

Catch up: Trump picks Scott Bessent for treasury; Northvolt files for bankruptcy



Donald Trump chose **Scott Bessent** to lead the treasury department. The hedge-fund manager [supports tariffs](#), at least as a negotiating tool, and yet investors regarded him as a safe pair of hands considering the more extreme candidates in contention. Mr Bessent also wants to cut taxes and cancel Joe Biden's green-energy subsidies. Unlike the president-elect, he has warned about yawning government debt.

Northvolt filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in America. The Swedish battery-maker had piled up \$5.8bn in debt. Its co-founder, Peter Carlsson, quit as chief executive. The firm was seen by many as [Europe's best chance](#) to challenge Asia's dominance in the electric-vehicle sector. It raised more than \$15bn in investments, including from Volkswagen and the German government, but struggled to scale up production.

The judge overseeing **Donald Trump's** hush-money case cancelled the president-elect's sentencing, which was due next week. He did not reschedule it. Mr Trump, who was convicted in May of 34

felonies, is arguing that his case should be [dismissed](#) because sentencing would interfere with his presidential transition. The judge gave Mr Trump's lawyers a deadline of early December to formally make their argument.

America banned 29 Chinese companies from bringing a range of food and metals to its market over alleged [human-rights abuses](#). America suspects that the goods were produced with forced labour involving **Uyghurs**, a minority in China's northwest province of Xinjiang. It is the biggest single addition to the blacklist of more than 100 companies since it was passed into law in 2021.

Euro-zone business activity unexpectedly fell to a [ten-month low](#) in November. The S&P's flash composite PMI dropped from 50, the threshold for contraction, to 48.1. The services sector shrank for the first time since January, no longer offsetting a recession in manufacturing. [The contraction](#) increases the odds of the European Central Bank pursuing more aggressive interest-rate cuts in December.

Volodymyr Zelensky, **Ukraine's** president, said Russia's use of a [new kind of medium-range ballistic missile](#) was a "clear and severe escalation" in the war. Russia fired it at the eastern Ukrainian city of Dnipro on Thursday. Vladimir Putin, Russia's leader, claimed there were "no ways of counteracting" the weapon and said the attack was a response to Ukraine's recent use of American- and British-made longer-range missiles.

Matt Gaetz said he would not re-join Congress after [dropping his bid](#) to become America's attorney-general. The Republican lawmaker from Florida resigned from the House of Representatives after Donald Trump picked him for the role, and before the lower chamber could release an ethics report into his alleged sexual misconduct (which he denies).

Correction: *An earlier edition incorrectly linked the International Criminal Court to the United Nations. It is an independent body. Separately, we said that NATO leaders would meet on Friday. In fact NATO's Parliamentary Assembly met for their annual assembly. Sorry.*

Word of the week: DOGE, previously a meme. Now Elon Musk's "Department of Government Efficiency", a new advisory body tasked with cutting red tape and wasteful spending in America. [Read the full story.](#)

Trump's picks face the Senate



Donald Trump's stream of cabinet nominations range from conventional to [outrageous](#). His transition team is already lobbying senators, who approve judicial- and executive-branch nominees. The upper chamber proudly guards its role. But Mr Trump will soon test the loyalty of Republican senators: does it lie with him, or with their own institution?

Traditional choices—such as Marco Rubio, a longtime senator, for secretary of state—will easily win confirmation in the Senate, where Republicans will hold 53 out of 100 seats. But Robert F. Kennedy junior, [Pete Hegseth](#) and Tulsi Gabbard—Mr Trump's choices for, respectively, [top health](#), Pentagon and intelligence posts—are vulnerable because of inexperience, quacky views or personal indiscretions. Matt Gaetz, Mr Trump's pick for attorney-general, combined all three vulnerabilities; he dropped his bid on November 21st. The question for Mr Trump in the weeks ahead is how much political capital he wants to spend on pushing through unpopular nominees—and whether he's willing to risk a constitutional crisis by somehow [sidelining the Senate](#).

Italy's fading star



Delegates from Italy's maverick Five Star Movement will gather in Rome on Saturday for a weekend convention. The assembly is being held against the background of a [bitter split](#) between the party's founder, Beppe Grillo, and its president, Giuseppe Conte. Mr Grillo, a comedian-turned-politician, founded the party in 2009 with hopes of replacing Italy's parliamentary democracy with a new kind of direct democracy that exploited the possibilities of the internet.

Mr Conte has prodded it into becoming a more conventional parliamentary party. He has also pushed it to the left. He hopes that members will endorse his views during the assembly, cementing his leadership. But he will face resistance. Delegates loyal to Mr Grillo will probably argue that Mr Conte's strategy is not working. In each of the last three regional elections, the party has won less than 5% of the vote—pitiful results for a party that was once Italy's largest.

Poland's liberals eye the presidency



After eight grim years on the opposition benches, Poland's liberals returned to government in parliamentary [elections last October](#), forming a centrist coalition. But to consolidate their power—and to push through [stalling reforms](#)—they still need to win back the presidency. Elections are scheduled for May. The coalition's largest group, Civic Coalition (KO), will unveil its candidate on Saturday, following a poll of its members.

The front-runner is [Rafal Trzaskowski](#) (pictured), the left-leaning mayor of Warsaw. He narrowly lost to [Andrzej Duda](#), the incumbent president, in the last [election, in 2020](#). But [Radoslaw Sikorski](#), a veteran foreign minister who has styled himself as a hawkish candidate, has emerged as a strong contender. Bolstered by the election of Donald Trump, he is expected to force eastern Europe into more *realpolitik*. But who offers the best chance of winning against Law and Justice, the populist-nationalist party, which has yet to unveil its candidate? Early polls suggest Mr Trzaskowski is the safer bet.

An intimate portrait of displacement



Es Devlin's work has appeared on the world's biggest stages. She has won Olivier awards for her designs on the West End and Tony Awards for her backdrops on Broadway. She collaborated with Adele and Beyoncé on their concert tours and designed ceremonies for the Olympic games in London and Rio. Her latest project, however, is both grand and intimate.

“FACE to FACE: 50 Encounters with Strangers” opens at Somerset House in London on Saturday. The show features “CONGREGATION”, an installation for which Ms Devlin invited 50 people from 28 countries to sit for her. At first, she knew only each individual's name and that they had come to London after being forcibly displaced from their homes. (The artwork was created in partnership with UNHCR, the UN's refugee body.)

“CONGREGATION” brings together portraits, sound design and projections as Ms Devlin's subjects speak about what London has provided them: shelter, anonymity, acceptance and opportunity.

Weekend profile: Priyanka Gandhi, hope of India's opposition



Just two years ago Priyanka Gandhi's political career seemed to have hit a wall. The scion of India's foremost political dynasty, whose father, grandmother and great-grandfather were all prime ministers, had been put in charge of the Congress party's campaign for an election in Uttar Pradesh, or UP, the nation's most populous state. And she bombed: Congress won two seats in the state assembly in its worst-ever performance there. Not long afterwards, she resigned as the party's leader in UP.

Yet in the wake of an [unexpected general-election result](#) in June 2024, Ms Gandhi is making a remarkable comeback. Her efforts on the campaign trail are now widely credited with helping to strip the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, or BJP, of its parliamentary majority. And though she did not run for a seat initially, on November 13th she stood in a by-election for one in the southern state of Kerala after her brother, Rahul, gave that up to take another that he won in UP (candidates can run for up to two seats in India but occupy only one). The result will be announced on November 23rd.

If she wins, as expected, it will mark her long-awaited debut in India's lower house of parliament. Priyanka, who at 52 is two years younger than Rahul, has long been considered the more natural politician. Some think she could even be a prime-ministerial candidate. But she has often expressed ambivalence about politics, not least because of her tragic childhood. She was 12 in 1984 when Indira, her grandmother, was shot dead by her Sikh bodyguards. Seven years later her father, Rajiv, was assassinated by a Tamil suicide-bomber.

Recently, though, her appetite for politics appears to be growing. That is partly because her children are now grown up. But family friends say Priyanka has also been energised by the pursuit of the BJP's Hindu-nationalist agenda by Narendra Modi, the prime minister, as well as his erosion of secularism and of democratic institutions, and his use of state agencies to target political opponents, including the Gandhis, with corruption probes. For the general election she campaigned in some 16 Indian states, attending 108 rallies.

Her anticipated debut in parliament is not without controversy. BJP leaders cite it as evidence of Congress's continued dynasticism. And they accuse the Gandhis of deceiving voters in Kerala's Wayanad constituency (which Rahul had represented since 2019) by putting forward Priyanka as his replacement after the recent election.

Priyanka is unlikely to eclipse Rahul, who was appointed in June as leader of the opposition, in the short term. Still, her public profile is bound to rise in the coming years. Congress supporters say they relish the prospect of seeing the siblings join forces in parliament to challenge Mr Modi. But if Priyanka's popularity continues to grow, the party will have to confront a question it has long sought to avoid: might she stand a better chance than Rahul of one day leading India?

Weekly crossword



Our crossword has two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers, all of which feature in articles in this week's edition of *The Economist*:

Cryptic clues

1 down Oily, succulent merguez partly eaten by German politician (9,4)

1 across Can ref rebuild team? (6)

2 across Rank wind exits insides (5)

3 across City finds zero upside reinvesting in clearing house initially (6)

Factual clues

1 down Leader of the Christian Democrats (9, 4)

1 across Country that has recently been training Ukrainian troops (6)

2 across A weighted average of prices, say (5)

3 across Largest city in Switzerland (6)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am GMT on Monday to crossword@economist.com. We will pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners in next week's edition.

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:

Iskriyana Vasileva, Berlin, Germany

Stan Seltzer, Trumansburg, New York

Giedrius Kazakevicius, Vilnius, Lithuania

They all gave the correct answers of: "The Master and Margarita", The Duke of Edinburgh, "The Lovely Bones", "Happy" and Sealed With a Loving Kiss. The theme is songs by Stevie Wonder: "Master Blaster (Jammin')", "Sir Duke", "Isn't She Lovely", "Happy Birthday" and "Signed, Sealed, Delivered, I'm Yours".

The questions were:

Monday: Mikhail Bulgakov is best known for which novel, oft cited as a 20th century classic?

Tuesday: What title is most associated with Prince Philip, the late husband of Queen Elizabeth II?

Wednesday: Which novel by Alice Sebold is narrated by a 14-year-old girl who is murdered in the first chapter?

Thursday: Which hit song by Pharrell Williams came from the soundtrack of the film “Despicable Me 2”?

Friday: For what words does the acronym SWALK stand?

Train hard, fight easy.

Alexander Suvorov