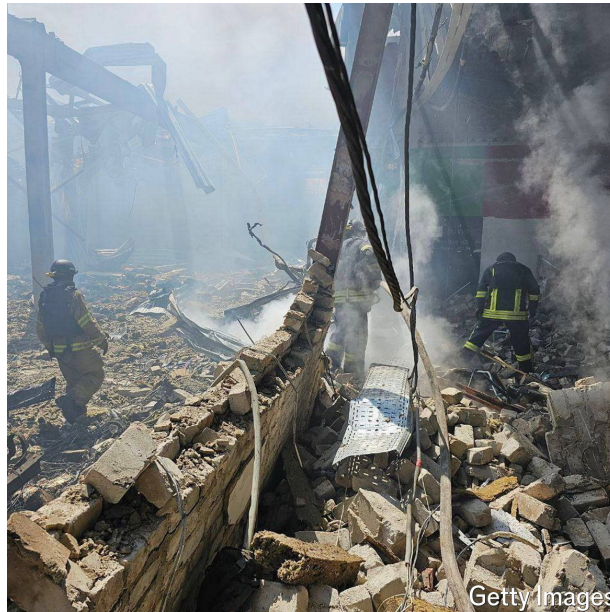


Catch up: Russia strikes Ukrainian supermarket; Maduro bans X



Russian strikes on a shop in Kostyantynivka, a city in eastern Ukraine, killed at least 14 people and injured 43, according to local authorities. Meanwhile Ukrainian forces continued to advance into Kursk, a Russian region bordering Ukraine, in what has become its biggest cross-border incursion since [Russia's invasion](#) in 2022. Russia declared a state of emergency in the region on Wednesday and says that it is moving reinforcements to the region.

[Nicolás Maduro](#), **Venezuela's** autocratic president, blocked access to X, a social-media platform, for ten days. Mr Maduro won a rigged election on July 28th, and has since clamped down hard on widespread dissent. He accused **Elon Musk**, the owner of X, of being involved in a “criminal cyber coup d'état” disrupting the country's computer system, and of “inciting hatred, fascism, civil war, death...of Venezuelans”.

Stockmarkets continued to rebound at the end of [a tumultuous week for equities](#). Wall Street led the way. Stock indices there rose after a report showed that jobless claims—a proxy for lay-offs—in

the past week were lower than expected. The S&P 500 increased by 2.3%, its biggest single-day gain since 2022. Morning trading in Asia was also bullish, with Japan's closely watched Topix index up by 1.5%.

Austria said that an 18-year-old Iraqi has been arrested in connection with the plot to attack a **Taylor Swift** concert in Vienna. He swore allegiance to the Islamic State, a jihadist group, as did the main suspect, a 19-year-old Austrian with North Macedonian roots already in custody. He has apparently made a full confession.

Junts per Catalunya, a [Catalan separatist party](#), said it would reconsider its parliamentary support for **Spain's** central government. In July Spain's Supreme Court upheld arrest warrants for the organisers of a referendum for Catalanian independence in 2017, despite the passing of an amnesty law in May. **Carles Puigdemont**, an organiser of that referendum, briefly returned to Spain on Friday after seven years in exile, despite the warrant for his arrest.

Britain's prime minister, Sir Keir Starmer, said that the government would review the Online Safety Act, passed in 2023, after falsehoods online fuelled [far-right riots](#) across the country. Sadiq Khan, London's mayor, said the law was "not fit for purpose". Sir Keir reportedly told police to "stay on high alert" for the possibility of further thuggery this weekend.

In a joint statement America, Egypt and Qatar called for more **Gaza** ceasefire talks between **Israel** and **Hamas** on August 15th. Israel said it would send a delegation to Doha on August 15th, but Hamas is yet to respond. On Tuesday the militant group chose [Yahya Sinwar](#), the architect of the October 7th attacks, as its new leader. His appointment makes a ceasefire less likely.

Figure of the day: 450%, the increase in the amount of time that Americans spend listening to podcasts over the past decade. [Read](#)

the full story.

In the run-up to America's presidential election, we've launched [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 relics in China's economy



With their drone deliveries, fancy payment apps and profusion of electric vehicles, Chinese cities can resemble the future. But in macroeconomic terms, the country is a [remnant of the past](#). Several economists think it suffers from “secular stagnation”, a term from the 1930s that was also applied to America in the 2010s. The condition comprises a chronic shortfall of demand that results in subpar growth, low interest rates and low inflation.

Figures released on Friday showed that consumer prices in China rose by 0.5% in July, compared with a year ago—slightly more than expected, in part because weather disrupted food supplies. The central bank cut its policy interest rates last month. But it is also trying to prevent long-term bond yields falling too low. This mixed strategy (propping up long rates while cutting short ones) is reminiscent of the yield-curve control introduced in Japan in 2016. When it comes to monetary policy, China is also a bit behind the times.

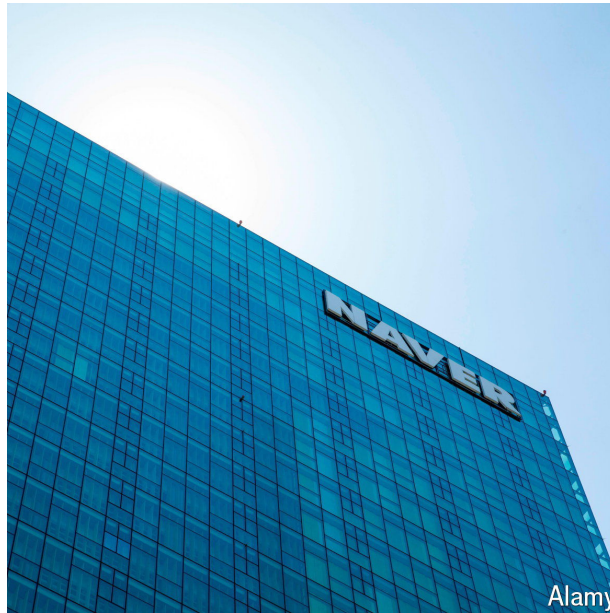
Co-operation in the South China Sea



Vietnamese and Philippine coast-guard ships held their first-ever joint exercises near Manila on Friday. They were a sign of a shift in the relationship between Vietnam and the Philippines, which are among the seven rival [claimants](#) to all or parts of the South China Sea. The two countries are setting aside their bilateral rivalry in the face of China's aggressive assertion of its own claims in the western Pacific. Those include claims to the South China Sea and the democratically governed island of Taiwan.

China, wary of war, deploys coast-guard ships to hound foreign vessels out of disputed waters without resorting to arms. Its neighbours, similarly wary, send coast-guard ships to resist passively. In the resulting grey-zone conflicts, the most dogged in their resistance are Vietnam and the Philippines. The joint manoeuvres were a chance for their respective coast guards to tap each other's front-line expertise.

Japan and South Korea's tech quarrel



A hacking incident has evolved into a feud between Japan and South Korea. In October personal data of hundreds of thousands of users on Line, Japan's most popular messaging app, were leaked. In a rare move, the Japanese government called on Line Yahoo (LY), the app's operator, to review its ownership structure, currently run by a 50-50 joint venture between SoftBank, a Japanese tech investor, and Naver, a South Korean internet giant. Naver—which reported strong second-quarter results on Friday, with net profit rising by 16%—controls much of Line's technology. Japanese authorities accuse the South Korean firm of mismanagement and want SoftBank and LY to cut ties with it.

South Korea's government promised a robust response to any “unfair” measures against Naver. Still, Line's ownership looks set to change eventually. SoftBank plans to increase its stake in LY in the medium-to-long term, eventually turning Line into a “homegrown platform”. And last month LY told Japanese authorities that it aims to “completely separate” its systems from Naver by 2026.

A beach-side protest in Italy



Much of Italy's coastline is in effect the private property of those who hold concessions to run beach-side establishments. They monopolise the beachfront with rows of reclining chairs and umbrellas, depriving the public of free access. On Friday, however, many holders of such concessions will set out their loungers two hours later than usual. They are protesting against the EU's demands for competition in the sector. The issue has become a struggle for the soul of [Europe's free-market economy](#).

After years of government delays, some franchises will be put out to tender by the end of 2024. The concessionaires want the government to clarify which are at risk and to provide compensation to those who lose out. The current licence-holders are barely scraping a living—at least, according to their tax returns. Figures published this week showed that in 2022 they declared annual earnings of just €26,000 (\$27,000) on average. If the latest protest doesn't work, the concessionaires are threatening longer stoppages later this month.

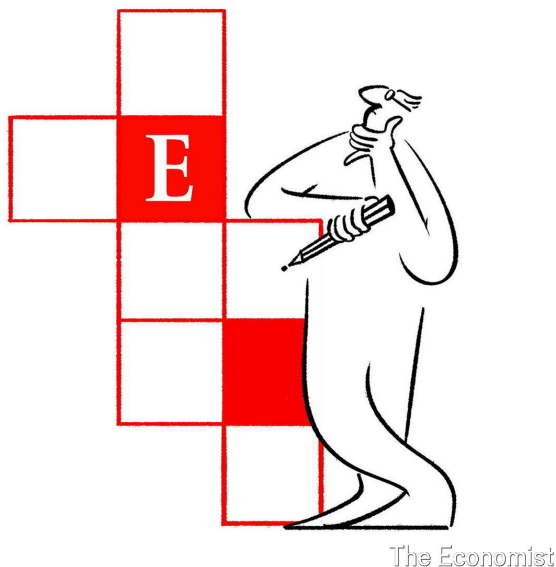
Professional bull-riding in New York



The arena of the Barclays Center normally hosts the Brooklyn Nets, a basketball team. But this weekend it will be covered with dirt for the debut outing of the New York Mavericks, a new franchise in the Professional Bull Riding Teams league.

PBR has hosted events since 1992, including in New York. But it introduced teams only in 2022. The format turns the loneliest of challenges, in which a rider has one shot to hold onto a bucking bull for eight seconds, into a collective affair. Teams of five riders compete against other squads to win games across two consecutive evenings. The goal is to make bull riding appealing to the average sports fan. It seems to be working. About 1m people watch PBR Teams events on television, and franchise value is growing fast. The first eight franchises were sold to investors for around \$3m. The Mavericks were sold two years later for around \$23m.

The winners of this week's crossword



Thank you to everyone who took part in our weekly crossword, published in the weekend edition of Espresso. The winners, chosen at random, were:

Brian Moss, Marlborough, Britain

Thierry Rajaobelina, Montpellier, France

Anjana Seshadri, Mumbai, India

They all gave the correct answers of breakdancing, Beirut, drugs, and genome. Check back tomorrow for this week's crossword.

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.

Friday: Who composed the widely used “wedding march” and the Hebrides Overture?

Thursday: Which singer had a disco hit with the song “You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)”?

450%

The increase in the amount of time that Americans spend listening to podcasts over the past decade.

[Read the full story](#)

**Art is the contemplation of the world in a
state of grace**

Hermann Hesse