

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: EPA

American and European officials agreed in principle to offer Ukraine **NATO-like security guarantees**. Friedrich Merz, Germany's chancellor, said the deal presented a "real chance" of **peace**. American officials said the guarantee would be modelled on NATO's Article 5, which treats an armed attack on one ally as an attack on all. The Kremlin said it had not yet seen the proposal.

**Australian** officials said that the two gunmen responsible for **the attack** in **Bondi Beach** were inspired by **Islamic State**, and that they were investigating a trip the pair made to **the Philippines** the previous month. Immigration authorities in the Philippines confirmed that the two suspects had entered the country in November. Fifteen people were killed in the assault, which is being investigated as an act of terrorism.

Donald Trump sued the **BBC** for up to \$10bn over a documentary that used edited footage of a speech he made before the January 6th riot. The clip stitched together parts of his address to make it appear that he had urged the crowd to storm into the Capitol building. The **British broadcaster** has apologised to the president, but said there was no "basis for a defamation claim".

**Britain's unemployment rate** rose slightly to 5.1% from August to October, its highest level since January 2021, according to official figures. The average earnings growth in the private sector was 3.9% year on year, down from 4.2% in the three months to September, a further sign of a **slowing economy**. The Bank of England is expected to cut interest rates when it meets on Thursday.

**Business activity in the euro area** slowed more than expected in December, dragged down by a private-sector downturn in Germany. S&P Global's Composite Purchasing Managers' Index showed the **euro zone** slipping from 52.8 in November to 51.9, nearing the threshold for contraction. Meanwhile French manufacturing data surprised analysts by recording the strongest growth in more than three years.

The Rwanda-backed M23 militia agreed to a request by the Trump administration to withdraw from Uvira, a city in eastern Congo that it captured on December 10th. America's government said the siege violated **a peace agreement** it had brokered between the leaders of Congo and Rwanda in June, which compels Rwanda to stop supporting M23 and withdraw its troops from eastern Congo.

**PayPal**, a digital-payments firm, applied for a banking licence in America. Establishing PayPal Bank will "strengthen our business and improve our efficiency", said the firm's boss. Since Mr Trump returned to office in January, a growing number of fintech and **cryptocurrency firms** have shown interest in becoming banks, thanks to his administration's more lenient approach to the sector.

**Figure of the day:** 3,800, the number of encounters between drones and planes over European cities in 2024, more than double the figure the year before. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Getty Images

## Europe's electric-car dilemma

On Tuesday the European Commission will set out its plans in relation to rules that would in effect end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars after 2035. [Europe's carmakers](#) have lobbied hard to push the deadline back to 2040, arguing that consumers are not switching to battery-powered cars fast enough to justify the scale of investment required. Governments in countries with large car industries, led by Germany, have backed that call.

If the EU sticks to its 2035 deadline, it may allow carmakers some slack—for example, by allowing greater use of hybrids or synthetic fuels to extend the life of combustion engines. Yet such concessions could prove counterproductive. [Chinese manufacturers](#), whose electric cars are steadily gaining market share in Europe despite tariffs, would be the main beneficiaries of any slowdown. Easing off the accelerator may not be the best way for Europe's EV-makers to catch up.



Photograph: Getty Images

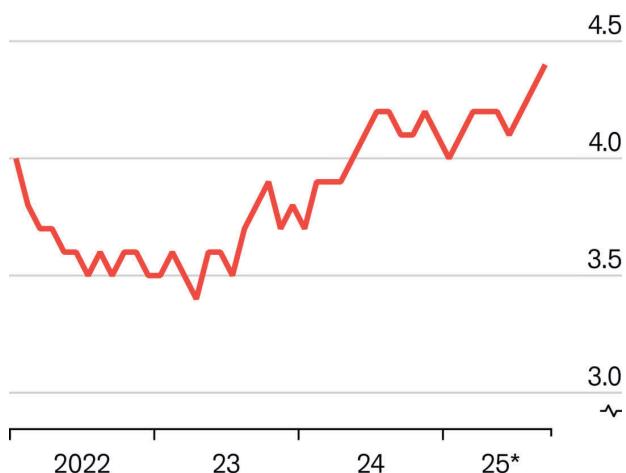
## America's data backlog catches up

The deluge of belated American economic data continues. The first [jobs figures](#) since September will be released after they had been delayed by the government shutdown. November's figures will be a complete release, while October's will only contain numbers from employers. The Bureau of Labour Statistics abandoned its household survey for that month, saying the shutdown disrupted its usual schedule too badly to reconstruct it. Economists will need to read the numbers with care, since furloughed government workers may have distorted the headline figures. Forecasters expect the unemployment rate to remain at 4.4%.

In normal times the Federal Reserve would have had this information ahead of its interest-rate decision on December 10th. Instead, policymakers pressed ahead without it. A majority opted for a quarter-point cut, partly out of concern that the jobs market was weakening. The delayed data will help clarify whether those fears were justified.

## Job jitters

United States, monthly unemployment rate, %



Source: Bureau of Labour Statistics

\*To September



Photograph: AP

## Modi's Middle Eastern overtures

This week India's prime minister, [Narendra Modi](#), is in Jordan, coinciding with the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries. He is also expected in Oman.

Mr Modi has good reason to indulge his penchant for travel yet again. India has increasingly aligned with [America](#) when it comes to the war in Gaza, and deepened its defence, technology and investment ties with Israel. To balance that, Mr Modi is keen to reassure Middle Eastern allies of India's friendship as part of the country's "multialigned" foreign policy in the volatile region.

In Jordan expect diplomatic chat on counter-terrorism, trade and regional stability. In Oman, the two countries are expected to sign the India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement to boost trade and investment. This is crucial because of Oman's strategic location for Indian access to the Gulf.



Photograph: AP

## Australia's gun laws under scrutiny

Candles burned on [Bondi Beach](#) in Sydney and at synagogues across Australia on Monday evening to honour the victims of an attack on Jews celebrating. The assault on Sunday was the country's deadliest mass shooting since 1996. A father and son killed at least 15 people and injured dozens more.

Authorities have vowed to tighten Australia's already strict gun laws. Proposed measures include limits on how many firearms an individual can own. One of the attackers at Bondi legally possessed six guns, several of which were used in the shooting. Anthony Albanese, the prime minister, is under pressure from the opposition and from Israeli leaders, who argue that the massacre reflects a failure to confront a rise in antisemitism since Hamas's attacks on October 7th 2023. An independent inquiry will examine what went wrong, including whether police protection at Hanukkah events in Sydney was sufficient. One gunman was killed at the scene; the other, his son, remains in hospital and is expected to face criminal charges once deemed fit to stand trial.



Photograph: Nature Picture Library

## Polar bears prepare for thin years

Scientists project that by 2050 there will be two-thirds fewer polar bears than there are today. A [rapidly warming Arctic](#) is making food harder to find: when sea ice melts polar bears lose their seal-hunting platforms. Many starve to death.

A new study in *Mobile DNA*, a scientific journal, shows how climate change is altering polar bears at a genetic level. Researchers compared gene activity in two groups of bears, one from a warmer part of Greenland and one from a cooler part. They found that the mobile parts of DNA, the “jumping genes” that move around a genome in response to environmental stress, were more active in bears living in the warmer region. The activity had altered the expression of 27 genes, including ones relating to heat stress, and influenced others relating to fat processing, which may help those bears survive with fewer blubbery seals to eat. The findings suggest that some polar-bear genomes are scrambling to adapt to warmer environments. But scientists are unsure whether this can happen fast enough to prevent extinction.



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 [\[email protected\]](mailto:[email protected]). We'll pick three winners at random and crown them on Saturday.

**Tuesday:** Hyakutake and Hale-Bopp are two examples of which heavenly phenomena?

**Monday:** Larry, Curly and Moe were regular members of which comedy troupe?

*Correction: Monday's edition included a quiz question that appeared last week. Above is Monday's correct question. Sorry*



Illustration: The Economist

## The winners of last week's crossword

Thank you to everyone who took part in our crossword, published on Saturday. The winners, chosen at random, were:

**Juan Pablo Fernández**, Boston, Massachusetts

**Patrick Allen**, Iver, United Kingdom

**John Pierce**, Lagos, Portugal

*I will take fate by the throat; it  
will never bend me completely to  
its will.*

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**Ludwig van Beethoven**