

Catch up: Floridians flee Hurricane Milton; Israel sends more troops into Lebanon



Hurricane Milton regained its designation as a category-five [storm](#) as it approached Florida's west coast. Around 28 Florida counties are under a hurricane warning. Meteorologists expect that the storm will trigger severe thunderstorms and tornadoes. Ron DeSantis, the state's governor, has urged residents in its path to "get out now", as 5.5m people were issued with evacuation orders. President Joe Biden postponed visits to Angola and Germany. Some 5,000 members of the National Guard have been deployed, with another 3,000 standing by.

Israel sent a fourth combat division into southern **Lebanon**, providing thousands more troops for the ground [invasion](#). Its [air strikes](#) have continued to hit Beirut, Lebanon's capital. Meanwhile, Hizbullah said it foiled two Israeli attempts to breach its border defences. On Tuesday, the militant group had launched 180 projectiles mainly towards Haifa, in northern Israel, according to the country's authorities.

America's Department of Justice told a federal judge it might push for **Google** to be broken up because of antitrust concerns. The DoJ's court filing said that the tech giant's "unlawful conduct persisted for over a decade and involved a number of self-reinforcing tactics". It follows an American judge's ruling in August that the firm's search business was an illegal monopoly. Dismantling Google is, however, [a terrible idea](#).

North Korea announced that it will "permanently shut off and block" the border with **South Korea**. Its armed forces said that this was a "self-defensive measure" in response to the South's "war exercises" and the presence of American nuclear "assets" in the region. On Tuesday South Korea's defence minister suggested that they could strike sites where the North launches [trash balloons](#) from, "if circumstances warrant".

Alimentation Couche-Tard, a Canadian retailer, reportedly told Japan's **Seven & i**, the parent company of 7-Eleven, that it would raise its takeover offer to \$47bn. In September Seven & i rejected a bid of \$39bn, saying it "grossly" undervalued the firm. Seven & i's shares surged on the reports. If it goes ahead, the merger would create a [convenience-store goliath](#).

The **Russian rouble** hit its weakest value since October 2023, at 97.20 against the dollar, according to data from the London Stock Exchange. This comes despite Russia selling off foreign exchange reserves to [support its currency](#). International sanctions and volatile oil prices continue to drag down the rouble.

The **Nobel Prize in Chemistry** was awarded jointly to David Baker, [Sir Demis Hassabis](#) and John M. Jumper. Prof Baker was lauded for his work in computational protein design, while Sir Demis (who co-founded DeepMind, an artificial-intelligence startup) and Mr Jumper were recognised for their efforts in protein structure prediction.

In the run-up to America's presidential election, we've launched [The US in brief](#)—a daily update to help you keep on top of the political stories that matter. [Sign up here](#) to receive it as a newsletter, each weekday, in your inbox.

Figure of the day: 2m, the number of barrels of oil that Iran exported per day last month, equivalent to nearly 2% of world supply. [Read the full story.](#)

Orban addresses the European Parliament



Hungary has held the EU's six-month rotating presidency since July 1st. But its prime minister, [Viktor Orban](#), had delayed the traditional address to MEPs for months. On Wednesday he finally took the stage, warning that continued wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, as well as a "migration crisis", have amounted to the "most serious period" in the EU's history.

Mr Orban is the [foremost leader](#) of Europe's Brussels-bashing and anti-immigrant club. The EU has withheld billions of euros in aid over concerns of democratic backsliding and the European Commission is partially boycotting events the Hungarians host during their presidency. His speech received limited applause from hard-right parties, who made gains in the European elections in June. Most other MEPs will be furious at Mr Orban's overtures to Russia. Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission's president, came back swinging. "There are still some who blame this war not on the invader but on the invaded," she said.

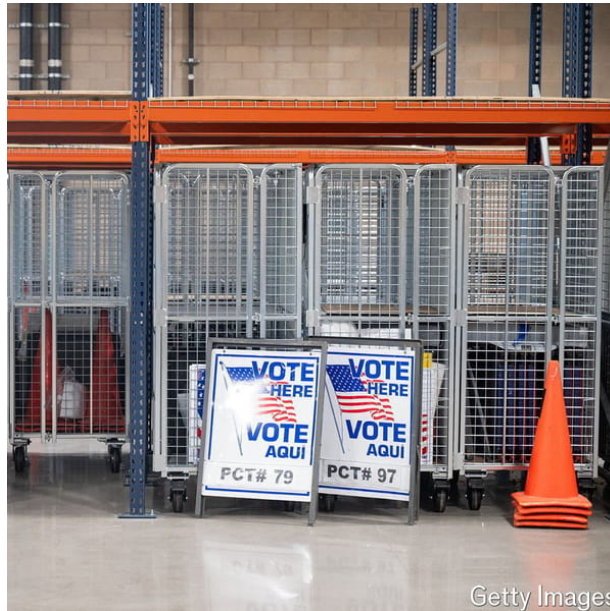
India's slowing economy



Speaking at a conference on [India's economy](#) this week, Narendra Modi, the prime minister, was typically bullish. The world, he suggested, is living through an “Indian era”, pointing to the country’s growth rate—the fastest among big economies. Recent data, however, suggest a less rosy picture. Last month car sales, a proxy for consumption, fell by 9.3% year on year. Growth in manufacturing and services activity slowed. Government investment decreased between April and August.

This increases the pressure on the Reserve Bank of India, which concluded a three-day meeting on Wednesday, to cut interest rates. But as most analysts expected, the RBI held firm. Inflation remains a concern, despite easing in recent months from an annual rate of 5.1% in June to 3.7% in August. The conflict in the Middle East, which could send oil prices spiralling, adds to the worry.

Voting begins in Arizona



November 5th may be the date Americans have circled on their calendars. But in Arizona, election day is more like election month. On Wednesday early voting will begin in the crucial swing state. Nearly 90% of Arizonans cast early ballots in 2020.

The state has recently elected a Democratic governor and two Democratic senators. It also narrowly voted for Joe Biden in 2020. But Republicans still outnumber Democrats among registered voters. *The Economist's* [presidential forecast](#) gives Donald Trump a two in three chance of winning Arizona's 11 electoral votes.

It is not just the top of the ticket that matters. Democrats need to win a Senate seat in Arizona to have any hope of retaining control of the chamber. Ruben Gallego, a Democratic congressman, is polling well ahead of Kari Lake, a MAGA Republican and former news anchor. The two will have their first and only debate on Wednesday.

Germany's recession woes



Last year [Germany](#) was the only G7 economy to experience a recession. This year it may do so again. On Wednesday Robert Habeck, the vice-chancellor and economy minister, is set to announce that the government expects GDP to contract by 0.2% in 2024, a downgrade from an earlier forecast of modest growth. Indeed, real GDP has barely risen since the pandemic. What is ailing the country once feted as Europe's powerhouse?

High interest rates hurt construction and manufacturing. The [economy](#) was also especially reliant on Russian gas, the supply of which was turned off after Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. Wage growth is now outstripping inflation, but households are channelling incomes into savings rather than consumption. These problems may prove transient. But structural headwinds also loom, including slow productivity growth, low public investment and an ageing population. Mr Habeck believes the government's recently approved "growth package" will juice Germany's economy back to life next year. Few economists agree.

The future of Frieze London



London's finest art fair is back. Gallerists will gather in Regent's Park for Frieze, which opens on Wednesday. More than 160 exhibitors, from 43 countries, will show contemporary works. Frieze Masters, a fair that mixes old and new art, and Frieze Sculpture, an outdoor public display, will run alongside the flagship event.

Collectors will doubtless enjoy the fanfare. But outside the park, London's art scene is gloomy. Famous galleries have closed this year, including Marlborough Gallery, one of the oldest. Christie's, a British auction house, reported a 22% drop in sales in the first half of 2024. Paris is [nipping](#) at London's heels. Art Basel Paris opens on October 18th at the Grand Palais. Some American collectors now head to the French fair instead of Britain's Frieze. October has long been a dazzling month for art in London. The city's dealers are worried Paris will steal its shine.

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.

Wednesday: In the early 1980s, which smokable and highly addictive drug saw an explosion in use in the US?

Tuesday: What is the mechanism on a canal that allows the water level to be raised or lowered?

2m

The number of barrels of oil that Iran exported per day last month, equivalent to nearly 2% of world supply.

Read the full story.

Evil communication corrupts good manners.

Benjamin Banneker