

Catch up: America promises Ukraine aid; world leaders mourn Carter



America announced nearly \$6bn in **aid to Ukraine**. President Joe Biden promised \$2.5bn-worth of military aid, while Janet Yellen, the treasury secretary, committed a further \$3.4bn in budgetary support. Mr Biden said he would work “relentlessly” to “strengthen [Ukraine’s position](#)” before leaving office in January. Many fear his successor, Donald Trump, will cut aid to Ukraine.

A state funeral will be held for **Jimmy Carter**, [who died](#) aged 100 on Sunday, at Washington National Cathedral on January 9th. Every living American president offered fond recollections of their predecessor, to which numerous world leaders added their praise for the former president’s efforts to promote peace and democracy. America will also hold a day of national mourning.

Ukraine’s foreign minister, Andrii Sybiha, visited **Syria** to meet [Ahmad al-Sharaa](#), the rebel commander who ousted Bashir al-Assad, the country’s pro-Russia former dictator. Last week Ukraine began shipping grain to Syria; Mr Sybiha said more was on its way. He encouraged Mr al-Sharaa to expel Russian forces from Syria

and met his Syrian counterpart, who spoke of forming “strategic partnerships” between the two countries.

Mr Trump endorsed **Mike Johnson’s** bid to win re-election as speaker of America’s House of Representatives. Having the president-elect in his corner will help the Republican secure the votes from members of his party’s right wing, some of whom were upset by a [deal he struck](#) over the federal budget earlier this month. Members of the lower chamber will vote on Friday.

Japan’s purchasing-managers index, an industry survey, rose from 49.0 in November to 49.6 in December. A reading above 50 represents growth. Meanwhile South Korea’s seasonally-adjusted factory output for November fell by 0.7% compared with the previous month. The larger-than-expected drop was the result of weakening exports and low business confidence caused by geopolitical uncertainty.

Trinidad and Tobago declared a state of emergency after a recent spree of gang-related shootings. Police will be allowed to conduct searches without warrants as part of efforts to crack down on illegal weapons. The Caribbean dual-island, which has a population of around 1.5m, has recorded 623 murders so far this year, its highest ever number.

Shares in Jeju Air, a **South Korean** airline, fell to their lowest on record a day after a [Boeing](#) plane operated by the carrier crashed in the country’s south, killing 179 people. Earlier South Korea ordered a safety inspection of its domestic airlines as well as all Boeing 737-800 models used by them. **Boeing’s** shares tumbled during Monday trading.

Figure of the day: 20%, the rate of value-added tax that Britain’s Labour government is putting on private-school fees. [Read the full story.](#)

Will democracy prevail in Asia in 2025?



Until January 2nd we are looking ahead to next year's big stories. Today, what will shape Asia?

In 2024 Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party were re-elected to government with a **weakened mandate**. Meanwhile protests led to the ousting of Sheikh Hasina, **Bangladesh's** autocratic former prime minister. Will 2025 see more good omens for Asian democracy?

In India, an emboldened opposition and civil society will hold Mr Modi to account. He has already had to make a series of U-turns on issues such as a controversial broadcasting bill. But in other parts of Asia the situation is more worrying. In Indonesia Prabowo Subianto, a controversial former general with a **sordid past**, took over as president, and a high-profile opposition politician was soon arrested. In Thailand, the Move Forward Party, a pro-democracy group, has been barred from politics; many supporters are still in jail. And South Korea's democracy will be further tested as it deals with the fallout from a brief period of martial law declared by Yoon Suk Yeol, the now-suspended president.

What Donald Trump means for China



Donald Trump has threatened to impose tariffs of 60% on Chinese goods. That might knock 2.5 percentage points off Chinese economic growth over the subsequent year, says UBS, a bank. Mr Trump's comments could be a negotiating ploy. Still, [China](#) can ill afford a trade war. Since the pandemic its economy has underperformed. America's new administration will continue to impede the flow of Western technology, such as advanced chips, to China.

China's leaders may become more aggressive if their frustration grows. The country is forcefully pushing its territorial claims in the South China Sea. Tensions are also growing around Taiwan, which Mr Trump has intimated he may not protect from Chinese aggression. But China's armed forces are not yet ready for a big war. Officials will look for other ways to take advantage of Mr Trump's unilateralism, such as driving a wedge between America and Europe, and continuing to promote China as the leader of the global south.

Investing in India's future



[Narendra Modi](#) came to power over ten years ago promising “minimum government, maximum governance”. And yet public money and state initiatives have featured prominently in his economic strategy. His coalition government plans to devote over 11trn rupees (\$130bn) to capital expenditure in the year to March 2025. That amounts to 3.4% of GDP, up from 1.7% five years ago.

Public investment cannot grow this quickly for much longer. The government is keen to trim its budget deficit to 4.5% of GDP next fiscal year. But Mr Modi may have to indulge the expensive ideas of his coalition partners, especially if his party suffers setbacks in upcoming state elections. Given the government's constraints, more future investment must come from companies. Many of India's big conglomerates seem ready to do their bit. S&P Global, an analytics firm, reckons Indian conglomerates could invest about \$800bn over the next ten years, almost three times as much as over the past decade.

Japan starts to feel its age



In 2025 the number of [over-75s in Japan](#) will reach nearly 22m, up from 17m a decade ago. The government projected in 2018 that overall social-security costs, including pension payments, would grow by nearly 60% between 2025 and 2040. Policymakers refer to this as the “2025 problem”.

More than half of Japanese aged 65-69 and more than one-third aged 70-74 are employed. But on turning 75, problems begin to mount. Labour-force participation drops to 12%. Health-care spending increases precipitously. The share of the population requiring nursing jumps from 3% for those aged 65-74 to 12% for those aged 75-84, and to 45% for those over 85.

The government has tried to manage this by building more care homes. It also loosened restrictions on migrant workers and is recruiting more caregivers from South-East Asia. An overhaul to the pension system is scheduled for 2025. Such measures will help, but bolder reforms will also be necessary.

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. We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Tuesday: Which Dr Seuss book features the character Sam-I-am?

Monday: Which is the largest ice shelf in Antarctica, at almost 500,000 square kilometres?

**Get at least eight hours of beauty sleep,
nine if you're ugly.**

Betty White