

Catch up: more wildfires ravage Los Angeles; inflation slows in China again



Joe Biden declared an emergency in California and promised federal support as **wildfires** scorched large parts of **Los Angeles** County. At least five people have been killed so far, while more than 100,000 have been ordered to evacuate. The [first blaze](#) broke out on Tuesday in the hillside neighbourhood of Pacific Palisades, after which extreme winds helped spark five more.

Denmark's foreign minister said that there was no “foreign policy crisis”, despite **Donald Trump** refusing to rule out military or economic coercion to acquire [Greenland](#), a self-governing Danish district. Mr Trump has long coveted the resource-rich island. Meanwhile Claudia Sheinbaum, **Mexico's** president, called for parts of the United States to be renamed “Mexican America”. Mr Trump wants the Gulf of Mexico to be renamed the Gulf of America.

Inflation in **China** slowed for the fourth straight month in December, despite the [government's recent efforts](#) to ease deflationary pressure. With the cost of food falling, consumer

prices rose by just 0.1% year on year, the smallest increase in nine months. Producer prices fell for the 27th consecutive month, by 2.4%.

A sell-off in **government bonds** caused borrowing costs to rise around the world. In Britain, the yield on the ten-year gilt climbed to its highest level since 2008. Yields on America's ten-year treasury bonds jumped above 4.7% for the first time in nearly nine months. German and Japanese borrowing costs also rose. Investors are growing more concerned about increasing levels of [government debt](#).

Liberia and Panama, which are home to the world's biggest **shipping** registries, supported a tax on the industry's **emissions**. The proposal, put forward by the UN, would charge shipowners a levy for every tonne of greenhouse gas their vessels emit. America and China oppose the tax, but it now has the support of 45 countries that account for 66% of the global shipping fleet.

The **Israel Defence Forces** recovered from Gaza the body of Youssef Ziyadne, a 53-year-old **hostage**. The IDF said it had "serious concerns" for the life of his son, who was also abducted in October 2023. Ceasefire talks resumed between Israel and Hamas last week. Reports suggest that the release of 34 of the remaining 98 [hostages](#) is under discussion.

Russia bombed a residential building in the **Ukrainian** city of [Zaporizhia](#), killing at least 13 people and injuring 18 more. President Volodymyr Zelensky described the attack as "cruel" and urged [Ukraine's allies](#) to put Russia "under pressure for its terror". Earlier Ukraine said it had struck a strategic fuel depot in Russia's Saratov region.

Figure of the day: 43, the number of "critical minerals" of which Greenland is believed to have supplies. [Read the full story](#).

Why does Donald Trump want the Panama Canal?



Donald Trump has recently asserted that the United States is being “ripped off” by administrators of the Panama Canal and that “Chinese soldiers” are operating the waterway. He has threatened to “demand that the Panama Canal be returned” to the United States. On December 23rd José Raúl Mulino, Panama’s president, retorted that “every square metre of the Panama Canal” belongs to the country. Opposition parties agree.

Mr Trump’s real goals may be less outlandish. But nobody knows what they are. Among them might be tighter controls of [migration](#) through the Darien Gap, a reduction in Chinese influence in Panama or improved investment conditions for American firms there.

Mr Mulino says he will not make any moves until Mr Trump is inaugurated. But Panama could in the meantime use its seat on the UN Security Council to push for a special resolution to reaffirm its sovereignty over the Canal.

Will Lebanon finally have a new president?



Perhaps the 13th time will be the charm. On Thursday the [Lebanese parliament](#) is due to select a new president. The post has been vacant since October 2022, when Michel Aoun finished his six-year term. In a dozen meetings lawmakers have been unable to agree on his successor. Hizbullah, the Shia militia and political party, wanted to install Suleiman Frangieh, an undistinguished former MP (and the grandson of a former president). Its opponents support General Joseph Aoun, the army chief.

There is reason to think MPs will break the deadlock. Hizbullah was badly weakened by its war against Israel, which ended in November, and diminished even further by the fall of the Assad regime in Syria. It may be too weak to block General Aoun, who has the support of America and Saudi Arabia. Mr Frangieh dropped out of the race on Wednesday night. As ever in Lebanon, external events have reshaped internal politics.

The threat to India's IT success



Since Donald Trump won America's presidential election in November, shares in [Indian IT](#) outsourcing firms have risen. Bosses in the sector, for which America is the biggest market, believed that Mr Trump's pro-business approach will help them. There are other reasons to be bullish. After being dragged down by global economic uncertainty in 2023, earnings have in the past year picked up, driven by the AI boom.

There could be more good news on Thursday when TCS, India's biggest such firm, reports earnings from the last quarter of 2024. Analysts are optimistic, but that could be derailed by Mr Trump. Over the past month, his supporters have railed against H1-Bs, a category of visa for skilled workers that Indian IT firms rely on to send staff to America to understand client needs. Should Mr Trump succumb to the demands of his base, any recovery could be stalled.

An opposition firebrand returns to Mozambique



More than two months ago [Venâncio Mondlane](#) fled Mozambique, fearing for his life. He had run as an opposition candidate in October's election, which he says he won. The process was so [flawed](#) that it is impossible to know the truth. He says he will fly back to Maputo, the capital, on Thursday. Many Mozambicans will see it as the return of their rightful president.

That view is not shared by the Frelimo party, which has ruled for 50 years. Its candidate, Daniel Chapo, was officially declared the winner with 65% of the vote. But its control is slipping. Furious protesters have attacked Frelimo offices and police stations, raided factories, and shut down mines. If and when Mr Mondlane touches down, the state will be in a quandary. Let Mr Mondlane go free, and he might lead people in the streets. Arrest him, and popular anger will flare.

America mourns Jimmy Carter



On Thursday a national funeral service will be held in Washington, DC for [Jimmy Carter](#), who died on December 29th, aged 100. All of America's living presidents are expected to attend, with Joe Biden among those delivering eulogies. Throughout the week thousands of Americans have paid tribute to their 39th president, whose coffin has travelled by motorcade from [his home town](#) in Plains, Georgia. A private ceremony in Plains will conclude proceedings.

Mr Carter, once a peanut farmer, was perhaps the most virtuous of all America's presidents. His foreign-policy achievements, including the Camp David accords between Egypt and Israel in 1978, were typical of a man intent on peace for its own sake. But his single term in the White House was rocky. After his presidency he set up the Carter Center, where he became an advocate for peace and democracy; he won the Nobel Prize for peace in 2002.

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.

Thursday: Which concert venue is based at 881 Seventh Avenue in New York?

Wednesday: What do the initials FTA stand for in economics?

**Shared pain is lessened; shared joy,
increased—thus do we refute entropy.**

Spider Robinson