

Catch up: Netanyahu demands withdrawal of UN peacekeepers; success for Starship



Binyamin Netanyahu demanded that the UN withdraw its peacekeepers from southern Lebanon. The Israeli prime minister argued that the blue helmets were merely “providing a human shield for Hizbullah.” His call came after a fifth peacekeeper was injured in **Lebanon**, this time by gunfire. The UN said it was not clear who was responsible. On Friday the Israel Defence Forces said they would conduct “a thorough review” after strikes on [southern Lebanon](#) injured two peacekeepers. Another two were injured on Thursday when they fell from a watchtower that was fired on by an Israeli tank.

SpaceX's giant [Starship rocket](#) completed its fifth test flight. The spacecraft took off from Texas, detached from its booster rocket and landed in the Indian Ocean. The booster returned to the launch pad where it was “caught” by giant arms. The reusable system is central to the expansion of Starlink, a satellite data constellation; to

NASA's plans to return Americans to the Moon; and to the vision of **Elon Musk**, SpaceX's boss, of a human settlement on Mars.

Baba Siddique, an Indian politician, was shot dead in Mumbai, in the state of Maharashtra. Mr Siddique had served as a minister in the state, and been a member of the legislature. In February he switched allegiance from Congress, India's main opposition, to join a coalition partner of the [ruling](#) Bharatiya Janata Party. Two men have been arrested in connection with his murder. Rahul Gandhi, Congress's leader, lamented a "collapse of law and order in Maharashtra".

At the end of a summit leaders of the ten-country Association of Southeast Asian Nations called for urgent agreement on a code of conduct for the **South China Sea**. Several ASEAN members, notably the Philippines and Vietnam, regularly clash with China over rival territorial claims in the disputed waters. The escalating [rows](#) risk dragging in America, a treaty ally of the Philippines.

China's consumer-price index, a main gauge of inflation, rose by 0.4% in September from a year earlier, missing expectations. The producer-price index, which measures goods at factory gates, was down 2.8% year-on-year—meaning it fell at the fastest pace in six months. On Saturday China's finance minister said the country will "significantly increase" debt issuance to fight [its economic slowdown](#).

Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee for [the presidency](#) in America, released a **medical report**. It concluded that she is in "excellent health" and has "the physical and mental resiliency" for the job. Donald Trump, her Republican opponent, has refused to do so. Ms Harris is keen to draw attention to his age: when running against Joe Biden, 81, Mr Trump, 78, seemed relatively sprightly; against Ms Harris, 59, he seems less so.

Just as **Christopher Columbus** was woefully confused as to which lands he came upon during his voyages of discovery, so the exact identity of the explorer himself remained a mystery after his death in 1506. But after decades of investigation, scientists, using DNA, have determined that he was a Sephardic Jew, and the hotly disputed remains in Seville Cathedral are really his. As to his nationality, all they can say is that he was western European.

Word of the week: Metamaterials, a class of materials engineered to have surprising effects not commonly found in nature. [Read the full story](#).

In the run-up to America's presidential election, read [The US in brief](#)—a daily update to help you keep on top of the political stories that matter. [Sign up here](#) to receive it as a newsletter, each weekday, in your inbox.

The WHO tries to plug funding gap



The World Health Summit brings together politicians, scientists, businesses and others to set the agenda for a healthier world. A priority for this year's meeting in Berlin, which starts on Sunday, is “sustainable financing”, with particular reference to the World Health Organisation. The agency has insufficient regular funding to meet the long-term health targets set by countries around the world. [Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus](#), who is in his second and final term as director-general, wants to put his organisation on a firmer financial footing. The WHO has so far raised only \$4bn of the more than \$11bn it needs over the next four years. It will try to close that gap in Berlin.

Other topics on the agenda include antimicrobial resistance, women's and childrens' health strategies, climate-health connections and the use of artificial intelligence in health care. Altogether, the summit argues that its call for more money could prevent 40m avoidable deaths to disease by 2028.

China's unenviable economy



When central banks in America, Europe and elsewhere were battling rising prices in 2022, the People's Bank of China could be forgiven for feeling smug. Consumer-price inflation in [China](#) has remained below the official ceiling of 3% for over four years. On a trip abroad in 2023, the PBoC governor was told that all other central banks would be “very happy” to have his record.

But just as Western central banks responded too slowly to inflation, so the PBoC has underreacted to deflation. Data released on Sunday showed that in September China's factory-gate prices fell for the 24th consecutive month and that consumer-price inflation remained dangerously low. Not until last month did China's central bank wake up to the urgency of the problem, delivering a combined cut in interest rates and reserve requirements. Now that inflation has cooled in America and Europe, fewer central banks would swap their record for China's.

The growth of women's rugby



In 2022 New Zealand hosted the Women's Rugby World Cup. The final was the biggest match in the history of the women's game. A record crowd filled Eden Park in Auckland as the hosts overcame England, who were on a 30-match unbeaten run, to win 34-31. The tournament's positive reception persuaded World Rugby to offer more support. The next World Cup, in England in 2025, will feature 16 teams, up from 12. The international body also established a new annual competition, WXV, to help the game grow between World Cups. This year's tournament concludes this weekend.

WXV features 18 teams across three divisions, with promotion and relegation. England won the top division in 2023. They will play Canada in this year's closing round, a de facto final as both sides are unbeaten. A second successive WXV title would cheer England. Still, the result they really want is to defeat arch-rivals New Zealand to win the World Cup next year.

Sienese painting shines at the Met



The Frick Collection/Michael Bodycomb

Move over, Florence. The city of Michelangelo often gets pride of place in the history of the Renaissance. But an exhibition that opens at the Metropolitan Museum in New York on Sunday, makes the case for the equal importance of Siena.

“Siena: The Rise of Painting, 1300–1350” includes more than 100 paintings, sculptures, textiles and other objects made before plague devastated the city in the middle of the 14th century. Siena controlled a trade route that stretched from Naples to Paris to Canterbury. With extraordinary wealth, an influx of exotic goods and ideas, and stable democratic government, the Tuscan city became a hub for artists. They included Duccio di Buoninsegna, Simone Martini and the Lorenzetti brothers, the focus of the Met’s show.

On display are both large works to decorate church altars, as well as exquisite small versions for private devotion. All are marked by a human touch, and human stories, that helped pave the way for realism.

A worthy finale to the WNBA season



The Women's National Basketball Association has had a banner year. Propelled by the draft of [Caitlin Clark](#), a phenomenon in the college game, attendances across the league have risen by almost 50% compared with 2023. A new broadcast deal is worth an estimated \$200m a year, more than three times the current level. More TV revenue means higher player wages, so stars do not have to supplement their earnings by competing overseas during their off-seasons.

The competition concludes with a best-of-five series between New York Liberty and Minnesota Lynx, which continues on Sunday. The Liberty saw off reigning champions Las Vegas Aces in the semis, and, in Breanna Stewart and Sabrina Ionescu, have two of the league's finest players. However, the team has lost all five of its previous finals appearances. By contrast, the Lynx, who narrowly won the first game on Thursday, have four wins from six appearances.

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*:

October 13th edition

Cryptic clues

- 1 down Popular British foodstuff ruined? Send a kebab (5, 5)
- 1 across Cobra ingests part of organ (5)
- 2 across Don't exhale lest harmful infection starts in this city (5)
- 3 across Quiet! Beer is source of gas (5)

Factual clues

- 1 down Fibre-rich canned pulses (5,5)
- 1 across The only part of the body that named itself (5)
- 2 across Capital city beleaguered by air pollution (5)
- 3 across Fissile rock from which gas can be extracted (5)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by

9am BST 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:

Alexandra Millbrook, London, Britain

Giovanni Collot, Conegliano, Italy

Shin Inagaki, Tokyo, Japan

They all gave the correct answers of: Point Break, a lock, crack cocaine, Invisible Touch and a melt. The theme is words ending in down: breakdown, lockdown, crackdown, touchdown and meltdown.

The questions were:

Monday: Which film from 1991 featured Patrick Swayze as the leader of a group of surfers who were also bank robbers?

Tuesday: What is the mechanism on a canal that allows the water level to be raised or lowered?

Wednesday: In the early 1980s, which smokable and highly addictive drug saw an explosion in use in the US?

Thursday: Which was the only Genesis song to reach number 1 in the Billboard Hot 100 ranking?

Friday: In America, a sandwich including cheese and meat or fish is generally known as a what?

Metamaterials

A class of materials engineered to have surprising effects not commonly found in nature.

Read the full story

Human society must be regarded as one part of a continuous natural entity that includes all animals and plants.”

Kisho Kurokawa