

Catch up: An attack on Israel; A ceasefire in Pakistan



Hizbullah fired more than 250 projectiles towards Israel, wounding at least seven people. On Saturday an Israeli airstrike had hit a residential block in central **Beirut**, killing 29 people and wounding more than 60, according to Lebanese officials. Lebanon's armed forces said that Israel also struck an army base near the southern city of Tyre, killing one soldier and injuring 18 more.

Government negotiators convinced warring Sunni and Shiite groups in Kurram, a district the country's northwest, to agree to a seven-day ceasefire, according to **Pakistani** authorities. The most recent spate of violence began when a convoy was ambushed on Thursday. At least 68 people were killed in that attack and in reprisals since. Dozens have been killed in sectarian clashes in recent months.

Marcel Ciolacu, Romania's centre-left prime minister, is likely to come out on top in the first round of **Romania's presidential elections**, according to exit polls. Behind him is Elena Lasconi, a

centre-right candidate, followed by Calin Georgescu and George Simion, two hard-right politicians. The two top candidates will compete in a run-off on December 8th.

Hundreds of **Yemenis** are now fighting for Russia in **Ukraine**, according to the *Financial Times*. Some of the recruits told the newspaper that they had been sent to the conflict via a company connected with the Houthis, an Iranian-backed rebel group in Yemen. Russia has increasingly used foreign fighters in the war, including Nepalese mercenaries and thousands of [North Koreans](#).

Iran announced that it would hold talks with Britain, France and Germany on November 29th to discuss its **nuclear programme**. On Friday its government said it would start new centrifuges, which are used to enrich uranium, after the UN's nuclear watchdog criticised the country for being uncooperative. Iran's regime has been preparing for the return of Donald Trump, who is likely to [treat it harshly](#).

Donald Trump completed his main cabinet picks with the selection of Brooke Rollins for **agriculture secretary**. Ms Rollins served as Mr Trump's domestic-policy adviser during his first term. She founded the [America First Policy Institute](#), a pro-Trump think-tank, in 2021. On Friday the president-elect tapped **Scott Bessent**, a [hedge-fund titan](#), to lead the treasury department.

The **Eurovision Song Contest** will go ahead in Basel after all, after voters rejected a referendum that would have blocked it. A Christian party had garnered enough signatures in the Swiss city to trigger a vote, arguing that the festival was “blasphemy” and that public money should not be spent on “woke propaganda”. But some 66% voted to host the continent's feast day of camp musical fun, according to early figures.

Figure of the day: 124, the number of countries that are members of the International Criminal Court and must therefore extradite

Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, to the court if he steps on their soil. [Read the full story.](#)

The long road from Baku to Belém



Talks at COP29, held in Azerbaijan, produced only gridlock for two weeks. The final hours of the United Nations’ annual climate conference, though, were packed with drama. At one point delegates from developing countries and small island states walked out. But a new target was eventually struck. Rich countries committed themselves to giving \$300bn a year in climate financing a year for poor ones by 2035. India’s negotiator decried the sum as “paltry”.

The contentious deal overshadowed other discussions. After years of wrangling, rough rules for an international carbon market were approved. But representatives quibbled over a landmark commitment, made at last year’s COP, to “transition away” from fossil fuels—the first time a reference to the main cause of global warming had made it into a UN text. Fierce opposition, particularly from large producers like Saudi Arabia, meant that that promise was not reaffirmed. And an assessment of progress in cutting greenhouse gases was postponed until next year’s conference in Brazil.

India's news parliamentary session



India's parliament begins what is set to be a stormy winter session on Monday. On Wednesday American prosecutors [indicted Gautam Adani](#), an Indian tycoon, and seven others over an alleged scheme to pay over \$250m in bribes to Indian officials. Mr Adani, who denies any wrongdoing, is a close ally of Narendra Modi, India's prime minister. Though Mr Modi is not implicated directly, India's opposition is demanding a parliamentary investigation and Mr Adani's arrest.

By all rights, Mr Modi should have been celebrating. India's opposition alliance won a state election that ended on Saturday in Jharkhand, in eastern India. But his Bharatiya Janata Party and its allies took a larger prize, winning in Maharashtra, India's richest state. The scandal threatens to overshadow the result, and disrupt the government's plans to pass 16 bills this parliament session, including a controversial one regulating Muslim charitable endowments. It will not welcome the distraction.

Sputter, sputter, Zoom?



Zoom was a star performer among tech stocks during the pandemic. The video-conferencing firm's share price soared by 273% between March and October 2020. But as covid-19 receded and enthusiasm for remote work waned, its valuation fell from \$161bn at its peak to \$25bn. Quarterly results, announced on Monday, will be a health report on the firm.

Eric Yuan, Zoom's founder and boss, believes that it is more than "just meeting conferencing". The firm is betting on a new "AI companion". It helps users draft emails and chat messages, summarise meetings and look up answers on the internet. In August Zoom raised its revenue forecast for 2024, citing strong demand for its AI-powered tools. The company's share price has risen by 17% since January. But it lags behind the NASDAQ Composite, a tech-heavy index, which is up by 28%. Investors will be looking for signs that Zoom's AI-based strategy is working.

Will Egypt's state withdraw from its economy?



On Monday Egypt's government will complete a private sale of up to \$104m-worth of shares in United Bank, which is majority owned by the state. Starting on Wednesday, the public can buy in. It will be Egypt's first initial public offering since 2021. The government has floated the idea of at least a dozen more IPOs of state-owned firms.

Nearby conflicts are battering Egypt's economy and reducing government revenue. The government hopes to receive a \$1.3bn tranche from an \$8bn International Monetary Fund loan programme. It has promised reforms in exchange. The country's main underlying problem is that the state, and specifically the army, has a stranglehold on the economy.

Mr Sisi has conspicuously failed to keep previous promises to reduce the state's economic footprint. The IPOs may suggest that is changing. On November 20th the IMF said Egypt is making "substantial progress". The strongman may finally be keeping his word.

Even chess champs get the yips



Ding Liren once played 100 chess matches without losing. In 2018 he was the joint-tenth highest-rated player in history. And in 2023 he became China's first world chess champion. Yet when he defends his title against Gukesh Dommaraju, an 18-year-old Indian, over the next three weeks, Mr Ding will be the underdog.

After becoming champion Mr Ding's form collapsed, leading him to take a months-long break during which he sought psychological help. The champion admits that he is afraid of losing badly to Gukesh (as he prefers to be called). Magnus Carlsen, the greatest living player, has speculated that Mr Ding is "permanently broken".

This focus on Mr Ding risks underplaying his challenger's achievements. Gukesh is the **youngest person** ever to win the right to face a world champion. If he wins, the youngster will get the attention he deserves. A victory for Mr Ding, though, would be a stirring comeback.

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.

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

Our liberties were not won without suffering, and may be lost again through our cowardice.

Upton Sinclair