

Catch up: Israel bombs Beirut; Mexico's tariff warning



Israel launched air strikes against **Hizbullah** in Beirut, Lebanon's capital. It claimed to have hit 20 targets, including a command centre and weapons stores. The strikes, which are among the most intense that Israel has launched against the [Iran-backed militia](#) in the past two months, came shortly before a meeting of Israel's security cabinet to discuss a ceasefire deal that would end the fighting in Lebanon.

Mexico's president, Claudia Sheinbaum, warned that "one tariff will come in response to another" after **Donald Trump** [proposed tariffs](#) of 25% on goods from Mexico and Canada. Ms Sheinbaum suggested inflation and unemployment would rise in both America and Mexico under the American president-elect's plans. Mr Trump vowed the measures would remain until Mexico and Canada stop illegal migration and drug trafficking to America.

Russia launched its biggest wave of drones at **Ukraine** since the beginning of its invasion, according to the Ukrainian air force. Ukraine either shot down or jammed most of the 188 drones. Still,

a number of drones struck [critical infrastructure](#), which Russia has been targeting to deny Ukrainians power during the winter.

Banco BPM, Italy's third-largest bank by market capitalisation, rejected a €10.1bn (\$10.7bn) takeover bid by **UniCredit**, a bigger competitor, saying it did not reflect its profitability. [Andrea Orcel](#), UniCredit's boss, has argued for consolidation among European banks. He is trying to acquire [Commerzbank](#), despite opposition from Germany's government; in September he disclosed UniCredit had built a stake of around 20% in the German lender.

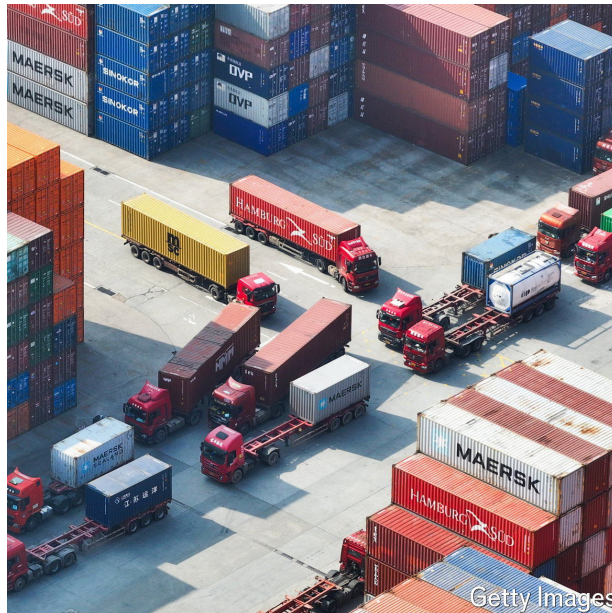
President Joe Biden announced a plan to lower the cost of [weight-loss drugs](#) for Americans covered by Medicare and Medicaid, two government-run health-care schemes. The proposal would give some 7m people access to the drugs in order to tackle obesity and associated illnesses. Donald Trump, America's president-elect, may kibosh the plan when he takes office in January.

New **HIV infections** fell by 22% and HIV-related deaths plunged by nearly 40% between 2010 and 2021, according to a study published in the *Lancet*, a medical journal. The declines were mostly driven by improving rates in sub-Saharan Africa, but experts warned that the disease is far from being stamped out. The UN aims to [eradicate AIDS](#) as a public-health issue by 2030.

Orange, a French telecommunications firm, said it was planning to collaborate with **OpenAI** and **Meta** to train [artificial-intelligence models](#) on African languages. Orange hopes to reach more customers in Africa. The models will be trained on Wolof and Pulaar, two west African languages that together have 22m speakers. Orange said the models would be freely available to support health care and educational services.

Figure of the day: 91%, the increase in the price of shares in GEO Group, a firm that owns and operates prisons, after Donald Trump won America's election. [Read the full story.](#)

Fears of a trade war



With Donald Trump promising to hike tariffs on his first day in power in America, including on [Chinese imports](#), businesspeople are trying to figure out what China's response will be. Some fear a tit-for-tat trade war.

The early signals from China have been reassuring. The central bank has said that it will maintain the “basic” stability of the currency, rather than devaluing it to offset new tariffs. More fiscal stimulus may be on the way. And China is keen to be viewed as doing its bit for globalisation. It says it will remove tariffs on goods from the poorest countries and extend visa-free entry to more countries.

On Tuesday, after Mr Trump revealed his plans to add an extra 10% to tariffs on Chinese goods, Han Zheng, China's vice-president, called economic globalisation “an irreversible historical trend”. America's incoming president seems determined to test that claim.

Ukraine's plea to NATO



Ambassadors from NATO countries will meet Ukrainian diplomats in Brussels on Tuesday. Ukraine requested the emergency meeting after Russia fired an experimental intermediate-range [ballistic missile](#) at the city of Dnipro on Thursday. Such missiles, especially those equipped with multiple warheads, are typically associated with nuclear weapons. Vladimir Putin, Russia's president, said he was responding to Ukraine's recent use of American and British missiles inside Russia.

Ukraine wants “concrete and meaningful outcomes” from the NATO meeting. That could mean commitments to new weapons or other aid. It is bracing for Russia to open a new front in the southern province of Zaporizhia, where Ukraine mounted an unsuccessful counter-offensive last year.

Russia and Ukraine both know that Donald Trump is keen to start [peace talks](#) when he takes office in January. Each is keen to put itself in the strongest position for the moment when diplomacy begins.

Shifting fortunes in Sudan's civil war



The official Sudanese army continues to retake territory in the country's [agricultural](#) heartlands. On Saturday it pushed the Rapid Support Forces, a mutinous paramilitary group that is its chief adversary, out of Sinja, the capital of Sennar state in central Sudan. The RSF, which had controlled Sinja for most of the past five months, has also been losing ground in Khartoum, the national capital, since the end of the rainy season in September.

The question is whether these shifts will help restart negotiations to bring an end to Sudan's [catastrophic](#) civil war. In a [recent interview](#) with *The Economist* a top official of the RSF said that it was ready to talk. But the army's generals have for months insisted that they will never negotiate with the RSF, which they consider a jumped-up militia. They will probably want to capture more territory before agreeing to discuss terms. Peace remains a long way off.

America's sticky housing market



The Federal Reserve's efforts to [cool inflation](#) remain hampered, in part, by the stagnant housing market. Many homeowners, locked into low mortgage rates, are reluctant to trade up for significantly higher borrowing costs. Though the average 30-year fixed mortgage rate dipped to 6.1% in September, it has since rebounded to 6.8%. Home sales (excluding new builds) remain far below their pre-pandemic levels.

[Home prices](#), meanwhile, are up 4.2% over the past year. The latest nationwide index from S&P Case-Shiller, published on Tuesday, is likely to show that prices continued to climb in November. But this trend could eventually reverse. On the supply side, more properties are coming on the market. Persistently higher interest rates may convince more would-be sellers, until now biding their time, that they can't wait forever. America's housing market may not be stuck for long.

Merkel's memoirs



When Angela Merkel stepped down as Germany's chancellor in 2021, after 16 years, she was Europe's undisputed leader. How rapidly her legacy has turned to ashes. Today, Germany's economy is in a mess; Russia is threatening Europe; and in elections in February the centre is likely to be squeezed by the unMerkel-like extremes on the left and right.

Mrs Merkel's memoir "Freedom", [published on Tuesday](#), is her bid to restore her reputation. She comes across as reasonable and modest. In office she was hard-working and brave. Instead of demonising her opponents, she was the architect of compromises that had something for everyone.

Yet "Freedom" does not succeed. It is too discreet and full of travel schedules and meetings. Mrs Merkel defends positions that look bad today, such as increasing Germany's dependence on Russian energy, as necessary compromises. She insists that she always got the best deal possible. She is asking her critics to take a lot on trust.

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.

Tuesday: What did a man mistake his wife for, in the title of a book by Oliver Sacks?

Monday: Which hit song by Men at Work has a title usually associated with Australia and New Zealand?

Truth is powerful and it prevails.

Sojourner Truth