

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Getty Images

The **White House** confirmed that **Pete Hegseth**, America's war secretary, authorised a follow-up [strike](#) on an alleged drug-smuggling vessel from Venezuela in September. It said that Mr Hegseth had not instructed an admiral to "kill everybody", but that the act was "self-defence". Donald Trump and Mr Hegseth previously denied reports that he ordered the strike, which even some Republicans say would be illegal.

Russia claimed to have fully captured the town of [Pokrovsk](#), in **Ukraine's** Donetsk region. It has been battling to take the strategic hub for over a year, suffering huge losses. Vladimir Putin said the capture would help Russia push forward with its "special operation" in Ukraine. Ukraine did not confirm Pokrovsk's loss. An American delegation is currently in Moscow to try to negotiate peace.

Hong Kong's leader, John Lee, said he would establish an independent, judge-led committee to review the cause of the city's [deadliest fire](#) in decades. The blaze last week killed at least 151 people; dozens are still missing. Police arrested 13 people for suspected manslaughter. Anti-corruption investigators also arrested

12. Contractors involved in renovating the towers were among those detained.

Asian stocks rebounded on Tuesday, after **global bond markets** fell on Monday. Markets were reacting to the [Bank of Japan's](#) suggestion that it could raise interest rates this month. Japan's two-year government bond yield spiked above 1% for the first time in 17 years. The yield on ten-year Treasury bonds hit 4.1%. That prompted a sell-off in risky assets, including Bitcoin.

Apple replaced its vice-president for artificial intelligence, apparently reacting to worries that the firm is coming off [second best](#) in the race to integrate AI into its products. Amar Subramanya, formerly Microsoft's AI vice-president, will take over from John Giannandrea. Apple had hoped that generative AI would help it transform the iPhone into a digital assistant, but progress has been painfully slow.

Airbus reported a quality problem with some of the metal panels used in its A320 aircraft. The [European planemaker](#) has only just finished dealing with a software glitch involving the same model, which disrupted airlines worldwide. Airbus said it was inspecting affected planes. Shares fell by around 10% on the news but had largely recovered by the market's close.

The head of **Britain's** fiscal watchdog resigned after his organisation accidentally published details of [the government's budget](#) before they were announced in Parliament. Richard Hughes said he took "full responsibility" for the leak, which the Office of Budget Responsibility described as the "worst failure" in its history. The report contained confidential and market-sensitive data.

Figure of the day: 70%, the rise in the price of onions in Iran this year. [Read the full story](#).

Correction: In an earlier edition, we stated that Marco Rubio, America's secretary of state, was heading to Moscow on Monday to discuss the peace plan in Ukraine. In fact it was other American officials who were heading there. Sorry.



Photograph: AP

Mr Witkoff goes to Moscow (again)

Donald Trump's special envoy, [Steve Witkoff](#), and son-in-law, Jared Kushner, are in Moscow, where Mr Witkoff will update Vladimir Putin on the [19-point peace plan for Ukraine](#). The proposal will reportedly walk back some of the most pro-Kremlin clauses of an earlier 28-point document which prompted dismay across Europe. The discussions follow a meeting in Florida on Sunday between American and Ukrainian negotiators.

Notably, Marco Rubio, America's secretary of state, will not attend the talks. He was present at the discussions in Florida and is seen as the most pro-Ukrainian member of the administration. European officials are concerned that Mr Witkoff and Mr Kushner—who are businessmen rather than experienced diplomats—see a peace deal as a way to secure American-Russian joint-ventures in energy and minerals, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. If those claims are true, both Mr Witkoff and Mr Kushner can expect a friendly welcome in Moscow.



Photograph: AP

Another chance for a political upset

America's last special election of the year—Tuesday's contest in Tennessee's seventh congressional district—is shaping up as yet another chance for Democrats to ride [a wave of gains](#) they have enjoyed since Donald Trump returned to the presidency. Aftyn Behn, the Democratic candidate, is hoping to flip the ruby-red district, which stretches west from Nashville into the rural heartland. Drawing on the populist playbook, she is reminding the district, which went for Mr Trump by 22 points a year ago, that grocery prices haven't dropped and that health-care costs will soon rise.

Her Republican opponent, Matt Van Epps, leads the polls, but the gap is closing. The unusually tight race is making Republicans nervous. MAGA Inc, Mr Trump's super PAC, has spent nearly \$1.2m on the election. The president himself turned to Truth Social to encourage “America First Patriots” to vote. If Ms Behn does pull off an upset, expect Republicans' anxiety to deepen.



Photograph: Getty Images

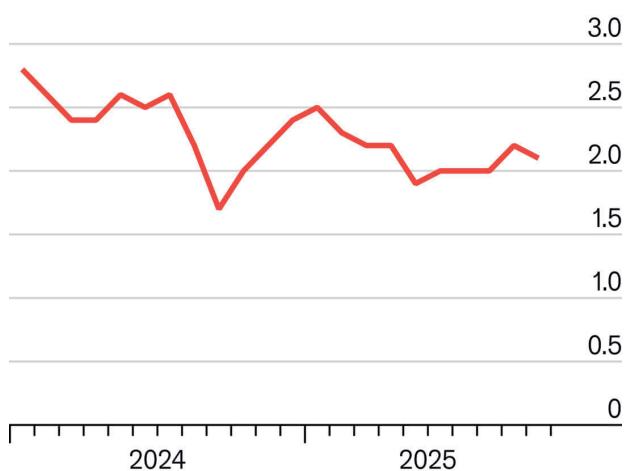
Europe is not counting on a rate cut just yet

In the third quarter, [the EU economy](#) grew at about 1.6% year on year. Survey indicators suggest it might continue at that pace. Meanwhile, inflation in the euro area is close to the European Central Bank's target of 2%. On Tuesday, the latest inflation figures will show whether the bank's top brass have room to ease policy with an interest-rate cut when they meet later in December. Initial data releases in Germany, Spain and France show inflation largely unchanged, giving the ECB little reason not to lower rates.

But some indicators are more worrying. Underlying inflation, which strips out volatile costs such as those for energy, is on the rise in Spain. And while output-price inflation is low, firms reported rising operating expenses again, which could mean higher prices in future. If the trend continues, those hoping for a rate cut to boost the economy will be disappointed.

Inflation watch

Euro area, consumer prices,
% increase on a year earlier



Source: Haver Analytics



Photograph: Reuters

Apple faces an EU court

On Tuesday the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) will issue a preliminary ruling on a class-action suit against [Apple](#) and its Irish subsidiary, which is proceeding in a Dutch court. The ruling will determine whether the Amsterdam District Court has jurisdiction under EU law to “centralise” complaints from all App Store users in the Netherlands who accuse Apple of uncompetitive practices. A ruling in favour would expose Apple to a single, massive damages claim.

The precedent could be significant. The CJEU may reject the consumers’ arguments and decide that, in similar collective-action cases, plaintiffs must first file their claims in their local courts before cases can be merged. That would create an enormous procedural headache for consumers. At least one EU advocate-general suggests such a ruling is likely. It would ease legal pressure on big tech, but bear bitter fruit for consumers.



Photograph: Getty Images

The media scandal rocking America

Olivia Nuzzi, a journalist at the centre of a media firestorm, will tell her side of the story in “American Canto”, a memoir which is being published on Tuesday. Ms Nuzzi’s account will follow the meteoric rise of her professional career. A correspondent for the *Daily Beast* at just 21, she became Washington correspondent for *New York* magazine three years later.

Her downfall has been equally intense. Ms Nuzzi left the magazine last autumn after news broke of an inappropriate romantic relationship with [Robert F. Kennedy junior](#), whom she had profiled and who is now America’s health secretary. Adding to the scandal, Ms Nuzzi’s ex-fiancé has alleged that she had an affair with Mark Sanford, another prominent politician (Ms Nuzzi’s lawyer denies the claim). *Vanity Fair*, which subsequently hired her, is now “looking at all the facts”.



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:). We'll pick three winners at random and crown them on Saturday.

Tuesday: Which Wes Anderson film stars Gene Hackman as the eccentric patriarch of a gifted family?

Monday: What was the nickname of Jennifer Grey's character in the movie "Dirty Dancing"?

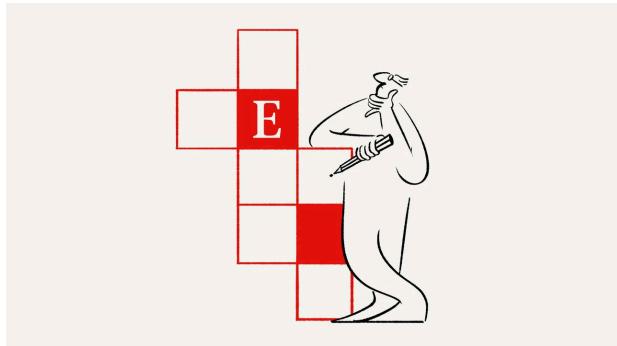


Illustration: The Economist

The winners of the mini crossword

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

Ozlem Sumnu, Barcelona, Spain

Amelia Cheng, Coquitlam, Canada

Hasit Raja, Nairobi, Kenya

They all gave the correct answers of [Agatha Christie](#), [amnesty](#), [costume](#) and [emerald](#).

*The breath that sharpens life is
life itself.*

Philip Larkin