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Bloomberg

Evening Briefing

Europe Edition

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European diplomats [travelled to Damascus](#) today in an effort to build ties with Syria's de-facto leader, Ahmed Al-Sharaa, and try to coax him into cutting ties with Russia. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock and her French counterpart, Jean Noël Barrot, led the mission. They're the highest-ranking Western officials to go to Syria since al-Sharaa's Islamist group, Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, or HTS, [ousted](#) Syrian President Bashar al-Assad last month. Europe could potentially lift sanctions and offer Syria assistance in reconstructing its war-torn economy. In return, the bloc would like HTS to help manage the return of [millions of Syrian refugees](#) stuck in Europe. [Some leaders](#) are also demanding that Syria end its military base agreement with Russia before improving ties. Baerbock said the EU wants to help Syria achieve "an inclusive, peaceful transfer of power" and with reconstruction efforts. She acknowledged it will be "a rocky road." [--Jonathan Tirone](#)

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What You Need to Know Today

Elon Musk's interference in UK politics prompted British conservatives to contact allies of President-elect Donald Trump, warning his team not to act on the billionaire Tesla founder's policy advice. Several prominent [Brexit-supporting politicians](#) with links to Trump spent Thursday warning their Republican counterparts against following Musk's endorsement of a British [far-right](#) activist, according to people familiar with the conversations. Musk — who is set to play a key role in Trump's incoming administration — began 2025 with a [volley](#) of posts on his social media platform X stating that Tommy Robinson, whose real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, should be freed from jail, where he is serving a sentence after pleading guilty to contempt of court last year.

China's yuan weakened past a level that Beijing had been defending throughout December, opening up room for the managed [currency to drop further](#) amid a sluggish economy. The currency breached the psychological milestone of 7.3 per dollar for the first time since late 2023, amid concerns over China's economic struggles and a widening bond yield discount to the US. The break may signal that China, the European Union's second-biggest [trading partner](#), is looking to accommodate mounting growth pressures through a weaker currency.

Europeans face freezing temperatures and snow, poised to boost heating demand and pile more pressure on the region's [depleting gas inventories](#). Northeast France and northwest Germany are on alert for precipitation and ice. [Snow is likely to get heavier](#) in the north through Friday, while isolated wintry showers are forecast further south. [Alpine ski resorts](#) are poised to benefit from the weather.



Skiers ski down a slope of the Italian ski resort of Sestriere, Piedmont *Photographer: MARCO BERTORELLO/Getty Images*

Russia is moving to restrict online images and maps showing one of the country's oil refineries in an effort to [protect the crucial infrastructure](#) from Ukrainian drone attacks. A Moscow court ordered Russia's [leading online search engine](#), Yandex, to block access to maps and images of the facility, which has been attacked multiple times by drones, according to court documents. Ukrainian has repeatedly attacked [Russian energy installations](#).

Lazard was hired by Canyon Bridge Capital Partners to find a [buyer for chip designer](#) Imagination Technologies, according to people familiar with its plans. The private equity firm with ties to Chinese state investors believes it can get more than the £550 million (\$681 million) it paid for Imagination in 2017, according to the people. Investor [interest in chipmakers surged](#) in 2024 as AI-computing requirements drove new demand. Imagination designs are used by companies including Texas Instruments and Alphabet's Google.

Super-hybrid automobiles built by the likes of Mercedes and Toyota are being marketed to consumers curious about the [virtues of electric vehicles](#) but still skeptical over their range. The cars are designed to drive about 50 miles (80 kilometres) on a single charge — a range covering the vast majority of most people’s daily journeys — before their internal combustion motors kick in. Hybrids are still seen as only an intermediate technology. Fully electric vehicles have [proved far more popular](#) and most auto executives expect them to completely take over the industry: it’s just a question of how soon.



Mercedes GLC 350e *Photographer: Mercedes*

Not too long ago, it looked like people were in the middle of a great [American food revolution](#). Ever since the pandemic, when stuck-at-home consumers found themselves noshing all day on comfort foods, snacking has looked like the future of the American diet. About 86% of people surveyed in November 2023 said they were snacking as much as or more than they did the year before. Last year, 22% of

[consumers snack](#) three or more times a day. “People are kind of eating nonstop,” says *Bloomberg Intelligence* analyst Jennifer Bartashus.

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If the post-holidays chill has you pining for palm trees and island bliss, here's a bit of good news: 2025 has lots of new resorts to deliver on your castaway fantasies, in nearly every corner of the world. Caribbean hideaways, restored fincas in the Balearics, sumptuous overwater villas in up-and-coming Bahrain, and an Australian island resort close to the Great Barrier Reef: [There's an easy escape to be had no matter where you live](#). What they all have in common is an embrace of culture and nature, helping guests enjoy far more than the local beaches.



Twinpalms Bangtao Phuket Tented Resort *Source: Twinpalms Bangtao Phuket Tented Resort*

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