

Catch up: Iran's supreme leader defends missile strike; oil prices surge



In his first public sermon in nearly five years Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, **Iran's** supreme leader, said that [Iran's retaliation](#) to [Israel's bombardment](#) of Lebanon was “completely legal and legitimate”. Separately, an Israeli air strike cut off the Masnaa border crossing, a key road connecting Lebanon to Syria. Around 160,000 people have fled from Lebanon to Syria since Israel began its ground operation. The Israel Defence Forces had accused Hizbullah of using the crossing to transport military equipment.

Oil prices continued to rise on Friday, with Brent crude up by nearly 1%. On Thursday prices posted their biggest one-day rise in almost a year, surging by more than 5%, after President Joe Biden suggested that American officials were “discussing” whether to support an [Israeli attack](#) on **Iran's** oil facilities.

Dockworkers agreed to immediately end a [three-day strike](#) at 36 **American ports** along the east and Gulf coasts. The International Longshoremen's Association, the dockers' union, said it had reached a tentative agreement with the United States Maritime

Alliance, which represents terminals and carriers. The provisional terms reportedly include a 62% wage increase over six years.

Volodymyr Zelensky, [Ukraine's](#) president, criticised his country's western partners for “dragging out” the delivery of **long-range weapons**. Mr Zelensky was speaking in Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, at a joint press conference with Mark Rutte, the new head of NATO. Mr Rutte, on his first trip as secretary-general of the alliance, said that he wanted to make it “crystal clear” that “NATO stands with Ukraine”.

Japan's new prime minister, Ishiba Shigeru, argued for better deterrence in his first policy speech, warning that “today's Ukraine could be tomorrow's East Asia”. A [self-proclaimed defence obsessive](#) Mr Ishiba has long argued that Japan should strengthen its armed forces to counter **China**, and has even called for creating an “Asian NATO”. But he also places great importance on maintaining dialogue.

The **European Commission** sued **Hungary** over a controversial law it passed last year in the name of protecting its national sovereignty. Critics compare the measure, which criminalises some groups that take foreign money, to a Russian law requiring NGOs that receive funding from abroad to register as “foreign agents”. The bloc argues that the measure infringes EU law.

A leaked excerpt from **Melania Trump's** upcoming memoir revealed that she supports **abortion** access. The former first lady—whose husband helped usher in the [end of *Roe v Wade*](#), which had established a federal right to abortion—reiterated her views in a video on Thursday. Donald Trump has said that he would veto a national abortion ban if re-elected. Most Americans support some [access to the procedure](#).

Figure of the day: \$1trn, the amount of external debt that governments in the global south have not reported to the World

Bank since 1970. [Read the full story.](#)

America's job market in focus



America's jobs report for September, released on Friday, will reverberate through global markets. Investors are trying to work out how aggressively the [Federal Reserve](#) will cut interest rates. Now that inflation is receding, the crucial variable is the job market. The economy probably added 150,000 jobs last month, according to the median forecast, while the unemployment rate may have remained at 4.2%. In that scenario the Fed will probably cut interest rates by a quarter of a percentage point at its next meeting in November, smaller than its half-point cut in September.

Data released earlier this week painted a mixed picture. The number of Americans quitting their jobs slumped to its lowest since the summer of 2020, a sign of potential weakening in hiring prospects. But a separate survey registered an unexpected uptick in private-sector hiring last month. If there are cracks in the American labour market, they appear to be mild for now.

The EU votes on Chinese EV tariffs



On Friday the European Union voted in favour of signing tariffs of up to 45% on Chinese-made electric vehicles into law for five years. The [European Commission](#) has accused China of unfairly subsidising its EV industry. It fears that cheaper imports pose a threat to European carmakers.

Five countries voted against the measure, according to Euronews, including Germany, Hungary and Slovakia. Germany has been a particularly vocal opponent. It exports plenty of cars to China, and several of its largest carmakers also have factories there.

As for Chinese carmakers, higher duties may temporarily slow their progress and give Europeans the opportunity to catch up. But the tariff barrier is unlikely to prevent them from capturing market share. Having set prices in Europe a little lower than for competing European models, they have scope to cut them further.

Iran's waning power



When an Israeli bomb killed Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hizbullah, last week it also decapitated a fearsome militia and dealt a blow to Iran's "axis of resistance", a constellation of proxy forces. His funeral is rumoured to be held on Friday. Since then, Iran has fired directly on Israel. But it appeared to fail in its objectives of hitting two air-force bases and a military-intelligence facility. Most of the missiles were intercepted and destroyed mid-air.

Iran is ending this year [weaker than it began](#). Although it has warned Israel against hitting back, Israel's retaliation will probably be of a far greater magnitude. And the proxies that are its first line of defence are struggling. Hamas is markedly weaker after a year of war in Gaza; the Houthis' income has been cut along with the flow of goods from Hodeida, Yemen's main port. As Iran mourns Nasrallah, it also mourns the depletion of its power.

Europe rules on the rights of Afghan women



On Friday the European Court of Justice ruled that Afghan women can be given refugee status solely on the basis of their gender and country of origin. Sweden, Finland and Denmark already grant it status automatically. But until now, in other European countries applications were considered case by case.

Three years after America's withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Taliban is removing **every shred of freedom** from women. A new set of consolidated religious laws published last month made matters worse. Women may not raise their voices or recite the Koran in public. They may not look at any man other than their relatives, and must cover their faces fully.

Even before the latest laws, women were banned from attending secondary schools, universities, parks and female-only spaces such as beauty salons. They cannot work in most professions. The situation has left Afghan women desperate; many are searching for ways to leave. The ECJ's ruling could make freedom easier to find.

Coldplay's new album



Young women have often held the pop charts. (This summer has been dominated by artists like Taylor Swift, [Charli XCX](#) and Sabrina Carpenter.) All-male bands, though capable of filling stadiums, often lag behind them in record sales. Coldplay have managed to sell both tickets and records in vast numbers. On Friday they release “Moon Music”, their tenth studio album, while still on tour for “Music Of The Spheres”, its bestselling predecessor.

The secret to Coldplay’s success lies partly in their ability to adapt to new musical trends. The British band have moved away from the sometimes dour indie rock of their early albums for more upbeat pop and electronic tunes. They’ve also collaborated with newer popular artists like Burna Boy and Little Simz.

Coldplay have also expanded their reach beyond Europe and America, tapping into new audiences. The “Music Of The Spheres” tour, which has sold over 10m tickets, includes stops in Abu Dhabi, Mumbai, Seoul and Hong Kong.

Daily Quiz



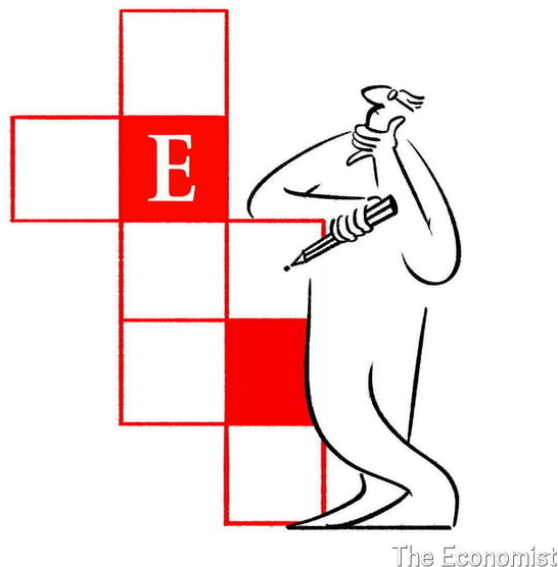
The Economist

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 BST on Friday to QuizEspresso@economist.com. We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Thursday: Which US national monument was originally dedicated on October 28th, 1886?

Friday: Which proposed constitutional amendment was approved by Congress in the early 1970s but fell short of getting the required number of states to ratify it?

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:

Christine Reiter, Alexandria, Virginia, America

Alan W Makin, Oxford, Britain

Kobchai Kingchatchaval, Bangkok, Thailand

They all gave the correct answers of [appendicitis](#), [Alaska](#), [Dubai](#) and [Saxony](#). Check back tomorrow for this week's crossword.

\$1trn

The amount of external debt that governments in the global south have not reported to the World Bank since 1970.

Read the full story.

**The true secret of happiness lies in taking
a genuine interest in all the details of daily
life.**

William Morris