

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. Meanwhile, the UN said that the main gate of one of its compounds was “destroyed” by two Israeli tanks. On Friday the Israel Defence Forces said they would conduct “a thorough review” after strikes on southern Lebanon injured two peacekeepers.

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](#).

German government sources said that **Joe Biden** will visit **Germany** on Friday. The American president had been due to make the trip last week, but it was cancelled due to Hurricane Milton in Florida. The wars in Ukraine and the Middle East are sure to be high on the agenda.

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.

Figure of the day: 800,000, the number of properties that were foreclosed within China in 2023 due to companies struggling with high debts. [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.

Britain's investment pow-wow



Britain hosts a summit for business leaders on Monday as the new Labour government tries to attract international investment and boost economic growth. But the government's relationship with some investors has come under strain. Downing Street had to distance itself from comments made by a cabinet minister referring to P&O Ferries, a shipping company owned by DP World, a ports giant based in Dubai, as a “cowboy operator” for sacking nearly 800 staff in 2022 and replacing them with cheaper workers. DP World appeared to withdraw the announcement of a £1bn infrastructure deal at the summit but is now expected to participate.

The backdrop to the event has been equally gloomy. Businesses are bracing for tax rises in the [budget](#), due on October 30th, in which Rachel Reeves, the chancellor, also plans to close a tax loophole for private-equity bosses. Many also feel that the government's downbeat message about its economic inheritance risks undermining its investment drive. It may be tough to lift spirits.

Waiting for escalation on all fronts



A year into what began with a surprise attack by Hamas on Israel, the conflict is now a multi-front war which could still escalate on at least three fronts. In Gaza, Israel launched a new offensive in recent days, encircling the Jabalia refugee camp in what could be the prelude to a renewed assault on Gaza city against remaining Hamas fighters there. On Israel's northern border with Lebanon, what has been presented by Israel as "limited" ground operations against Hizbullah could soon expand into a much wider campaign to remove the Iranian-backed Shia party-cum-militia from its position of power in Lebanon.

And then there's Iran. Since October 1st, when Iran launched a salvo of 181 ballistic missiles on Israel, a massive [retaliation](#) has been in the works. The only questions are what will be the scale of such an onslaught and whether Israel will target just military bases, or aim at nuclear sites and oil terminals. If it is the latter, the repercussions will be felt far beyond the Middle East.

Adani's global plans



Last year the Adani Group, an Indian conglomerate, was accused of, among other things, committing fraud in its aggressive pursuit of growth . Those allegations (which the Adani Group denies), made by Hindenburg Research, a New York-based short-selling firm, rattled the group, but have done little to [diminish its ambitions](#). It continues to pursue global expansion, with Adani Green, its renewable energy arm, leading the charge. In recent months, the company has announced plans to develop projects in several countries across Asia and Africa.

However, on Monday those plans could face a setback when Sri Lanka's Supreme Court hears petitions against one of Adani's proposed wind-power projects. Environmentalists claim the project would endanger biodiversity and migratory birds. Even if the Supreme Court were to rule in Adani's favour, Sri Lanka's new government could still scupper the plan. Anura Kumara Dissanayake, elected president last month, has vowed to cancel both projects, saying that they threaten the country's "energy sovereignty".

The Paris motor show



The world's big motor shows are in decline as carmakers devote the cost and effort of selling cars to online marketing and co-opting influencers. The show in Geneva, once Europe's pre-eminent car event, has come to an end after 119 years. Perhaps the biennial event in Paris, which begins on Monday, has benefited from the Swiss show's demise. It promises to be a livelier affair than expected. Several big manufacturers are turning up and plenty of new cars will be launched.

Naturally, a French firm, Renault, is out in front with six new cars on show including a reborn Renault 4, a cheap electric car intended to take on the Chinese competitors that have Europe in their sights. Despite the European Union's recent imposition of [tariffs](#) on imports, several of those same Chinese carmakers will show off their wares, such as BYD, Leapmotor and Hongqi. The battle for European hearts, minds and roads will be on full display.

Aquatic airways



Fish have no wings but seem able to fly. Researchers have long been baffled by fish populations in remote ponds and lakes unconnected to other water bodies. This led Akifumi Yao of the University of Tsukuba to speculate that they hitch rides. Since many fish stick eggs to aquatic plant leaves, which sometimes get snagged on the feet of birds like herons, Mr Yao theorised that they were unwittingly transporting the fish.

He set up camera traps around ponds loaded with plants and stocked with fish. Sure enough, he caught a heron green-footed. To determine if eggs could survive aerial transport, leaves with them attached were taken out of the water and monitored. In a new paper in *Science of Nature*, Mr Yao and his team report that most endured air exposure for twelve hours. Given that the average speed in flight of a heron is 39kph, these birds can carry fish eggs quite a distance.

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: Joe Biden is the 46th president. How many vice presidents have there been?

800,000

*The number of properties that were foreclosed within China in 2023 due to companies struggling with high debts.
Read the full story.*

A liberal is a man or a woman or a child who looks forward to a better day, a more tranquil night, and a bright, infinite future.”

Leonard Bernstein