

Catch up: Putin issues an ominous threat; Israel and Hizbullah trade accusations



Vladimir Putin threatened to use **Russia's** new ballistic missile to turn “decision-making centres” in Kyiv, **Ukraine's** capital, into “dust”. Russia's president said the Oreshnik missile, which was first deployed last week, was “comparable in strength to a nuclear strike”. Mr Putin's remarks came after a wave of Russian strikes on [Ukraine's energy system](#). The attack triggered emergency electricity shutdowns in several regions.

Israel and **Hizbullah** accused each other of violating a [ceasefire](#) in **Lebanon**, which came into effect on Wednesday. Israel said it had fired at “suspects” in southern Lebanon, whom it accused of breaching the conditions of the truce. It subsequently said its air force had hit one of Hizbullah's rocket-storage facilities. Hizbullah in turn accused Israel of attacking Lebanese border villages. The truce is meant to last for 60 days.

Georgia's government suspended **EU accession** talks until 2028. The ruling Georgian Dream party argues that EU membership would harm the country's economy by disrupting trade deals with

non-EU countries. Thousands of pro-EU demonstrators blocked streets in Tbilisi, the capital. The EU had already frozen Georgia's application over concerns about [authoritarianism](#) and Russian influence.

Australia passed a law banning under-16s from [using social media](#). The bill, which will be one of the strictest of its kind in the world, will require social-media platforms to verify the age of users when they sign up. The communications minister will decide later which sites will be off limits to children. Businesses could be fined up to A\$49.5m (\$32m) for failing to comply.

Canada's Competition Bureau is suing **Google**, alleging anti-competitive practices in online advertising. The antitrust watchdog claims that the tech giant abused its dominance by requiring advertisers to use other related tools too, putting its rivals at a disadvantage, and by inflating advertising costs. It seeks a court order to force [Google](#) to pay a hefty fine. The move follows similar legal actions in America and Europe.

Spain approved paid “**climate leave**” that allows workers to take up to four days off to avoid travel during extreme weather events. The measure, which is inspired by similar legislation in Canada, comes after [floods](#) in the eastern region of Valencia killed more than 200 people last month. Several companies were criticised for forcing employees to work during the emergency.

Shares in [HYBE](#), **South Korea's** biggest music company, plunged by 7% after NewJeans, a chart-topping K-pop girl group, ended their partnership with Ador, one of HYBE's affiliates. The artists announced the shock termination in response to Ador's refusal to reinstate Min Hee-jin, NewJeans's manager, who was accused of trying to take control of the sublabel. A legal battle will probably ensue.

Figure of the day: 2%, the proportion of the world's green-energy projects that have been built in Africa over the past decade. [Read the full story.](#)

A matter of life and death in Westminster



On Friday British MPs will vote on the most consequential private member's bill (ie, one not introduced by government ministers) for more than 50 years. The proposal—put forward by [Kim Leadbeater](#), a Labour backbencher—seeks to [legalise assisted dying](#) for the terminally ill in England and Wales. A few weeks ago the bill looked likely to pass its second reading easily. Now the result is highly uncertain.

In a fierce public debate, critics of the bill have gained the most momentum. The health secretary, Wes Streeting, has argued that palliative care in the health system he runs is too poor to offer patients a genuine choice. Others have questioned whether the bill's many safeguards—including that a High Court judge must approve requests to die—could protect vulnerable people from coercion. Still, at least two-thirds of the public and (it seems) most MPs continue to support the principle of assisted dying. The question is whether they will vote for it.

The rise of social commerce



A festive shopping frenzy goes into top gear on Black Friday. Retailers will offer steep discounts to lure customers into their stores and online shops. But this year more customers will also be shopping for deals on social-media apps. Online purchases that originate on [social media](#) will reach \$72bn in America in 2024, according to eMarketer, a research firm, accounting for 6% of online sales. The figure is up from \$47bn in 2022, and is expected to reach \$100bn in 2026.

Still, Western consumers have been slower than their Chinese counterparts to embrace social media as a marketplace. Social commerce is expected to represent almost 30% of all online sales in the country this year. TikTok Shop, a feature on the Chinese-owned video-sharing app, is designed to encourage impulse shopping: users scroll through posts about products and buy items with just a few clicks. Some companies and brands balk at the feature's emphasis on selling products at deep discounts.

The fragile calm of Irish politics



Irish voters head to the polls on Friday. Surveys suggest that the two centre-right factions that have long dominated [Ireland's](#) politics will remain in power. Fine Gael, led by the prime minister, Simon Harris, has had a bad campaign. But it will probably return to office in coalition with its current partner, Fianna Fáil, and at least one other party. Should Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil achieve equal levels of support, they may repeat their current arrangement, taking turns with the premiership.

Two years ago the leftist Sinn Féin party, formerly the political wing of the Irish Republican Army, looked set to be involved in government. Discontent over a housing crisis and the cost of living pushed it to 37% in polls. But the party's support has since dropped: some believe it has not pandered sufficiently to anti-immigrant sentiment among working-class and rural voters. If that sentiment continues to grow, the next election might not be so smooth.

Talk of political murder in the Philippines



On Friday Sara Duterte, vice-president of the Philippines, defied a summons by police to answer questions about her apparent threat to kill members of the Marcos dynasty, to which the current president, Ferdinand Marcos, belongs. Detectives postponed the interrogation until December 11th.

Ms Duterte is the leading contender to succeed Mr Marcos in elections due in 2028. Yet she fears that the dynasty, [formerly her allies](#), will do anything to stop her, perhaps even kill her. Should that happen, she appeared to warn in an online press conference, she had arranged for the assassinations of Mr Marcos, his wife and the speaker of Congress, his cousin. She later denied making threats.

Ms Duterte's popularity is declining. Her hints of violence against the Marcoses may be a way of signalling to voters that she will be as tough as her father, Rodrigo Duterte. As president between 2016 and 2022 he gained popularity by overseeing a crackdown on drug-dealers in which thousands died.

The Beatles, so much younger than today



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When the Beatles arrived in America in early 1964 they were shadowed by Albert and David Maysles, siblings who pioneered the fly-on-the-wall documentary technique. The pair's footage, much of it rarely seen since, underpins "Beatles 64", the latest of a seemingly endless succession of documentaries about the British band.

The film, released on Disney+ on Friday, is a hotch-potch of what might have remained three separate concepts. The Maysleses' clips capture the band's cheek and charm as fan and media hysteria envelops them. Alongside those segments are recent interviews with Beatles fans and deftly choreographed strolls down memory lane with the surviving band members. The archive quotes from the Beatles are more interesting. A young Paul McCartney, caught up in the whirlwind of the group's rise, quips: "Culture? It's not culture! It's a good laugh." Decades later, everybody seems to take it a great deal more seriously.

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.

Friday: Which Chinese waterway, more than 1,000 miles long, has sections that were built as far back as the 5th century BC?

Thursday: Which Beatles album has a cover featuring a montage of people the group admired? (Hint: the full title is needed to guess the theme.)

The winners of last week's crossword



Thank you to everyone who took part in our weekly crossword, published in the weekend edition of Espresso. The winners, chosen at random, were:

John Groves, Brockville, Canada

Nicky Patchett, Cape Town, South Africa

Tor Alloway, London, Britain

They all gave the correct answers of [Friedrich Merz](#), [France](#), [index](#) and [Zurich](#). Check back tomorrow for this week's crossword.

All that is not eternal is eternally out of date.

C.S. Lewis