

US doesn't have a wealth creation monopoly

RUCHIR SHARMA, PAGE 15

How to switch work off during holidays

WORK & CAREERS, PAGE 10

Energy boom
Spain burnt
by solar glut

Photovoltaic panels have been the building blocks of a solar power boom in Spain – but the country's support for renewables, plus its abundant sunshine, have created an energy glut.

At some points in the year as much as 60 per cent of Spain's electricity comes from the sun, pushing down both prices and operators' profits.

Spanish prime minister Pedro Sanchez calls his country a "global benchmark" in the transition to carbon-free energy, and has offered stalwart support for renewables. But power companies and investors say the boom has gone too far, too fast.

A sharp slowdown in new projects is forecast for next year, while M&A activity has shifted to fire sales of assets. Solar projects which sold for €200,000 per megawatt two years ago are now on the market for €28,000-€39,000.

Big Read page 13



Bloomberg Creative

Briefing

► **Smotrich says Netanyahu plan not aggressive enough** Israeli finance minister Bezalel Smotrich has said he has "lost faith" that the premier can win a "decisive victory" in Gaza, after the security cabinet agreed to expand the offensive into the enclave. — PAGE 2, FT VIEW, PAGE 14

► **Big oil steps up drilling** The world's leading oil companies have intensified their hunt for oil and gas reserves, as a slower than expected transition to clean energy implies fossil fuel demand for decades to come. — PAGE 5

► **New Nvidia China licences** The US commerce department has started issuing licences for the chip group to export specially designed H20 chips to China, after chief Jensen Huang met Donald Trump last week. — PAGE 4

► **US consumers stay home** Cost-conscious Americans have taken to staying home to eat as they worry about a slowing economy and stubbornly high prices. Leading restaurant chains are warning of a sales fall. — PAGE 7

► **Rolls-Royce pension shift** The engineering group has agreed to transfer its pension obligations to Pension Insurance Corporation as it becomes the latest British company to shift liabilities off its balance sheet. — PAGE 5

► **Swiss target gold industry** Switzerland's failure to negotiate lower tariffs with US President Donald Trump has sparked a national debate over the role of its gold industry, with calls for it to pay for the "damage". — PAGE 4

► **Brazil fears more tariffs** Lawmakers in the second biggest agricultural exporter say their fear additional US tariffs as Brazil has been a big buyer of Russian diesel and fertiliser since the war in Ukraine began. — PAGE 2

► **Global rice prices tumble** Record harvests and the ending of export bans in India have flooded the market with supply, pushing prices to their lowest in eight years and dealing a blow to many farmers across Asia. — PAGE 5

Europe urges US to raise sanctions heat on Putin ahead of Ukraine war summit

◆ Alaska talks set for Friday ◆ Allies seek Zelenskyy's attendance ◆ Trump land swap plan under fire

ANNE-SYLVIA CHASSANY — BERLIN
PAULA TAMM — BRUSSELS
CHRISTOPHER MILLER — NEW YORK

European leaders are pressing Washington to ratchet up sanctions pressure on Moscow as they race to shape the outcome of a meeting between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin that could determine the fate of Ukraine and the long-term security of the continent.

As the US president and his Russian counterpart prepare for talks in Alaska on Friday, European capitals have been rushing to forge a united front over the format and substance of a meeting that could be a turning point in the war.

At a summit this weekend, hosted by UK foreign minister David Lammy and attended by US vice-president JD Vance, European and Ukrainian security advisers

argued Washington should apply pressure on Russia through sanctions threats, according to several officials in attendance or briefed on the talks.

"Putin only acts under pressure," German chancellor Friedrich Merz said yesterday. "Clearly the military pressure is not strong enough, and US sanctions haven't yet been applied. If they were, the impact on the Russian economy would be significant. I've been urging the US president to do that."

'If [US sanctions were applied], the impact on Russia would be significant'

German chancellor Friedrich Merz

Merz added that the Alaska meeting must yield tangible results, "either in the direction of increasing pressure on Russia, or that Russia realises of its own accord that this war cannot go on".

European officials have argued that any future ceasefire agreement should be enforced with tough sanctions for violations, ensuring that Russia cannot bank economic benefits from peace before resuming the war.

Vance yesterday described the planned meeting as a "major breakthrough for American diplomacy", saying the push was to find a negotiated settlement "where the killing stops". He told Fox News: "Both the Russians and the Ukrainians probably at the end of the day are going to be unhappy with it."

Vance also warned Europe the US

would no longer be funding Ukraine as it had. "If you care so much about this conflict, you should be willing to play a more direct and more substantial [part] in funding this war yourself," he said.

Europeans are looking at frozen Russian sovereign assets as a point of leverage, with Brussels floating the idea of using the assets to fund Ukraine, two EU officials said.

One proposal under discussion would involve borrowing the cash accumulated at the Belgian clearing house Euroclear on the €190bn of assets, and lending it to Ukraine.

Europeans have been pushing for Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to attend the Alaska meeting, Merz said. With Trump intent on discussing possible territorial concessions with

Putin, Europeans have demanded strong security guarantees that Ukraine should be part of any settlement. "Security guarantees are of the utmost importance for Ukraine," said an EU official.

Europeans warned against exchanges of territory, an idea floated by Trump last week, fearing it would amount to Ukraine ceding land. Europeans have argued instead that the current front line should be the starting point.

"The Russian position is framed as a territorial swap, but it appears as a rather one-sided swap," said the EU official.

In Kyiv, senior officials voiced concerns that Trump may try to pressure Zelenskyy into accepting a deal. Additional reporting by Stefania Palma
What Putin wants page 3

Sanctioned oil trader sues corporate spooks over alleged 'smear campaign'

TOM WILSON — LONDON

The only European sanctioned for trading Russian oil has used a US corporate intelligence firm for libel and slander, accusing the New York group of spreading disinformation on behalf of its former business partner.

The lawsuit is the latest twist in a bitter dispute between Dutch trader Niels Troost and his erstwhile partner Gaurav Srivastava, whom Troost has accused of having claimed falsely that he was a covert operative with the CIA in order to defraud him.

The Financial Times reported last year that Srivastava had promised to use his US intelligence connections to secure Troost a licence from the US Treasury to allow his company to legally trade with Russia after its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Srivastava denies having claimed to work with the CIA, and he hired New York-headquartered Arkin Group to help him counter the allegations.

The lawsuit alleges that Arkin Group, founded by CIA veteran Jack Devine, acted with "actual malice" by carrying out an "unrelenting and devastating smear campaign".

In March, Victoria Kataoka, a managing director at Arkin, appeared on a podcast alongside Srivastava in which she accused Troost of creating a "well developed and expertly designed... disinformation campaign" involving a "shiny... sexy fake spy story".

Arkin and Kataoka "manufactured and spread" an "untrue and defamatory claim", the lawsuit says.

It adds that they had disregarded "credible evidence refuting Srivastava's claims", which it says included "Srivastava's publicly documented history of fraud".

When the FT reported in December that Srivastava had claimed to be a CIA operative in order to acquire half of Troost's oil trading company, Srivastava called the account a "fiction" and repeatedly accused Troost of lying.

Troost was sanctioned last year by both the UK and the EU after the FT reported that his company, Paramount Energy and Commodities, had continued to trade Russian crude at prices above a G7-backed cap.

Troost alleges in the lawsuit that Srivastava defrauded him of at least \$25m, an allegation Srivastava has previously denied.

Srivastava did not respond to requests for comment. Devine said he "looks forward to the truth coming out through the US legal system".



Indian outsource groups rue late arrival to AI party

India is a latecomer to AI innovation, despite having leading IT companies and one of the world's largest pools of software engineering talent. While its tech industry generated \$284bn in annual revenues, cutbacks in the sector are predicted as clients turn to AI to trim spending. As one analyst observes: 'They're riding the wave of AI, but not planning heavily for a scenario where the wave actually disrupts them or their business model.'

Playing catch-up ► PAGE 6

Subscribe In print and online

www.ft.com/subscribe
Tel: 1800 028 8088For the latest news go to
www.ft.com© THE FINANCIAL TIMES LTD 2025
No. 42,017 ★

Printed in London, Liverpool, Glasgow, Dublin, Frankfurt, Milan, Madrid, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore, Seoul, Dubai



World Markets

STOCK MARKETS	Aug 8				CURRENCIES				GOVERNMENT BONDS			
	Aug 8	Aug 7	Prev.	%Chg	Aug 8	Aug 7	Aug 1	%Chg	Yield (%)	Aug 8	Aug 7	%Chg
S&P 500	6362.14	6340.90	0.06	0.0%	\$/£	1.106	1.108	0.00	US 2 yr	3.76	3.72	0.04
Nasdaq Composite	7147.28	7142.70	0.02	0.0%	\$/¥	1.344	1.326	0.2%	US 10 yr	4.28	4.23	0.05
Dow Jones Ind.	44130.39	43999.64	0.3%	0.0%	\$/€	0.867	0.871	0.0%	US 30 yr	4.86	4.79	0.07
FTSE 100	7165.65	7160.29	0.2%	0.0%	\$/₹	147.825	148.095	0.0%	UK 2 yr	3.82	3.80	0.03
MSCI World	5203.52	5202.07	0.0%	0.0%	€/¥	198.656	198.456	0.0%	UK 10 yr	4.68	4.63	0.05
FTSE 100	9085.73	9100.77	-0.06	0.0%	\$/₹	0.941	0.932	0.0%	UK 30 yr	5.43	5.35	0.07
FTSE All-Share	4593.17	4594.57	-0.04	0.0%								
MSCI EM	7743.00	7702.32	0.4%	0.0%								
Xetra Dax	24182.86	24192.50	-0.12	0.0%								
Nikkei	41820.48	41959.15	1.8%	0.0%								
Hang Seng	24849.82	25001.83	0.6%	0.0%								
MSCI World	4098.08	4092.36	0.1%	0.0%								
MSCI EM	1260.46	1244.43	1.2%	0.0%								
MSCI ACWI	526.47	523.23	0.2%	0.0%								
FT Worldex 2000	8142.71	8148.12	-0.06	0.0%								
FT Worldex 5000	62683.70	62515.70	0.0%	0.0%								
COMMODITIES		Aug 8		Prev.	Aug 8		Aug 1	%Chg				
BITCOIN		116082.00		116180.00	0.0%							
BITCOIN		3963.70		3938.26	0.0%							
BITCOIN		64.15		62.44	2.8%							
BITCOIN		66.83		69.71	-4.1%							
BITCOIN		3383.75		3298.85	2.5%							

Prices are latest for action
Data provided by MorningstarGOODWOOD
REVIVAL

12 • 13 • 14 SEPTEMBER

TICKETS AND HOSPITALITY NOW ON SALE

GOODWOOD.COM

INTERNATIONAL

Military offensive

Gaza war plan will fail, says Israeli minister

Far-right Smotrich says he has lost faith that PM can achieve 'decisive victory'

NERI ZILBER – TEL AVIV

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said he had "lost faith" that Benjamin Netanyahu could achieve a "decisive victory" in Gaza, days after the country's security cabinet agreed to expand the military offensive in the shattered enclave.

Smotrich, an ultranationalist and key member of the governing coalition, said Netanyahu of conducting an "about-face" after having promised this time to "go all the way", and criticised

the premier for leaving open the possibility of a ceasefire-for-hostages deal with Palestinian militant group Hamas, in a blistering three-minute video on Saturday.

Smotrich said he had remained in government "as long as I believed we were driving for decisive victory", but that he had now "lost faith that the prime minister can and wishes to lead the [Israeli military] there".

The veteran premier has come under pressure from his far-right allies, including Smotrich and national security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, for more hardline policies throughout the Gaza war. While the statements on Saturday were the most expansive to date by the finance minister, he did not explicitly

threaten to resign or bring down Netanyahu's government. Netanyahu in a press conference yesterday rejected the criticism of his war plan, saying that "contrary to what has been said, this is the best way to end the war, and the best way to end it quickly".

While Smotrich has attempted to outflank Netanyahu from the right, the premier's decision to expand the offensive against Hamas in Gaza has been heavily criticised as reckless both at home and abroad.

Netanyahu's security cabinet ordered the Israeli military to begin preparations to "take control of Gaza City" after a marathon session that lasted into Friday morning. The cabinet suggested that civilians sheltering in what was

once the enclave's largest population centre would be forced to evacuate. Yet the expanded military offensive could be delayed until early October to allow time to call up reserves, forcibly evacuate hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, and create the required humanitarian aid infrastructure.

Netanyahu yesterday maintained that the "timeline that we've set for action is fairly quickly".

Smotrich, who took part in the deliberations, had said the plan amounted to "launching a military operation that is not aimed at resolving the issue, but rather at putting pressure on Hamas to agree to a partial hostage deal". "That's not how you win a war," Smotrich added, highlighting an aggressive alter-

native plan – which he did not describe in detail – he claimed would lead to "a lightning fast military victory".

Smotrich and his far-right allies have publicly supported the full reoccupation of the entire Gaza Strip, the "voluntary" return of the territory's 2m people to undefined foreign countries, and the re-establishment of Israeli settlements across the enclave.

Netanyahu's governing coalition consists of the premier's Likud party, two far-right parties and two ultra-Orthodox factions. Despite the coalition troubles, political analysts remain sceptical that snap elections are likely. Elections are not formally meant to be held until the end of 2026. **See FT View**

Middle East. Sunni rule

Faith in Syria regime shaken by sectarian killing

Last month's clashes in Sweida have exposed the fragility of the post-Assad government

RAYA JALABI – BEIRUT

When Zain and dozens of other civil society activists staged a sit-in outside Damascus's shuttered parliament to protest against sectarian violence in southern Syria last month, they were first insulted by passers-by, then attacked.

Young men carrying wooden sticks descended upon the group, according to multiple people present, accusing them of defending "traitors" from Sweida's Druze community, which was embroiled in clashes with Sunni Bedouin tribes and government forces that killed hundreds of people.

"The youths who attacked us kept shouting 'We are not Syrians, we are tribes'," Zain said, describing how they tore up protesters' signs that included slogans such as "Syrian blood on Syrian hands is forbidden".

The 54-year-old was among the many who cautiously welcomed Sunni Islamist rebel leader Ahmed al-Sharaa in December, phoned at the ousting of dictator Bashar al-Assad and the opportunity to rebuild the shattered nation – even if she disagreed with Sharaa's ideology. But the jubilation that characterised those early days has been slowly replaced by sectarian tension and a burgeoning Sunni populism.

This has been subtly encouraged by the new Islamist rulers, who have sought to undermine faith by comparing their reign to that of Damascus's 18th-century Sunni Umayyad Dynasty, while their supporters have become less tolerant of criticism.

"Whereas in 2011, the masses backed the protesters," Zain said, referring to the popular uprising against Assad that led to the civil war, "today they are being misled".

Last month's violence in Sweida severely undermined the cautious faith many Syrians had placed in Sharaa. The national mood has instead darkened, leaving many – including Sunnis, who make up about two-thirds of the 25m population – asking whether Sharaa will foster unity or sectarian strife. Syria's patchwork of ethnic and religious groups, which include other Mus-



Southern violence a gunman stands in front of burning grass as clashes between an alliance of Bedouin Arabs and tribal forces and armed Druze factions flared up in Sweida in July

lims, Druze and Christians, were often pitted against each other during 50 years of brutal minority rule under the Assad, themselves part of the Shia offshoot Alawite sect. Sunni rebels formed the backbone of the revolt that started in 2011, and many Sunnis were forced either to submit to the regime or flee during the war. This power dynamic has reversed dramatically since Assad's ousting by Sharaa, Syria's first Sunni leader in decades. Sharaa, whose rebel group was once a former al-Qaeda affiliate, has promised to protect minority rights and govern inclusively. But analysts say he has done little to dampen the growing sense of Sunni nationalism, in part because it is a useful tool with which to placate his base.

"It gives Sharaa's Islamist project a more national bent and endears him to the streets, who have long awaited Sunni rule," said Malik al-Abdellah, a London-based Syrian analyst.

The more extreme elements in Sharaa's base view other sects and religions as heretics, while his former rebel group, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham – veterans

of which make up the core of Syria's security forces – had a history of abuses against Christians and Druze.

Some minorities increasingly fear they are vulnerable. "We feel that they are the victors, that they are not only the majority but also now powerful rulers," said Amal Georges, a 56-year-old Christian shopkeeper in Damascus. "All of my Sunni friends, they're ignoring the shop staff this government is doing because they don't want to give up on this sense of victory," she said. "So as minorities, we are being made to feel like we are their subjects and that we have to walk on eggshells around them and they will punish us."

The first major flare-up came in March, when clashes between government forces and pro-Assad Alawite forces in coastal regions spiralled into killings of civilians in which more than 1,400 people died. The government, eager to restore confidence, ordered an investigation into the violence. It later concluded some state security forces participated in mass atrocities.

National outrage was limited in part because of the involvement of Alawite

'Sunnis feel that they are the victors, that they are not only the majority but also now powerful rulers'

insurgents still seen as supporters of the Assad regime. But many Syrians are finding it harder to overlook the killings in Sweida.

Government forces, sent in to quell the violence, were accused of participating in reprisal killings against the Druze. Israel in turn launched strikes against Sharaa's security forces in the name of defending the minority, further inflaming divisions and mistrust.

Druze residents told the Financial Times that sectarian killings of civilians were rampant, particularly following the arrival of Sunni tribes from other parts of the country to defend their Bedouin brethren.

One video from Sweida shows what appear to be government fighters asking a bloodied man on the ground if he is Druze or Sunni. The man replies only that he is Syrian – an answer that leads to him being shot dead.

"I have been a fan of Sharaa's and as a Sunni, I am proud of what he's been trying to do. But that video broke my faith in him a bit," said Abdallah Omar, a 24-year-old university student in Aleppo. "The US says it to be the main source of his fault completely – but he is showing that he cannot control his own people or he actually here to make Syria better? I don't know anymore."

Sharaa's government has tried to win back support, condemning the reported violations and announcing an investigation into the violence conducted after the massacres in March.

He also announced parliamentary elections will take place in September, with one-third of the 210 seats allocated to him – including for areas not currently under government control such as Sweida and the Kurdish north – east. But more violence last week – such as clashes between government fighters and Kurdish-led forces – has further derailed efforts to unify the country.

For some Syrians it is too late. Hosam, a 52-year-old Druze teacher, marked for months with members of Sweida's secular movement to call for more inclusive governance, including free and fair elections, a national dialogue and a constitution. "They refused everything," Hosam said.

"We are Syrians . . . But today, we cannot accept that these terrorists are governing us from Damascus. If we deal with them, it means we will sign our death warrants. And that is impossible."

Tax rises

Romania returns to austerity in battle against high deficit

MARTON DUNAI – SOUTH-EAST EUROPE CORRESPONDENT

Austerity measures that stoked public anger and led to the collapse of governments across Europe over a decade ago are making a comeback in Romania, where officials seek to rein in a record deficit.

Finance minister Alexandru Nazare told the Financial Times that a first set of tax rises and spending freezes came into force on August 1, with two more packages planned for later this year – despite protests in part sparked by the far-right opposition.

"Of course it is not easy," Nazare said, adding that the coalition government was committed to passing all necessary measures. "We are all fully aware of the current state of the budget."

At 9.5 per cent of GDP, Romania's public deficit was the highest in the EU in 2024, well above the 5 per cent threshold prescribed in the bloc's fiscal rules. The previous government, however, was reluctant to adopt any belt-tightening measures in the run-up to elections last year. Austerity measures remain deeply

unpopular after the country passed one of the harshest sets of spending cuts and tax rises in Europe in the wake of the sovereign debt crisis.

In 2024, the government in Bucharest collapsed amid anti-austerity protests, echoing similar events in Greece, Portugal and Ireland. This time, the Romanian government is seeking to stagger the measures.

Still, hundreds of protesters took to the streets of Bucharest and other cities earlier this summer, with far-right AUR party leader George Simion calling for early elections and vowing to "refuse paying taxes" levied by what he described as an "illegitimate government".

The August 1 package includes an increase in the top VAT bracket from 19 per cent to 21 per cent, as well as higher excise duties. Any increases to public sector wages and pensions are after until 2026. But the more difficult measures, including overhauling the governance of state-owned companies and slashing generous pensions and other perks for former government officials, are yet to be agreed. Romania's economic fundamentals remain challenging: all three major rat-

ing agencies have downgraded it to just one notch above non-investment grade – or "junk status" – because of the country's rapidly ballooning debt and high inflation.

GDP expanded just 0.5 per cent in the second quarter, with the central bank warning that growth is likely to slow down even further as inflation forces it to keep the key interest rate at 6.5 per cent. The economic malaise was compounded by a months-long political crisis after the constitutional court in December cancelled a presidential election due to alleged Russian interference.

Brics nations

Brazil fears extra US tariffs over Russian diesel purchases

MICHAEL STODOL – RIO DE JANEIRO
MICHAEL POGGER AND
REUTZ LANGELLA – SÃO PAULO

Brazil, the world's second-biggest agricultural exporter, is braced for additional punitive US tariffs because it has been one of the largest buyers of Russian diesel and fertiliser since the war in Ukraine. It is enjoying hundreds of millions of dollars in discounts on its fuel purchases.

President Donald Trump has already imposed 50 per cent duties on most Brazilian goods to press his demands that Brazil halt the trial of his far-right ally Jair Bolsonaro on coup charges and ease off on regulating US social media companies.

But after Trump raised tariffs on India, the biggest market for Russian crude since 2023, and ordered officials to monitor other countries' purchases of Moscow's oil products with a view to additional duties, Brazilian politicians and business leaders believe the country could be the next target.

"The latest sanctions on India confirm what could happen to Brazil," said Carlos Viana, one of a group of Brazilian senators who travelled to Washington last month to discuss the "purchase of large quantities of diesel [from Russia] and most of the fertilisers used in Brazilian agricultural production."

Trade between Brazil and Russia, its partner in the Brics bloc of emerging nations, has more than doubled over the past five years, reaching \$12.4bn in 2024.

Sérgio Araújo, head of Brazil's fuel importers' association Abicom, said there was a threat of more US tariffs. "Russia is an important supplier of a product [diesel] which we are highly dependent on," he said. Brazil imports at least a quarter of its diesel, which powers the trucks moving goods around the vast country, as well as tractors and machinery on its farms. The US says it to be the main source of diesel imports, but after Russia invaded Ukraine and the EU imposed sanctions, an opportunity opened up to buy diesel more cheaply from Moscow, anyone

Discounts of up to 30 per cent were initially offered to Brazilian buyers by Russia, according to a senior industry source, and they responded eagerly.

Brazil's diesel imports from Russia shot up from \$95m in 2022, the year the war began, to \$4.5bn the next year and \$5.4bn last year. This made Brazil the world's second-biggest buyer of Russian diesel after Turkey, oil experts said.

Alan Gledits, vice-president of refining, chemicals and oil markets at Wood Mackenzie, said: "We estimate that the discounted Russian barrels provided Brazil annual savings of over \$500m in 2023 and more than \$400m in 2024. Now Russian diesel imports have resumed. Brazil's position has been significantly reduced."

Brazil's position with the US is further complicated because it already supports a 50 per cent tariff on Russian oil. After Trump's 50 per cent rate came into effect on Wednesday, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has refused to speak to the US leader, saying he does not want to suffer "humiliation".

MAKE A WISE INVESTMENT

Subscribe today at ft.com/subscribe today

FINANCIAL TIMES
330 Hudson Street,
New York, NY 10013

Subscriptions and Customer Service
FT Publications Ltd
circulation@ft.com, www.ft.com/help
Advertising
Tel: +1 212 904 0500
usinfo@ft.com
Letters to the editor
letters@ft.com
Executive appointments
executive@ft.com

Published by
Bluebird Newspaper Printing, Harrow, UK
Evergreen Printing Company, Baltimore, MD
Bay Area Production Services, Fremont, CA

Printed by Bluebird Newspaper Printing, Harrow, UK

Published daily except Sundays, New Year's Day,

Good Friday, Independence Day, Thanksgiving,
the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Day and the day
after Christmas Day.

US subscription rates, 1 year \$406. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY and at additional mailing offices. Post-Master: Send address changes to FT Publications Inc, PO Box 446, Newburgh, NY 12551. USPS number: 7050-60. GST# R123074670. For both services phone +44 20 7873 4888, or alternatively, email syndication@ft.com

Reprints are available of any FT article with your company logo or contact details inserted (your minimum order 100 copies). One-off copy reprints are available for reproduction of FT articles are also available. For both services phone +44 20 7873 4888, or alternatively, email syndication@ft.com



Alexandru Nazare: "We are all fully aware of the state of the budget"

INTERNATIONAL

Putin attempts to hit several goals in Trump peace deal talks

Ending the war will test the skills of both presidents at this week's summit

ANASTASIA STOGNEI – BERLIN
FABRICE DEPREZ – KYIV
Alaska, the venue set for Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump's meeting on Friday, could hardly be more symbolic of the Kremlin's view of the world.

Unlike Putin's military seizure of around a fifth of Ukraine, Russia's 19th-century sale of Alaska to the US under Emperor Alexander II was a peaceful transaction. Still, it serves as a reminder that national borders are not set in stone, and land can be a currency for statecraft.

Neither the battlefield balance nor budget strains are forcing the Russian president to scale back his maximalist territorial ambitions or consider unfavourable peace terms, according to analysts. His focus instead is on keeping communication open with Trump, lest the president's frustrations with Moscow start to carry a cost.

"Putin has no incentive to wind down the war right now," said Alexandra Prokopenko, a fellow at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Centre. "What matters to him is keeping Trump's attention."

On that front, Moscow is facing more risk. Trump, who came to office promising to end the war within 24 hours, has voiced irritation with Putin being "very nice" while simultaneously attacking Ukraine and feeding Washington "a lot of bullshit".

For the first time since taking office, Trump has begun enabling more significant transfers of weaponry to Kyiv, and threatening to apply tariffs on India for buying Russian oil.

But this impatient mood shifted almost overnight after US special envoy Steve Witkoff's visit to Moscow last Wednesday – just two days before Trump's ceasefire-or-sanctions deadline. Rather than more trouble for the Kremlin, what emerged was Putin's first invite to America to meet a US president since he saw George W Bush in 2005.

The Alaska meeting, which came out of it, is the result of both Putin and Trump "hacking themselves into a corner", said Sam Green, a professor of Russian politics at King's College London. Putin, Green said, was never going to announce the deal on Trump's timeline, signalling weakness under pressure, and Trump was uneasy about the prospect of imposing sanctions that might ultimately prove ineffective and "appearing weak twice".

The Trump-Putin meeting without Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy – long a prize for the Kremlin – appears to come without Russia making significant concessions on its core war goals. To Andrei Kozyrev, a former Russian foreign minister, it underlined that the meeting itself would be "a political gain for Putin".

For Ukrainian officials the move to talks represents an attempt by Putin to achieve at least three distinct goals. Alyona Hetmanchuk, the new head of Ukraine's mission to Nato, said it was to emerge from isolation, avoid new sanctions, and to use Trump's determination to end the war "in order to solve by diplomatic means the tasks he failed to complete by military means".



Unchanged approach: Vladimir Putin, seen at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Kremlin in June, has stated that his conditions for Ukraine remain the same
Getty Images

The diplomatic frenzy is unfolding as Ukrainian forces face increasing pressure in the east, with the Russian military now pushing to encircle several cities that have served as strategic strongholds for Ukrainian defenders.

DeepState, a war monitoring group with ties to the Ukrainian ministry of defence, reported yesterday that Russian forces had managed to advance nearly seven kilometres in an area near the city of Pokrovsk, which Russian forces have attempted to surround for the past year.

On the economic front, Russia feels less confident as its energy revenues have been down 20 per cent year on year over the first seven months amid lowering oil prices, with Trump's new tariffs on India adding to the pressure.

The full details of Putin and Witkoff's talks have not been disclosed, but key elements emerged in US calls with European and Ukrainian counterparts and public statements, including the possibility of exchanging Ukrainian territory.

"There'll be some swapping of territories, to the betterment of both," Trump

said. Immediately after the meeting, Moscow called Witkoff's proposals "acceptable" but did not comment on Trump's statements about a land swap.

Putin has repeatedly stated that his conditions for Ukraine remain unchanged. "They are not even conditions, but Russia's goals," he told Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenko as the two sat on a bench in Valaam Monastery in northern Russia on August 1.

"The main goal is to eliminate the root causes of this crisis," Putin added, citing his nearly 90-minute speech from last June, in which he listed his demands, interspersed with historical anecdotes. They include Ukraine's official renunciation of Nato membership and its non-nuclear status, its "demilitarisation" and "denazification" – a vague demand that is essentially tantamount to Zelenskyy's removal.

He also said Ukraine had to "fully withdraw" its forces from four Ukrainian regions that Russia occupies only partly, but still decided to officially incorporate them into its territory. Putin "does not exclude" that Ukraine

['The Alaska meeting is the result of both Putin and Trump] backing themselves into a corner'

'Putin would like to divide the world into spheres of influence with Trump and Xi'

could "maintain sovereignty" over Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions as long as it gives Russia access to Crimea through them. "Kyiv has to guarantee a servitut [legal term for a right to use land]," he added.

The demand for Ukraine to pull back its troops from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions is "a negotiating trap", said Volodymyr Fesenko, a Kyiv-based political analyst.

"Putin understands perfectly well that Ukraine won't agree to unilateral concessions, and he'll try and use this meeting with Trump and our rejection of the Russian plan to accuse Ukraine of not wanting to end the war," he said.

While polls have shown increasing exhaustion in Ukraine and support for a potential ceasefire, there remains overwhelming opposition to Ukraine bowing to Russian demands by pulling back from populated areas.

Almost three-quarters of Ukrainians polled in July by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology rejected a plan to end the war that would involve Ukraine ceding the entire Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, renouncing Nato membership and accepting limitations on its army.

With the Alaska summit approaching, both Zelenskyy and Putin have been working to shore up backing from their respective allies.

Ukrainian negotiators want Europe and the US to insist that talks only take place following a ceasefire or meaningful reduction in hostilities. Putin, for his part, has called leaders of seven countries Moscow considers friendly, including China's Xi Jinping, and has hosted the UAE president and India's national security adviser at the Kremlin.

"There is no real alternative but to freeze the conflict along the current front line. The post-Korean war stand-off is way more likely than lasting peace," said Andrey Kolesnikov, a Moscow-based political analyst.

"Putin would like to divide the world into spheres of influence with Trump and Xi. A new Yalta and a cold war – that's just what he wants. He is eager to claim [Joseph] Stalin's laurels."

BACK FROM THE BRINK

URGENT APPEAL

ZSL

WE'RE BRINGING ANIMALS BACK FROM THE BRINK

Join our fight to save unique and threatened wildlife

zsl.org/join

ZSL is a charity registered in England and Wales no: 208728 working internationally

INTERNATIONAL

Technology

US licenses Nvidia chip exports to China

Door reopens for H2O sales after chief executive's visit to White House

DEMETRI SEVASTOPOULOS – WASHINGTON
MICHAEL ACART – SAN FRANCISCO

The US commerce department has started issuing licences to Nvidia to export H2O chips to China following weeks of inaction, after chief executive Jensen Huang met President Donald Trump at the White House.

A US official told the Financial Times the bureau of industry and security, the arm of the commerce department that oversees export controls, had begun to issue licences for the H2O.

Nvidia designed the chip for the Chinese market after the Biden administration imposed export controls on more advanced artificial intelligence chips.

In April, the Trump administration appeared to take a tougher line by telling Nvidia it could not sell the H2O to China. Trump reversed course after Huang visited the White House and directly lobbied the president. But Nvidia was frustrated that three weeks after the decision, the administration had not started issuing the licences.

Huang visited the White House last Wednesday and held another meeting with the president. Two days after the meeting, the commerce department starting issue the licences, according to people familiar with the decision.

One person familiar with the situation said the decision to press ahead with the export licences came after Huang's meeting with Trump in the Oval Office. Nvidia and the commerce department declined to comment.

The H2O has become the focus of a debate among security officials, who say allowing China to buy the H2O will help its military. But Nvidia argues that blocking US technology exports forces China to accelerate innovation.

The Financial Times reported last month that 20 security experts, including Matt Pottinger, deputy national security adviser in the first Trump administration, and David Feith, who served at the National Security Council earlier this year, wrote to commerce

secretary Howard Lutnick to urge him not to allow H2O sales to China.

In the letter, the security officials said the move would be a "strategic mis-step that endangers the United States' economic and military edge in artificial intelligence". Nvidia countered that the criticism was "misguided" and rejected the argument that China could use the H2O to enhance its military capabilities.

Nvidia took a \$4.5bn hit in the July quarter, as well as an additional \$2.5bn in missed sales, after the White House introduced the original licence requirement. The move came as a surprise to the company, which had only recently informed Chinese clients that it expected them to continue.

It was viewed as a ban that would kill

the legal sale of Nvidia's AI chips in China, cutting the company off from a market that Huang has said will hit \$50bn in the next two to three years.

The company had forecast an \$8bn loss in China revenue for the July quarter. The company was, however, exploring the potential for a redesigned AI chip for the China market that was compliant with the new export rule.

Huang has warned the restrictions will result in the likes of Huawei gaining an edge in a global race to build the hardware underpinning artificial intelligence.

Nvidia had already gone from a 95 per cent share of that market to a 50 per cent share in four years as Chinese rivals gained ground, Huang said in May.

Trade talks

Swiss gold industry in crosshairs after debacle over levies

MERCEDES RUEHL – ZÜRICH
LESLIE HOOK – LONDON

Switzerland's failure to negotiate lower tariffs with US President Donald Trump has sparked a national debate over the role of its gold industry and whether it should pay for the "damage".

The world's largest gold refining hub has been rocked by Washington's 39 per cent rate on select Swiss imports and an unexpected levy on gold bars, which was first reported by the Financial Times. The moves were spearheaded by Trump as part of his broader push to reduce America's trade deficit. The White House said on Friday it would issue an executive order "clarifying" the US stance on gold bar tariffs in the near future.

Although Switzerland has no gold mines itself, the gold shipped by its refineries to the US – worth about \$61.5bn over the 12 months ending in June – weighed heavily on the country's trade surplus with the US, leading some in the country to blame the sector for the failed trade talks.

Gold was the country's single largest export last year at 27 per cent, ahead of pharmaceuticals, according to the Swiss National Bank. A sharp rise in Swiss gold exports earlier this year, which was driven in part by US investors rushing to bring metal in ahead of potential future tariffs, has drawn particular attention in Washington. The Swiss government, which returned home empty-handed from a last-minute trip to the US last week, has vowed to continue negotiations for a better deal.

But some critics and leftwing politicians in Switzerland are now openly calling for the gold sector – which employs around 2,000 people and generates more than \$100bn in revenue – to be made to pay in some form for the financial damage.

"If a sector is damaging a whole national economy and the sector itself is not really a big value to Switzerland by employees or taxes, then you have to think about it, maybe this sector has to pay for the damage happening right now," said Hans-Peter Portmann, a lawmaker from the liberal Free Democratic party of President Karin Keller-Sutter.

Portmann proposed sending gold back to where it came from – such as the UK, Brazil or the Netherlands – and let that country be responsible for transporting it.

Voices demanding action are growing louder. Green party leader Lisa Mazzone has proposed the industry compensate Switzerland with "appropriate taxation" to counterbalance the effect of Trump's tariffs.

Lawmakers from the Social Democratic party have also criticised the government for failing to anticipate that gold could become politically sensitive.

Nannette Hechler Fayd'herbe, chief executive for Europe at Lombard Odier, a Swiss private bank, said tariffs or restrictions on the industry might make economic sense if it can help with negotiations. "[If] the Trump administration is just looking at the overall headline import number from Switzerland and... [it may] make sense on the Swiss side to find ways to at least temporarily disincentivise Swiss exports of gold to the US, through trade barriers of some sort," he said.

The global gold trade flows normally follow a triangular pattern, with large bars moving back and forth between London and New York, via Switzerland, where they are recast into different sizes. London and New York do not use the same size bars.

Oil & gas. Pacific

Trump's ambitions for Alaska LNG fall flat

President struggles to persuade sceptical Asian partners to join flagship US pipeline project

CHRISTIAN DAVIES – SEOUL
HARRY DEMPSEY – TOKYO
JAMIE SMYTH – NEW YORK

Donald Trump's trade deal with Japan turned heads when the US president announced, in addition to tariffs and investment pledges, that the allies would enter into a natural gas joint venture in Alaska.

The claim seemed to mark the resurrection of a long-standing US ambition, a liquefied natural gas project including an 800-mile pipeline across the state. Analysts have estimated the project could cost more than \$60bn.

Washington has argued that the pipeline linking Alaska's northern gasfields to the southern port of Nikiski would expedite supplies to Pacific allies. It has sought to press Japan and South Korea – the world's second- and third-largest buyers of LNG, after China – to back the scheme by bundling it with tariff negotiations. But the Trump administration has struggled to persuade sceptical Asian partners to come on board, and officials, experts and energy industry executives have cast doubts on its financial feasibility.

Rapid Energy Group, a Washington-based consultancy, described the project in June as a speculative investment in which "politics overrides commercial logic".

No Asian companies have made explicit investments in the project, while Japanese and South Korean buyers are yet to sign even nonbinding letters of intent to purchase gas from it, despite trade deals with Tokyo and Seoul.

In August, Japan's chief low-carbon fuel officer at JERA, the world's largest natural gas buyer, said Japanese officials had asked the energy group to consider an Alaska LNG project in a "fair, reasonable manner" because they wanted to give "some sugars" to Trump.

"Normally, the Japanese government doesn't say that," said Tsagaru.

He acknowledged that Alaska LNG was a "good concept", cutting shipping time to Japan by ten to eight days, versus about 35 days eastbound from the Gulf of Mexico. But he cautioned that the company needed "detailed information" before it could "enter into long-term supply contracts".

One person directly involved in recent trade negotiations between the US and Japanese officials noted that the White House had said only that "the US



In the pipeline: rendering of the liquefaction facility at the southern port of Nikiski, Alaska

and Japan are exploring a new offshore agreement for Alaskan liquefied natural gas – far short of the "joint venture" boasted by the US president. Japan officials said it had agreed to "examine Alaska LNG".

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a South Korean official said Seoul also harboured "big doubts about the project's economic feasibility", particularly the pipeline construction, though some Korean companies were keen to be involved as construction partners.

Seoul agreed to make \$100bn of US energy purchases over the next four years as part of a trade deal with the Trump administration, but later clarified that it had not made any commitments to Alaska LNG.

"The US is not providing the information we need about the costs," the official said, adding that South Korean gas buyers would "absolutely not" have considered investing in the project were it not for US pressure.

Alaska started shipping LNG to Asia in the late 1960s. But with its southern gasfields running out, the state has sought to find a way to pipe gas from fields north of the Arctic Circle to liquefaction plants in the south.

The current proposal dates back more than a decade, having languished since US energy majors ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips backed out in 2016. A

nonbinding accord with three Chinese state-owned companies to co-develop the project, signed when Trump visited President Xi Jinping in Beijing in 2017, had failed to bear fruit.

In his second term, Trump has appeared determined to get the project off the ground. He claimed in his address to Congress in March that Japan, South Korea and other countries wanted to invest "trillions of dollars each" in it.

But US officials have secured only limited commitments.

Taiwan's state-owned energy company CPC signed a nonbinding letter of intent (LOI) in March to buy 6mm metric tonnes a year from the 20mm-tonne project following a visit to Taipei by Alaska's Republican governor Mike Dunleavy. Thailand's state-owned oil and gas company, PTT, also signed an LOI for 2mm tonnes in June.

Dunleavy told the Financial Times that talks between the White House and Asian countries were "very positive", and denied that Trump was coercing allies into participation with threats of tariffs. "I think that's part of the discussion, but I don't think it's blackmail," he said.

Many energy analysts remain sceptical Alaska LNG will be built.

According to Rapidian, the energy consultancy, the second phase of the

'Risks are accentuated by the [White House's] overt use of the project to advance political goals'

Alex Muntion, Rapidian

project – a gas treatment plant with carbon dioxide removal, an LNG export facility and associated pipelines – is likely to cost \$60bn, almost double the initial forecast of \$33bn a decade ago.

That does not include the cost of the first phase, the 800-mile pipeline, which was previously forecast at \$10.8bn but which Rapidian believes carries risk of overruns and environmental legal challenges.

"These risks are accentuated by the Trump administration's overt use of the project to advance political goals, both under its 'energy dominance' agenda and as a possible condition in bilateral trade negotiations," said Alex Muntion, a Rapidian analyst.

"Our base case is that the project does not reach a final investment decision."

Brendan Duval, chief executive of Alaska LNG's lead developer Glenfarne Group, declined to disclose an updated cost estimate for the project. He said pessimism surrounding it was based on flawed comparisons with the LNG Canada project near the Alaska border, which was dogged by delays and cost overruns.

"The worst outcome is we end up selling it all out to some of the other countries and players and international buyers, and there's nothing left for the Koreans and the Japanese," he said.

Additional reporting by Kathrin Hille

Agriculture

Australia optimistic on maintaining boom in beef sales to US after mild hit from tariffs

NIC FILDES – SYDNEY

Australian beef producers hope to prolong a boom in sales to the US after Donald Trump's tariffs handed the country an advantage over rival exporters such as Brazil.

Cattle farmers feared the worst in April when Trump singled out Australia's strict biosecurity laws for criticism and warned that the US would stop importing red meat from the Pacific country.

"I figured we were about to get rail-roaded," said Adam Armstrong, a Queensland cattle farmer.

But Trump's extensive new global tariff regime introduced last week imposed a relatively mild baseline duty of 10 per cent on Australia, which has an overall trade deficit with the US.

Other beef producers faced significantly higher levies, including 50 per cent for Brazil, 35 per cent for Canada and 15 per cent for New Zealand.

"What this decision means is that, in conjunction with the changes to other countries, Australian producers are now more competitive going into the US," said Don Farrell, Australia's trade minister.

US demand for Australian "trim" beef – which is blended with fattier American meat to make hamburger patties and mince – has boomed in recent years, as the American cattle industry has been unable to keep pace with consumption.

Exports of beef to the US rose 12 per cent in July on the year before to 45,000 tonnes, according to data from Meat & Livestock Australia, helping boost overall shipments last month to an all-time high.

Constrained domestic supply due to years of drought has driven US meat prices to record levels this year and further increased appetite for imports. Australian exports to North America

– including Canada, which has also imported more Australian beef – are up 30 per cent in 2025, and overall exports up 11 per cent, according to MLA.

Will Evans, chief executive of Cattle Australia, a trade lobby, said the US was a "vital" partner, noting the country imported more than A\$6bn (US\$5.9bn)

of beef last year. Australia exports about 70 per cent of the beef it produces, according to the MLA. Prime cuts also go to markets including Japan, China and Europe.

Robert Mackenzie, a fifth-generation farmer in northern New South Wales with 5,500 Angus cattle, said that the US



Cattle on a farm in New South Wales. Canberra has denied it has compromised on its biosecurity regulations to gain a better trade deal with the US

industry could absorb the impact of the tariffs but that the product was "price driven", which should play to Australia's strengths.

"Higher tariffs from other countries that have made political waves have opened up bigger markets for Australia, not just US but also China," he said. "It's made us more competitive."

He said this had helped offset the impact of high energy and labour costs in Australia, where the industry also does not enjoy the subsidies offered in some other countries.

Yet Canberra's move to lift restrictions on imports of cattle processed in the US but sourced from other countries – which were introduced in 2003 to prevent mad cow disease and other threats from infecting local herds – has stoked concern among farmers. The Australian government denied it had compromised on its biosecurity regulations in service of a better trade deal with the US.

"The outcome of the technical assessment of beef from the United States is the culmination of a decade of science and... [it may] make sense on the economic side," Farrell said in July.

Many cattle farmers remain cynical, pointing to the "eleventh-hour announcement" of the tariff change after consultation with industry. "They also fear that the country's reputation for producing 'clean, green, disease-free meat' could be jeopardised."

"It only takes one infected cow or infected piece of beef to spread the disease. Why would we take the risk?" said Mackenzie.

Armstrong cautioned that the beef industry was a "blood sport", with frequent fluctuation between global winners and losers and no room for triumphalism. "Brazil is in the line of fire and that bodes well for us," he said. "But Trump could single us out for something else, so it'd be careful about celebrating."

Give me an AI break The rising tide of news stories fails to bring any real insight on exactly how it's being used **PILITA CLARK**

Companies & Markets

Big Oil set to 'drill, baby, drill' as green cash falters

- Renewed focus on building reserves
- Bosses highlight shift in earnings calls

MALCOLM MOORE — LONDON
JAMIE SMYTH — NEW YORK

The world's leading oil companies are stepping up their hunt for new oil and gas reserves as a slower than expected transition to clean energy sets the stage for stronger fossil fuel demand for decades to come.

Executives from BP, Chevron, Exxon-Mobil, Shell and TotalEnergies all used recent earnings calls to highlight how they have begun refocusing on securing new reserves after years of prioritising renewables.

Expectations for a rapid energy transition have moderated in recent years as elevated inflation and interest rates raised costs and slowed development of renewables.

"There is a very big supply gap that M&A cannot solve in the long run"

Jessica Ciosek, Wood Mackenzie

Geopolitical instability has led governments to prioritise energy security over decarbonisation. President Donald Trump has directed oil and gas producers to "drill, baby, drill".

Wood Mackenzie estimates a slower transition could leave the world needing about 5 per cent more oil per year than previously forecast from the mid-2030s.

The energy consultancy forecasts that the world will require more than 100bn extra barrels of oil and gas from exploration by 2050 to help fill this gap.

The expectation of greater demand is raising concerns that years of underinvestment have left the industry unprepared.

Jessica Ciosek, head of Americas exploration research at Wood Mackenzie

zies, said there was a "huge need" for more oil and gas. "There is a very big supply gap that M&A cannot solve . . . in the long run. Companies are refilling a pipeline, not just in drill-ready prospects but in access to the areas where they would consider drilling."

Ciosek noted that the industry was playing catch-up after neglecting exploration earlier in the decade, choosing instead to focus on slashing costs and gearing up for a quick shift to clean energy.

Last year, a total of 3bn barrels of oil were discovered, according to Rystad, another energy consultancy, equivalent to just 19 per cent of the world's annual production.

The most striking pivot has come at BP, which spent \$15bn since 2021 pursuing a clean-energy strategy that alienated investors.

Under pressure to boost profitability and replace reserves, BP announced in February that it would sharply increase investment in oil and gas.

The company now plans to drill 40 exploration wells over the next three years and recently won its biggest discovery in 25 years off the coast of Brazil.

Chevron is also changing tack after years of prioritising cost-cutting and shale investments over riskier deep-water opportunities, which reduced its oil reserves to 9.8bn barrels last year, the lowest in more than a decade.

ExxonMobil is branching out after spending the past decade focused largely on Guyana. The group has signed a deal to study four offshore blocks in Libya and it is preparing to resume exploration activities in Trinidad and Tobago after a two-decade hiatus.

TotalEnergies and Shell have similarly underscored their commitment to finding new reserves.

Grain glut Blow to Asian farmers as rice price slumps after record harvests engulf markets



Rice prices have plunged over the past year
Thai 5% broken rice (US\$ per tonne)



SUSANNAH SAVAGE — LONDON

Global rice prices have tumbled to their lowest level in eight years in a blow to many farmers across Asia as record harvests and the ending of export bans in India flood the market with supply.

Export prices for Thai 5 per cent broken white rice, the global benchmark, have dropped to \$37.50 per tonne in recent days, a 26 per cent fall since late last year and their lowest level since 2017.

That extends a slide that began after India, the world's largest exporter, started lifting restrictions on shipments in September 2024.

The UN's All Rice Price Index is down 15 per cent this year, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization.

"It's that simple: there's just too much stock," said Samarendu Mohanty, director of the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture and Development Studies at Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University. "India's rice produc-

tion last year was a record . . . The crop they just planted is going to be another record crop."

The price decline marks a sharp reversal from early last year when rice soared to its highest level since 2008 after India introduced a series of export curbs. That sparked a wave of panic buying among consumers and prompted protectionist measures in other producing countries.

India's policy shift late last year, following a record harvest in 2023-24 that swelled government inventories, was "the main reason" for the dramatic drop in prices, said Oscar Tajara, senior analyst at Rabobank.

"This comes on top of strong production in Thailand and Vietnam, which has taken global rice output to a record high this marketing year."

Demands, meanwhile, have fallen. Indonesia, one of the biggest buyers, frontloaded imports last year and has not re-entered the market in 2025. The Philippines has banned imports until October to protect domestic prices during its main harvest.

"Indonesia is not, the Philippines is

out — there's no demand for white rice right now," Mohanty said.

India's unusually strong supply position reflects advances in the country's agriculture, he said.

Almost all the farms in India's main rice-growing regions have irrigation systems now, making production more resilient to drought and increasingly erratic monsoons, he added.

Farmers are also increasingly buying new seeds each season, which boosts yields, and expanding acreage of rice thanks to the country's minimum support price system and state bonuses, which helps shield farmers from global price swings.

Growers in most other Asian countries have no such protection as global prices plunge, said Tajara. "Low prices will erode farm earnings, which is particularly challenging with higher input costs and inflation," he added.

For consumers, however, the slump offers welcome relief after several years of high food prices. In countries that depend on rice imports, cheaper prices can help ease headline inflation and household budget pressures.

Rolls-Royce agrees deal on pension liabilities

LEE HARRIS AND MARTIN ARNOLD
LONDON

Rolls-Royce has agreed to transfer its UK pension obligations to Pension Insurance Corporation in a deal that will shift liabilities worth £4.5bn off the engineering group's balance sheet.

The deal, covering the retirement savings of 56,000 people, is the latest example of a pension risk transfer (PRT) deal in which organisations such as PRT pay pension plan sponsors to take on their financial obligations to members.

UK businesses from Boots to British Steel have insured their pension obligations or offloaded them to PRT specialists in recent years. Higher interest rates have reduced the value of the liabilities in pension plans, making the deals more affordable.

Helen McCabe, chief financial officer of Rolls-Royce, said the deal to transfer the company's liabilities for 15,000 pensioners and 21,000 deferred members was a "win-win for all our stakeholders".

Demand for PRT deals is expected to reach £500bn by 2033, according to estimates from consultancy LCP.

Insurers specialising in the arrangements have, meanwhile, become prime takeover targets for alternative asset managers, since they provide a captive customer for asset management services.

The Rolls-Royce agreement comes weeks after Athora, an insurer based by US private capital group Apollo, announced that it would acquire PIC in a £5.7bn deal.

Mitul Magadia, chief origination officer at PRT, said that, after the acquisition, which remains subject to regulatory approval, PIC "expects to have strong appetite to complete many more" transactions of this nature.

Regulators are starting to worry about the growing shift of pension assets to private equity owners.

The Bank of England warned recently that such groups could be more vulnerable to a credit downturn because they are leveraged and typically own a larger proportion of illiquid assets.

However, Liz Airey, chair of trustees at the Rolls-Royce Pension Fund, said its members would be "in safe hands" at PIC.

Canadian asset manager Brookfield, which already had a presence in the UK pension market, is expected to pay to pay a 75 per cent premium to buy just Group, another PRT specialist, which has focused on smaller transactions.

Management. Company kowtowling

Bosses find flattery gets you everywhere with Trump

Apple and BoA chiefs among leaders to butter up president with corporate interest in mind

FT REPORTERS

America's corporate leaders are doubling down on a strategy to promote their companies in the Donald Trump era: butter up the president.

Apple boss Tim Cook offered a masterclass in the Oval office last Wednesday, presenting Trump with an engraved glass plaque on a gold mount.

"President Donald J Trump: Apple American Manufacturing Program," it read.

"You've been a great advocate for American innovation and manufacturing and I'm grateful for your leadership and your commitment," Cook told Trump, whose "liberation day" tariff announcement in April helped wipe \$700bn from Apple's market capitalisation. Moments later Trump announced his plans for steep new tariffs on chip imports — but said Apple would be spared.

A day earlier, it was Bank of America boss Brian Moynihan's turn to praise the president. Trump had lambasted Moynihan for "kissing my ass" during his first term but then declining to open a bank account for him. Speaking to CNBC hours later, the chief executive lauded the choice language and said the president was "after the right thing" on the question of bank access in the US.

Some see the recent kowtowing as a sign that corporate leaders have learnt from the example of Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, whose fiery visit to the Oval office in February jeopar-

ised his country's military aid. "He smacks these leaders in the nose and they've learned not to respond the way, say, President Zelenskyy did," said Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, senior associate dean for leadership studies at the Yale School of Management.

The bosses' charm offensive has led to some eye-popping claims and reversals. Last month Ford chief executive Jim Farley said the government was "very committed to supporting companies like Ford", despite the carmaker's taking an \$800mn hit from the White House's high tariffs.

This contrasted with Farley's comments during the early weeks of the Trump administration that tariffs were adding "a lot of cost and a lot of chaos".

The president's targeting of law firms with executive orders has also shown he is willing to use the power of his office to retaliate against critics, making corporate leaders nervous about what they say in public. Elon Musk, who donated more than \$250mn to Trump's campaign, is the most notable boss to pay the price for crossing the president.

Musk, who once said "I love Donald Trump as much as a straight man can love another man", turned opponent after the president's sweeping spending bill slashed electric-vehicle incentives, costing Tesla billions in profit.

Trump went from praising Musk as a "super-genius" on election night to branding him a "TRAIN WRECK" in July and has threatened to cancel government contracts for the tech boss's SpaceX and his satellite internet business, Starlink.

Behind closed doors, advisers say the level of unease is among the highest they have seen in years. "A big pharma CEO told me that the entire sector is petrified

of everything the administration is doing, but he can't speak up for fear of putting a target on his company's back," said a top adviser to Fortune 500 companies. "They're walking on eggshells."

One biotech boss, Leonard Schreiber of Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, suggested Trump owed his life to his company. "I think the president probably knows Regeneron and my first name, given that it was Regeneron's cocktail for Covid-19 that may have saved his life," Schreiber said on a recent call with analysts.

Flattery has been an effective tool with the president. In addition to the concessions won by Cook and Apple, Jensen Huang, chief of semiconductor company Nvidia, has lavished praise on Trump's vision for America. The president has now rolled back the export control policies that would have hurt Nvidia's global chip sales.

Some of the buttering up began soon after Trump won the election last year. Chief executives made a beeline for Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort to firm up ties with the incoming administration.

Musk, who once said "I love Donald Trump as much as a straight man can love another man", turned opponent after the president's sweeping spending bill slashed electric-vehicle incentives, costing Tesla billions in profit.

Trump went from praising Musk as a "super-genius" on election night to branding him a "TRAIN WRECK" in July and has threatened to cancel government contracts for the tech boss's SpaceX and his satellite internet business, Starlink.

Behind closed doors, advisers say the level of unease is among the highest they have seen in years. "A big pharma CEO told me that the entire sector is petrified

Others poured money into his inauguration party. Jeff Bezos's Amazon soon after paid \$400mn to buy the rights to a biopic of Trump's third wife, Melania. On Thursday, his company signed a deal to provide AI in cloud computing services to the federal government, gratis.

Even among business leaders who had supported opposition Kamala Harris, there was initially optimism that Trump would pursue a pro-business agenda of deregulation. The reality has been more chaotic than many were anticipating. Trump's sweeping tariffs in particular have caused widespread disruption for large multinational companies such as Apple.

Just as the benefits of currying favour with the White House were on display last week, the cost of looser ties was also being felt. A day after Cook placed the gold-mounted glass plaque on the president's Oval office desk, Trump targeted another tech boss, Intel's new chief executive, Lip-Bu Lu. He called Tan "highly conflicted" and demanded that he resign, an apparent reference to Tan's deep involvement in China's semiconductor industry.

Bernstein analysts wrote in a research note: "Unfortunately, unlike other tech CEOs, Lip-Bu does not appear to have cultivated the kind of business relationship with Trump that would help to assuage his ire."

After staying quiet for some hours, Intel released a statement saying it was "deeply committed" to advancing US national security interests and that it looked forward to "our continued engagement with the administration".

"I'm deeply committed" to advancing US national security interests and that it looked forward to "our continued engagement with the administration".

Reporting by Joshua Franklin, James Fontana, Kellen, Patrick Temple-West, Michael Acton, Stephen Morris and Jamie Smyth

Apple chief Tim Cook's overtures won an exemption from chip tariffs

Contracts & Tenders

PFC CONSULTING LIMITED
(A wholly owned subsidiary of PFC Ltd)
Regd. Office: First Floor, Urja Nagar, 1, Barakhamba Lane, Connaught Place, New Delhi - 110001, (India) Fax: 011-23434390

GLOBAL INVITATION THROUGH E-BIDDING ONLY
FOR SELECTION OF TRANSMISSION SERVICE PROVIDER ON BUILD, OWN, OPERATE AND TRANSFER (BOOT) BASIS FOR MTR-STATE TRANSMISSION PROJECTS IN MAHARASHTRA

PFC Consulting Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Power Finance Corporation Limited (A Government of India Undertaking), invites proposals for setting up of transmission projects on Build, Own, Operate and Transfer (BOOT) basis following single stage two envelope process of "Request for Proposal" (RFP).

Interested bidders may refer to the RFP notification and RFP documents available on the website <https://www.mscscorporate.com> and <https://www.infoprocindia.com>. The Bidders may obtain the RFP documents on all working days between 10:30 hrs (IST) and 16:00 hrs (IST) from 06.08.2025 to one working day prior to bid submission for the projects mentioned below on payment of a non-refundable fee of Rs. 1,00,000/- (INR) (USD 1,000/-) (GST 18%) from PFC Wing 'A', Statestadium House, Connaught Place, New Delhi - 110001, Tel: 91-11-23443096, Fax: 91-11-23443090, e-mail: procurement@pfcindia.com. The RFP documents can also be downloaded from <https://www.mscscorporate.com> and <https://www.infoprocindia.com>, however, in such case, interested party can submit Response to RFP only on submission of non-refundable fee of Rs. 1,00,000/- (INR) (USD 1,000/-) (GST 18%) separately. The survey report and clarification to RFP documents shall be issued to those bidders, who have obtained purchased RFP documents by paying requisite fee of at least one working day prior to bid submission date. Bidders should regularly visit website to keep themselves updated regarding clarifications/ amendments/ time extensions etc., if any. The important timelines in this regard are as follows:

S. No.	Name of Transmission Scheme	Last date for seeking clarification (dd/mm/yyyy)	Last date for submission of response (dd/mm/yyyy)	Date of opening of response (dd/mm/yyyy)
1.	Network Expansion scheme in Maharashtra for removal of Transmission congestion in Pune Region-I (756400 kV AS Pune Area)	27/08/2025	10/10/2025 to 12/10/2025 (IST)	10/10/2025 to 12/10/2025 (IST)
2.	Transmission Scheme for Establishment of 400/220 kV AS Wagholi (Dist. Solapur)	29/08/2025	13/10/2025 to 15/10/2025 (IST)	13/10/2025 to 15/10/2025 (IST)

Note: PFC Consulting Limited reserves the right to cancel or modify the process without assigning any reason and without any liability. This is not an offer.

An Initiative of

GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA

Chief Procurement Officer

PFC CONSULTING LTD
(A wholly owned subsidiary of PFC Ltd)
(A Govt. of India Undertaking)

Chief Procurement Officer

STATE TRANSMISSION UTILITY MAHARASHTRA

Imagine your advert here

Business for Sale, Business Opportunities, Business Services, Business Wanted, Legal Notices, Company Notices, Public Notices, Floating Rates Notes, Shareholder Messages, Property For Sale, Tender Notices

Classified Business Advertising
Tel: +44 20 7875 4000 | Email: advertising@ft.com

COMPANIES & MARKETS

Indian outsourcing groups play catch-up on AI

The vast IT sector races to roll out new tools but struggles for growth as clients divert spending to the new technology

CHRIS KAY, KRISHN KAUSHIK, JOHN REED AND PATRICK JENKINS — BENGALURU

India's IT services giants are racing to reinvent themselves for the age of artificial intelligence, rolling out new tools to customers from banks to sporting bodies even as the technology threatens to slash client spending in the near term.

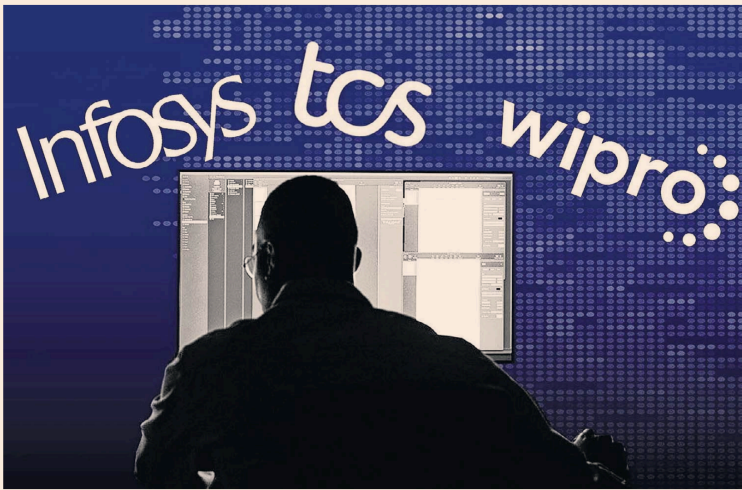
The country's vast outsourcing sector has been struggling with tepid customer demand for its services in the US, its largest market, as a "Trump bump" from anticipated tax cuts and easing regulations has failed to materialise. Instead, the US president's trade battles — including a 50 per cent tariff slapped on India that nevertheless excludes services — have delayed business decision-making and investment.

Sector growth has been in the low single digits for the past two years, according to HSBC, which last month attributed the sluggishness to economic uncertainty, competition from corporate in-house global capability centres being set up rapidly across India, as well as "ambiguity" over the impact of generative AI.

Major players Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services and Wipro are keenly aware that AI is a double-edged sword. Nandan Nilekani, Infosys co-founder and chair, told the Financial Times that his company was working on "hundreds" of AI projects with corporate partners, even as "this AI stuff has taken away some of the spending, because everybody is diverting money from other things to AI".

The tech billionaire said the sector's niche would be finding practical uses for the "whole cornucopia of technology" developed by a handful of pioneering companies, such as OpenAI and Anthropic, that were "competing to plant their stake in the ground" as Big Tech in the US ploughed hundreds of billions of dollars into AI.

"I think in the next few years, the balance of spending will go from buying core infrastructure to making it useful to companies," Nilekani said in an interview in Bengaluru. "If you're helping



Fortune 500 companies get their AI going, that requires a different approach — that's where Infosys comes in."

Infosys last month said it had built 300 agents, while it recently announced AI implementation deals with German energy provider Enn, Norway's DNB Bank and the UK's Lawn Tennis Association. At the same time, chief financial officer Jayesh Sanghrajka told analysts that some "discretionary programmes" had been paused by companies because of "significant investments" in AI.

In TCS's recent quarterly results, India's largest IT company reported that consolidated revenue climbed just 1.3 per cent year on year, falling below analysts' forecasts despite its signing AI deals, such as modernising Virgin Atlantic's tech operations.

Aarthi Subramanian, new chief operating officer at TCS, said the Mumbai-based company had seen "strong demand" for AI and analysing data. She noted that TCS had built a product for AmTrust, a New York-based property

Screen test: the major players in the Indian IT sector are keenly aware that AI is a double-edged sword for them
IT manager/ Getty Images

and casualty insurer, to help brokers generate personalised quotes quickly.

Infosys and Wipro fared better with their earnings reports, which revealed signs of recovery as they secured multi-billion dollar projects and achieved sales growth that exceeded expectations. HCLTech, the third-largest IT outsourcing in India, reported more mixed results, with revenue expansion exceeding forecasts, but quarterly net profit declining 9.7 per cent from a year ago.

Kumar Rakesh, a Mumbai-based IT analyst at BNP Paribas, said the June quarter was usually good for the sector, as clients released budgets earlier in the year. But more concerning for investors was commentary that demand had "further deteriorated for some of these companies".

"They're riding the AI wave but not planning for a scenario where the wave disrupts them"

Anirudh Suri, Carnegie India

"What that means is that the expectation that things will start improving in the second half may not necessarily materialise," he said.

While India's tech industry generated \$284bn in annual revenues, some analysts predicted the sector faced inevitable cuts, as clients used AI to trim spending. Aparna Iyer, chief financial officer at Wipro — India's fourth-largest IT company, owned by the billionaire Premji family — said in an interview that AI adoption was still in the "very early" stages, but Wipro's strategy was "anchored around that".

"Even as we are forming and rethinking, I think a lot of our clients are pretty much in the same phase," she added.

The size of India's AI market is expected to grow from up to \$9bn in 2023 to as much as \$22bn by 2027, according to estimates published last year in a joint report by Boston Consulting Group and Nasscom, India's IT industry trade body.

Yet, despite having leading IT companies and one of the world's largest pools of software engineering talent, India is a relative latecomer to AI innovation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government only launched its India AI Mission to promote development last year while China issued an AI plan in 2017.

New Delhi has now earmarked about \$1.2bn to help increase AI capabilities and infrastructure over five years.

Indian government officials have also privately bemoaned the relatively late start in AI by some top companies. "Ideally, TCS or Infosys should have invested in models 10 years or five years back," one official in New Delhi told the FT.

"Almost none of them are looking to use the AI wave as a way to move up the value chain, and build AI [large language models] themselves, or actually invest in R&D in AI," said Anirudh Suri, non-resident scholar at the Carnegie India think-tank. "In a way, they're riding the wave of AI, but not planning heavily for a scenario where the wave actually disrupts them or their business model."

Cost-cutting and streamlining opportunities presented by AI have also left questions over future hiring in India's tech industry. The sector is one of the few to provide large-scale white collar work to more than 5mn people, in a country that is struggling to find formal employment opportunities for its vast population.

Last month, TCS said it would cut 2 per cent of its workforce, about 12,000 mainly middle- to senior-level staff, as part of a "future-ready" plans to invest in new technology and deploy AI "at scale".

BNP Paribas's Rakesh said generative AI tools and automation required fewer people, and for Indian outsourcing, "part of the revenue model is based on per-hour effort basis... that is being disrupted".

"If [AI adoption] leads to productivity and therefore you can do more things with fewer people, that's the right way," Nilekani said. "We have seen many iterations and generations of technology in the last 40 years... so I think we have a very agile way of retraining our people."

Pilita Clark see back page

India's IT services leaders are out of favour with investors

Share price and index rebased in Indian rupee terms



Source: LSEG

Oil & gas

Co-founder calls for EG to sell US business

IVAN LEVINGSTON — BLACKBURN

One of the billionaire co-founders of EG Group has called for the petrol station giant to explore a sale of its \$5bn-plus US business, offering up an alternative to private equity backer TDR Capital's plan for an initial public offering of the entire operation.

Zuber Issa, who retains a 25 per cent stake and a seat on the board of EG after stepping down as its co-chief executive last year, told the Financial Times that he wants EG to pursue a sale of its US business to reduce debt.

"There are people who want to buy the US assets," said Zuber in an interview at EG's global headquarters in his hometown of Blackburn, Lancashire. "It will be an auction process which would get to a clear end goal much quicker [than an IPO] and we can pay the debt off."

The comments mark a rare public intervention from Zuber and suggest a divergence of opinion with TDR on the best way to exit what has been a highly successful investment.

EG was formed by the 2016 merger of Euro Garages, the forecourt business built up by Zuber and his brother, Mohsin, with TDR's European Forecourt Retail Group.

The end of the low interest rate era curtailed years of debt-fuelled expansion and forced EG into selling assets to reduce leverage.

The group's net debt now stands at \$5.3bn, equivalent to almost five times

last year's adjusted earnings. EG is 50 per cent owned by London-based buy-out group TDR with the remainder split between the Issas.

The brothers sit on EG's nine-strong board as non-executive directors alongside two TDR representatives.

The group has more than 5,500 sites across nine countries and generated revenues of \$24.2bn last year.

EG has been working towards an IPO in the US for several months, a process which could involve selling some of its European assets beforehand, the FT previously reported.

That would pave the way for TDR to begin exiting its investment, potentially around the middle of next year.

"The shareholders are still thinking about the options," Zuber said. "Other

options would be trying to sell the US in its entirety. And I think that should be an option we should do."

Zuber said a sale was attractive because there were comparable businesses in the US market for valuation purposes and a disposal would leave the wider group with leverage of about three times earnings.

EG's US business made adjusted profit of \$449mn last year, just under 50 per cent of group profit.

In its period of rapid growth, EG attracted scrutiny over its corporate governance.

Addressing the controversy around the Issas' decision to buy two private jets using interest-free loans from EG, Zuber said that, while the planes were for business use, he and Mohsin were advised to register them in their own names.

"When you go into the US, all the businesses have jets, especially in our sector," he said. "But there's a taboo here in the UK, unfortunately." He added that the loans had been paid off.

The partnership between the Issas and TDR deepened in 2022 when they teamed up on the £6.8bn acquisition of Asda, the UK's third-largest supermarket chain. Under their ownership, Asda has lost market share to rivals.

Zuber acknowledged that the brothers underestimated the strength of the competition, particularly from discounters Aldi and Lidl.

He sold his 22.5 per cent stake in Asda last year to TDR, handing the buyout group majority control.



The comments mark a rare public intervention from Zuber Issa

FT Weekend Festival

6 SEPTEMBER 2025

Kenwood House Gardens,
London & Online
9.30 - 19.15 BST

Lyse Doucet
Yuval Noah Harari
David Nicholls
Alice Loxton
Nick Clegg
Ben Pentreath

Thomasina Miers
Jeremy King
Jancis Robinson
Charlotte Philby
Tim Harford
Monisha Rajesh
Lea Ypi
Tim Littlewood



ft.com/festival

Headline partner

BANK OF AMERICA

Official destination partner

CANADA

Festival partners

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE

Festival friends

Cartwright Jensen Group

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Official destination partner

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE

Festival friends

Cartwright Jensen Group

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Official destination partner

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE

Festival friends

Cartwright Jensen Group

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Official destination partner

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE

Festival friends

Cartwright Jensen Group

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Official destination partner

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE

Festival friends

Cartwright Jensen Group

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Official destination partner

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE

Festival friends

Cartwright Jensen Group

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Official destination partner

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE

Festival friends

Cartwright Jensen Group

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Official destination partner

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE

Festival friends

Cartwright Jensen Group

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Official destination partner

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE

Festival friends

Cartwright Jensen Group

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Official destination partner

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE

Festival friends

Cartwright Jensen Group

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Official destination partner

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE

Festival friends

Cartwright Jensen Group

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Official destination partner

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE

Festival friends

Cartwright Jensen Group

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Official destination partner

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE

Festival friends

Cartwright Jensen Group

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Official destination partner

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE

Festival friends

Cartwright Jensen Group

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Official destination partner

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE

Festival friends

Cartwright Jensen Group

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Official destination partner

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE

Festival friends

Cartwright Jensen Group

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON

Travel & leisure

Restaurants hit amid fears over US economy

Americans dine at home to save cash as they fret about job security and high prices

BY TAYLOR NICOLE ROGERS — CLEVELAND

US consumers are eating at home to save money as they worry about a slowing economy and stubbornly high prices, leading restaurant chains to warn of declining sales.

HOP and Applebee's owner Dine Brands, Sweetgreen, Wendy's and Denny's all warned investors last week that consumers' hesitancy to spend is hurting sales. Chipotle Mexican Grill gave a similar warning last month.

Americans ate 1bn fewer meals at

restaurants between January and March than in the same quarter of the year before, according to data from market research firm Circana.

The decline came after the share of meals eaten at home versus at restaurants had remained more or less steady since 2023.

McDonald's chief executive Chris Kempczinski said that, while the burger chain's sales had returned to growth last quarter, visits from low-income customers in particular had fallen by 'double-digits' between April and June as their real incomes had declined.

"You're seeing people either skip occasions, so they're skipping... breakfast or they're trading down either within our menu or they're trading

down to eating at home," Kempczinski said.

Fears of a slowing labour market and the economic impact of President Donald Trump's tariffs have discouraged spending, leading to what Denny's chief executive Kelli Valade called "a very choppy consumer environment".

Denny's chief financial officer Robert Verostek added that "macroeconomic changes" had made the diner chain's sales "pretty volatile" in July.

Consumers' growing efforts to seek savings by cooking more of their own food has sparked a wave of value meals, ranging from Taco Bell's "luxe cravens boxes" to McDonald's \$5 meal deal to try to draw in diners, with mixed success.

Visits to US restaurants have fallen

1 per cent this year compared with 2024, according to market research firm Black Box Intelligence.

Fast-food restaurants have been hit with their traffic sliding 2.3 per cent in the second quarter compared with the previous year.

"Right now we have highly leveraged consumers," said Sally Lyons Wyatt, a Circana adviser who focuses on the food service industry. "It's going to take a lot of levers being pulled in order to get consumers more comfortable to spend more money out of home. And it's not going to be this year."

Dine Brands chief executive John Peyton said that, when Americans did eat out, they were cutting back on beverages and appetisers or "trading down"

to more inexpensive menu items in an attempt to lower their bill.

Michael Skipworth, chief executive of Wingstop, said: "Through our regular consumer research, we hear concerns about elevated prices, future job prospects and general anxiety about the future."

While overall food inflation has slowed, the cost of eating out is outpacing that of cooking at home with the consumer price index for food at home up 2.4 per cent and food away from home climbing 3.8 per cent in the 12 months to June.

The US Department of Agriculture said the costs of eating out will keep rising more quickly than home meals.

Additional reporting by Gregory Meyer

Financials

SGX poised for revival after shift in capital flows, says chief

OWEN WALKER — SINGAPORE

Singapore's stock exchange is primed for a revival with tens of companies in talks to list, according to its chief executive, signalling the exchange may be recovering after decades of companies withdrawing listings.

SGX reported its strongest annual revenues and net profits in 25 years on Friday as the bourse pushes to expand its commodity business through acquisitions.

Chief executive Loh Boon Chye said this was partly due to increased trading on the back of disruption in global markets caused by uncertainty surrounding US tariffs.

"The US still [has] the largest capital markets but because global investors are thinking about... greater diversification, it has created shifting capital flows," Loh told the Financial Times.

He added that SGX was benefitting from investors moving their money to Asia. The exchange reported S\$1.3bn (\$1bn) of net revenue over the past year, up 11 per cent on the previous year, and S\$648m of net profit, up 8 per cent.

Singapore's Straits Times index, which tracks the performance of the top 30 companies listed on SGX, has risen 37 per cent over the past 12 months.

Companies have been withdrawing listings from Singapore for years as large

south-east businesses favoured bigger US markets.

The number of companies listed in Singapore fell to 608 in June, its lowest level for more than two decades.

But Loh said there were more than 50 companies in talks about listing on SGX with more than 10 already in talks with the exchange's regulatory arm about applying for an IPO.

Since Loh became chief executive a decade ago, he has tried to diversify the business away from depending on its stock market revenue.

One of his first moves was buying the UK's Baltic Exchange, which traces its origins back to London's 18th century coffee houses.

The Baltic is best known for compiling The Baltic Dry index, which charts the cost of transporting commodities such as iron ore and grain in bulk.

SGX's results reflected its range of business areas, which include fixed income, currencies and commodities, which made up 26 per cent of group revenue.

Loh said the group was focused on growing its commodities business and was weighing up further deals.

"We also want to grow our business inorganically with targeted acquisitions," he said. "[Commodities] is clearly a space that we're seeing shifting investment flows."

Singapore's fortunes have diverged from some other exchanges in the region, which have recorded high growth. Hong Kong's stock exchange recently said it had 208 companies in its IPO pipeline, an all-time high.

Market questions. Week ahead

Data quality in spotlight as investors crave clarity

How weak is the UK jobs market?

Investors will be hoping that official data due tomorrow sheds some light on the state of the UK jobs market.

There is near-universal gloom among employers, who worry about tariffs abroad, new taxes at home, ongoing labour shortages and a slew of new legislation on workers' rights.

But while some business surveys point to a catastrophic slump in hiring, others paint a less dramatic picture – where employers are not hiring much, but neither are they firing.

Recent official data has been similarly mixed, with tax records pointing to flat or falling payroll employment, while the labour force survey from the Office for National Statistics shows a recent pick-up in both employment and unemployment.

The extent of weakness matters, with the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee split on whether it should worry more about the risks of job losses or of stubborn inflation.

Economists polled by Reuters expect tomorrow's figures to show unemployment steady at 4.7 per cent and wage growth in the three months to May slowing to an annual pace of 4.7 per cent, down from 5 per cent a month earlier.

Dolphine Strauss

Will US inflation numbers withstand Trump's pressure?

US statisticians are scheduled to release a closely watched measure of consumer price inflation this week, the first such release since Donald Trump fired their boss.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics will reveal its consumer price index for July tomorrow. Economists polled by Reuters expect the index to have risen 0.2 per cent in the month, slightly less than its 0.5 per cent rise in June, according to LSEG.

The data will be the first CPI release since the US president ordered the firing early this month of Erica McEntarfer, head of the BLS, after a downturn in jobs report. The move sparked widespread alarm for potentially undermining confidence in US government statistics, used by global investors to price assets worth trillions of dollars.

Thierry Wizanman, global currency and rates strategist at Macquarie Group, said he and colleagues had been fielding questions about McEntarfer's firing,



Commuters on London Bridge: markets will be looking for a clear steer on UK employment tomorrow, while in the US the official statisticians will release the first inflation report since Donald Trump fired their boss

Seán Adams/Reuters

while noting that response rates to BLS business and household surveys had been in decline for years, raising doubts over the quality of its data. "Still, if political manipulation of the 'official' [data] is suspected to continue, those suspicions will certainly seep into the CPI report... and that could have direct market implications," Wizanman said.

July's CPI will be the last for a full month before Trump's new "reciprocal" tariff regime came into effect last Thursday, four months after his "liberation day" announcements, although many new customs duties are already being collected. Markets have weathered months of turmoil as the president and his negotiators have announced, backed away from and doubled down on numerous tariff proposals.

Strategists at Goldman Sachs said Trump's import taxes would "continue to boost monthly inflation" over the

next few months. They expect annual CPI inflation of 3.5 per cent in December, or 2.5 per cent excluding tariff effects. Will Schmitt

Will the RBA pull another surprise?

The Reserve Bank of Australia is widely expected to cut its policy interest rate by a quarter of a percentage point tomorrow, taking the rate to 3.6 per cent, as the bank attempts to steer the country's economy down a narrow path of easing inflation while avoiding recession.

But that was true last month, too, when the central bank surprised markets by keeping the rate unchanged despite high conviction that it would cut. Australian rate traders learnt a hard lesson that the RBA is "not here to make friends," said Chris Weston, head of research at brokerage Pepperstone.

Michele Bullock, RBA governor, said

July's CPI reading will be the last full month before Trump's 'reciprocal' tariffs came into force last week

the decision to hold was driven by timing and did not reflect any directional issue. Policymakers opted to wait for greater clarity on the economic outlook. Recent data showed that annual "trimmed mean" inflation – the RBA's preferred measure, which gives a reduced weight to the most extreme movements in prices – fell to 2.7 per cent in June, its lowest rate since December 2021, while unemployment ticked higher to 4.2 per cent.

Belinda Allen, senior economist at Commonwealth Bank, said the data would give the RBA confidence to resume its easing cycle. "A rate cut [tomorrow] is a done deal," she said.

The RBA's cautious approach makes a faster pace of easing unlikely. Allen said that a further quarter-point cut in November, followed by more easing next year, is to be expected if inflation continues to slow. Nic Fildes

FT FINANCIAL TIMES

IS YOUR SHARE PRICE BEING NOTICED?

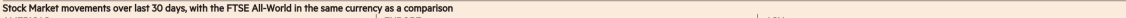
The Financial Times Share Service sections help you to reach and engage financially aware decision-makers and affluent shareholders from across the world in print and online.

Contact data@ft.com

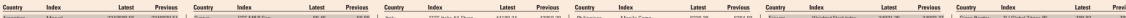


FT.COM/MARKETSDATA

Change during previous day's trading (%)



AMERICAS

[illegible]

© 2004 Market Movers. All rights reserved. For more information, please visit www.marketmovers.com. A full version of this table is available on the Market Movers research data archive.

[illegible]

Downs	118.50	6.63	5.93	Close Brothers	560.50	17.50	3.29	Paribas Act	81.43	1.93	243.40	Mazda Motor	971.80	45.50	4.91
Downs				Downs				Downs				Downs			
Pearson				Pearson				Pearson				Pearson			
110.95	-6.5	-1.8	Amprint	110.95	-6.5	-1.8	Amprint	110.95	-6.5	-1.8	Amprint	110.95	-6.5	-1.8	Amprint
117.30	-4.9	23.5	Bathory	117.30	-4.9	23.5	Bathory	117.30	-4.9	23.5	Bathory	117.30	-4.9	23.5	Bathory
280.00	-10.4	-34.5	Capita	280.00	-10.4	-34.5	Capita	280.00	-10.4	-34.5	Capita	280.00	-10.4	-34.5	Capita
253.00	-12.2	26.3	Gas Water & Utilities index	253.00	-12.2	26.3	Gas Water & Utilities index	253.00	-12.2	26.3	Gas Water & Utilities index	253.00	-12.2	26.3	Gas Water & Utilities index
111.90	-5.4	-1.9	Electricity	111.90	-5.4	-1.9	Electricity	111.90	-5.4	-1.9	Electricity	111.90	-5.4	-1.9	Electricity

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

FTSE All-Share Basic Materials (27)	682.44	1.52	5916.46	6480.47	7273.99	4.31	1.14	20.25	164.14	101.44.58	FTSE Global Small Cap	5780	1200.19	0.1	0.7	7.4	1826.20	8.7	1.8	Industrial Metals & Mining	114	542.80	1.2	1.2	16.8	1141.28	-18.9	3.5	Consorte Group PLC	229.00	-2.08	Nighttime PLC	7188.00	-0.00	
FTSE All-Share Energy (13)	6713.33	-0.12	7631.76	8722.56	8918.97	9089.99	4.74	2.02	10.05	266.78	11061.57	FTSE Global Mkt Plc	4122	616.59	0.3	1.7	11.4	1107.13	12.8	1.8	Drugs International PLC	94	1083.59	0.8	5.8	27.3	2545.65	25.5	2.8	Rights PLC	2669	-9.80	Nights PLC	4573	-0.00

FTSE All-Share UK Insurance Inc	7953.07	-0.26	8786.98	5961.14	5953.69	5626.82	4.81	0.59	35	243.88	10709.83	
FTSE All-Share Nonlife Insurance Inc	5339.13	-1.33	6796.95	5441.121	5402.687	4362.27	4.17	12.36	143.78	72327.25		
FTSE North America Small Cap	1226	143.97	-0.2	0.1	2.7	1094.33	3/6	1				
FTSE North America	563	895.45	-0.1	1.8	8.5	1432.26	3/3	1.3				
FTSE Europe	37	656.46	0.5	-4.3	-3.1	1380.58	-3.9	2.3				
Holma PLC	3280	84.09	Standard Chartered PLC	1387.5								
Hilma Pharmaceuticals PLC	1740	199.08	Taylor Wimpey PLC	101.10								

FTSE All-Share Composite Index	42,439.61	-2.46	3915.66	4356.57	4398.09	3863.85	1.89	1.62	32.1	302.7	5708.40	FTSE Japan Mid Cap	339	701.94	0.7	0.6	18.6	1049.74	20.7	2.5	Health Care Equipment & Technology	122	1293.05	1.0	-3.1	-86	1633.23	-3.9	1.3	HSBC Holdings PLC	939.30	21.48	United Utilities PLC	145.00
FTSE All-Share Consumer Services	43,696.90	0.63	7320.38	4361.13	4387.49	1180.81	4.22	1.29	1.64	167.25	8410.07	FTSE Global W Japan Small Cap	331	807.81	0.4	5.6	21.3	1254.00	20.4	2.7	Pharmaceuticals & Biotechnology	220	508.17	-1.2	-0.1	82	529.20	1.6	2.6	Imi PLC	2242	0.65	United Group PLC	1135

FTSE All-Share Industrial Supersector (USD) 50896.19	0.29	39.90	39.92	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	50.90	5
--	------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	---

TSX All Share Price Movements and Mining (Q) 07/10/16	-0.31	16917.62	18769.12	18693.54	9316.46	2.22	2.35	181	2195.21	14038.26								
FTSE All Share Price Movements and Mining (Q) 07/10/16	-0.49	6304.06	7042.04	7026.53	8770.91	4.33	0.89	25.52	214.54	7700.54								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								
TSX Gold & Silver Producers	0.00	4561.87	4877.00	4877.00	4561.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4561.87								

UK RIGHTS OFFERS				UK COMPANY RESULTS							UK RECENT EQUITY ISSUES			
Amount	Latest			Company	Turnover	Pre-tax	EPS(d)	Div(d)	Pov div	Total	Issue	Issue	Stock	Close

*Available to Premium subscribers

WORK & CAREERS

The secret to a good summer work party

Fix your own dinner, know how to end a conversation, and always keep in mind who you actually like, writes **Stephen Bush**

The work – or work-related – summer party has much to recommend it. It's a neat way to make new contacts and to reconnect with people you have been rubbish at speaking to that year. But it also comes with costs and pitfalls.

Nonetheless, there are some good rules of thumb, which remain useful even in the relative lull between the July party rush and the early September engagements.

First and foremost, even though I have noted a welcome increase in the number of parties providing good and plentiful nibbles, grab something to eat

beforehand. The risk is not, in my experience, drunkenness on the night itself, which, unpleasantly as I love a good gossip, I have never observed or experienced. More common, through bitter experience and second-hand, is a persistent, low-level hangover the day after because you have consumed exactly four canapés and four glasses of wine.

One solution is to have dinner plans after an event, especially if you are bagging with colleagues you particularly like. Another is to have a good sandwich right before. One reason why I am so fond of Gail's is that it takes some beating as a place you can get a sandwich, in central London, after five o'clock. Regardless, although non-alcoholic options are improving all the time, make your own plan for food and your own plan for water.

This last point on hydration has become particularly acute as more and more summer parties seem to be taking place at statement venues. I had a thoroughly lovely time at a recent event,



FT Montage/Dreamstime

courtesy of a company who will remain nameless, but the beautiful veneer's glass roof left us all feeling like we were left-overs in a microwave. By the end I was so dehydrated that, despite having had

just one glass of wine, I felt like I had woken up after a 48-hour bender.

Secondly, remember this is a work event. Again, I am not referring to inappropriate behaviour that you

wouldn't wish your colleagues to see; sadly, summer parties are mostly free of that sort of thing nowadays. The more common problem is that hyper-awareness of being at an industry mixer can result in gatherings with the overly formalised feeling of some wedding between warring nations, rather than a useful coming together. This is a problem, I would say, that I experience more in the academic and corporate worlds than when the summer party is in Westminster.

When it comes to interacting, it is perfectly fine to be bluntly transactional. Not to the extent you are looking over someone's shoulder, of course. But it is actively a good idea to say "well, I must talk to you and so before I leave", or "I need to circulate" after a conversation has run its course. Certainly this is a better approach than claiming you need to go to the loo.

Also advisable when meeting new contacts, in an age when the physical business card has gone out of fashion

everywhere but the diplomatic circuit, is to put new numbers into your phone's notes app, rather than your contacts. That way you are much more likely to remember to send follow-up messages in a timely fashion. Either that, or exchange numbers and connect on LinkedIn at the same time.

Last of all, begin with an honest account in your mind of who you actually like. I had a lovely time a few weeks back at a garden party in Westminster, but I realised afterwards that I had learnt very little about the inner life of the political party in question and rather a lot about people's new gardens – a consequence of talking too much to contacts I actually like. If you see someone at a work summer party whose company you enjoy enough to invite to your own home, the best approach is to have a quick check in and then do exactly that. You'll do much more useful networking and you can look forward to a better evening during the August void between parties.

Work-life balance

Getting away from it all: how to actually take a holiday from work

Research suggests most high earners check in with the office while away. We ask **FT writers and contributors** what they do

What do you look for in a holiday? Doing nothing by a pool, or extreme sports? Would you prefer to spend time alone, or with a group? Go on an adventure or take time to relax in luxury?

Whatever you aspire to do, it's unlikely a dream holiday involves checking emails. But for many of us it's the reality. According to the CIPD, 30 per cent of UK employees say they and colleagues use allocated time off to work – a form of what the HR professionals place calls "leaveism". A separate survey by NatWest found two-thirds of high-earners work on holiday.

Is it possible to actually get away from it all? We asked writers and industry leaders how they take a break – and the best holidays that resulted.

Rachel Carrell, CEO of childcare company Koor Kids

As an entrepreneur with three kids, "off" time doesn't happen unless we explicitly ringfence it. So on holiday, my husband and I use a system we call "Golden Time" – two hours a day when each parent gets to do whatever they want without judgment. That could mean a nap, a run, a solo trip to a wine bar, or even a work call. It might sound unromantic to schedule freedom – but it really helps avoid the situation where we both feel "on" all day long, or one of us somehow always feels "in charge".

This summer, we're piloting something I've dreamt about since Covid – working remotely from a beautiful place with **childcare**. We're going to Bordeaux for a month, with our nanny coming for two weeks. We've chosen to stay in the city itself, so our nanny can take the kids out while we work. I'm not militant about "switching off". I do check Slack while I'm away, and I tell people that if something is really urgent, they should WhatsApp me.



Toss Smith/Roberts

Emma Jacobs, FT features writer

I should be the ideal holiday-maker. I manage a no one, so if anyone has no problems, whether I'm there or not makes no difference. The only prep I need to do is grind through a backlog of work to deliver before I go. The problem is, I have no willpower. Someone at the office will have a query before I know it. I'm scrolling through my inbox. Then, inevitably, something interesting catches my attention, and I'm trapped in email ping pong all of my own making. So this year, I plan to impose self-control, scheduling impulsive replies for when I get back to the office.

I find the best way to get into the holiday spirit is to go to a holiday supermarket: something about browsing different food and drink signals isn't in my usual routine. Then I read a gateway book. It has to be a page-turner – something to make reading an urgent habit. Once I'm back into reading compulsion, then I know I can distance myself from work. Because the reality is, I am not important. While work seems to expand to fill whatever time you have, as children grow increasingly independent, the time they spend with parents only diminishes.

Favourite holiday

It changes every year. Interrailing a couple of years ago was great. Home swaps are a new experiment. After a long time in lockdown, I enjoyed a trip with family, from whom we'd been separated for months, in a cottage on a river, in a heatwave, which seemed blissful and simple.

Cesar Carvalho, CEO and co-founder of Wellhub

The biggest mistake I see leaders make is believing they're doing their team

a favour by staying available on holiday, replying to emails and messages all the time. They are modelling that boundaries aren't priorities, and that their people can't be trusted to handle things without them.

I also used to answer emails while my kids played in the sand, thinking I was being responsible. But I was also teaching them poor work habits. Now I'm intentional about taking time off, but this only works because I spend the year empowering my team and building trust. During my time off, I only respond to emails and chats once a day in the morning before my family wakes up. That's it. I also leave one person in the team assigned to call me right away if a topic deserves my attention and can't wait for the next morning. Most don't.

To be a good leader to others, one has to be good to oneself, so try to signal to my body something is different. I don't shave on my day off, and exercise more and eat healthier – which is easier without business dinners.



Favourite holiday

One week in Croatia with my family, where the biggest decision was which beach to visit. I returned more creative and energised than I'd been in months – and my team had thrived, making some of our smartest decisions without me hovering.

Taylor Nicole Rogers, FT labour and equality correspondent

My penchant for high-energy holidays means I've often returned to the newsroom more physically exhausted than before I left. I spent the first few years of my career dashing from office to airport for some camping or skiing trip, occasionally running straight back to my desk from my return flight.

So my paid-time-off experience was forever changed when I started adding an extra day off at home at the end of every trip. Weekend days do not count. Having that extra day to catch up on sleep after an overnight flight or complete household tasks like cleaning, laundry and grocery shopping takes the pressure off the transition back into work. The week before a vacation no longer feels like a sprint to get ahead, nor the week after a dash to catch up.

If your time off goal is to prevent burnout, give your holiday some space on your calendar to do its job.



Favourite holiday

My mind has never been as still as on my recent three-week camping safari through the national parks of Zimbabwe and South Africa. Being out of cell phone range and spending hours watching animals reminded me how few of the things I stress about actually matter.

Marco Amitrano, senior partner at PwC UK

Taking a meaningful holiday is a discipline in itself. Leaders inevitably feel the pull to stay connected, but rest isn't just a reward for hard work – it's a fundamental part of it.

At PwC, we encourage our people to take a proper break, and leaders are expected to model this too. Before I go, I make sure my team are fully briefed, empowered to make decisions, and clear on what can and can't wait for my return. In a client-facing business, issues can arise every day and it's my responsibility to be there, so I can never really go uncontactable. However I set boundaries. Any urgent matters go to my immediate support team first, which creates a safety valve.

While I'm away, I enjoy the opportunity to give more time to my family and do some new thinking. Knowing what energises you and drains you is the important thing when deciding what's worth turning into while-on holiday.

Favourite holiday

Nerano, an Italian fishing village where the Amitrano family comes from. Having lots of family together, in one of my favourite places, is unbeatable – no agenda, just time to reflect on what made me, rebuild my energy reserves, and renew that vital sense of passion and self-belief.

Bree Groff, author of 'Today Was Fun'

For me, the first step of a holiday is reaching the brink of divorce with my husband as we scrutinise each other's itineraries and stress about money. Luckily, it gets better from there. In the run-up to the trip, I clear my calendar of obligations and spend an unrea-

sonable amount of time crafting an OOO message ("I'm in Italy, supporting the gluten industry in its time of need.") I also try to "mise en place" my return week – booking exercise classes, ordering groceries to be delivered, and making sure I have "digital catch up" time blocked on my calendar.

Once we're off (usually to Europe), it takes a day or two for my brain and body to slow down. I'll tease my husband for walking at an NYC clip even on a holiday stroll. But soon enough we ease into a new rhythm. We love a boutique country inn, but also an Airbnb where we live as temporary locals. In fact, every trip ends up being part holiday, part retirement resource, a mix of savouring the moment and broadening our horizons to what life could be.

Favourite holiday

I've been travelling with my friend Jenessa for decades. In our younger years we had exciting adventures. Now, we mostly just have aperitivo in Italy. My favourite holiday of late was the road trip we took with our families through Umbria. I remember a meal of grilled vegetables, meats, cheeses, and local wine as we sat at a restaurant overlooking the Umbrian hills. I looked around at people I love in this paradise and knew: this was Peak Life. My favourite holidays take me there.

James Thornton, CEO of Intrepid Travel

As you'd expect from the CEO of a global travel company, I prioritise taking holidays, so I'm regularly planning my next adventure. I travel for work about 200 days a year, and my family makes sacrifices because of this. Holidays are really important to us, and a time when we can be together and share new experiences. I've been fortunate to travel to all the continents, including family adventures in Japan, Peru, and Jordan.

When I'm on holiday, I'm extremely disciplined about not checking my inbox. When I'm at home, I have close to a zero-inbox policy, but on leave, I step away completely. It's probably unusual for a CEO, but I find the separation good for creative thinking.

I always keep a list on my phone of opportunities or challenges that I'd like Intrepid to be focusing on once I get back to work. I also still prioritise exercise – a run or long walk every morning.



Favourite holiday

My holiday happy place is Croatia. My wife is Australian Croatian, and we love being by the sea and sailing. I like the concept of "meantime" – going from place to place, doing new things each day. I don't like to stand still for too long. The food is also amazing – I love salty fish on the BBQ.



Favourite holiday

Any place on holiday! When you're skidding down a mountain you have no choice but to be mindful and present, or you'll break your leg. At least that's how it always feels for me. Then at the end of the day I'm too exhausted to do anything but eat potatoes and cheese, then sleep.



FTWeekend Festival

Experience the FT Weekend paper come to life with sessions including:



Explore climate solutions with Octopus Energy CEO, **Greg Jackson**, author and senior researcher at Oxford University, **Hannah Ritchie** and the FT's **Pilita Clark**



Explore the oil tycoons, the civil rights movement and the extraordinary quest to find every Black figure in western art with FT Life & Arts columnist, **Enuma Okoro**



Join Natural History Museum director of science, **Tim Littlewood**, to discuss digitising the entire collection and using AI to help develop drought-resistant wheat and much more



Explore the new age of the train with author and travel writer, **Monisha Rajesh** and author, **Andrew Martin**

6 SEPTEMBER 2025
Kenwood House, London & Online
09:30 - 19:15 BST



Book now
ft.com/festival
#FTWeekendFestival

Headline partner
BANK OF AMERICA

Official destination partner

Festival partners

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE
SWITZERLAND

Elysian
RESIDENCES

GROVE
GALLERY

octopusenergy

Pearson

Wealth
Management

Champagne partner

LOUIS ROEDERER
CHAMPAGNE

Festival friends

Cartwright Jenson Group

LINCOLN
SQUARE
LONDON

NIKEI

reMarkable

VINTAGE
ACQUISITIONS

Exhibitors

BAILEY ROBINSON
— TRAVEL WITHOUT COMPROMISE —

ETO

Kevin Anderson
HARDY & PARTNERS

NOBLE CALEDONIA
SMALL SHIPS - BIG EXPERIENCES

SUCCESSION
WEALTH

ARTS

The fantastical made ferocious

The strange, ceaselessly inventive art of Leonora Carrington is celebrated in a show in New York State, writes Ariella Budick

It didn't have time to be anyone's muse, the surrealist painter Leonora Carrington once said. "I was too busy rebelling against my family and learning to be an artist."

Carrington, who died at 94 in 2011, had time to lead a twisty, unconventional life, become famous as Max Ernst's mistress, survive the early years of the second world war in France and settle in Mexico. And yet she painted so prolifically and well that her 1945 opus "Les Distractions de Dagobert" sold at auction for \$28.5m last year, handily beating Ernst's record price of \$24.4m in 2022.

There's a lot of drama, trauma, mystical vision, technical virtuosity, formal grace and plain old eccentricity packed into Leonora Carrington: *Dream Weaver*, a compact retrospective of her work at the Katonah Museum of Art, an hour outside of Manhattan. If the gaudy gathering of grotesque "Rabins" ("The Rabbits") from 1960 isn't to your taste, slide a few feet over and you come to an adorably tender "Portrait of Gooky" from 1935, or the pencil drawing "Girl, Horse, Tree" (c1940), in which the three subjects merge into a vaporous interspecies concoction.

A few steps away is "Pastoral" (1950), a complex tableau of creatures, spirits and humans picknicking in a dappled wood. Here, Carrington evokes Giorgio's "The Tempest" and Manet's "Le déjeuner sur l'herbe" to endow the scene with art-historical gravitas, but she animates the breeze-stirred trees, mint green meadows and twilight sky with a light brush all her own.

Her fierce eye imbued the most improbable objects with intensity. Consider the solitary vegetable she painted in 1987: it's not just a red cabbage; it's a

sanguinary one, with crimson leaves edged in papy grey. I don't think I've ever seen a single item of produce rendered with so much sentient vitality. Carrington didn't see it as an inert foodstuff, waiting to be chopped and browned, but as the "alchemical rose", a talisman pregnant with sacred meaning and capable of inducing some freaky psychedelic experiences. It's also a victim of human appetites, which, she claimed, "screams when dragged out of the earth and plunged into boiling water or grease – forgive us, cabbage".

To her, style was a tool, and she was ready to trade it in for a new one when the occasion arose

Reading these words does her a disservice. Perhaps she takes empathy for plant matter a little far, and some viewers may wrinkle their noses at her mash-up of Tibetan Buddhism, Kabbalah, ghost stories, alchemy, shamanism, Robert Graves's *The White Goddess*, Celtic legends and Mayan mystical epics. But skip the texts and cryptic symbols, and you find that her art itself is ceaselessly inventive and appealingly strange. I find it helpful to focus on the quality of her brushstroke and line, and on the wisps of insoluble mystery.

To her, style was a tool, and she was ready to trade it in for a new one when the occasion arose. She kept returning to her life-long themes – incidents from her life, a menagerie of real and fantastical creatures, horses, landscapes imbued with a spiritual buzz – but gave them constantly shifting forms. Edward



Clockwise, from above: Leonora Carrington, "Nunscape at Manzanillo" (1956); "Cabbage" (1987); "Untitled (Griffin)" (1950)

James, a surrealist impresario and promoter of Magritte and Dalí, remarked that "she has never relinquished her love of experimentation; the results being that she has been able to diversify and explore a hundred or more techniques for the expression of her creative powers. She continues to try new media which help her to clothe her vital ideas with fresh shapes."

Carrington was born in 1917 in

Lancashire, north-west England, into a wealthy Catholic family with a grand, if creepy, gothic house, aptly named Crookley Hall. First, she antagonised her parents, and then the nuns at a series of convent schools, who kept throwing her out.

She got her revenge in "Nunscape at Manzanillo" (1956), in which a boatload of sisters founder on rocks. Some sing in the surf or dance on the beach, one tries to swim while her habit drags her down, another cradles a great fish like an overgrown baby. Somewhere out of the frame or beneath the waves, one of the nuns must be up to something un-nun-like because her underclothes hang from an improvised line.

After hunting for an education in Florence, she alighted in London in 1935, and in 1936 she studied with the French modernist painter Amédée Ozenfant. Her pencil sketch of a man with sensuous lips, conspicuous nose and vigilant eyes is a testament to her respect for the teacher who, she said, "gave me the first tools".

That was a watershed year for Carrington. Herbert Read published his seminal book *Surrealism*, and her mother understood enough about Leonora to give her a copy. She also attended London's first surrealism exhibition and saw Max Ernst's "Two Children are

Threatened by a Nightingale", an experience that changed her life.

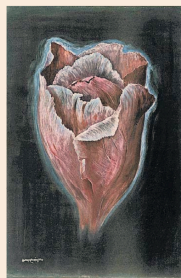
She was 19 when she met Ernst, who was 45 and twice married (not counting his ménage à trois with Paul Eluard and his wife Gala). Stricken with bolts of mutual infatuation, Carrington and Ernst settled in an old farmhouse in the village of Saint-Martin-d'Ardeche in the Rhône Valley.

"It was an era of paradise," she later said. Together, they decorated the interior with equine women and waggy-legged lizards, and set a stiff monumental mermaid to guard the terrace.

The idyll came to an end with the war.

Ernst was arrested twice – by the French for being German and by the Germans for being a "degenerate artist". She fled to Madrid, he to the US with Peggy Guggenheim (who became his third, but not final, wife).

Carrington experienced a psychotic episode and landed at an asylum in Santander, northern Spain. Shortly after her release, she met the Mexican



poet and journalist Renato Leduc, who married her and whisked her first to New York and then, in 1942, to Mexico City. Though the marriage dissolved, Carrington fell in love with the city, which suited her eclectic sensibility and remained her home for the rest of her life.

The 1950s marked the apex of her career, when she could dwell on her past and in her imagination without the distractions of war or sexual adventures. (In Mexico, she enjoyed a long, apparently stable marriage with the photographer Chiki Weiss.) In the stunning 1957 "Country House", a castle much like her childhood home is velled in extravagant greenery and watched over by charmingly sedate monsters. This uncharacteristically misty painting is rendered in the manner of the frescoes in the ancient Roman Villa Livia, giving it the air of a bucolic retreat from stress and the passage of time.

A few years later, she used a contrasting technique with a similar degree of control in the fearsome "Bird of Frey". The avian predator, executed with ruthless precision in white chalk lines on black card and finished in gouache, gazes at a rodent that wriggles in its talons. The bird's eye is a black circle with spokes of light; the victim is a white disc of terror. Like so many of her busy paintings and quick sketches, this supremely elegant drawing lingers in the zone she knew best: the eerie fusion of cruelty and beauty.

To October 5, katonahmuseum.org



Carrington's "Pastoral" (1950) — Leonora Carrington/MS

Righteous rage over a wrongful conviction

PODCASTS

Fiona Sturges



In 2001, 35-year-old Kathleen Folbigg opened her front door in Singleton, New South Wales, to a police detective who said he was there to arrest her. In the preceding decade, she had endured unfathomable loss with the deaths of all four of her infant children. The youngest was just 19 days old when he died; the oldest was 18 months. She said they all died in their sleep.

In 2003, Folbigg was convicted of the murder of three of her children, and the manslaughter of her fourth, and ordered to serve a minimum of 25 years in prison. Branded "Australia's worst female serial killer", she spent much of the first decade of her 20 years in prison in isolation to keep her away from other inmates enraged by her alleged crimes. But Folbigg's conviction was quashed in 2023 after an independent enquiry deemed the evidence against her unreliable.

In *The Lab Detective*, a powerful new podcast and the latest in the *Tortoise Investigates* series, journalist Rachel Sylvester talks to Folbigg and others about the horrific miscarriage of justice that led to her imprisonment. Research undertaken by Carola Vinueza, a specialist in genetics, helped secure Folbigg's freedom by showing that she and her children carried DNA containing a genetic mutation that can potentially cause infant death. "I

wouldn't want my worst enemies to go through this sort of stuff," Folbigg says. "It is something that will be with me for the rest of my life."

Folbigg's story is shocking, but *The Lab Detective* isn't solely about one woman's wrongful conviction.

Sylvester uses the familiar true-crime framework to explore a wider theme about motherhood and how society, and the justice system, believes mothers should be: nurturing, selfless, perfect. Sylvester observes how, when babies die in unexplained circumstances, fathers are rarely accused of killing them even though they may share parenting duties equally. Folbigg's case, she says, "fits into a troubling pattern of mothers accused of murder when their children die, often on the basis of scant circumstantial evidence".

There is much in this series that is sad and engaging. Sylvester, an empathetic host, gaups more than once

at the tragedy of a woman traumatised by the loss of her babies, only to be accused of killing them. But there's an unexpected thread of optimism, too, as she talks to Vinueza about her work and digs into the role of genomics to help right legal wrongs and combat misogyny. Through Vinueza and her colleagues' vital research, a pictured is painted of a battle playing out between science and the law.

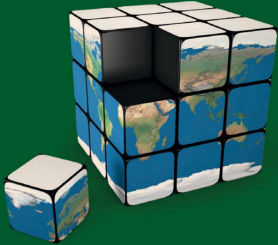
In the fourth and final episode, Sylvester and Vinueza discuss a recent case in Greece where a mother, Roula Pispirtigou, dubbed in the press a "modern-day Medea", received three life sentences for the murder of her three daughters. There are apparent similarities to Folbigg's case. Pispirtigou, who has so far been denied genetic testing, maintains her innocence.

tortoisemedia.com/listen/the-lab-detective



Kathleen Folbigg after her conviction was quashed in 2023; she had served 20 years in prison for killing her four children — *FT*

fDi
Intelligence



Out now: The fDi Report 2025

Global greenfield investment trends

The fDi Report 2025 is the annual assessment of crossborder investment, based on data from fDi Markets – a service from FT Locations.

Report highlights:

- Renewable energy is the top sector by capital investment globally.
- Asia-Pacific is the leading regional destination, attracting \$394bn – nearly one-third of the global total.
- The US is the top destination country with India coming in second place.

Download your free copy of the report:
www.ftlocations.com/knowledgehub



FT LOCATIONS

FT BIG READ. RENEWABLES

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has pushed for his country to become the 'global benchmark' in the transition to greener, carbon-free energy. But oversupply has led to prices and profits plunging.

By Barney Jopson and Nassos Stylianou

How Spain's solar boom has overheated



The dusty terrain has been levelled by tractors and rammed with ranks of metal rods. They will soon support thousands of solar panels, rated by mini-motors being screwed on by workers in 35C heat.

"Setting up a solar plant is like building a factory in the countryside," says Miguel de la Rosa, an engineering chief for project owner Zilestra, as cable reels and cranes of electrical gear imported from China sit ready for connection to the power grid early next year.

The project in Belinchón, 50km south of Madrid, is another tract of sun-baked Spain now blanketed by rectangles of black silicon, but it may also be the final echo of an era of breakneck growth.

Photovoltaic cells have been the building blocks of a solar power boom spurred by Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, whose support for renewables, combined with Spain's abundant sunshine, has driven a wave of construction. Since he took power in 2018, energy developers have built solar parks, proved that power generation had attractive returns and pulled in capital from yield-hungry investors.

In 2023 and 2024, Spain added more solar power capacity than any other European country except Germany, whose economy is more than twice its size. Aggressive bidding between competitors in the M&A market drove prices for existing projects ever higher.

At some times in spring, as much as 60 per cent of Spain's electricity comes from the sun. That has enabled Spain to slash its use of gas and coal-fired power stations. Consumers have reaped the rewards, as cheap electricity fees from the country from the angst elsewhere in Europe over utility bills.

Sánchez calls his country a "global benchmark" in the transition to greener, carbon-free energy as Europe, the world's fastest-warming continent, bears the brunt of climate change.

But the sunlit uplands of solar have begun to overheat.

Spain has built so much solar capacity that at certain times of day it produces far more electricity than it needs. Prices have plunged as a result, dragging down owners' profits with them. Over the past year, "day ahead" wholesale electricity prices were zero, or even negative, 10 per cent of the time, according to data from grid operator Red Eléctrica. In May, they were at zero or below for one-third of the entire month.

Free power is gratifying for customers, but bad for generators. Some solar operators are told to shut down by Red Eléctrica to curb oversupply, via "curtailment" orders for which they are not always compensated.

The hit to profits has been compounded by another blow: the Iberian blackout in late April, which began in Spain and left 58m people without power for at least five hours, and in many places for much longer.

The government has concluded that solar power did not cause the outage, but its prevalence in the energy mix is important context for what went wrong.

Investors and power companies said their doubts about the adequacy of the Spanish electricity system had been confirmed by the blackout.

'The sector is suffering the consequences of oversupply, which is having a very grave effect on the profitability of solar projects'

They do not question solar's essential role in the clean energy transition. But due to oversights or overconfidence, they say Spain has not adapted to its reliance on solar energy. Prices and demand are too low. Its grid and use of battery storage are behind the times. In a country that is a test case for renewables, the solar boom appears to have gone too far, too fast.

Legacy projects such as Zilestra's are being completed, but a sharp slowdown in new projects is forecast for 2026. M&A activity has switched to fire sales. Solar projects that were selling for €200,000 per megawatt two years ago are now on the market for €28,000-€89,000, according to Teaser, a deals marketplace.

"The sector is suffering the consequences of oversupply, which is having a very grave effect on the profitability of solar projects," says Mario Ruiz-Tagle, who heads the Spanish business of Iberdrola, Europe's largest utility.

Yet the building is supposed to continue apace. Today Spain has 36GW of total solar capacity and the government's target is to reach 76GW by 2030.

"What the government says in its road map is one thing," says Pablo Martínez, Iberia lead at Modo Energy, a data provider. "But the industry and the price signals in the market say something else."

When Sánchez became Spain's Socialist prime minister, he ended a run of barren years for renewables. A previous

leftwing government had used subsidies to encourage an incipient solar sector but, as the Eurozone crisis deepened, a subsequent conservative administration swiped away that support as part of efforts to reduce public debt.

Sánchez helped restart a solar boom by committing himself to decarbonisation and easing some permitting. He did not offer subsidies like the kind of clean energy tax credits in the now semi-repealed US Inflation Reduction Act.

Investors warned to Sánchez's promise of no more U-turns. But the blackout that hit at 12.35pm on April 28 highlighted the shortcomings of a vital part of the system: the electricity grid.

The government has blamed the outage on mistakes by both Red Eléctrica and the utilities that run gas and nuclear power stations, saying they failed to damp down a voltage surge on the grid. But its official report noted something else: the surge was linked to instability

at a solar plant. At 12.05pm, an unnamed facility in Badajoz in western Spain produced an "anomalous" oscillation in grid frequency – the rate at which the electrical current alternates. It was so big it registered in France and Germany.

The presence of a solar plant in the causal chain was telling. No longer is the Spanish system centred on a few dozen fossil fuel and nuclear plants whose huge turbines are located close to urban demand hubs. Instead, it relies on a web of smaller renewable plants dispersed across rural areas, including 54,000 solar installations. They generate power more or less continuously, depending on cloud cover and the rotation of the earth, and do not help to stabilise grid frequency and voltage in the same way as giant gas and nuclear turbines.

"This transformation has pushed the grid to the limits of the generation mix," said José Bogas, chief executive of Endesa, a big Spanish utility, in May. Yet, he added, "we have continued to operate the system as we used to".

But Spain's electricity grid has been neglected. According to BloombergNEF, it has been Europe's stingiest grid investor since 2020, putting \$0.30 and for every €1 invested in renewables, versus a pan-European average of \$0.70.

"Spain was very early and very fast with renewable deployment, but it has not been as speedy as some others with planning," says Axel Thiemann, chief executive of Sonnedix, an international power producer that generates renewable energy in the Iberian peninsula.

The authorities had been happy to see renewable energy production rising while grid costs, which generally get passed on to consumers, stayed affordable, says one executive at a big energy producer who asked not to be named. "They exhausted the economic model to the most cost-efficient point," the executive adds. But the blackout showed "there are no free lunches".

As long ago as 2017 a group of European grid operators, Entso-e, warned that the growth of renewables risked creating instability in the grid and called for the deployment of devices that mimic the stabilising function of turbines, known as grid-forming inverters. Portuguese grid operator Ren, whose system was dragged down by the outage, made concrete proposals for investments in shock absorbing equipment in a December 2024 plan.

But Spain's minority government acted only after the network collapsed,

unveiling "anti-blackout" legislation in June. "There's been more regulation in the past few weeks than in the past five years," says Iberdrola's Ruiz-Tagle.

Joan Groizard, Spain's secretary of state for energy, told the Financial Times that "we've reflected not only on how we reinforce the electricity system now, but how we prepare a system that will continue to evolve" up to 2050.

The legislation gave Red Eléctrica a long list of new orders to do more to control voltage, to deploy new technology, and to use extra leverage to adapt its planning when circumstances change.

But Groizard adds a caveat. "Let's remember that the key opportunity here is price competitiveness. If I massively increase investment in the grid without any clear criteria, and as a result drive up costs on electricity bills, I will no longer be competitive."

On July 22 that point became moot. The legislation was voted down in Spain's Congress in a rebellion by both conservatives and the hard left, who complained the government was not holding anyone to account for the blackout. The government is now trying to achieve some of the same goals via regulatory reforms that do not need parliamentary approval.

"What happened was a serious act of responsibility on the part of the groups that voted against the bill," says Sara Aagesen, Spain's deputy prime minister and energy minister.

In some ways, Spain's solar boom is a victim of its own success. In spring and autumn, the sun is still strong enough to maximise solar output, but mild temperatures mean consumers have no need for things like air conditioning or heating.

The result is that the day ahead electricity price set by OMIE, the Iberian market operator, falls to zero or below. On May 11, the spot price hit a record low of minus €15 per megawatt hour.

But that does not mean every generator is giving away free electricity. Power producers have pioneered the use of long-term supply contracts, known as power purchase agreements (PPA), which they sign with corporate clients for 10-20 years to secure price stability.

Zilestra's Belinchón project, a 150MW facility planned last year when the market was less strained, has a deal with a group of pharmaceutical companies including Takeda and Teva. When it was signed, the average PPA price in Spain was €39 per megawatt hour, according to Our New Energy, a services group.

Zero prices in the spot market remain a problem, says Zilestra's Moreno, because they make clients less inclined to sign solar-only PPAs.

Spain has limited options for the surplus energy on its hands. Several producers, including Rolwind, Grenenergy, Sonnedix and Zilestra, are now switching their attention to batteries. Their bet is that charging them during solar hours and discharging them in the evening will lift daytime prices off the floor and give them more electricity to sell profitably at peak hours.

The operators of existing plants know that to defend themselves against the price curve they need to install

Workers preparing the platforms that will hold solar panels at Zilestra's site in Belinchón. Legacy projects such as this are being completed, but new ones are slowing down

Nacho Hernandez/FT

batteries," says Luis Marquina, head of Aephal, a battery trade group.

Others argue that batteries are not a panacea, in part because they cannot match the vast capacity of hydro plants that store energy by using it to pump water uphill. But in recent years both California and Australia, big generators of solar power, have successfully used batteries to flatten out prices.

In Europe, the UK has installed 5GW of battery capacity while Italy has 1GW, according to Rabobank. Energy executives say that Spain – with only 60MW of battery capacity – has again been behind the pack. One obstacle is a slow permitting process, says Moreno, even when batteries are just being added to an existing solar plant.

Another complaint is that while batteries can help prevent blackouts by providing backup generation or voltage control, Spain – unlike the UK – has not set up a regulated market where owners can get a price for those services.

Measures to tackle those barriers were a pillar of the anti-blackout legislation. But while it remains blocked, and the alternative regulatory reforms are pending, some investors say there is too much financial risk in batteries.

Shuffling supply and demand around during the day masks a more profound challenge: Spain's overall electricity consumption is flat – no higher last year than it was in 2004.

"Electricification has not been as fast as we would have hoped in Europe overall, but in Spain in particular, in a rational world you would say low prices incentive consumption and that has not happened," says Sonnedix's Thiemann.

Power utilities counter that industrial demand for cheap power is emerging, but cannot be satisfied because the grid does not have enough capacity.

The bottleneck is in securing an access point from Red Eléctrica, because the petition process is clogged. Utilities had to reject 54GW of 67GW in requests last year, says Aelea, a trade group that represents Iberdrola, Endesa and EDP.

One-third came from data centres, and US tech giants including Amazon, Meta and Microsoft have all announced big Spanish projects that require huge amounts of power.

But the companies will face familiar obstacles. "Grid interconnection? It's going to take a long time to assess. Permitting? It's hard," Moreno adds. "The interest is real. The speed at which they can actually build is uncertain."

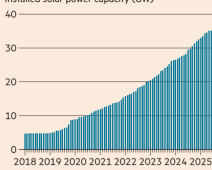
Spain's problem is not that its solar boom went too fast, "it's that the government has been too slow", says another energy executive.

Energy minister Groizard demands. The rejected anti-blackout bill sought to resolve the grid access problems by prioritising genuine projects, and the regulatory industry replacing it tries to do the same.

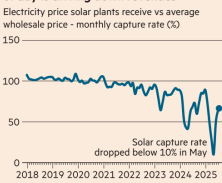
More generally, he argues that generation capacity had to be built before demand would follow. By his rationale, solar oversupply and zero prices are not a failure, but "transitional" phenomena that are now attracting industry as they were meant to.

"There will be a balance between supply and demand at competitive prices," Groizard says, "within just a few years."

Spain's solar power capacity has surged in recent years... Installed solar power capacity (GW)



...but oversupply at certain times of day is driving down revenues



Sources: Red Eléctrica; Modo Energy. Solar capture rate is the electricity price a solar asset receives relative to the average wholesale price

'The interest [from tech giants for data centres] is real. The speed at which they can actually build is uncertain'

The FT View



FINANCIAL TIMES

"Without fear and without favour"

ft.com/opinion

Netanyahu's disastrous plan to take control of Gaza

A small window exists for Israel's allies to dissuade it from further escalation

For weeks, foreign leaders have been raising the pressure on Benjamin Netanyahu to end his catastrophic war in Gaza. Instead, Israel's prime minister has devised a new plan that would inflict yet more death and destruction on the 2.1m Palestinians inside the besieged strip. A day after Netanyahu signalled his intent to fully take over the enclave, his security cabinet ordered the army to prepare to take control of Gaza City, its shattered capital.

This would mean more civilians being killed and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians once more being forcibly displaced, even as a man-made famine stalks the strip. And it would only be the beginning. The next targets are likely to be urban areas in central Gaza where Israeli troops have not yet deployed at

scale as Hamas is believed to be holding Israeli hostages there.

By endorsing the plan, Netanyahu is in effect putting two fingers up to a world increasingly appalled by Israel's actions and the suffering it is causing in Gaza. He is also ignoring the advice of his military chiefs, and the wishes of the hostage families and the majority of Israelis. Many have begun to realise the harm the war is doing to their country – diplomatically, economically and socially.

Expanding the offensive would be disastrous for Israel, as well as the Palestinians. It would imperil the remaining 20 living hostages Hamas seized during its abortive October 7, 2023 attack, who are also starving and enduring a lethal existence. It would mean mobilising thousands of reservists, straining a weary military and putting more Israeli lives at stake. And it would further erode Israel's moral standing. The Jewish state long ago lost any justification for pursuing its offensive in retaliation to Hamas's attack, with evidence of war

crimes mounting and tens of thousands of Palestinians killed.

Netanyahu insists his mission is "total victory" over Hamas. Freeing the hostages, demilitarising Gaza, ensuring Israeli control over the strip and, eventually, establishing a "civilian administration" that excludes the militant groups and the Palestinian Authority, the western-backed body that administers parts of the occupied West Bank. But he has never presented a coherent plan beyond the destruction of the strip and forcibly displacing Palestinians.

Nor has Netanyahu ever seriously considered a potential alternative. The UK, France and Arab states have been formulating a plan that envisages a committee of Palestinian technocrats, backed by the PA, governing Gaza, with security overseen by local police and PA personnel. They have mooted an international "stabilisation" force in the strip. Importantly, Arab states have finally joined European allies in publicly acknowledging that Hamas needs

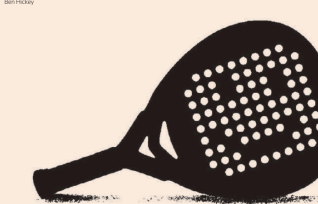
Trump is the one man with the political heft to hold the prime minister to account. But he is either unwilling or unable to force him to end the war

to relinquish power and be disarmed. The plan is not perfect and may not be workable. But it is better than the alternative. Netanyahu is bent on pursuing. He has repeatedly resisted US and Arab efforts to secure a permanent ceasefire and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza – even though Hamas's military strategy has been to wait for Israel's leaders to crack. Instead Netanyahu, on trial for corruption and beholden to extremists in his ruling coalition, puts his political interests before the nation's. Donald Trump is the one man with the political heft to hold Netanyahu to account. But while the US president appears to have finally awoken to the starvation caused by Israel's weaponisation of aid, he is either unwilling or unable to force Netanyahu to end the war. Yet he is not only failing the Palestinians, but Israel as well. There is a narrow window to prevent the Israeli leader's latest calamitous scheme becoming reality. Trump, and Israel's other allies, must act now to prevent it.

Opinion Sport

What padel taught me about the power of play

Ben Hickey



Jemima Kelly

It's a funny thing, becoming an adult. We spend our childhoods and teenage years learning the plans, going to dance classes, drawing, singing, playing sports – often at vast expense to our parents. And then we get to an age at which these things feel too silly, too indulgent, too juvenile, so we often give them up entirely in favour of more grown-up leisure pursuits: fancy meals, farmers' markets, saunas, yoga classes, and, if we're really evolved, personal development.

But then at a certain point some of us get a different feeling. All of sudden we wonder: why am I not doing any of those fun, frivolous, joyful things I used to do? Why do I only have hobbies that involve either consuming something someone else has created for me or some form of navel gazing? When did I give up playing around?

I am doing something I'm not very good at – excellent for relinquishing the fat, relentless ego

Don't get me wrong – I am all for "doing the work", as they call it. I use the term "navel gazing" to describe factiously. I believe we should all be consciously trying to make ourselves into better, kinder, happier human beings, and I think that is a life-long effort. No undertaking in this vein is too "out there" for me; I have a quarterly column in HTS called "Adventures in Woo Woo", and adventure I do. But I also wonder whether we spend so much time looking into either ourselves or our phone screens that it leaves us with little time for looking out.

I suddenly realised earlier this year – while, yes, doing a deep dive into my soul via the medium of writing "morning pages" – that I had in an inexplicably profound craving for playing some form of sport. Specifically one that involved whacking something quite hard with a racket or bat (I'm sure a psychoanalyst would have thoughts).

For whatever reason, my heart was calling out for tennis, squash, badminton, badminton, even ping pong. And so, two weeks ago, I did something about it. I always slightly regret getting involved in crazes – feeling the need to maintain some kind of counter-cultural credibility – but not this time. Nick Clegg, Kate Middleton,

David Beckham, and now me too. Having listened to a friend go on about how much fun it was for several months, I caved, and took myself along to an introductory session at my local padel club. I am utterly, wonderfully, ruinously addicted to it. I've played every day I have been in London since.

I've long envied the kind of men who meet up once a week to play football together – yes, I know I could do that too, but it is not a default activity for men in the same way that it is for men (or at least for the moderately sporty ones). There has always been something appealing to me about the idea of spending time in other people's company without speaking very much to them, and for the decidedly non-stressful and uncomplicated pursuit of winning a game.

Padel, designed to be played in doubles on a court small enough to feel intimate, benefits from having both the social factor and the network effect of football. It is the world's fastest-growing sport and is surging in popularity in Britain at about 400,000 people played in 2024, according to the Lawn Tennis Association, up from 129,000 the previous year. Furthermore, the fact that one of the ways you can win a point is by smashing the ball hard enough against the glass at the back of the court to make it rebound across to the other side of the net makes it feel, particularly for those of us who have played tennis, not just novel but decidedly rebellious. It's the kind of innocent fun that one doesn't get to experience much as an adult.

My introduction to the game was a humbling experience: I hadn't realised we were being graded during the session, and at the end I was given a 1.5, from a range of 1 to 7. But this, I am realising, is part of the beauty of my new addiction: not only am I engaging in an effortful, offline, social activity but I am also doing something I'm not very good at – excellent for relinquishing the fat, relentless ego, for giving us the rewarding possibility of getting better at something, and, studies suggest, for making us even better at the things we're already good at.

Most importantly, though, I'm switching off my overthinking brain in a delightfully chaotic, joy-giving way – one that connects me to other human beings, rather than leaving me isolated and untethered from the world by the turn of screens tends to do.

We have long known that play is crucial to the development and wellbeing of children. Why would we assume it was different from adults? Maybe we just need to reframe it: if you're not playing, you're not really doing the work.

jemima.kelly@ft.com

Letters

AI can't own the thoughts that make us human

Of all the life-defining moments I can remember – graduation, my first job, heartbreak – my brain insists on clinging to a 2016 development economics exam, held in a sweltering basement classroom. The question: "Explain Schumpeter's theory of innovation." I dutifully wrote about "creative destruction", throwing in all the right textbook clichés. Back then, it felt like just an economic theory. Now, it feels almost brutal.

Your piece on artificial intelligence and cognitive offloading ("The risk of letting AI do your thinking", FT View,

August 1) brought that concept home, and with a thud. At Wimbledon this year, something was off. The crowd still followed the rallies with polite concentration. But the line judges were gone, replaced by AI that now calls the shots, literally. No one blinked. The humans had vanished without ceremony.

Back home in India, the same silent shift is happening in offices. Tech groupie TCS and Infosys are "re-skilling" thousands in AI while discreetly laying off thousands more. Progress is marching on, but not

everyone's invited. And somewhere along the way, we stopped thinking. We have lost the ability to wrestle with the habit. Why wrestle with a half-formed thought when a chatbot can finish the sentence for you?

That exam memory still lingers. Still there, still real. Still human. But it's still mine.

Maybe what AI can't replace isn't intelligence, but ownership of our thoughts, our doubts, our pointless little moments that make us human.

Tanvi Bagadliya
Pune, Maharashtra, India



Emergency vehicle sirens 'blast, shriek and howl' in every big city

Global effort is needed to close the digital divide

Maha Hosain Aziz ("AI is stepping up as the new foreign aid", Opinion, July 31) asks the right questions about what happens when development is powered by artificial intelligence.

As traditional forms of foreign development aid are challenged, it is important that we apply lessons from past failures and successes. Above all, it is important to avoid new dependencies – AI and data colonialism if you will – and uphold the agency of countries and communities over their digital future.

As we do so, we need to be on the agenda of the UN, since the Summit of the Future adopted path-breaking decisions on the global governance of AI last September. Following up on these decisions, António Guterres, the UN secretary-general, will present a report to the UN General Assembly next month on inclusive options for AI capacity building. This will take into account lessons from past models of development co-operation in areas such as global health and climate change.

The digital divide is real: all of Africa has less than 1 per cent of global data centre capacity and accounts for less than 1,000 CPU cycles per second, compared with 100,000 for the US. This would be a rounding error in the numbers being deployed by Big Tech. A global effort is needed to put a floor under the AI divide. As we do so, we need to avoid fragmented actions, link funding to evidence for outcomes, and respect choices that countries and communities need to make in light of their political-economic and cultural contexts.

Amandeep Singh Gill
Under-Secretary-General and Special Envoy for Digital and Emerging Technologies, United Nations
New York, NY, US

Starmar awards agency to Israel, but not to Palestine

Richard Wright's analysis of the government trying to ignore recognition of Palestine (Letters, August 1) is excellent. The state of Palestine is already recognised internationally in law. It was not so the International Court of Justice would certainly not have referred to it in its advisory opinion of July 19, 2024.

So, the UK should formally recognise it, without preconditions. But there is, perhaps, a more compelling reason for Sir Keir Starmer's conditional offer. Its most obvious characteristic is that it awards agency solely to Israel, not to Palestine. Why? I think he is sending a public message to Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu along the lines of: "Look, I must appease my party and the electorate who are accusing me of complicity. My proposal will come to nothing if you only make the right public remarks now. You can then kick the can down the road, while I have to implement any kind of serious economic sanctions."

The Trump factor apart, Starmer will be anxious to avoid a rift with Israel because the UK and Israel share interests in cyber skills, weapons technology, etc, mostly derived from keeping the occupied territory in subjugation for half a century, something that has proved useful to Israel's western allies. Too cynical? I'd love to think so but remain unpersuaded.

David McDowall
London TW10, UK

Liberalism's big task is to rebuild trust in institutions

Edward Leach (Opinion, July 29) is right to highlight the volatility facing right and centre-left parties, but he misdiagnoses its causes. Public dissatisfaction is metastasising across the spectrum: voters are "shopping around" not because liberalism is uniquely weak, but because trust in institutions and governing competence has eroded everywhere.

Covid-era policy is a poor lens through which to view this. Some measures warrant scrutiny – masking cyclists outdoors was unnecessary – but it is misguided to suggest that liberalism's credibility rises or falls on the restrictiveness of pandemic policy. Leach also cites disavowals of the Wuhan lab leak hypothesis as evidence of liberal intolerance.

The broader story is larger than Covid. Political volatility reflects economic insecurity, media fragmentation and electorates punishing whose governs.

Rebuilding trust in democratic competence – not just in liberal parties but in government itself – is the central task.

Rebecca James Gross
Austin, TX, US

Osborne's crypto warning is right on the money

Former chancellor George Osborne is right to say in his recent comments that the UK has been "completely left behind" in the race to regulate crypto (Opinion, August 4).

Britain's legacy as a world-leading financial centre was built on embracing change. If we want to stay competitive, we need to be the same with crypto. The UK still has a chance to benefit from what many are calling a "second money advantage", where the UK can learn from other countries that have gone first, and implement a framework that's both clear and competitive. But, and this is crucial, only if we move quickly.

The government can and should address immediately two real-world barriers crypto firms face in the UK: access to banking, which is still being denied to many licensed firms, and the requirement for crypto firms, where the Financial Conduct Authority has only registered 51 companies. That's shockingly low for a G7 economy.

Lord Valzeay of Didcot
Chairman of the Joint Committee on the Chair of the Crypto and Digital Assets All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), UK Parliament, London SW1, UK

Demerising can re-energise London Stock Exchange

So Lex tells us that the London Stock Exchange group prefers the name LSEG and surmises that "discussions on how to re-energise the City take up an outsized amount of LSEG boss David Schwimmer's time relative to their impact on his business" (Lex, August 6).

Does not a simple solution beckon? Why not demerger the London Stock Exchange and its listed companies, managed fully and unambiguously according to the vital task of its re-energising? This would allow the data and analytics business to take the lead, while the LSEG business is no longer troubled by distracting demand. The London Stock Exchange is far too important for the City, and the UK economy, to be in the rounding numbers of a group with its mind elsewhere.

Barry T Gamble
Banbury, Oxfordshire, UK

Blast of ambulance sirens irks more than music critics

Sorry to hear about your classical concert being disrupted by sirens of a concert being disrupted by sirens attending the Royal Albert Hall ("Sparkling concern for piano – and sirens", August 5).

Sadly, this is a common experience at homes throughout the land, day and night, as emergency vehicles blast, shriek and howl their way to an incident – or a false alarm. Yes, there must be benefits, in terms of seconds saved en route to an emergency. But there are costs too: not only the incalculable costs of added stress and disruption to the lives of those who are woken up, unexpected noises (or the worst); but also accidents caused directly by panicked drivers, and indirectly by the disturbed sleep and shattered peace of mind of several of homes anywhere within several hundred metres of the routes these vehicles take.

Today's car baffle with electronics; accepting that saving a few seconds of travel time is essential for genuine emergencies, we can, I'm certain, come up with more subtle and focused ways of asking road users to move to one side.

John G. Chester
Chester, Cheshire, UK



Stephen Bush
The secret to getting the most out of your summer party
● WORK & CAREERS

Can we just have one day when no one mentions AI?



Pilita Clark
Business Life

On the first Monday of this month, AI made it into headlines around the world more than 2,100 times.

Artificial intelligence was reported to be scamming people in Malaysia; learning the Luganda language in Uganda; reshaping the Indian tech sector; and creating billionaires across the US and China.

It was a different story on the same Monday in August last year, when AI only made it into 761 headlines, according to a search of Factiva, a huge global database of newspapers, magazines and other sources.

The number was just 140 in 2022, and 110 in pandemic-struck 2020. Go back a decade to 2015 and there were only nine such headlines, two of which concerned the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei.

The AI boom that followed the 2022 release of ChatGPT shows little sign of busting. But there are many times when I wish it would.

To be precise, I wish there were just one day – or even half a day – when I never read, heard or was asked about anything to do with AI.

It's not so much the depressing



number of times one hears that the technology is killing jobs, making us dumber, making stuff up, supercharging fraud, stealing creative work and driving up carbon emissions as it enriches a cluster of tech giants.

Nor is it the exploding valuations of said giants, and the \$100m signing bonuses they are now reportedly offering AI research stars.

It's more that the rising tide of news about AI is manifestly failing to bring a commensurate level of insight about exactly how it is being used and what it will end up doing.

In the nearly three years since ChatGPT's launch, the gap between insider and amateur AI knowledge seems to be widening rather than narrowing.

Speaking as a confirmed amateur, I do not doubt the people in, say, professional services firms who claim AI-generated reports are saving

●● The rising tide of news about the tech is failing to bring an equal level of insight about how it is – and will be – used ●●

thousands of hours of work, or researchers who say it makes it easier to spot abnormalities on chest X-rays. I can see why the AI models of Nobel Prize-winning researchers might eventually help overcome a smorgasbord of scourges, from Parkinson's disease to drug-resistant bacteria and plastic pollution.

The other day I spoke to the chief executive of the Gates Foundation, Mark Suzman, who said AI models in apps are giving farmers real-time help to grow and sell crops. He thinks such models will have a "transformative" effect in Asia and Africa.

The trouble is that all this still seems so remote from what we read about AI, not to mention our experience of it.

Those Factiva database searches to check AI mentions took a bit of time, and required a subscription. But they produced verifiable, credible results.

ChatGPT, on the other hand, took just seconds to misinform me that, on August 4 2025, "only one" headline in major news outlets explicitly included the term "AI".

Moments like this make me worry about the number of people who rely on AI tools to diagnose medical ailments, compose legal contracts or

"fact-check" what they read online.

On the upside, my experience, slight as it was, adds weight to a study last month showing that experienced software programmers – whose jobs seem at risk from AI – took 19 per cent longer to do a set of tasks with AI coding tools than without them.

Things may change. The share of Americans now using AI daily at work is double what it was 12 months ago, even if it is just 8 per cent.

But for the moment, we are stuck with mass AI confusion.

A recent Gallup poll found 49 per cent of Americans think AI is just another tech advance that will improve our lives, and 49 per cent think it is very different and threatens to harm humans and society.

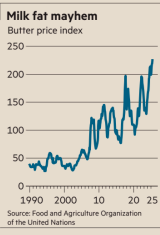
Notably, 64 per cent plan to resist using AI in their own lives. That's a lot.

Tobacco and fossil fuel companies know how hard it is to shift public perceptions once they take hold. But it's still early days. Back in the year 2000, more than 20 per cent of adult Americans said they would never get a mobile phone, and we all know how that worked out.

pilita.clark@ft.com



Record butter prices leave bakers with indigestion



One of life's little culinary pleasures – a freshly baked croissant – grows ever more dear. Across the globe, record butter prices threaten the affordability of an everyday indulgence.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization's butter price index is at an all-time high, according to the latest reading in June. An imbalance between supply and demand suggests little relief in sight. At the most recent Global Dairy Trade auction, which helps set the direction for prices, butter reached an average of more than \$7,200 per metric tonne. While that is down from the highs set in May, it is still 54 per cent higher than two years ago.

In Poland, the cost of butter was elevated enough that the government announced plans in December to sell off 1,000 tonnes of its reserves in a bid to curb the surge.

In New Zealand, the issue has become a topic of political recrimination. In France, where butter consumption per capita is among the highest in the world, there are growing concerns over supply shortfalls. Grim news for lovers of the Kouign-amann, a Breton pastry made of nearly 30 per cent butter.

The problem with butter starts with milk. The global dairy industry is experiencing a decline in milk cow

herds amid droughts and diseases. That has kept a lid on production. World milk supplies from five leading producer regions – the EU, the US, New Zealand, Argentina and Australia – is forecast to grow less than half a percentage point this year.

In the hierarchy of dairy processing, bottlers are typically first in line to get milk. Then come makers of ice cream, yoghurt, cheese and butter. In recent years, competition for cream – a key component of butter – has grown as low-fat diets have faded in popularity and consumers, especially in the US, Middle East and Asia, return to higher-fat dairy products.

The squeeze on butter churns has been further exacerbated by the explosion in demand for whey protein. Originally a waste product of cheesemaking, whey is now a multibillion-dollar industry, giving dairy processors more reasons to devote more milk to making cheese instead of butter.

The high price of butter will be felt by food and confectionery makers who are already facing high costs for cocoa after prices for beans hit a record this year. Those who make premium products will presumably do their best to pass along higher raw ingredient costs to buyers of dairy-based goodies and flaky breakfast treats. *Quid damnum!*

NIKKEI Asia The voice of the Asian century

CROSSWORD No 18,130 by PETO

ACROSS

- Alcohol induced confidence of crude gauché developed over time (5,7)
- Plant evidence finally after trap brought about return of American students (7)
- Agreed to get high-backed bench then died (7)
- On which to post new source of title-tattle without delay (7)
- Polish needed on fellow's shoes (7)
- Get rid of English class system (5)
- Letter showing account including hire of transport? Just the opposite (9)
- Crude oil painting initially has part to play in dumb show actor's withdrawal (9)
- Introduction of energy during concert (5)
- Helene's people rebuilding on Sinai (7)
- Argue against portend and commit forever (7)
- Plead for space to have free entertainment (7)
- Burn most of letter revealing sweet conveyance of rugby anthem (7)
- Wear perfume to meet soldiers in recreation facility (6,6)

DOWN

- Mentally assimilates abstract poems at last (7)
- Mounting bitterness hindering restraint in husbandry (7)
- Heather upset over Bill's anguish (9)
- Drives out in posthaste in the middle of Crosby (5)
- Plump architect's principal round building (7)
- Girl left social worker for dashing young man (7)
- Lack of self-control in popular apostle concerned with interrupting (12)
- Record speed over a short time to note differences (12)
- Cram case designed to carry earliest of handguns into weapons store (4,5)
- Lose against leading pole jumper (4,3)
- Derelict area not enjoying spell of great success (2,14)
- Identifying flag of old queen upraised by knight in port (7)
- Opening with soldiers assuming that coldness of manner (7)
- Locates spectacles reportedly (5)

JOTTER PAD

Solution 18,128

INCIDENT QUAVER
MURDER NIT
PRISONER JAUNT
ACROSS WILIT
CAKES FORETASTE
TELEVISION
ATWILL TARTIFFS
HPNANERBY
ANAGRAM BADOBY
NUTRITION
GRIVANCE ASSET
BLESSAZITI
APTARY STRUGGLE
COKIND
KINDER DEFEATED

Scan the QR code to access FT crosswords over the last 30 days cryptic, Polymath, Weekend and Sunday puzzles – or go to ft.com/crosswordapp

Get the business insights you need to succeed in Asia
Visit asia.nikkei.com

BOVET

CELEBRATING ART AND INNOVATION.
SINCE 1822.

THE SUPERLATIVE WORLDTIMER

THE RÉCITAL 30
[WWW.BOVET.COM](https://www.bovet.com)