world. The regime has quelled the unrest for now, but this remains perhaps its weakest moment in its 47-year history.



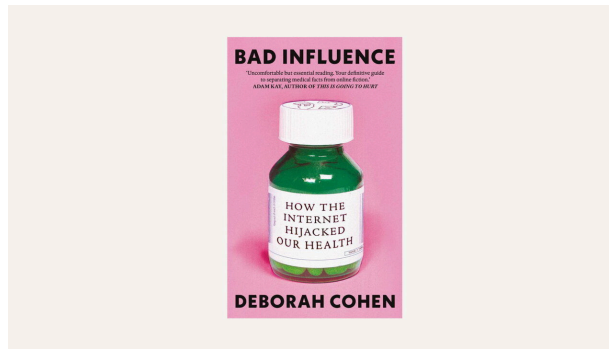
Photograph: Alamy

Black and white diplomacy

Japan's last two pandas—Xiao Xiao and Lei Lei—are due to return to China at the end of January. On Sunday visitors to Tokyo's Ueno Zoo will have a final chance to see the twin cubs. Their departure marks the end of half a century of [panda diplomacy](#): for the first time since 1972, Japan will be pandaless.

Officially, the animals are leaving because their loans are expiring. But the lack of a replacement hints that politics is involved. Japanese officials have tried, in vain, to secure more pandas. Japan's prime minister recently provoked China's fury by suggesting her country might intervene if China invaded Taiwan. China responded by discouraging its citizens from travelling to Japan and by cutting some flights.

The zoo expects that between mid-December and the final showing on Sunday, roughly 178,000 people will have come to say goodbye. Fans will get one last glimpse of the cuddly bears—and, perhaps, of warmer times.



Photograph:

Is the internet bad for your health?

Health advice has gone viral. In Britain more than three-quarters of web users search for information about health and wellbeing online, according to Ofcom, the country's media regulator. Many are consulting Dr AI: billions of messages about health care are exchanged on chatbots each week. On January 7th OpenAI announced ChatGPT Health, an assistant which can tailor its responses based on users' medical records and [data from fitness apps](#). In a timely new book, Deborah Cohen, a journalist and qualified physician, assesses how the internet is reshaping how people manage their health.

“Bad Influence” examines what happens when “entertainment, commerce and health collide”. Dr Cohen looks at the doctors, podcasters, coaches and quacks who are taking to online platforms to promote new tests, cures and treatments. She covers the rude health of wearable technology, wellness culture and weight-loss drugs. It is a fascinating and often alarming book, relevant to anyone who finds themselves frequently Googling their symptoms.



Photograph: Reuters

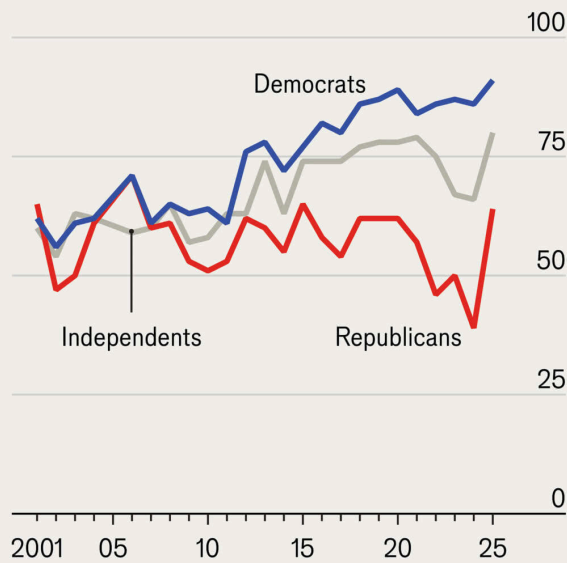
Championship Sunday in the NFL

The National Football League is split into two conferences of 16 teams: the American Football Conference and the National Football Conference. On Sunday the best two teams in each face off for a place in this year's Super Bowl, which will be played in Santa Clara, California, next month.

The AFC game pits the Denver Broncos against the New England Patriots. Pundits reckon the Patriots will progress to [the big show](#)—partly because the Broncos lost a key player to injury last week. Meanwhile, in the NFC, the Seattle Seahawks are on a seven-game winning streak, having thrashed the San Francisco 49ers in the previous round. Their opponent, the Los Angeles Rams, have also had a strong season, winning 12 of 17 games. The Rams' veteran quarterback, Matthew Stafford, is in contention for the league's most valuable player award. Expect the game to be close. In the regular season they split their two match-ups, both of which came down to the wire.

Still open

United States, respondents who think immigration is a good thing for the country, %



Source: Gallup

Photograph:

Data bite: Donald Trump's immigration crackdown

Clamping down on illegal immigration is [central to Donald Trump's agenda](#). His administration has dramatically lowered the number of people crossing America's southern border. Yet it has also rewritten the country's legal immigration system to make it almost unworkable. It has blocked many would-be immigrants from coming, detained foreign students and threatened to strip others of their American citizenship. This moratorium on legal immigration may not be popular with Americans. A majority of supporters of both major political parties think immigration is good for the country (see chart). Republican support for newcomers dipped when the southern border was overrun, but has since rebounded.



Illustration: Sandra Navarro

The winners of the week's quiz

Thank you to everyone who took part in this week's quiz. The winners, chosen at random, were:

Amelia Powell, Atlanta, Georgia, America

Jos Aarts, Nijmegen, The Netherlands

Samuel Onyoso, Nairobi, Kenya

They all gave the correct answers of: Christopher Lee, Jonathan Pryce, Christopher Walken, Donald Pleasance and Telly Savalas.

The theme is that they all played Bond villains: Lee was Scaramanga in "The Man with the Golden Gun", Pryce was Elliot Carver in "Tomorrow Never Dies", Walken was Max Zorin in "A View to a Kill", and Pleasance and Savalas played Ernst Blofeld in "You Only Live Twice" and "On Her Majesty's Secret Service" respectively.

The questions were:

Monday: Which actor, who appeared in many Hammer horror movies, gave his autobiography the title of "Tall, Dark and Gruesome"?

Tuesday: Which actor played Pope Francis opposite Anthony Hopkins as Pope Benedict XVI in “The Two Popes”?

Wednesday: Which actor won an Oscar for best supporting actor as a traumatised Vietnam veteran in “The Deer Hunter”?

Thursday: Which actor played the psychiatrist who treats Micheal Myers in the first Halloween film?

Friday: Which actor is best known for playing Kojak in the 1970s TV series?

*Success consists of going from
failure to failure without loss of
enthusiasm*

Winston S. Churchill