

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: EPA

Volodymyr Zelensky, **Ukraine's** president, said **America's** [proposed peace plan](#) presented his country with a choice between “losing dignity” or forfeiting American support. America has reportedly threatened to withhold weapons and suspend intelligence sharing if Mr Zelensky does not agree to it. Donald Trump told Fox News Radio, an American channel, that Thursday is an appropriate deadline for acceptance. The proposal has been criticised by European leaders.

**Marjorie Taylor Greene**, once a dogged MAGA loyalist, announced her resignation from America's House of Representatives following [a dramatic bust-up](#) with Mr Trump. America's president branded the congresswoman from Georgia a “traitor” after she called for the release of a trove of files on Jeffrey Epstein, a dead sex offender. Days later, Mr Trump reversed his position on the documents. He signed a bill to release them this week.

**China** took its [two-week-long spat](#) with **Japan** to the United Nations. On Friday its representative, Fu Cong, sent a letter to the UN's secretary-general, Antonio Guterres, condemning Japan's “highly dangerous” comments that “expressed its ambition for armed intervention”. Takaichi Sanae, Japan's new prime minister,

had told the country's Diet that a Chinese attack on Taiwan could necessitate a military response.

Mr Trump said he had a “great meeting” in Washington with **Zohran Mamdani**, adding that he believed New York City's mayor-elect would “surprise some conservative people”. Speaking cordially from the Oval Office after months of bickering from afar, the pair said they discussed affordability in New York. America's president suggested he would help the city, seemingly reversing [earlier threats](#) to withhold crucial federal funds.

**American stocks** rallied on Friday, concluding a turbulent week. Investors' confidence was buoyed after John Williams, a Federal Reserve official, hinted that America's central bank could [cut interest rates](#) in December. The s&p 500, an index of big firms, and the NASDAQ, a tech-heavy index, each closed up almost 1% higher, partially recovering from their losses on Thursday.

The price of **Bitcoin** briefly dipped below \$81,000, its lowest value in seven months, as investors fled risky assets amid the global stock sell-off. It later climbed back to roughly \$84,000. The cryptocurrency peaked at around \$126,000 in early October, propelled by Mr Trump's [crypto-friendly policies](#). Since then cryptocurrencies have [collectively lost](#) an estimated \$1.2trn in market value, according to CoinGecko, a tracker.

A pilot from India's air force died in a plane crash on the final day of the **Dubai air show**, the Middle East's biggest aviation event. The accident occurred during a display flight. It is the second known crash of the Tejas fighter jet, which is built by India's state-run company, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. The cause is under investigation.

**Word of the week:** *Benshengzhuan*, a pathway through which university graduates in China can go on to secure vocational training. [Read the full story.](#)





Photograph: Reuters

## Donald Trump's peace plan for Ukraine

America is pushing for Ukraine to agree to a [peace deal](#) by Thanksgiving on November 27th. The Trump administration's 28-point plan demands painful concessions from Ukraine. One is that Ukraine cedes the part of Donetsk that Russia has failed to take after trying for nearly four years. Others include ruling out ever joining NATO and limiting the size of its army to 600,000 soldiers.

The plan stops just short of being the demand for total capitulation that many of Ukraine's allies have feared. Under the proposal, Russia would not be recognised as having legal title to the occupied territories. The frontline running through Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, two south-eastern regions Russia claims, would be frozen. It would forfeit some of its frozen financial assets, which would be used to rebuild Ukraine, and return the 20,000 Ukrainian children that it forcibly deported. But the plan would give Russia much of what it wants and, critically, the "security guarantees" that Ukraine would get are vague and feeble.



Photograph: Getty Images

## The blame game over October 7th

On Saturday Israel's opposition parties and anti-government groups, including supporters of former hostages and bereaved families, will hold a rally calling for an inquiry into the security failures that allowed Hamas to carry out [the attacks of October 7th 2023](#). For two years the prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, delayed such an inquiry. He promised to open one after the end of the war in Gaza.

On November 16th Mr Netanyahu's cabinet formed a ministerial committee to set up the commission to run the inquiry. It will not satisfy the opposition. Under Israeli law, members of such commissions must be appointed by the Supreme Court. But the government has argued that the court cannot be trusted to appoint an impartial panel and wants the commission's members to be appointed by politicians. They hope to shield Mr Netanyahu from accusations that his policies let Hamas grow strong in Gaza. The war may be over, but the recriminations over how it began continue.



Photograph: Sotheby's

## **Grudges, gambling and glamour in Hong Kong**

Sotheby's "Masterpieces of Asian Art" auction was lively when it began in [Hong Kong](#) on Saturday. The auction house is selling treasures from Japan's Okada Museum of Art, founded by Okada Kazuo, a billionaire known as the "Pachinko King". The proceeds will help pay legal fees that Mr Okada racked up during decades of feuding with Steve Wynn, a rival gambling tycoon.

Mr Wynn, a casino mogul, once collaborated with Mr Okada to build a gambling empire in Asia. But the pair fell out in 2012. Mr Wynn's company eventually paid more than \$2.6bn to settle a lawsuit with Mr Okada's, but Mr Okada owed \$50m in legal costs. The Sotheby's sale will help pay the debt.

And what a sale it will be. Lots include a rare print of "The Great Wave" by Hokusai Katsushika, one of the world's most famous works of art. Yet even that is unlikely to wash away attention from the dramatic feud.



Photograph: Universal Pictures

## The spellbinding success of “Wicked”

A two-part [musical-movie](#) extravaganza has struck a chord. Last year’s first instalment of “Wicked” took more than \$750m at the global box office, surpassing “Mamma Mia!” (2008) to become the highest-grossing film adaptation of a Broadway musical. “Wicked For Good”, the second half of the tale about Glinda the Good Witch (Ariana Grande) and Elphaba, the Wicked Witch of the West (Cynthia Erivo), was released to much fanfare this week.

What explains the films’ success? It helps that they are adapted from an already popular stage show seen by 70m theatregoers around the world. And their cinematic wizardry makes the wonderful world of Oz seem, well, wonderful. “Wicked For Good”—a nearly two-and-a-half-hour film spun out of an hour-long musical act—offers new songs and silly phrases. Characters say “a clock tick” in place of “a second” and words like “obsessulated” with alarming frequency. This may leave some viewers feeling less than obsessulated with the whole thing.





Photograph: Shutterstock

## **Weekend profile: Erik Prince, America's most notorious mercenary**

Fifteen years ago the future looked grey for Erik Prince. A string of scandals had forced the American executive to sell Blackwater, the private military company (PMC) he had founded in 1997. The war on terror—which had fuelled Blackwater's rise—was being scaled back. Neo-cons were out; multilateralism was in. Dogged by lawsuits and negative headlines, Mr Prince left America for the United Arab Emirates. The age of the modern [mercenary](#), in the West at least, was over.

Or so it seemed. Today, the industry's rise appears unstoppable—and Mr Prince is back at the heart of it. From Ukraine to [Haiti](#) to Congo, America's most notorious mercenary is everywhere.

The scion of wealthy Michigan industrialists, Mr Prince had a conservative upbringing. His father, whose factory made die-cast machines, was a big donor to organisations promoting traditional Christian values. The young Mr Prince joined the United States Naval Academy, but quit after three semesters reportedly because he found the place too liberal. He eventually became a Navy SEAL, serving in the Balkans, Haiti and Middle East (though he saw no combat). But two tragedies in short succession—the death of his father in 1995, followed by his first wife falling ill with cancer (she



died in 2003)—prompted the 25-year-old to return home, whereupon he sold the family business for a reported \$1.35bn.

With the proceeds he set up Blackwater, which thrived in Iraq after the American invasion in 2003—until it attracted criticism for the behaviour of its contractors. Four were convicted of killing 14 Iraqi civilians in a notorious massacre in Baghdad in 2007. He ostensibly retreated from the limelight, but controversies still followed. The UAE reportedly hired him to set up a battalion of 800 foreign mercenaries, at a time when autocracies across the Middle East were being buffeted by the Arab Spring.

As competition has heated up between China and America over control of critical minerals, Mr Prince has focused on Africa. Donald Trump has put Congo at the heart of his administration's Africa policy, helping to mediate a fragile ceasefire in the country's conflict-wracked east in return for a stake in its riches. Mr Prince, meanwhile, struck a deal to help the Congolese government collect taxes. He [tells \*The Economist\*](#) he is helping boost state capacity. Critics fear he will undermine it.

Unusually for a mercenary, Mr Prince is not media shy. He is brimming with the MAGA-style machismo that his friend Pete Hegseth, America's Secretary of War, calls a "warrior ethos". Last year he proposed a return to colonial rule in African and South American countries "incapable of governing themselves".

[The world according to Mr Prince](#) is one in which private firms with private firepower are the solution to many of its most intractable problems. The choice in many places, he says, is between private companies bringing order, or "total anarchy, meltdown".



Illustration: The Economist

## Mini crossword

We publish a new interactive edition of our crossword daily, allowing you to enter and check the answers and see explanations. Try it [here](#).

There are two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers.

### Cryptic clues

*1 across* - No good hint about an absence of anything (7)

*2 across* - Country in the bottom left-hand corner of paradise (6)

*3 across* - Births concealed by audio rig in studio (7)

*1 down* - Disturbed, unsocial or mad: Latin leader in trouble? (7,6)

### Straight clues

*1 across* - What Donald Trump says Mohammad bin Salman knew about the killing of Jamal Khashoggi (7)

*2 across* - Country that in 2023 banned digital tools for young children (6)

*3 across* - What Nike had in the running tracks of Oregon in the 1960s (7)

*1 down* - Leader accused of directing the Cartel de las Soles (7,6)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am GMT on Monday to [\[email protected\]](#). We will pick three winners at random and crown them in Tuesday's edition.



Illustration: The Economist

## The winners of this week's quiz

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

**Marco Radnic**, Punta del Este, Uruguay

**Amitai Wagner**, Zikhron Ya'akov, Israel

**Kathryn Voegeli**, Uetikon am See, Switzerland

They all gave the correct answers of: a monk, Charlie's Angels, a clown, Cat Stevens and gold. The theme is types of fish: monkfish, angel fish, clownfish, catfish and goldfish.

The questions were:

**Monday:** A man who decided to become a Cistercian or Carthusian would have chosen what profession?

**Tuesday:** Farrah Fawcett, Kate Jackson and Jaclyn Smith were the original cast members of which TV show?

**Wednesday:** The childkiller in Stephen King's novel "It" usually appears in what form?

**Thursday:** The singer-songwriter Yusuf Islam is also known by which stage name?

**Friday:** White, rose and yellow are the most common colours for which precious metal when used in jewellery?

*It is a narrow mind which cannot  
look at a subject from various  
points of view.*

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***George Eliot***