

Catch up: SCOTUS upholds TikTok ban; Israel's government approves Gaza deal



America's Supreme Court [upheld a law](#) forcing **TikTok's** Chinese owner, ByteDance, to sell the app or face a nationwide ban. The deadline for divestment is Sunday, the day before Donald Trump's inauguration. The law, passed over fears of Chinese influence, could see TikTok removed from app stores. Mr Trump campaigned vowing to "save" the platform.

Israel's government approved the Gaza ceasefire deal, paving the way for the agreement to take effect on Sunday. Hamas expected to release the first hostages that day. Hard-right members of **Binyamin Netanyahu's coalition** [oppose](#) the deal and have threatened to resign in protest.

Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, and his Iranian counterpart, **Masoud Pezeshkian**, signed a 20-year strategic-partnership treaty in Moscow. The pact will deepen economic, energy and defence co-operation. Both countries are under Western sanctions. They have strengthened ties since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. [Iran](#) has been accused of supplying Russia with drones for the war.

Mr Trump said that he had a “very good” phone call with **Xi Jinping**, [China’s president](#). In a social-media post America’s president-elect wrote that they discussed trade, [fentanyl](#) and TikTok, among other topics. The Chinese government said the pair agreed to establish a “channel of strategic communication”. Han Zheng, China’s vice president, will attend Mr Trump’s inauguration.

The **European Commission** told **X** to disclose recent changes to its recommendation algorithm, as part of an investigation launched in 2023 into the social-media platform’s role in European politics. The move follows complaints that X is promoting hard-right views. **Elon Musk**, the firm’s boss, has [publicly supported](#) the Alternative for Germany party.

A [court in Pakistan](#) sentenced **Imran Khan**, a former prime minister, to 14 years in prison for corruption. The charges were linked to the Al-Qadir Trust, a charity he founded while in office. Mr Kahn has been in jail since 2023 on separate charges. His wife, Bushra Bibi, was also convicted and handed a seven-year sentence for her role in the case. Mr Khan said the charges were politically motivated.

SpaceX’s seventh test flight of its [Starship rocket](#) failed minutes after launch. The upper stage exploded because of a suspected fuel leak, but the Super Heavy booster successfully landed back on its launchpad at the firm’s base in Texas. American aviation regulators briefly rerouted flights over the Gulf of Mexico. **Elon Musk**, SpaceX’s boss, said improved versions of the rocket were ready for future tests.

Sudan's rebels on the back foot



As Sudan's civil war enters its 21st month, the Sudanese Armed Forces continue to make ground against the Rapid Support Forces, a mutinous paramilitary group. On January 11th the national army retook Wad Madani, one of the country's biggest cities, from the rebel force. The victory marks the culmination of a counter-offensive launched at the start of the dry season in October.

The RSF had captured the city, deep inside the SAF's heartland, in [late 2023](#). At that stage many felt the group had cleared a path towards victory across the country. Few would place that bet today. Last week America accused the RSF of having [committed genocide](#) in Darfur. It also slapped sanctions on its leader, Muhammad Hamdan Dagalo (known as Hemedti). A year ago Mr Dagalo was welcomed in capitals across Africa as a probable [president-in-waiting](#). Now, on top of battlefield setbacks, the militiaman risks being treated in some parts of the continent as a diplomatic pariah.

Europe's next cultural capital



This weekend Chemnitz, a city in the German state of Saxony, becomes “European Capital of Culture” for 2025. An opening ceremony featuring performances by artists across 60 stages will kick off a year-long programme of exhibitions and events at the city’s museums and galleries. Highlights include a show of the work of Edvard Munch, a Norwegian painter who stayed in the city in 1905, and the opening in April of a refurbished villa that was the birthplace of Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, a founding member of the Brücke painters’ group, which was active in the early 20th century.

Chemnitz received its cultural accolade in 2019, at a time when the city—called “Karl-Marx-Stadt” by communist East Germany—was trying to repair its image. A centre of the textile industry and machine construction before unification, Chemnitz was hit by deindustrialisation and high unemployment in the 1990s. Far-right riots took place in 2018. Today Chemnitz is a stronghold of [AfD](#), a hard-right party. A cultural festival could lighten the mood.

The Economist's “Archive 1945”



One question naturally dominated the minds of weekly readers of *The Economist* 80 years ago: when would the defeat of Nazi Germany and its alliance finally arrive? In our pages, at the start of 1945, we celebrated that much of France had been liberated. But we also lamented how a combination of “military deadlock and political disunity” had delayed the much-anticipated Allied victory. Division among Allies over how to treat Germany postwar was one problem. The Nazis, we wrote, were hoping “that the coalition against them will, after all, collapse”.

To mark the 80th anniversary of the end of the second world war, we are publishing weekly updates from our archive. These will track momentous events—such as the deaths of Roosevelt and Hitler—but also provide the analysis and opinion that our correspondents and editors shared while in the thick of the conflict. Follow the weekly updates on [our dedicated interactive page](#).

An introspective pop star returns



David Gray, a British singer-songwriter, found fame with his fourth album, “White Ladder”. The self-financed and home-recorded album was issued in 1998 but took another three years to reach number one in Britain. It went on to stay in the charts for several more years and to sell millions of copies worldwide.

An anniversary tour for “White Ladder” inspired Mr Gray’s latest record. “Dear Life”, released this week, revisits and expands upon the blend of melancholic folk-pop and electronica that made him so popular in the first place. The strong set of songs underlines the influence he claims over subsequent troubadour stars, such as Ed Sheeran and Hozier. Yet Mr Gray is much more thoughtful. He once seemed like an older soul in a younger artist’s body. Now in his fifties, Mr Gray has grown into his nuanced style.

A mammoth opportunity for conservationists



Dodos, thylacines and woolly mammoths have long been extinct. Colossal Biosciences, which describes itself as “the world’s first de-extinction company”, wants to bring them back. This week the Texas-based startup raised \$200m to develop its genetic technologies. Its latest round of financing, which comes from TWG Global, a diversified holding company, brings Colossal’s total funds raised since its launch in 2021 to \$435m.

But the practice of “de-extinction” has critics. Some argue that the money would be better spent safeguarding existing species. Colossal itself admits that its resurrection of Ice Age mammoths would not be an exact match, but rather “a cold-resistant elephant with all of the core biological traits” of a mammoth. Nonetheless the company is attracting capital and expertise, which has already delivered a handful of firsts for biodiversity genomics. Last year a new foundation was established to support conservationists using Colossal’s technology. If a replica of an extinct icon can be engineered, expect the revenues from zoos and safaris in protected wilderness to be mammoth indeed.

Weekly crossword



Our crossword has two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers, all of which feature in articles in this week's edition of *The Economist*:

Cryptic clues

1 down Crazy man with a plan (and odd cravat) in important waterway (6,5)

1 across Inn, with landlord in charge initially, is not private (6)

2 across Deposed dictator found among crass admirers (5)

3 across City left with bare ponds and no backing (6)

Factual clues

1 down Something that Donald Trump wants America to have back (6,5)

1 across What Venture Global, a large American gas exporter, is about to become (6)

2 across Whose regime collapsed in Syria in December (5)

3 across What accounts for 15% of Britain's population, and 22% of its economic output (6)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am GMT on Monday to crossword@economist.com. We will pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners in next week's edition.

The winners of this week's quiz



The Economist

Thank you to everyone who took part in this week's quiz. The winners, chosen at random, were:

Laura M. Linger, Winnetka, Illinois, America

Andreia Bessa, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Thomas Rynell, Stockholm, Sweden

They all gave the correct answers of The Interpretation of Dreams, Durham, Tin, a hood, and wolves. The theme is Kevin Costner movies: Field of Dreams, Bull Durham, Tin Cup, Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves and Dances with Wolves

The questions were:

Monday: Sigmund Freud's book "Die Traumdeutung" is generally known in English by what title?

Tuesday: Which town in north-east England on the river Wear is home to a prestigious university and has a castle, and cathedral, that are UNESCO world heritage sites?

Wednesday: Which atomic element has the symbol Sn?

Thursday: What is the term for the cap placed over the head of a

trained falcon?

Friday: A pack of canis lupus would be better known by what name?

Chanoyu

*A Japanese tea ceremony that contributed to the spread of matcha.
Read the full story.*

Words are the most powerful drug used by mankind.

Rudyard Kipling