

Catch up: ceasefire in Lebanon; the new European Commission



A [ceasefire](#) between Israel and Hizbullah began in **Lebanon** at 4am local time. It is “designed to be a permanent cessation of hostilities”, according to Joe Biden, who announced the deal. The American president said he hoped a ceasefire in Gaza would follow. Israel will withdraw its forces over the next 60 days while Lebanon’s army takes control of regions near the border in order to ensure Hizbullah does not regroup there.

The **European Parliament** approved Ursula von der Leyen’s team for her second term as president of the **European Commission**. The commission will be one of the most right-wing for years; more than half of its members are from the centre-right European People’s Party. The lineup includes Andrius Kubilius, a former Lithuanian prime minister, who will be the EU’s first [defence commissioner](#).

Donald Trump selected **Jamieson Greer** as his top trade negotiator, saying the lawyer “played a key role during my first term in imposing tariffs”. On Monday Mr Trump [proposed levies](#)

of 25% on Mexican and Canadian goods, and additional 10% tariffs on Chinese goods. The president-elect also chose **Kevin Hassett**, an economic adviser during his first term, to lead the National Economic Council.

The **International Criminal Court's** chief prosecutor, [Karim Khan](#), said he would seek an arrest warrant for [Min Aung Hlaing](#), the leader of **Myanmar's** military junta, for crimes against humanity. Mr Khan said he had found evidence that the junta had persecuted and forcibly deported members of the Rohingya, a Muslim minority. A panel of three judges will consider his request.

Supporters of **Imran Khan**, a [jailed former prime minister](#) of **Pakistan**, called off protests demanding his release by the country's army-backed government. The protests began on Sunday, when thousands began marching towards Islamabad, the capital. Mr Khan's supporters later occupied parts of the city centre. Police broke up protest sites on Tuesday. At least six people, including police and protesters, were killed in clashes.

Samsung Electronics announced major management changes. Jun Young-hyun, who previously ran the South Korean giant's growing battery subsidiary, was named as co-chief executive and the boss of its memory-chip business. Samsung's share price has fallen since August as [investors worry](#) about the competitiveness of its high-end chips and the risks that America's protectionist new president might pose.

China's defence minister was placed under investigation for corruption, according to the *Financial Times*. Dong Jun, a former navy chief for the People's Liberation Army, is the third consecutive person in the role to be investigated. China's army has faced a sweeping [anti-corruption crackdown](#) since last year.

Figure of the day: 14%, the year-on-year rise in imports to America that the National Retail Federation expects in November,

as firms stockpile in expectation of Donald Trump's tariffs. [Read the full story.](#)

Russia's economic bind



Industrial-production and unemployment figures released on Wednesday will show how Russia's war economy is holding up. Since the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russia's economic performance has confounded analysts. Western countries hit back with one of the toughest sanctions regimes in modern history. But Russia's GDP grew by 3.6% last year and is expected to maintain a similar pace in 2024.

Yet signs of strain are [finally starting to show](#). Vast government spending on defence and security—expected to be equivalent to 8% of GDP next year—is overheating the economy. The annual inflation rate was 8.5% in October. The central bank has raised interest rates to 21%, a two-decade high, as it tries to rein in prices and defend the value of the rouble, partially so that Russia can keep importing crucial war materials from China. Higher borrowing costs will crimp investment and consumer spending. Growth looks set to slow sharply next year.

Ursula von der Leyen's new team



On Wednesday the European Parliament endorsed Ursula von der Leyen to run the European Commission for a second five-year term. The German will lead Europe's powerful executive with a [team of 26 commissioners](#), most of whom will be new. Mrs von der Leyen had the backing of the European People's Party, a grouping of centre-right parties that topped continent-wide elections in June. She cobbled together an alliance including other centrist parties (and gained tacit support from some on the hard right) to ensure her re-election.

Her new team of commissioners, appointed by national governments, starts work on Sunday. Kaja Kallas, a hawkish former Estonian prime minister, will oversee foreign policy. For the first time a commissioner will be dedicated to defence. António Costa, a former prime minister of Portugal, becomes president of the European Council, with the job of chairing meetings of EU leaders.

Namibia's opposition steps into the limelight



On Wednesday Namibians vote for a new president and parliament. For the first time since Namibia won independence from South Africa in 1990, the ruling South West Africa People's Organisation may not win. In recent years its grip on power has been weakening. In 2019 the party lost its two-thirds parliamentary majority. Opposition parties now control Namibia's three main cities. Voters are angry about unaffordable housing, soaring unemployment and rising corruption.

In the presidential race Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, the 72-year-old vice-president, faces her biggest challenge from Panduleni Itula, a 67-year-old dentist, lawyer and former SWAPO youth campaigner, who formed the Independent Patriots for Change in 2020. Mr Itula came second, with 29% of the vote, when he ran for the presidency as an independent in 2019. At the very least he will hope to deprive "NNN", as the vice-president is known, of a majority in the first round, forcing a run-off.

A positive step in the energy transition



From Wednesday [Britain will roll out a scheme](#) that could help to reduce the country's use of fossil fuels. The “Demand Flexibility Service” allows homes and businesses to get paid for using power at times when the grid is less strained—such as by charging an electric vehicle or running home appliances at night. Roughly 2.6m households and businesses have taken part in pilots over the past two years. Now customers will be able to use it year-round.

Demand flexibility is a cherished prize in climate policy. If grid operators can become skilled at shifting consumers away from evening peaks, or days of low wind and sun, the transition to clean power would be made much easier. It would reduce the intermittency problem of renewables; the grid would be less reliant on back-up fossil-fuel plants. Britain looks well placed to achieve the feat, in part because its energy companies are relatively fast adopters of technology.

An operatic great on screen



Maria Callas is the latest musical icon to get the glitzy biopic treatment. “Maria”, directed by Pablo Larraín, opens in American cinemas on Wednesday. Angelina Jolie plays the Greek opera diva in a film that focuses on the days before her death in Paris in 1977. Kodi Smit-McPhee plays a documentary-maker to whom, in her imagination, Callas tells her story.

As in the recent “[Elvis](#)” and “A Complete Unknown”, an upcoming homage to Bob Dylan, this musical biopic is in part, well, a musical. The soundtrack is wonderful, with Ms Jolie’s tones blended into recordings of Callas’s soaring soprano. It includes flashbacks that capture the exultation of performance, the horror of Callas’s wartime childhood and the pain of her relationship with Aristotle Onassis, a shipping magnate. The film’s short cinema run before its release on Netflix on December 11th is a sign of Oscar ambitions, most obviously for Ms Jolie in the central role.

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: Which Virginia town, on the James river, is noted for its marine terminal and military bases?

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

**He who feared that he would not succeed
sat still.**

Horace