

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AFP via Getty Images

Two gunmen opened fire at **Bondi Beach** in Sydney, killing at least 11 people. One attacker was shot dead and the other, in a critical condition, arrested. Media footage showed beachgoers fleeing and victims lying on the ground. A Jewish community leader said the shooting occurred during a Hanukkah celebration. Shootings are rare in Australia, which has strict gun laws.

Police said they had taken a “person of interest” into custody following a shooting at **Brown University** in Providence, Rhode Island. The attack left two people dead and nine injured, some critically. Students were ordered to shelter in place, although that order has now been rescinded. Donald Trump told reporters that he had been “fully briefed” on the situation.

Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine’s president, called for a “dignified” peace as he prepared for [talks](#) in **Berlin**, Germany’s capital, with American envoys and European allies. He faces pressure from Mr Trump to accept a lop-sided compromise deal. Mr Zelensky said Russia was “dragging out the war” through continued strikes on cities and infrastructure. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians remain without power after recent attacks.

Three **Americans**—two soldiers and a civilian interpreter—were killed in central **Syria**. According to the Pentagon, they had been supporting operations to counter the Islamic State group (is) when they came under fire from a lone gunman, who was subsequently killed. Three other American service members were wounded; local reports also say that two **Syrian** soldiers were injured. President Donald Trump vowed to retaliate against is.

Israel said it had killed a senior **Hamas** commander in a strike on Gaza city. The target, Raed Saad, is believed by **Israel** to have played a key role in the attacks of October 7th 2023. Hamas did not confirm his death, but criticised Israel for violating their ceasefire deal. Gaza health authorities reported that five people were killed and 25 injured in the attack.

Hong Kong's **Democratic Party** formally voted to disband. The party, widely considered to be moderate, was the territory's only remaining big pro-democracy group. It had already signalled its intent to shutter, in the face of a crackdown on organisations considered anti-government. On Monday, a verdict will be announced on **Jimmy Lai**, a tycoon charged with national-security offences whom China calls the “mastermind” of protests in 2019.

The owners of **Juventus**, an Italian football team, rejected a €1.1bn (\$1.2bn) acquisition bid from **Tether**, a cryptocurrency group. Juve is controlled by Exor, a holding company for the Agnelli family, which has had ties to the club since 1923. (Exor also holds a stake in *The Economist*'s parent company.) Juventus is Italy's most successful team, but is going through a lean spell.

Word of the week: *embourgeoisement*. France's National Rally is gaining a white-collar following on top of its established working-class vote. [Read the full story.](#)

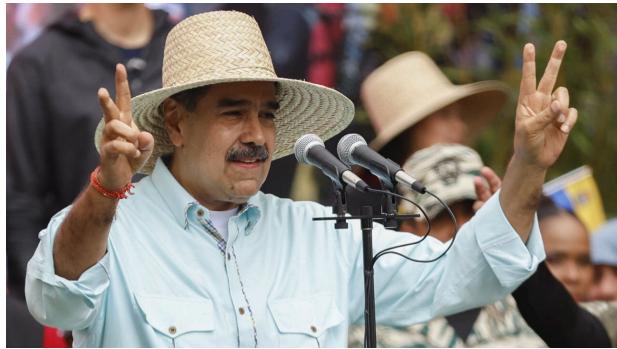


Photograph: AP

No phase two in Gaza this year

Two months since the [ceasefire in Gaza](#) came into effect, it is still far from clear when it will move to the next stage. Phase one included an Israeli partial withdrawal, the release of hostages by Hamas and the resumption of humanitarian supplies. The second phase is supposed to involve the inauguration of a “technocratic” Palestinian administration, deployment of an international “stabilisation force” and the disarmament of Hamas. These are to lay the groundwork for the third stage—a major reconstruction of the devastated strip.

A start to phase two before the end of 2025 looks unlikely. Donald Trump is set to announce his “board of peace” to oversee post-war Gaza early next year. He has summoned Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel’s prime minister, to Mar-a-Lago on December 29th. Mr Netanyahu has reservations about Turkey participating in the stabilisation force and is trying to delay further Israeli withdrawals. Mr Trump will need to apply pressure to keep his peace plan on the road.



Photograph: Getty Images

Busting the sanctions-busters of Venezuela

Venezuela's coastal waters are being closely watched after the Trump administration indicated it may [seize more sanctions-busting ships](#) carrying oil from the petrostate. On Wednesday America's special forces and coastguard boarded a tanker carrying 1.8m barrels of Venezuelan oil. Since then America has imposed sanctions on a [further six ships](#), which are understood to have recently loaded up with Venezuelan oil.

The strategy seems part of a new effort to choke off resources that sustain the regime of Nicolás Maduro (pictured), who stole the presidential election last year and has been branded a “narco-terrorist” by the Trump administration. Since America imposed sanctions on Venezuela's oil industry in 2019 the regime has relied on a global fleet of tankers whose operators use any means to evade detection, including by switching off their transponders and repeatedly changing their names. The Maduro regime has said it is the victim of piracy.



Photograph: EPA

Chile's election turns on migration

On Sunday Chileans vote in a presidential run-off. José Antonio Kast, a very conservative politician, is the strong favourite to win. In polls he leads his rival, Jeannette Jara, by about 15 points. That is partly because she is a member of the Communist Party, which puts off many Chileans. It is also because Chileans are most worried about issues that Mr Kast has emphasised: migration and crime.

There are over 300,000 irregular migrants in Chile, mostly from Venezuela. Almost all have arrived since 2018. Mr Kast, running for president for the third time, says they must leave or will be deported. But that looks extremely difficult. In [an interview](#) with *The Economist* he downplayed the degree of coercion that would be required. Mr Kast also plans to use drones and soldiers to “close” the border to illegal immigration. Inspired by [Nayib Bukele](#), El Salvador’s president, Mr Kast promises a crackdown on crime, with the help of big new prisons. Chile may soon be the latest test case for the tough right-wing policies that are in vogue globally.



Photograph: World Memory Championships

Unforgettable games

The 34th World Memory Championships conclude on Sunday in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The event, running since 1991, involves ten disciplines that test competitors' ability to memorise new material. Its concluding showpiece event is "speed cards", a race to memorise the order of an entire pack of cards, a feat that a memory athlete normally achieves by telling themselves a story about them. The world record, set in 2018, is 12.74 seconds.

The sport is becoming more popular, especially in Asia. This year competitors from 30 countries are taking part. Enthusiasts say cognitive workouts are a good antidote to the mental sloth encouraged by technology. Last year's games were won by Enkhjargal Uriintsolmon, a teenager from Mongolia, home to three of the four past winners. It established a training academy in 2010, and is expected to produce the winner in the championships again this time.



Photograph: Getty Images

The end of the Taylor Swift era?

When it comes to Taylor Swift, more is more. She made her latest album, “[The Life of a Showgirl](#)”, available in several digital editions and 27 physical ones. There was a cassette, eight vinyl versions, two deluxe CDs and 16 regular CDs, each with different bonus tracks. The vinyl editions featured poetry by Ms Swift. In 2023 “The Eras Tour” film, which took fans behind the scenes of her concerts, grossed over \$260m. So, Ms Swift has followed it up with “The End of an Era”, a six-part docuseries, which takes fans, well, behind the scenes of her concerts. It promises to be “illuminating”, offering “never-before-seen insight” into the pop star’s life.

Millions of fans will watch it, no question. But how much more will they take? Some have already criticised [Ms Swift’s perceived “greediness”](#); many have had their fill. As one fan posted online: “Marketing genius or just exhausting at this point?”

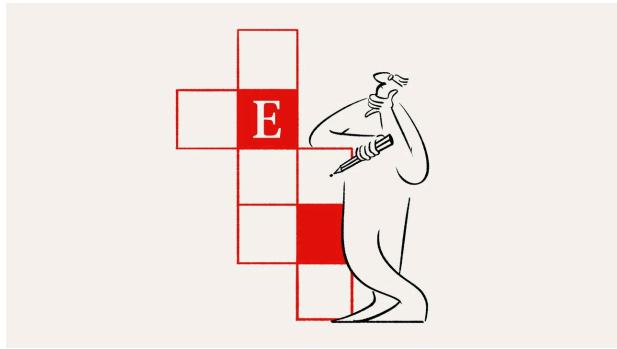


Illustration: The Economist

Mini crossword

We publish a new interactive edition of our crossword daily, allowing you to enter and check the answers and see explanations. Try it [here](#).

There are two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers.

Cryptic clues:

1 across - A rash separation (5)

2 across - DIY takes the French back to maximum output (5)

3 across - Excuse me Dr, I've somehow swallowed an urge (5)

1 down - Lowly hood? Barmy place to make a movie (9)

Straight clues:

1 across - Buzzing habitats (5)

2 across - An amount produced (5)

3 across - Big swing (5)

1 down - The home of a mighty media merger battle (9)



Illustration: The Economist

The winners of the week's quiz

Thank you to everyone who took part in this week's quiz. The winners, chosen at random, were:

Kate Knowles, Penrhyndeudraeth, Wales

Andrew Hutchings, Budapest, Hungary

Ewen Mackenzie-Bowie, Auckland, New Zealand

They all gave the correct answers of: Robinson Crusoe, Rock Hudson, the Boxer rebellion, two minute silence and contract bridge. The theme is songs by Simon & Garfunkel: Mrs Robinson, I Am A Rock, The Boxer, The Sound of Silence and Bridge Over Troubled Water.

The questions were:

Monday: The experiences of the marooned Alexander Selkirk were the reported inspiration for which famous novel?

Tuesday: Roy Harold Scherer found fame as an actor under which stage name?

Wednesday: A Chinese resistance movement against foreign powers between 1899 and 1901 is generally known by what name?

Thursday: What do people in many countries observe at 11am on November 11 (or the nearest Sunday to that date) to mark the casualties of two world wars?

Friday: In which card game are “Blackwood” and “Stayman” two of the best-known conventions used by players to cooperate?

*The present crisis of Western
democracy is a crisis in
journalism.*

Walter Lippmann, 1920