

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: SOPA Images/LightRocket via Gett

**Andriy Yermak** resigned as chief of staff to **Ukraine's** president, Volodymyr Zelensky, after anti-corruption agents raided his home. Mr Yermak had been leading Ukraine's peace negotiations with Russia. Mr Zelensky said he will shortly hold "consultations" to find a replacement. The corruption probe is reportedly part of a [wider investigation](#) that has toppled several officials close to the president.

**Vladimir Putin**, Russia's president, greeted **Viktor Orban**, Hungary's prime minister, in Moscow. Mr Putin welcomed Mr Orban's offer to host a Russo-American summit to end the war in Ukraine. [Mr Orban](#) said he hoped to secure Russian energy supplies for the winter. Other European leaders condemned Mr Orban's trip. On Thursday Mr Putin insisted Ukraine would have to surrender territory in any peace deal.

Prosecutors said they would charge the man accused of shooting two **National Guard** members on Wednesday with first-degree murder, after one of the [soldiers](#) died of her injuries. The other victim remains in hospital. John Ratcliffe, the head of the CIA, said the suspected attacker had worked with the spy agency in

Afghanistan. Donald Trump vowed a crackdown on immigration from “third-world countries”.

State media in **Syria** said that 13 people, including two children, were killed in an **Israeli** raid on a village in the south of the country. The Israel Defence Forces said the raid, near the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, targeted members of Jama’a Islamiya, a Lebanese Islamist group. The IDF said six soldiers were injured by militants.

Rescue crews neared the end of their search of seven high-rise residential towers in **Hong Kong** that went up in flames on Wednesday. The death toll from the inferno rose to 128. Authorities said that styrofoam panels used during renovation work had allowed the blaze to spread. John Lee, Hong Kong’s chief executive, also pledged to end the use of bamboo scaffolding.

**Germany’s** EU-harmonised annual inflation rate for November hit 2.6%—higher than expected and an outlier when compared with its closest neighbours in the bloc. France’s rate was unchanged, while Italy’s and Spain’s dipped. Inflation rose despite higher unemployment and less spending in shops. The European Central Bank is expected to hold interest rates unchanged at 2% at its next meeting in December.

**Iran’s football federation** said it would boycott the draw for the [World Cup](#), which takes place in Washington, DC, on December 5th. It said that the Trump administration had refused to grant visas to several officials. In the last World Cup in 2022, the Iranian and American teams were drawn in the same group. The Americans won the game 1-0.

**Figure of the Day:** 5,400, the number of foreign couples that got married in Copenhagen in 2024. [Read the full story here.](#)



Photograph: Reuters

## Retailers brace for an unpredictable Black Friday

Black Friday, a post-Thanksgiving shopping fest, is here. Although [retailers](#) have been spreading out their discount offers (and many have already begun), they are banking on this weekend and Cyber Monday, a shopping event next week, to boost their revenues.

American consumers, however, are sending [mixed signals](#). They say they are feeling dour, even as spending figures remain strong. The National Retail Federation expects retail sales in November and December to grow by up to 4.2% year on year. Yet tariffs, a shaky job market and slow wage growth for low-paid workers make it difficult to predict whether shoppers will spend with their usual seasonal zeal. Inflation is also a worry.

The divergence between spending and indicators of consumer sentiment, which normally move together, makes the direction of the [American economy](#) less certain. Even so, companies hope that markdowns entice cash-strapped Americans to shop away their anxiety.



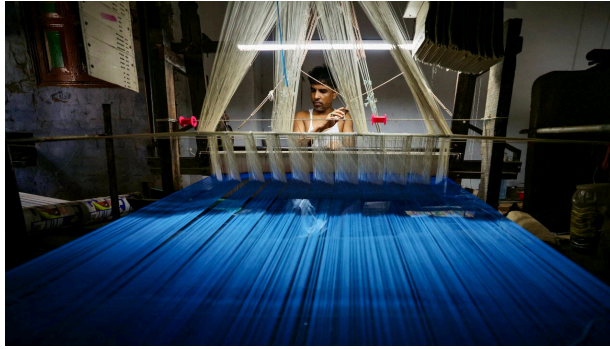
Photograph: AP

## Hong Kong mourns after a devastating fire

On Wednesday a fire broke out in an apartment block in [Hong Kong's](#) Wang Fuk Court housing complex. It licked its way up 31 storeys before leaping to six surrounding buildings. Soon, nearly the entire complex was an inferno. By the next day 128 people were confirmed dead, including a firefighter, making the blaze one of the deadliest in Hong Kong since the second world war. Around 200 were still missing.

The cause of the fire is unknown. But officials said it began on a section of bamboo scaffolding. Police said some materials compromised fire-safety standards. On Thursday they arrested three members of the construction firm on suspicion of manslaughter.

The blaze is already drawing comparisons with one that killed 72 people at [Grenfell Tower](#) in London in 2017. Combustible cladding caused both fires to quicken. Each took place in a poor building within a rich city. A similar public outcry and political backlash will probably follow, too.



Photograph: Getty Images

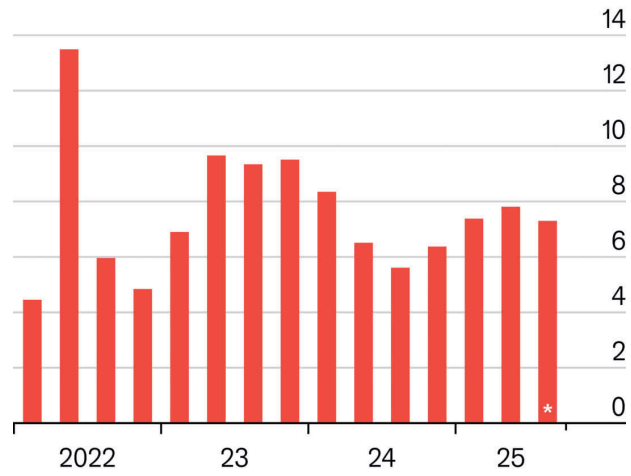
## India's economy remains strong

India has had a testing year. In May it took part in a brief but alarming conflict with its neighbour, Pakistan. Since August it has been coping with extortionate American tariffs. Still, economic growth has been strong; GDP grew by 8.2% year on year between July and September. India is forecast to remain the world's **fastest expanding** major economy, with growth of 6.5% this financial year.

The size of India's economy makes it more resilient to external shocks. The stockmarket is booming and its balance of payments is strong. Inflation has been kept under control; the central bank looks likely to cut interest rates next month. Ordinary Indians lament the poor pace of job creation, but the government is pressing ahead with a **major liberalisation** of labour laws that will make India an easier place to do business. Meanwhile officials hope to conclude a trade deal with America, which would ease pressure on exporters. As the year draws to an end, Indians have reasons for cheer.

## High note

India, GDP, % increase on a year earlier



Source: LSEG Workspace

\*Estimate



Photograph: © Saab AB

## Poland bulks up its navy

Keen to beef up its naval [power](#), Poland is laying the groundwork for a major modernisation of its fleet. Its government announced on Wednesday it would purchase three A26 submarines from Saab, a Swedish aerospace and defence company, in a deal thought to be worth some \$2.7bn. The submarines will not be surfacing in Polish harbours soon. The first is expected to be delivered around 2030.

The country's navy, which currently only has one operational submarine (and an old one at that), needs new ones to monitor and protect Poland's [energy](#) infrastructure in the Baltic Sea from hybrid or conventional attacks by Russia and its proxies. Among Poland's most important assets are a string of natural-gas terminals, pipelines and offshore wind farms, representing billions of dollars in investment. Recent damage to pipelines and cables on the Baltic seabed, suspected to be the work of the Russians, shows the threat lurking beneath the surface.





Photograph: John Wilson/Netflix

## A laugh-a-minute murder mystery

A spookily remote setting: check. A seemingly impossible crime: check. A brilliant detective and an endearing sidekick: check. In [“Wake Up Dead Man”](#), in cinemas now and streaming on Netflix on December 12th, Rian Johnson, the director, revels in the tropes of the murder-mystery formula. In this third instalment of the “Knives Out” franchise, Jud Duplency, a hoodlum-turned-priest (played by Josh O’Connor) is sent to an isolated church in upstate New York. Its tyrannical overlord (Josh Brolin) is elaborately murdered. Jud is the prime suspect.

Enter Benoit Blanc ([Daniel Craig](#)), the nattily dressed investigator with a Southern drawl. At the heart of this delightful romp is the tension between reason and faith that has powered the genre since its 19th-century beginnings. But Mr Johnson, who lays on plenty of stars, laughs and twists, never forgets an unwritten rule of screen mysteries, namely: have fun!





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

**Friday:** Which relay race in track cycling shares its name with one of America's founding fathers?

**Thursday:** Who starred as "Rick Grimes" in the long-running cable TV series "The Walking Dead"?

*The road of denial leads to the  
precipice of destruction.*

---

***John Bunyan***