

Catch up: UN condemns IDF raids on West Bank; Europe's falling inflation



Israeli troops killed five more Palestinians in the occupied **West Bank** on Thursday, following the ten they killed there on Wednesday. Israel says it is carrying out a “counter-terrorism operation” and has sent in ground troops and launched a drone strike. António Guterres, the UN’s secretary-general, said [Israel’s assault](#) was “deeply concerning” and called for “immediate cessation of these operations”.

Germany’s annual inflation rate fell to 2% in August, from 2.6% in July. **Spain** recorded a similar drop, from 2.8% to 2.4%. The decrease was mostly caused by falling energy costs. The data augurs a decline in euro-zone inflation. The [European Central Bank](#) will decide whether to cut interest rates for a second time this year at its meeting in September.

Two **Hong Kong** journalists from *Stand News*, a defunct [pro-democracy](#) news site, were convicted of sedition. The government accused Chung Pui-kuen and Patrick Lam of conspiring to publish seditious content. The pair will face up to two years in prison. They

were arrested in 2021 when hundreds of police raided their office and froze the site's assets, leading to its closure.

OpenAI is in talks to raise funds that would value it at \$100bn or more, according to reports. The artificial-intelligence company was valued at around \$86bn eight months ago. OpenAI is reportedly speaking to venture-capital firms over deals that would raise billions of dollars. The creator of [ChatGPT](#) last raised capital in early 2023, when Microsoft invested \$10bn.

Typhoon Shanshan hit southern **Japan**, bringing strong winds and heavy rainfall. At least three people died in a landslide, another died when a roof collapsed, and at least 90 more were injured. Around 119,000 homes were without power on the island of Kyushu. The storm is now moving northwards. Four million people have been ordered to evacuate, and several [carmakers](#) temporarily closed their factories.

Sir Keir Starmer, Britain's prime minister, met **Emmanuel Macron**, the French president, in Paris. The two leaders agreed to deepen collaboration on areas such as migration and defence. Yesterday Sir Keir met Olaf Scholz in Germany, where the pair announced a similar agreement. After a period of frosty relations with the European Union, Britain's new government wants to [reset ties](#).

The **International Atomic Energy Agency** reportedly said that **Iran** has recently increased its stockpiles of high-enriched uranium to near weapons-grade levels. Rafael Grossi, the director-general of the IAEA, said that he hoped to visit Iran soon for "constructive dialogue". Diplomatic efforts between the West and Iran to limit the country's enrichment program have [stalled](#).

Figure of the day: 10%, the share of new EV sales in Britain made by Chinese brands, up from around 3-4% five years ago. [Read the full story](#).

Harris and Walz sit down with CNN



When Kamala Harris replaced Joe Biden at the top of America's Democratic ticket in July, the party's despair over this year's presidential election gave way to jubilation. Her campaign has raised \$540m since launching; last week's Democratic National Convention was a raucous coronation. Ms Harris has been reluctant to slow the momentum down: her speeches focus on [broad values](#) rather than nitty-gritty talking-points, and so far she has avoided the press. But on Thursday night Ms Harris and Tim Walz, her running-mate, sit down for their first joint interview—with Dana Bash, of CNN.

As vice-president, Ms Harris had a reputation as unsteady, inauthentic and gaffe-prone. To a large extent that was a result of her performance in interviews, in which she could be awkward and prickly. But on the campaign trail, [the old Ms Harris is gone](#), replaced by a self-assured and polished politician. Her supporters will be hoping her reinvention holds when she meets the press.

A busy return for the EU



Foreign ministers of the EU's 27 member states will meet in Brussels on Thursday, as the continent's long summer break comes to an end. The main crises the diplomats have to contend with—notably in Ukraine and Gaza—are much as they were at their last meeting in July. The confab was due to be held in Budapest but was moved after the Hungarian prime minister, [Viktor Orbán](#), visited Vladimir Putin, Russia's president, in Moscow in July.

Expect a packed autumn. A report by Mario Draghi, a former prime minister of Italy, on the EU's economic policy is due in September. A new batch of European commissioners will be unveiled soon, including supremos for trade, regulating big tech and industrial policy—all of whom will have to be grilled by the European Parliament. And the continent will hold its breath in early November as America decides whether to send Donald Trump back to the White House.

India's war games with the West



The Indian government prides itself on its “multi-aligned” foreign and defence policy. Its leaders have fiercely resisted Western pressures to distance their country from Russia, its biggest arms supplier. But India’s military ties with the West have steadily deepened all the same, especially since a [deadly clash](#) on its Himalayan border with China in 2020. The latest sign of this is India launching its first-ever multinational air combat drills this month.

The second phase of the *Tarang Shakti* drills (meaning “power of waves”) began on Thursday. The exercises will run for a little over two weeks in the northern city of Jodhpur, after the first phase in the country’s south earlier in August. They involve 67 military aircraft from ten countries, including America, Britain, Australia, France, Germany, Spain and Greece. China will not attend, even as an observer. Indian officials say that Russia and Israel were also invited, but are tied up with ongoing wars.

The end-of-life business in Japan



Robot priests. Farewell cards that dissolve in water “along with your sadness”. A shuttle that shoots the ashes of your loved ones into orbit. These are just some of the innovations that companies have showcased at Endex, Japan’s largest expo for the funeral industry, which runs in Tokyo until Thursday.

Demographic and cultural changes have brought an [explosion of interest](#) in the “end of life” business in Japan. More people live alone, have fewer kids to care for them, and feel less tied to traditional customs—such as maintaining the family grave. In the year to April 2023 over 151,000 tombs were dismantled because younger generations were abandoning them and opting for city-friendly alternatives. Similar trends can be spotted elsewhere in the world. London has been suffering from such a shortage of graves that it is [reusing old ones](#). Outer space might not be the resting place of choice for now—but funerals have a long way to go.

The new invaders of Antarctica



As every pub quizmaster knows, the world's largest desert is not the Sahara. It is [Antarctica](#). The polar continent gets almost no rain—and is home to a host of unique and hardy creatures, whose ancestors survived several ice ages. Visitors from warmer locations, including small animals like earthworms and mites, have been known to hitch rides on great rafts of kelp.

But research published in *Global Change Biology* shows that invasive species may also hitch rides on another vessel: plastic debris. By modelling the drift of millions of virtual particles, scientists found that objects can float to Antarctica from South America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand—not just (relatively) nearby sub-Antarctic islands, as was previously thought. Beyond trashing the pristine landscape, the invaders could threaten Antarctica's ecosystem. Harsh conditions have hitherto stymied the growth of invasive colonies. However, warming waters, as a result of climate change, could aid the arrival—and survival—of newcomers.

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 sport, similar to tennis but with a plastic ball and an underarm serve, is the official sport of Washington state, where it was invented?

Wednesday: In October 2022, a leader in *The Economist* said that Liz Truss, Britain's then prime minister, had the shelf life of which vegetable?

10%

The share of new EV sales in Britain made by Chinese brands, up from around 3-4% five years ago.

Read the full story.

**The heart of history lies in interpretation
of the facts.**

Anna Ella Carroll