

Catch up: Russian general killed in Moscow; Assad's Syria exit “not planned”



Ukraine claimed responsibility for the **explosion in Moscow** that killed Lieutenant General **Igor Kirillov**, the head of Russia's nuclear-protection forces—the most senior officer to be assassinated since Russia [invaded Ukraine](#) in 2022. Local officials said the bomb was hidden in a scooter parked outside his home. On Monday, a Ukrainian court charged General Kirillov in absentia for using banned chemical weapons in the war.

Bashar al-Assad, Syria's [ousted dictator](#), said that his departure from the country was “not planned”. In his first statement since the fall of his regime, Mr Assad said he fled to Moscow only after a Russian airbase he was visiting on December 8th came under attack. He blamed the delay for his statement on “security reasons” and insisted he always acted in Syria's best interests.

Argentina's economy exited recession. GDP increased by a faster-than-expected 3.9% between July and September, the first quarterly expansion since late 2023. The figures will be a boost for [Javier Milei](#), the libertarian president, who since taking office a year ago

has [unleashed a blast of reforms](#) to revive the economy and cool inflation.

China launched its first batch of **Guowang satellites**. Like SpaceX's [Starlink system](#), Guowang is designed to use thousands of low-flying satellites to provide high-speed internet anywhere on Earth. Guowang is China's second such system: another, called [Qianfan](#), already has several dozen satellites in space. [Starlink's usefulness](#) in the war in Ukraine has left Russia, Taiwan, the EU and others keen to build similar systems.

Donald Trump lost his attempt to overturn the [criminal conviction](#) stemming from his “**hush-money**” case. Mr Trump's lawyers had used a Supreme Court ruling made in July that granted presidents immunity to make their case. But the judge dismissed the motion, saying that the president-elect's charges of falsifying business records were a personal act. Mr Trump is expected to appeal the decision.

Ukraine and **America** said that **North Koreans** fought for the first time [alongside Russians](#) against Ukraine, and that around 30 troops were killed or wounded near Kursk. John Kirby, America's National Security Council spokesperson, said that North Korean soldiers had moved “to the front lines”. About 11,000 North Korean troops are estimated to have been deployed near Russia's Ukrainian border.

Kenya's government said its wildlife service was working on an [IVF treatment](#) to help female **rhinos** breed. The northern white rhino is the world's most endangered subspecies of mammal: only two remain in the world—Najin and her daughter Fatu, who are 34 and 24 years old, respectively. With no male left for natural reproduction, officials hope treatment can bring the species back from the brink.

Figure of the day: 90,000, the number of drug-overdose deaths in America in the 12 months to July this year, a reduction of around a sixth. [Read the full story.](#)

The new Syria at the UN



On Tuesday the UN Security Council publicly discusses Syria for the first time since the [fall of Bashar al-Assad](#). Eyes will be on the Syrian delegation, appointed by the Assad government but thus far kept in post, and the old regime's ally, [Russia](#). The Kremlin's diplomats are said to be co-operative; Russian media now call Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the dominant rebel force, an "armed" rather than a "terrorist" group. Nevertheless, America is wary of letting Russia use its veto power to shape the transition to its liking. Antony Blinken, the secretary of state, has called for an "inclusive" and "non-sectarian" government.

The council cannot be entirely sidelined. Resolution 2254, agreed on in 2015, sets the terms for a "Syrian-led" transition. Moreover, the mandate of the UN's observer mission on the Golan Heights is due to be renewed this week. International criticism may turn from Russia to [Israel](#), which has been seizing more of the Golan Heights and bombing Syrian army equipment.

Canada's Trump problem



Figures released on Tuesday are expected to show that Canada's annual inflation rate remained around 2% in November. That should satisfy the country's central bankers, who view a steady 2%—in the middle of their target range—as confirmation that inflation has eased without triggering recession. Unemployment hit 6.8% in November, the highest rate since September 2021. But the growth outlook is improving. The Bank of Canada had forecast GDP growth of 0.4% in 2024; it now expects 1.2% or more.

All calm, then? Not exactly. Many worry about what Donald Trump's return will mean for Canada's economy. He has threatened to [impose a 25% tariff](#) on everything Canada exports to America unless it does more to secure their shared border. Pressure is mounting on [Justin Trudeau](#), the prime minister. His finance minister and deputy prime minister, Chrystia Freeland, resigned on Monday, saying they were “at odds” over how to get Canadians through difficult economic times without adding to Canada's growing budget deficit.

Georgia's political crisis



For weeks protests have rocked Georgia. In October the Russia-friendly ruling party, Georgian Dream, which faced mass demonstrations earlier this year over its growing illiberalism, claimed victory in a dodgy parliamentary election. Then on November 28th it paused Georgia's application to join the European Union, [sparking another bout of unrest](#), which enters its 20th day on Tuesday. So far police have arrested some 460 protesters—an unprecedented number in Georgia's democratic history.

The country faces a constitutional crisis. On Saturday an electoral college, dominated by the ruling party and boycotted by the opposition, voted for Mikheil Kavelashvili, a far-right former footballer, to become president at the end of the month. He would replace Salome Zourabichvili, the last pro-Western figure in high office, who is refusing to step aside. If she is forced out, anti-government protests could intensify. But Georgian Dream is preparing for a fight. On Friday it passed tough anti-protests laws—and is planning to roll out more.

More gloom for Germany's economy



ZEW, a German research institute, published its widely watched Indicator of Economic Sentiment on Tuesday. Donald Trump's victory in America's presidential election dampened expectations in last month's survey, as did the collapse of Germany's governing coalition. But this month's results were unexpectedly better owing to the prospect of [federal elections](#) in February and further interest-rate cuts.

Still, other data look grim. The Kiel Institute for the World Economy now forecasts that Germany's GDP will stagnate in 2025, rather than grow by 0.5% as it thought in the autumn. The think-tank attributed the downward revision to the expected imposition of American tariffs on German goods and problems in the manufacturing sector. It expects GDP to shrink by 0.2% this year; it predicts a moderate recovery only in 2026. The next chancellor, probably Friedrich Merz, of the centre-right Christian Democrats, will face a gargantuan task to restore the German economy to its former glory.

A crypto-sponsored golf bonanza



The boundaries between the sport and entertainment industries continue to erode. Netflix, for instance, recently made another foray into live sport—the once-fearsome Mike Tyson’s capitulation in the boxing ring to Jake Paul, a YouTuber. Netflix claimed the fight was the most streamed sporting contest in history.

On Tuesday attention will be a one-off golf event in Nevada, dubbed “The Showdown”. Two of the finest players on America’s PGA Tour, Rory McIlroy and Scottie Scheffler, will take on two of the best players from the [Saudi-funded LIV Golf](#), Bryson DeChambeau and Brooks Koepka, in a single round split into three segments with different rules. For golf the event may herald a new era: the PGA and LIV competitions are reportedly close to [finalising a merger](#). Moreover the players could win some \$10m in prize money paid in cryptocurrency, according to reports in American sports media. That compares favourably with most events on the PGA Tour.

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 character marries Bella Swan in the Twilight book and film series?

Monday: Which famous singer died on Christmas Day 2016?

**Beauty surrounds us, but usually we need
to be walking in a garden to know it.**

Rumi