

Catch up: Putin rejects full ceasefire; Israel strikes Gaza



Russia launched missile and drone strikes on **Ukraine**, hours after Vladimir Putin agreed with Donald Trump to halt attacks on the country's energy system. The strikes hit a civilian hospital in Sumy in northern Ukraine. [During his call with America's president](#), Mr Putin rejected the idea of a 30-day ceasefire. Still, the White House said negotiations on a ceasefire and permanent peace would start "immediately".

Israeli strikes on **Gaza** killed at least ten people, according to Palestinian officials, as **Israel's** [renewed offensive](#) continued. On Tuesday a large Israeli aerial attack killed at least 400 people, shattering hopes of extending a fragile ceasefire with Hamas. **Binyamin Netanyahu**, Israel's prime minister, warned those strikes were "just the beginning" and said future talks would be conducted "only under fire".

Police in **Turkey** arrested **Ekrem Imamoglu**, [Istanbul's mayor](#), days before he was set to be named as an opposition candidate to rival President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. State media reported the

arrest was related to corruption and terrorism; Mr Imamoglu's party called it a "coup". The next presidential election is not scheduled until 2028, but the opposition hopes to force an early vote.

Japan's central bank left its short-term policy interest rate unchanged at 0.5%. The Bank of Japan warned of "high uncertainties", saying rising rice costs would [push up inflation](#) while the "evolving situation regarding trade" could hurt the economy. Japan's rates are at their highest level in 17 years.

Afghanistan and **Pakistan** agreed to reopen one of their main border crossings after its closure for almost one month. A disagreement over Afghanistan's construction of a border post at the Torkham crossing sparked the dispute, which led to [several clashes](#) between Pakistani and Taliban forces. Trade across the border has now resumed; people are expected to be allowed to cross later this week.

Ben & Jerry's, an ice-cream brand, claimed that **Unilever**, the conglomerate that owns it, ousted its chief executive because of his political activism. In a court filing in New York it alleged that David Stever was fired not for poor performance, but for failing to bend to demands that Ben & Jerry's "silence the social mission". Unilever has not commented.

Two **NASA** astronauts returned to Earth after being stuck on the International Space Station for nine months. Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams were supposed to be in space for eight days, but they were stranded after technical glitches with the Boeing Starliner capsule that had carried them there. They returned in a [SpaceX](#) Dragon capsule, which splashed down off the coast of Florida.

Figure of the day: Nearly 3m, the number of Britons aged between 16 and 64 who are not working because of poor health. [Read the full story.](#)

The Fed's Trumpian challenge



The Federal Reserve has a tricky balancing act. Donald Trump's tariffs may cause inflation, which would normally call for higher interest rates. At the same time, hefty tariffs will weaken growth, which would normally call for lower rates. On Wednesday Fed officials will signal which they see as the bigger risk. For now, however, they are highly unlikely to change policy: investors and analysts expect the central bank to hold interest rates at the current level of 4.25-4.5%.

But the central bankers will indicate which way policy is likely to go. On Wednesday they are due to publish quarterly projections for interest rates, GDP, inflation and unemployment. Before Mr Trump took office they had predicted that lower inflation would allow for a gradual reduction of interest rates. Now, they may again forecast gradual rate cuts, but for a more worrisome reason: to prop up a [sagging economy](#).

Welfare cuts spark anger at Starmer



Sir Keir Starmer has recently had an easy time of it at Prime Minister's Questions, a weekly debate with the leader of the opposition in Britain's Parliament. Kemi Badenoch, leader of the Conservative Party, has struggled to land blows—to the frustration of many in her party.

But the prime minister faced a difficult session on Wednesday. Welfare cuts, announced on Tuesday, have set off the most serious infighting in his Labour Party since it took power in July. The government says they will save £5bn (\$6.5bn) a year by combining assessment for different sorts of benefits for people with illness or disability and tightening eligibility. Curbing Britain's [disastrous rise in worklessness](#) was certainly necessary: nearly 1m more working-age people are not in the workforce because of ill health than was the case on the eve of the pandemic. Still, Labour backbenchers are angry. How successfully Sir Keir quells dissent will reveal the strength of his grip on the party.

Economic wins but political trouble for Milei



Economists expect that Argentina's economy grew by 1.7% in the last quarter of 2024 year on year, ending six quarters of contraction. Meanwhile other forecasts predict strong growth in 2025 following a decline in GDP last year. The official yearly figures for 2024 are released on Wednesday. President Javier Milei has slashed government spending, which hurt growth in the short-term. But consistent fiscal and trade surpluses, and slowing inflation, may be reversing the trend.

Still, Mr Milei faces problems. He will have to push a deal with the IMF through Congress by decree, a tactic he recently used to appoint two unpopular nominees to the Supreme Court. A Congressional investigation into the president, for promoting a [scam cryptocurrency](#), will probably begin soon. And last week police violently repressed a pensioners' protest against his spending cuts. A video of an 87-year-old woman collapsing after being hit with a baton went viral; the public took note.

Russia's charm offensive in India



Russia appeared keen to please the hosts of the Raisina Dialogue, India's premier geopolitics conference, which ends on Wednesday. Ahead of the event, the Kremlin paid for billboards across Delhi emblazoned with images of Narendra Modi, India's prime minister, and Russia's president, Vladimir Putin. The pair are "side by side" in "driving global change", they proclaimed.

There's no denying that the countries are [getting closer](#). In December India and Russia signed their biggest-ever energy agreement, worth \$13bn a year. India views Russia as helpful to its prosperity and security—and as a linchpin of its "multi-aligned" foreign policy. The West once viewed that approach to geopolitics with suspicion. But Donald Trump's overtures to Mr Putin could yet embolden India and Russia to strengthen their ties even more.

A murder mystery in the White House



Paul William Davies was stumped. Shonda Rhimes, a powerhouse television producer, had given the writer a copy of “The Residence” to consider for adaptation. He found the book about the White House’s staff “fascinating”, but was not sure how to turn it into a show. Then, watching TV one day, he saw the chief usher testifying before a Senate committee and referring to a floor plan. Mr Davies remembers thinking: “Oh, it’s a ‘Clue’ board.” The idea of a murder mystery set in 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue took hold.

“The Residence”, a mini-series, is released on Netflix this week. The murder in question takes place during a state dinner for Australia’s prime minister. Cordelia Cupp (Uzo Aduba), a wry detective, is brought in to investigate. The show is either brilliantly, or terribly, timed. Some will run a mile from anything even remotely connected to American politics. Others will enjoy a bit of mayhem in the world’s most famous building.

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: Olivia Colman won an Oscar for playing Queen Anne in which 2018 film?

Tuesday: How is Haydn's 45th symphony generally known?

**The great secret of power is never to will
to do more than you can accomplish.**

Henrik Ibsen