

FINANCIAL TIMES

MONDAY 30 JANUARY 2023

INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

ASIA



Inside 'Qatargate': anatomy of an EU scandal
THE BIG READ, PAGE 17

The dispiriting reality of office spyware
PILITA CLARK, PAGE 20

Rising strife Deaths harden Israel's stance

Palestinians inspect damage to a house and car that were set on fire in a village near Ramallah in the occupied West Bank yesterday.
Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel's government would strengthen settlements in the West Bank and make it easier for civilians to carry guns after two shootings shook Jerusalem.
Seven Israelis were killed and three injured in the first, the bloodiest attack in the city since 2008. Two more were injured in the second attack near the Old City on Saturday.
The violence followed the deadliest Israeli raid in the West Bank for two decades and poses an early test for Netanyahu's new government, which is dominated by extreme right and ultra-religious politicians. It came to power last month pledging to take a hard line against the Palestinians.
Gun laws loosened page 2



Jordan: Anshory/AP; via Getty Images

Briefing

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German chancellor Olaf Scholz has ruled out sending fighter jets and ground troops to Ukraine and cautioned against a military aid bidding war among allies. — PAGE 2
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Factors such as high interest rates and volatile prices have increased costs for commodities trading, forcing the sector to seek an extra £300bn to keep going. — PAGE 6
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- **BlackRock lobbying rises**
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- **Radioactive error by Rio**
Mining company Rio Tinto has apologised after a radioactive caesium-137 capsule was lost from a truck along a 1,400km highway in Australia. — PAGE 9

EU push to designate Iran's Guards as terrorists puts nuclear hopes in peril

• Brussels angered by drones for Russia • Paris and Berlin back measure • Tehran talks at standstill

HENRY FOY — BRUSSELS
NAJMEH BOZORGHMANS — TEHRAN
ANDREW ENGLAND — LONDON

The EU is exploring legal options to designate Iran's Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organisation, in a policy shift that would probably scupper diplomatic efforts to prevent Tehran from developing nuclear weapons.
The move, which has the support of France and Germany, comes in response to Tehran's supply of armed drones to Russia for use in its war against Ukraine, together with its violent crackdown on domestic protests.
Paris and Berlin voiced their support for the measure in a meeting of foreign ministers last week, four officials with knowledge of the discussions said. The EU's legal service will draft an opinion

for the bloc's 27 capitals on the legality of the measure in the next three weeks.
"Yes, some member states are supporting this proposal," Josep Borrell, the EU's foreign policy chief, told the Financial Times. "Many would be in favour."
Western capitals' stance towards the Islamic republic is hardening. The UK is already conducting its own review of whether to impose the designation on the Revolutionary Guard, the most powerful wing of Iran's state security apparatus.

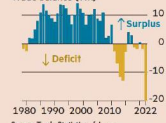
"The JCPOA is not dead but it is completely stalled... [This] would make things more difficult"

But, as I told my colleagues on the Council [of Ministers]: this is in your hands. I need a national decision."
The west has been angered by Iran's decision to sell weapons to Russia and its crackdown on protesters, Borrell said those two issues were "certainly a political influence" on EU policy on Iran.
Germany and France — alongside the UK, Russia and China — are signatories to the 2015 nuclear accord between Tehran and world powers.
Borrell is the lead mediator of indirect talks between the US and Iran in an effort to save what is left of the moribund Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action agreement. JCPOA placed strict limits on Iran's nuclear activity in exchange for the lifting of many western sanctions until it collapsed after then

president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the US from it in 2018 and imposed waves of sanctions.
Iran responded by aggressively expanding its nuclear programme and is now enriching uranium close to weapons grade. No nuclear negotiations have taken place since September, when Iran was blamed for rejecting a draft agreement to save the deal that had been agreed by the other signatories.
"The JCPOA is not dead but it is completely stalled," said Borrell. "It would be increasingly blocked if [the terrorist designation] was done by other states... It would make things certainly more difficult."
Additional reporting by Laura Pitel, Guy Chazan, Sam Fleming, Ben Hall and Leila Abboud

Datawatch

Japan recorded its largest trade deficit in 2022



The weaker yen and soaring energy costs plunged Japan into its largest ever trade deficit in 2022. An annual deficit is likely to persist, because of the need for energy-related imports and the prospect of subdued exports as global growth slows.



DNA decoding pioneer put to the test by Graill pursuit
Illumina's Graill quest — PAGE 8

Australia	A\$2000 (€6.057)
China	RMB92
Hong Kong	HK\$33
India	₹10220
Indonesia	Rp45000
Japan	¥150 (€4.75)
Korea	₩1500
Malaysia	RM1.50
Pakistan	₹100 (€0.30)
Philippines	₹100 (€0.30)
Singapore	S\$1.00 (€0.75)
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Adani hits back at short seller's 'attack on India' in attempt to calm investors

JOHN REED AND
BENJAMIN PARKIN — NEW DELHI
HUDSON LUCKETT — HONG KONG

India's Adani Group has rebutted allegations of wrongdoing by short seller Hindenburg Research that wiped more than \$50bn from its value last week, in a bid to calm investors in the middle of a \$2.4bn share sale.

Yesterday Adani published a document of 54 pages, plus some 350 more of appendices, in which it argued that Hindenburg's report had "caused serious and unprecedented adverse impact on our investors".
The allegations were "a calculated attack on India, the independence, integrity and quality of Indian institutions, and the growth story and ambition of India", the conglomerate owned by billionaire Gautam Adani said.

New York based Hindenburg last week published a two-year investigation in which it alleged that Adani had engaged in "brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud" over decades.
By the end of trading on Friday, the report had wiped more than \$50bn off the value of the Adani Group's listed companies. Shares in Indian banks and insurers with exposure to the business also fell.
Adani Enterprises, one of the group's companies, said over the weekend that its follow-on public offering of shares would proceed as planned, despite concerns that it would struggle to attract investors. Books are set to close on Tuesday.
The short seller's challenge to the group has caused a fission across India's business community: the company is one of India's largest private infrastruc-

ture groups and, before the sell-off, Gautam Adani was the world's third-richest person.
Adani said that "not one" of 88 questions posed by Hindenburg "is based on independent or journalistic fact finding" and called them "selective reiterations of public disclosures or rhetorical innuendos colouring rumours as fact".
It dismissed many questions as "disproven" and "baseless allegations" or "misleading claims", while others received longer answers, including scanned documents, tables and citations.
The group dismissed questions on its debt-fuelled growth model, stating that the "leverage ratios of Adani Portfolio companies continue to be healthy and are in line with the industry benchmarks of the respective sectors".

World Markets											
STOCK MARKETS			CURRENCIES				GOVERNMENT BONDS				
	Jan 27	Prev %Chg	Jan 27	Jan 26	Jan 27	Jan 26	Jan 27	Jan 26	Jan 27	Jan 26	Chg
S&P 500	4071.86	4080.61	0.27	€	1.204	1.083	0.92	US 2 yr	4.22	4.19	0.03
Nasdaq Composite	11523.23	11512.41	0.70	£	1.235	1.227	0.78	US 10 yr	3.53	3.50	0.02
Dow Jones Ind	34005.88	33948.41	0.17	¥	0.877	0.876	0.01	US 30 yr	3.64	3.64	0.01
FTSE 100	7795.15	7781.11	0.06	₹	129.572	129.525	0.04	UK 2 yr	3.55	3.55	0.00
FTSE All-Share	4259.97	4253.35	0.13	₹	180.815	180.807	0.00	UK 10 yr	3.32	3.31	0.01
CSI 40	7891.21	7888.98	0.02	₹	1.001	0.987	0.14	UK 30 yr	3.88	3.86	0.02
Xetra Dax	15150.03	15122.85	0.11	₹	0.00	0.00	0.00	JPN 2 yr	0.00	-0.01	0.02
Nikkei	27392.56	27362.78	0.07	₹	22080.82	22080.20	0.28	JPN 10 yr	0.46	0.46	0.00
Hong Kong	22888.00	22846.78	0.18	₹	2.57	2.57	0.00	JPN 30 yr	1.57	1.51	0.06
MSCI World \$	2777.62	2756.73	0.76	₹	1986.80	1982.51	0.80	GER 2 yr	2.57	2.57	0.00
MSCI EM \$	1856.46	1841.28	1.08	₹	2.24	2.21	0.03	GER 10 yr	2.74	2.71	0.03
MSCI ACWI \$	845.23	840.22	0.79	₹	2.19	2.19	0.00	GER 30 yr	2.19	2.18	0.02
FT Mib 30	5295.33	5291.30	1.11	₹	80.10	81.11	1.25				
FT Wilshire 5000	41319.32	40872.81	1.08	₹	86.75	86.82	-0.08				
				₹	1802.45	1818.80	0.77				

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INTERNATIONAL

Military aid

Scholz rules out sending jets to Ukraine

Talk of combat aircraft undermines public's trust, warns German chancellor

GUY CHAZAN — BERLIN
HENRY FOY — BRUSSELS

Olaf Scholz, German chancellor, has warned against a bidding war among western allies over military aid to Ukraine, as he firmly ruled out sending fighter jets and ground troops to Kyiv.

... and undermines people's trust in government decisions," he said. "I can only advise against entering a bidding war over weapons systems."

Ukraine with US F-16s and F-35s, Eurofighters, Tornados, French Rafales and Swedish Gripen jets.

other capitals are cautioning against such a move in the short to medium term, given the need to focus on ensuring the smooth delivery of tanks.

"This terrible situation," he said. "The confusion for that is clear: the withdrawal of Russian troops."

Jerusalem shootings

Israel to loosen gun laws following latest attacks

JAMES SHOOTER — JERUSALEM

Israel's hardline new government has said it will make it easier for civilians to carry guns and strengthen settlements in the occupied West Bank, after Jerusalem was hit by two shootings in less than 24 hours.

Seven Israelis were killed and three injured in the first shooting, which was the bloodiest attack in the city since 2008, and took place near a synagogue in a Jewish settlement on Holocaust Memorial Day. Two more were injured in the second attack near the Old City on Saturday.

Israel's security cabinet said that in response to the attacks, Israel would expand and accelerate firearms licensing, which would "enable thousands of additional citizens to carry weapons".

Yesterday morning, police sealed the house of the gunman behind the first attack, a 21-year-old Palestinian from East Jerusalem who was killed by police at the scene, as a prelude to demolishing it. The attacker in the second shooting, a 15-year-old Palestinian from East Jerusalem, was shot and hospitalised.

The security cabinet did not give further details of the steps to strengthen settlements, which it would be submitted this week. The military said on Saturday that it had already moved an additional battalion to the West Bank.

Hungary. Economic woes

Soaring inflation turns up heat on Orbán

Populist leader faces struggle to assuage growing discontent with pre-election generosity

MARTON DUNAI — BUDAPEST

With long queues at petrol pumps, teachers blocking Budapest streets in a strike over pay and small-business owners protesting against tax rises, Hungary's economic woes and the resulting public anger have wrong-footed rightwing prime minister Viktor Orbán and threaten to escalate his dispute with Brussels over frozen funding.

"I take second jobs and give private classes," said Fencsik, a teacher in Budapest who joined his profession's year-long rolling strikes after struggling amid soaring inflation. "I work or commute or sleep. It's unsustainable."

Despite measures such as retail price caps introduced even before the war in Ukraine sparked an energy crisis, food and power prices in Hungary rose 24.5 per cent year on year in December, the highest in the EU. The bloc's average is 10.4 per cent.

Economists pin the blame partly on a weak forint, the phasing of price caps and a retail tax. The price caps themselves had a distorting effect, they say, causing shortages of fuel and staples such as sugar as importers and retailers declined to sell below cost, as well as leading to price rises for non-capped products as they sought to compensate for the cap on other goods. Last month, the government was forced to remove the fuel cap after supplies collapsed, sparking panic buying.



Tough times: a demonstration by teachers' organisation in central Budapest this month

... and are seeking a wage rise of around 45 per cent and are also protesting about high workloads and central control of the education system, began another week-long strike last Monday. Wider demonstrations erupted last year over a sudden rise in small-business taxes and reduction in energy subsidies.

Analysts said Orbán was likely to try and deflect blame for the economic squeeze, hardening his political stance and making him an even more difficult partner in the EU than previously.

"To think in Brussels that the sun won't rise without them... that's completely misguided" Viktor Orbán

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Currency change

Nigeria delays phasing out of old banknotes after protests

AANU ADEOYE — SEREKUNDA

Nigeria's central bank has postponed phasing out old, high-value banknotes for 10 days amid criticism that millions of people have been unable to obtain replacements, putting business activity and livelihoods at risk weeks before presidential elections.

The last-minute move comes as politicians intensify campaigning ahead of elections on February 25. Buhari is standing down after serving two terms, and the candidate for the ruling All Progressives Congress, Bola Tinubu, has alleged that unnamed opponents are trying to use controversy over the banknote rollout to sabotage his campaign.

sign of the country's three highest-value denominations last October to stamp out counterfeiting and reduce the use of cash in Africa's largest economy — although analysts say it is unclear how issuing new notes will encourage alternative means of payment.

Spanish scheme

Brussels loses bid to join legal fight over green subsidies

JANE CROFT — LONDON
ALICE HANCOCK — BRUSSELS
RAINEY POPSON — MADRID

A UK court has thrown out a bid by the European Commission to join a legal battle in which Spain is seeking to avoid paying millions of dollars in compensation to renewable energy investors.

subsidies for green technology that Washington announced last year. The case is due to be heard by the UK's High Court in March, but Spain has applied to set aside the award.

INTERNATIONAL

Russian central bank tries to ease Kremlin's grip on economic data

Key financial indicators shrouded in secrecy amid Putin's information war

ANASTASIA STONEJI
AND MAX SEDDON — RIGA
DARIA MOSOLOVA — LONDON

Russian policymakers are debating whether to declassify more data as the Kremlin's drive for secrecy leaves even seasoned observers struggling to make sense of the country's economy.

Elvira Nabiullina, Russia's central bank governor, is leading the push to declassify reams of economic data, according to three people familiar with the matter. The Kremlin, which has yet to approve the initiative, has justified withholding information on a wide range of economic statistics as a necessary defence against western sanctions.

The classified data sets include key indicators such as foreign reserve holdings and export figures. Russian companies are allowed to keep "sensitive" results secret.

Nabiullina said last month that the country needed to disclose more data for markets to grow. "We need to go back to proper disclosure, with a few exceptions, so investors can invest in securities," she said.

The central bank said on Saturday that "many authorities share our opinion that we should return to data openness", adding that it was carrying out consultations with the government on the matter.

"The lack of publicly available statistics affects the quality of analysts' and researchers' work," the bank said. "The Bank of Russia advocates restoring the publication of financial statements, except for the indicators that increase

the companies' and the economy's vulnerability to sanctions risks."

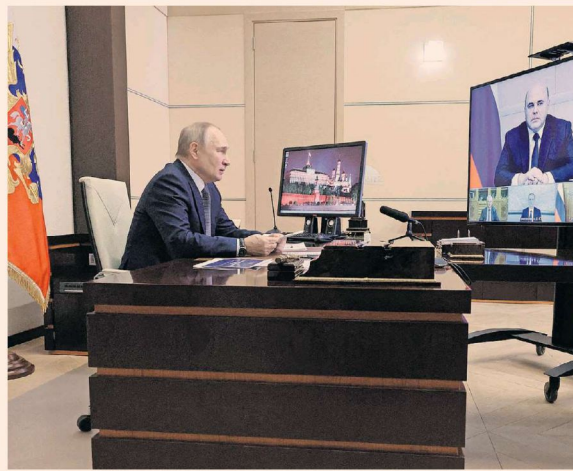
The debate highlights the extent to which economic data has become part of Russia's information war accompanying Vladimir Putin's offensive in Ukraine — and the west's efforts to slow it down. Addressing his economic cabinet on January 17, the Russian president proudly declared that Russia had weathered the worst of the sanctions.

Analysts agree that Russia's economy has fared better than expected, but Putin's rush to classify most economic data has left them with little to go on other than his triumphant statements — and has even tripped up the Russian president himself.

Last week, Putin said Russia had "preserved stability" on the labour market and hit record-low unemployment, below 4 per cent. But he failed to mention that hundreds of thousands of workers have fled the country since the Ukraine invasion began, while 500,000 men who were conscripted into the army now qualify as employed. This might improve the numbers, but it does little for the health of the labour market, according to Andrei Kolesnikov, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Hidden unemployment, including downtime, unpaid leave and partial employment, hit a record of 4.7m people in the third quarter of 2022, growing 7.5 per cent year on year, analysts at consulting network FinExpertiza wrote.

To find the missing data, foreign and domestic analysts resort to creative



Official secrets: Vladimir Putin addresses his economic cabinet this month via a video link. He claimed that the country had weathered the worst of the west's sanctions, although much of the economic data is classified

Official Secrets/Anastasia Stoneji

ways of cross-checking. "We started to use alternative indicators to trace exports and imports dynamics: fiscal data on imports VAT, trade statistics of Russia's external counterparties, shipping data," said Sofya Donets, chief Russia economist at Renaissance Capital, a Moscow investment bank. But not everything can be restored. "The lack of public companies' and banks' disclosure is a bigger issue," said Donets.

The Kremlin said the western sanctions had made it imperative to limit public disclosure. "There is a hybrid war being waged against Russia, including economic warfare. So in those conditions it is completely natural that we are classifying this data," Dmitry Peskov, Putin's spokesperson, told the Financial Times. "Everyone who needs to know, everyone who is part of the economic policymaking process, has access to the whole range of data, statistics and so on," he said.

Longstanding doubts about the quality of Russian statistics first came to a head in 2020, when excess mortality

rates outstripped the official number of coronavirus deaths several times over. But Putin used the official figures to declare that the country had beaten the pandemic and returned to economic growth before the west.

The war in Ukraine has only compounded the issue. When the invasion began, Russia's government statistics agency Rosstat stopped sharing mortality statistics by age group upon request, said independent demographer Alexey Raksha, who lost his job at Rosstat after criticising its handling of Covid data. This data would have allowed researchers to make similar estimates about war casualties using the methods they employed to determine the real toll of the pandemic.

Rosstat counts this data yearly, not on a monthly basis, and shares the data on five-year groups upon request," a Rosstat representative said.

Experts say the disparity between the public data and real economic picture is less stark, allowing it to capture broader trends. In September, Putin gave a pub-

lic dressing down to a top energy official for suggesting that gas production at Gazprom, Russia's state-run monopoly, had begun to decline.

"Gazprom's production isn't falling. You're just scaring everyone. It's going up," the Russian president told deputy prime minister Alexander Novak — even though Gazprom's own statistics showed a year-on-year drop of nearly 15 per cent.

By the January cabinet meeting, Putin admitted gas production had fallen by 12 per cent, a figure in line with what Novak said in a late December interview.

But in separate comments only three days earlier, Novak had floated a production drop of 18-20 per cent — and gave no reason for the sudden revision.

At the January meeting, Putin said Russia's GDP had fallen by only 2.5 per cent, a far cry from the up to 30 per cent hit that top technocrats had warned him was possible a month before the war. Projections by international institutions are not far off, with the IMF, the World Bank and the OECD all placing Russia's 2022 contraction between 3.4 per cent and 4.5 per cent of GDP.

Much of the blow to Russia's GDP has been softened by Moscow's increase in military spending, which analysts say does not feed into the real economy.

Other inconsistencies are plaguing the few available statistics. Real wage dynamics have become disconnected from retail sales in recent years, according to research by the Institute of International Finance. In 2022, real wages fell 2-4 per cent, largely benefiting from welfare payments, including those to the soldiers fighting in Ukraine.

But retail turnover fell by 9 per cent, according to Infoline projections based on official statistics, indicating a bigger hit to consumers. "It is impossible that people get almost as much as they used to but for some reason spend significantly less," said Milov.

Some experts also point to Russia's frequent retrospective revisions to statistics, such as adding *zachas*, Russian country homes, to construction figures.

Rosstat said that such changes were "natural" as the statistics agency sought to "accurately" reflect any changes that occurred in the economy.

Given the opacity of the Kremlin's decision-making, one senior official expressed scepticism that the policy of secrecy would be rolled back any time soon, saying: "We are in negotiations and hope they will listen to us, but cannot be sure it will work out."

"The lack of publicly available statistics affects the quality of analysts' and researchers' work"

Bank of Russia

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INTERNATIONAL

Economy

Beijing targets consumption to spur growth

Analysts hope dropping of zero-Covid policies will unleash spending

PRIMROSE RIORDAN — HONG KONG

The Chinese government has vowed to make consumption the "main driving force" of the economy as hopes grow that Beijing's abandonment of zero-Covid policies will unleash a flood of spending by Chinese consumers, fueling a global rebound.

during a meeting of China's cabinet, the state council, according to a statement released late Saturday.

"Boosting consumption is a key step to expand domestic demand. We need to restore the structural role of consumption in the economy."

While China has long sought to boost consumer spending, the comments from its outgoing premier come at a crucial moment as Beijing seeks to rebuild the economy after years of punishing lockdowns.

The Chinese economy grew by just 3 per cent in 2022, underscoring the impact of the government's zero-Covid strategy before it was abandoned last

month. Last year's collapse of the property market, which has contributed around one quarter of GDP over the past decade, has also added to economic stress.

Economists hope that China's pent-up consumer activity will buoy global demand.

Multinationals including Unilever have said in recent weeks they were expecting a rebound in demand in the country and banks including Morgan Stanley have increased their China growth forecasts.

"We believe the market is undervaluing the far-reaching ramifications of reopening, and the possibility

that a robust cyclical recovery can occur despite lingering structural headwinds," the bank said in a January note.

Still, doubts remain over the willingness of Chinese consumers to start spending again.

Experts have long warned that China's desire to move away from property-driven growth towards greater consumer spending will be challenging. Household spending accounted for 38 per cent of Chinese gross domestic product in 2021.

By comparison, it accounted for nearly 70 per cent of US GDP in 2022. The last few years of Covid has also bred economic caution as incomes and house

prices came under pressure in the real estate crash. The country's already high gross national savings rate swelled during the pandemic. Renminbi deposits held by households nationwide grew in 2022 by a record Rmb17.8tn (\$2.6tn), compared with growth of Rmb9.9tn in 2021, according to data from the People's Bank of China.

Chinese citizens celebrated lunar new year last week for the first time since pandemic controls were lifted. While state media say 226m domestic trips were made, 74 per cent more than last year at the height of Covid restrictions, that is still just half the 420m trips made in 2019.

Law enforcement

Memphis police shut down unit connected to Nichols death

JAMIE SMYTH — NEW YORK
STEFF CHAVEZ — CHICAGO
COLBY SMITH — WASHINGTON

The Memphis Police Department has disbanded a special police unit linked to the death of Tyre Nichols, a 29-year-old Black man who was pulled over for an alleged traffic violation this month and fatally beaten by five officers.

The decision on Saturday follows the release of harrowing video footage showing the officers punching, kicking and hitting Nichols with a baton in scenes that have sparked a renewed debate over police brutality, racism and the need for reform.

Memphis police chief Cerelyn Davis said she listened to the Nichols family, community leaders and members of the so-called Scorpion police unit — from which the five officers charged over Nichols' death were deployed — and disbanded it "in the best interest of all".

The Street Crimes Operations to Restore Peace in Our Neighbourhood unit was established in Memphis in 2021 to target violent offenders in areas of high crime.

"While the heinous actions of a few casts a cloud of dishonour on the title Scorpion, it is imperative that we, the Memphis Police Department, take proactive steps in the healing process," said Davis. She said the department would take every measure to rebuild trust following Nichols' death.

"What I saw on that video wasn't policing," Jason Armstrong, a police chief in North Carolina, told ABC yesterday. "What I saw in that video were individuals that were intent on imposing their force and their domination on an individual, and it was uncalled for."

Also speaking to ABC, Dick Durbin, the Democrat who heads up the Senate Judiciary Committee, called for a "national conversation about policing in a responsible, constitutional and humane way". He added: "These men and women with badges put them on each day and risk their lives for us. I know that. But we also see from these videos, horrible conduct by these same officers in unacceptable situations. We've got to change this for the better."

Nichols, who was father to a four-year-old son, died three days after being hospitalised following the beating delivered by the officers, who were also black. The officers were subsequently fired from their jobs and on Thursday indicted by a grand jury for second-degree murder, among other charges.

The video footage released on Friday evening showed in graphic detail how a police traffic stop turned into a savage beating that led to the hospitalisation of Nichols and later his death.

Nichols was recorded telling officers "I didn't do anything" as he was pulled from his car. After being pushed to the ground — where he was seen complying with officers' requests — Nichols was shown running away. A separate video captured minutes later showed two police officers holding Nichols from behind while a third punched him several times in the face before a fourth beat him with a baton. Nichols's heard screaming "mom" repeatedly.

The release of the footage sparked concerns among authorities that there could be a repeat of the nationwide riots and violent protests against police brutality following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis in 2020.

South America. Monetary union

Doubts rise over 'insane' common currency plan

Brazil and Argentina forge ahead, despite concerns over unequal benefits of proposal

LUCINDA ELLIOTT — BUENOS AIRES
BRYAN HARRIS — SAO PAULO
MICHAEL STOTT — BOGOTÁ

Former IMF chief economist Olivier Blanchard needed just two weeks to respond to the news that Brazil and Argentina would begin preparatory work on creating a common currency. "This is insane," he tweeted.

While economists have questioned the viability of the idea, political analysts have been less dismissive, pointing out that the desires of South America's mainly leftwing presidents to promote regional integration and challenge the US dollar's dominance should not be underestimated.

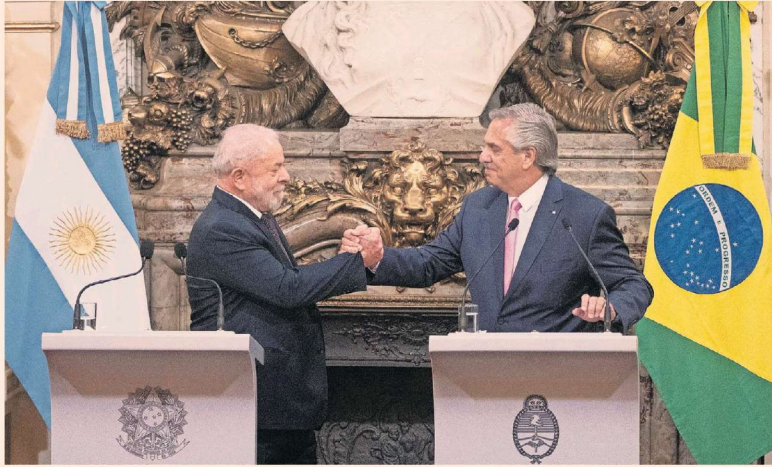
For the first time in more than seven years, Brazil and Argentina are politically aligned under leftist leaders, with both Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Alberto Fernández keen to present a united front.

Brazil's president said in Buenos Aires last week that "God willing," the finance ministers and leaders of the two central banks would have the "intelligence, competence and good sense" to begin work that could eventually produce a common currency.

His Argentine counterpart said while he did not know how the common currency would work, the two nations would enjoy a "deeper strategic bond" in the future. The two leaders made clear an eventual common currency would, at first, be limited to use in trade and would run in tandem with Brazil's real and the Argentine peso, rather than replacing them.

This is not the first time that the idea has been floated. People close to the previous rightwing administration in Brazil confirmed that former finance minister Paulo Guedes had defended the idea several times on the grounds the currency would help impose fiscal discipline and that there would be fewer global currencies in the future, so it would be beneficial if the region established its own. Guedes even suggested a name, the "peso real", and predicted a 15-year timeline for such a project.

Latin America's left has long wanted to reduce the region's historic dependence on the US and see a common currency as a clever way to claim greater economic sovereignty while also pursuing a long-held dream of closer political union. In a nod to those tensions with its rival north of the equator,



Political allies: Brazil's leader Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, left, and Argentine president Alberto Fernández

Brazil's current finance minister, Fernando Haddad, last year co-authored a piece suggesting a common currency called the "sur", or south.

Underpinning the political support is a desire to stabilise Argentina's battered economy. The country has been on the brink of insolvency for years, its central bank reserves are dwindling, tight exchange controls have led a rampant black market in the dollar and confidence in the peso has collapsed.

"Argentina needs an external anchor to restore credibility," said economist Rodrigo Wagner, an expert on new currency adoption.

The financial chaos has weighed on trade between the two economies. At roughly \$30bn in 2022, flows between Brazil and Argentina are lower than the \$40bn level recorded a decade ago. That is partly because Argentina has a chronic shortage of US dollars — the common currency of global export markets — to purchase Brazilian exports.

"Trade is certainly facilitated by a common currency and eliminating FX risks brings advantages," said Nanette Hechler-Fayd herbe, global head of economics and research at Credit Suisse.

However, she highlighted that monetary unions also posed challenges to member states, as the history of the EU's single currency project showed.

Pierpaolo Barbieri, founder of the Argentine fintech Uala, said it was too easy to be cynical about the plans. "Brazil wants a larger market for its exports and to lower trade barriers," he said. A common unit of exchange would be an "ultimate vehicle" towards achieving both. Digital currencies were already offering alternatives. "Anything that opens up our extremely closed market is a step in the right direction," he added.

Everton Guimarães Negressolo, president of the Argentine-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services, has said "a bilateral trade tool" in a currency "other than the dollar" would be beneficial to the businesses they represent — though he acknowledged that economic imbalances between the two countries posed significant challenges.

"It is very positive news to learn that we are working towards greater regional integration," said Gustavo Grobocopati, who heads one of Argentina's largest farming groups, Los Grobo, adding that the announcement was a good way to get

member states to "start doing the homework" on the imbalances.

But others argue the scale of the disparity between the two countries makes the project a non-starter.

Buenos Aires has been cut off from international debt markets since a default in 2020 and has tight foreign exchange controls. The real, meanwhile, is fully convertible, and a better grip on government spending means that Brazil has full access to international markets.

Annual inflation in Argentina reached 94.8 per cent in December, against a far more manageable 5.79 per cent in Brazil. Marcos Casarin, chief economist at Oxford Economics, said: "Argentina has more inflation in a single month than Brazil [has] in a year."

"My perception is this common currency is not going to be feasible. And if it is feasible, it is going to create increasing turbulence in our economy," said Walter Schalka, president of São Paulo-based Suzano, one of the world's biggest pulp and paper companies. "Argentina and Brazil are facing different economic moments."

Additional reporting by Jonathan Wheatley

'Common currency is not going to be feasible. And if it is feasible, it is going to create increasing turbulence in our economy'

Cinema

China's film industry shoots for post-Covid recovery amid censorship and falling sales

CHAN HO-HIM — HONG KONG

After spending six years and HK\$450m (US\$58m) on science fiction epic *Warriors of Future*, Hong Kong film star and *Star Wars* fan Louis Koo hoped it would capture the imaginations of China's millions of cinegoers.

But the film, about the battle to save the last spacelike Earth from an invasive alien planet, grossed a lukewarm Rmb567.9m (\$100m) on the mainland, falling to crack the box office top 10 last year.

"The pandemic has changed [the film industry] a lot, including how we evaluate when is the best time to release a film in which market and how it will potentially perform," Koo, who produced and starred in the film, said. "We are of course hoping for a quick recovery."

The question for producers such as Koo, both domestically and in Hollywood, is whether the end of Covid restrictions will encourage one of the world's biggest film audiences to return

to the cinema. Declining financing, censorship and changing tastes could all supplant the industry's hopes of a strong recovery after three years of lockdowns shut theatres across the country.

Chinese box office receipts topped more than a third from Rmb47bn in 2021 to Rmb50bn in 2022, according to ticketing platform Maoyan, relinquishing the crown to the US for the first time since surpassing it in 2020. For 2023, China's box office has surpassed Rmb5bn as of Wednesday, outpacing North America's \$486m, according to data from Maoyan and Amazon's Box Office Mojo.

Even as China sheds Covid restrictions, film producers and industry analysts remain cautious about this year's outlook, as shifting audience preferences and tighter import controls threaten the dominance of foreign blockbusters, previously the highest revenue generators in the market.

Disney's *Avatar: The Way of Water* could be a harbinger of difficult days to come for Hollywood in China. It was one

of last year's biggest foreign releases in China, grossing Rmb1.6bn since its release in December. But that was less than half of the takings for the year's top earner, *The Battle of Lake Changjin II*, a patriotic reimagining of the Korean war whose first instalment was commissioned by the Chinese Communist party's propaganda arm.

"Avatar underperformed compared to early expectations," said Chris Fenton, a US-China analyst and former president of DMG Entertainment Motion Picture Group. "A good part of that was due to Covid," he added.

China's cinema screens are undergoing a big shift in favour of domestic titles. Only 59 foreign films were approved to be screened in China last year, down from 75 in 2021 and 136 in 2019, according to Alibab's movie ticketing platform Taopiopiao, and just two non-Chinese films — *Avatar* and *Jurassic World Dominion* — cracked the top 10 in revenue in 2022.

Two Marvel films, also produced by Disney, have been approved to screen in

China next month, the first since 2019, and the lunar new year this month, traditionally a boom period for the film industry, are domestic productions.

For domestic productions, pandemic cuts on movement delayed filming and increased costs, limiting potential returns for investors. Domestic and international investment in China's film and television industry fell to Rmb1.6bn in 2021 from a peak of Rmb27bn in 2017, according to iMedia Research.

"There was a lot of optimism in 2021... when we thought we were heading back to pre-pandemic levels," said David Chen, a Hangzhou-based film producer with studio Versatile Media. "But [after the Shanghai lockdown from March to May] people couldn't secure financing any more and had to cancel projects."

In 2022, at least 15,910 out of 14,124 cinemas across the country were temporarily shut due to Covid, according to Beijing-based consultancy Top Century. Some never reopened.

Censorship also remains a "moving target" for skittish investors, analysts said. Ayane Kokas, director of the East Asia Center at the University of Virginia, said one "big challenge" for mainland filmmakers was that "the timescale for film production is much slower than Hollywood's."

"[The] lines for what is acceptable



Louis Koo in action with a young performer in his latest movie

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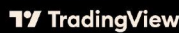
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Companies & Markets

Japan's boards seek insights on geopolitical business risks

- Suntory joins push to fill intelligence jobs
- Wars and supply chains among concerns

ERI SUGIURA AND KANA INAGAKI TOKYO

A growing number of Japanese businesses are strengthening their intelligence gathering as the country finds itself increasingly exposed to mounting tensions between the US and China.

Companies in sectors that have historically been less exposed to geopolitical disruptions – including Suntory and Mitsubishi Chemical – have hired risk executives and created new job roles and dedicated teams in recent months, as they catch up with their counterparts in more politically sensitive sectors.

The move to bolster their risk management capacity comes as investors

“The risk of being caught between [the US and China on changing regulations] is increasing”

call on Japanese companies to strengthen their disclosures on their response and readiness for contingencies such as the war in Ukraine, supply chain disruptions caused by the pandemic and increased tensions between the US and China over Taiwan.

Kyohji Yabu, research manager at the Japan External Trade Organization, said Japanese companies often faced the dilemma of how they could comply with changing regulations in the world’s two largest economies. “The risk of Japanese companies being caught between the two sides is increasing,” he said.

A report by consulting firm PwC Advisory published in September found that almost a third of Japanese-listed companies with sales of more than ¥500bn (\$5.9bn) cited “geopolitics” in their annual reports, compared with 11 per cent a year earlier. “Japanese companies have been slower to respond to economic security and geopolitical risks compared to US and European companies,” said Kazuhiko Ueno, a lawyer at the legal firm TMI Associates.

Last month Suntory poached Go Eguchi, a US-based executive at trading house Mitsubishi, naming him as the beverage group’s first chief intelligence officer.

A person close to the company said the group, which owns the US maker of Jim Beam bourbon whiskey, recognised the need to strengthen its intelligence gathering, after being warned of US regulatory challenges if it established a headquarters for a joint venture in a country considered too close to China.

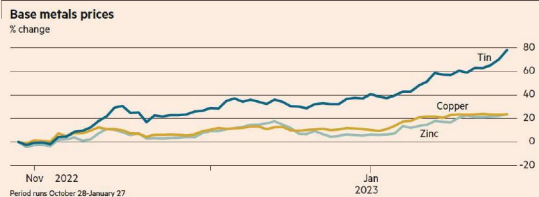
Mitsubishi Chemical, Japan’s largest chemical company, last year created the position of chief supply chain officer to oversee risks in the management of its plants, logistics, procurement and climate measures. The role will also include addressing future geopolitical risks, such as China’s invasion of Taiwan, according to the company.

Mitsubishi Chemical was in negotiations to buy coal from Russia when Bloomberg launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine last year. Within days, it had started talks with Australian suppliers.

The pivot, analysts said, underscored the need for a senior role to navigate such risks.

Hitachi last year named its finance chief as chief risk management officer, creating working groups to discuss crisis management and regional geopolitical risks. Although there is no designated executive, beverage maker Kirin has also launched internal discussions on how its subsidiary in Taiwan would respond in the case of a contingency, such as an invasion by China.

Bright prospects Hopes for China's economy spark surge in prices of tin, copper and zinc



HARRY DEMPSEY AND GEORGE STEER LONDON

Industrial metals have ripped higher since November on bets that China’s reopening will boost demand for raw materials.

A group of base metals – led by tin, zinc and copper – have surged more than 20 per cent in three months, further supported by the US Federal Reserve signalling a slowdown in the pace of interest rate rises and a softening in the US dollar, which imports them to buy commodities.

Star performer tin has rocketed almost 80 per cent to \$2,362 a tonne, the highest level since June, while copper prices have rallied by a tenth this month to \$9,329 a tonne on brighter prospects for China’s economy after the easing of its zero-Covid policies.

Investors have largely shrugged off concerns about slowing manufacturing activity in the face of unprecedented coronavirus outbreaks in Asia’s largest economy.

“At the beginning of the year everyone came in very nuanced, saying we were going to have a [global] recession, that copper would dip in the first quarter and then go higher, but we’ve done exactly the opposite,” said Al Munro, a broker at Mares. “Money flows what has driven metals in 2023 thus far, and that’s about a China reopening story.”

Filing industry executives say the current situation marks a stark reversal from only a few months earlier, when sentiment was weak but physical buying from Chinese customers remained strong.

“It has shifted between where we were that perceptions were bad and on-the-ground was good, to now perceptions are better but on-the-ground is uncertain,” said Richard Adkerson, chief executive of Freeport-McMoRan, one of the world’s largest copper producers.

Jeremy Pearce, who leads market intelligence at the International Tin Association, said that much the same could be said of the metal used primarily to solder electronics.

“The issue is all demand indicators are very negative as global manufacturing purchasing manager indices have been nosediving,” he said. “The demand picture is the opposite and disconnected from the price.”

Further fuelling the rally for some base metals has been a spate of supply disruptions from protests rolling copper and tin producers in Peru and production snags in Chile, to Indonesia stalling export licence renewals for tin smelters ahead of a possible tin ingot export ban.

The price of tin, which is becoming increasingly strategic because of its use in solar panels and microchips, has also been pushed higher by speculative buying by China, leading to a build-up in inventories.

Despite weak demand, last year China swung to net imports of 20,000 tonnes from net exports of 9,000 tonnes in 2021, according to AMT, a metals brokerage.

Commodity traders strive to fill \$300bn funding gap

LESLIE HOOK – LONDON

High interest rates, volatile prices and the war in Ukraine have made it significantly more expensive to finance commodity trade, forcing the industry to hunt for an extra \$300bn to \$500bn in working capital to keep raw materials moving around the world.

Changing trade patterns have made the global flow of raw materials less efficient and more costly to finance and are also likely to push up the price of commodities for consumers, according to a new study by consultancy McKinsey.

“Since the end of 2020, we have seen a doubling of the working capital requirements in the commodity trading sector,” said Roland Rechtsteiner, McKinsey partner and lead author of the report. “We could see a similar increase by the end of next year, if [further] changes in trade flows materialise.”

The commodity trading sector, which moves raw materials such as oil, gas, sugar and gold around the world, is the engine of the global economy. However, the cost of the financing required to move these cargoes has risen significantly because of volatility in prices and rising interest rates.

On top of this, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has triggered a profound shift in global trade flows – often resulting in longer, less efficient shipping routes.

An example is coal, where prices have nearly tripled over the past year. Europe is importing from Colombia, South Africa, Australia and other places, replacing coal that was previously brought from Russia. As cargoes have to travel further, financing costs rise.

The McKinsey report predicts average shipping times will increase 8 per cent, energy prices rise three-fold, and interest costs will rise seven-fold, between the end of 2020 and 2024, and that working capital requirements for commodity trading globally will increase between \$300bn and \$500bn.

Over the past year, even the world’s biggest trading houses have had to increase their lines of credit and seek new sources of finance. Trafigura increased its credit lines by \$7bn to around \$75bn by the end of last year.

Meanwhile Glencore disclosed that, during the first half of 2022, it had to post an additional \$2bn to meet margin requirements on commodities exchanges, contributing to a “significant” increase in working capital during the period.

Banks. Profitability

French lenders miss out on interest rates bonanza

Crédit Agricole and peers held back by rules including limits on their charges for mortgages

SARAH WHITE – PARIS OWEN WALKER – LONDON

French banks risk falling behind European rivals and losing out on windfall profits from rising interest rates due to rules that hamstring their ability to repricing loans.

After a decade of depressed returns, rising inflation and ECB rate hikes have radically changed the fortunes of most of Europe’s biggest banks, driving up margins and lending income.

With the exception of Credit Suisse, however profits are expected of Europe’s top banks when they report fourth-quarter results in the coming weeks. Italy’s UniCredit and Switzerland’s UBS begin the season tomorrow.

But not all banks will have benefited equally from the interest rate windfall – a disparity that is set to deepen in the short term.

France’s lenders are suffering from the most significant setbacks. Banks such as BNP Paribas, Crédit Agricole, Société Générale and BPCE are being curtailed by a mortgage market geared towards fixed-rate loans and a 200-year-old savings account designed to help pay for Napoléon Bonaparte’s wars.

two-speed European banking sector just as it starts generate interest from investors, including US ones.

Prospects for the industry in Europe have improved since the beginning of 2022, especially as concerns over recessions begin to fade, including in big economies such as Germany. Economists from Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan have recently reversed their expectations for a contraction in eurozone output in the first quarter.

“That in turn could lessen the need for banks to notch up large charges to cope with the risk of defaults, after they began to cut provisions last year as the hit from the coronavirus lockdowns of 2020 faded.”

“The drop in [European] gas prices has suddenly eased fears about any recessions to come,” said Jefferies analyst Flora Bouchaut.

“For banks, the big debate was that everyone knew that they would benefit from interest rate rises, but it wasn’t clear how much of that would be offset by the recessions that were expected and a rise in provisions.”

The French banks will be able to offset

some of the pain in their home market with business elsewhere, or in other divisions such as asset management, investment banking and car leasing.

But their French net interest income and margins – or the difference between what banks pay out to depositors and earn from borrowers – are coming under growing pressure, with the hit set to last until at least the second quarter of 2023, when the ECB is expected to start easing off its rate rises.

One senior French banking executive said 2023 “will still be a difficult year, but all the indicators will be back to positive in 2024”.

In addition to their exposure to fixed-rate home loans, and unlike most other lenders in Europe, French banks are also constrained by a limit, set by the central bank, on the amount lenders can charge for mortgages.

By November, French average mortgage rates of 1.91 per cent were the lowest in the eurozone, ECB data showed, with the average in the bloc already at 2.85 per cent.

Société Générale, France’s third-biggest listed lender, is the most

exposed to these pressures, with French net interest income accounting for about 15 per cent of overall revenues, Jefferies says. That compares with 9 per cent at larger peers Citi, Citigroup and 7 per cent at BNP Paribas, the least geared towards household loans.

BNP said in November it expected an extra €2bn of revenues by 2025 from rising interest rates once the benefits kick in. The bank, which has a strong presence in Italy and Belgium among other European countries and a large corporate and investment bank, is expected to perform better in the fourth quarter than its French rivals, Credit Suisse banking analyst Jon Pearce said.

Two of Spain’s mid-sized banks, Sabadell and Bankinter, have already given a glimpse of the upswing expected elsewhere in shorter term, with surges of 25 and 47 per cent respectively in their net interest income in the fourth quarter.

Bankinter’s results were overshadowed, however, by higher than expected costs in one retailer of other residual risks, including inflation pushing up salaries and other expenses.

Investors had remained largely cautious on the sector in 2022 – despite a rise in profits and the promise of French returns to investors through dividends and share buybacks – and some of the pressures from a simmering energy crisis in Europe remain a deterrent.

“The rate rises are an enormous change, a gift from heaven that had been awaited for a long time,” said Jérôme Legras, the head of research at Axiom Alternative Investments. “But there are still macroeconomic headwinds. Banks remain banks, they’re more cyclical than companies in other sectors.”

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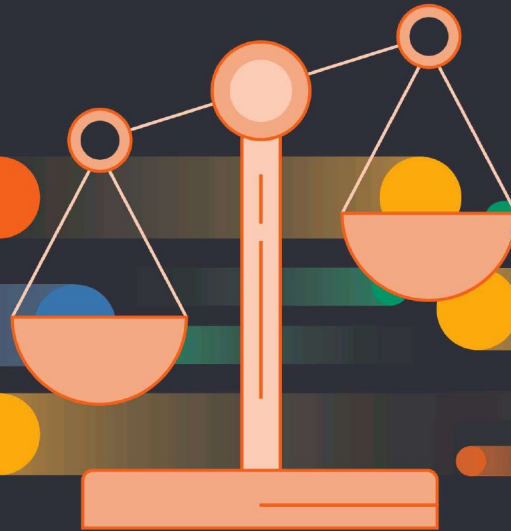
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BNP Paribas is among French banks curbed by a market that includes deposit limits linked to inflation



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COMPANIES & MARKETS

Investors cast doubt on Illumina's Grail quest

Unease grows over DNA sequencing pioneer's deal for cancer testing group amid EU opposition and weakening profit forecasts

JAMIE SMYTH — NEW YORK
JAVIER ESPINOZA — BRUSSELS

In September, the world's biggest genome sequencing company hosted Barack Obama, Bill Gates and other luminaries at its annual forum in San Diego, predicting its latest generation of machines would help "change the world".

Illumina could make the case that it had already done so with its existing technology. It provided the machines that in 2020 decoded the genetic sequence of the virus that causes Covid-19, enabling researchers to develop vaccines and drugs in record time.

Surging demand for its technology and a pandemic-era biotech investment boom caused the market capitalisation of the company — which has an 80 per cent share of the sequencing market — to peak at \$73bn in August 2021.

But as chief executive Francis deSouza took the stage in San Diego to introduce his guests and Illumina's new NovaSeq X Series there were signs that the outlook was darkening.

In August it reported a quarterly loss, weighed down by the legal costs of an unsuccessful patent battle with Chinese rival BGI group, which is now free to enter the US market. A month later the EU blocked Illumina's \$8bn acquisition of Grail, a cancer test developer that was initially founded by Illumina but spun off in 2017.

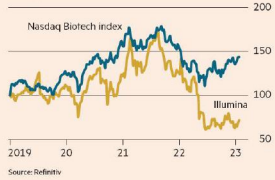
Since then, the company has downgraded profit forecasts and announced it is cutting 5 per cent of its 10,000 workers. And within the next few weeks Brussels is expected to hit it with a fine of up to 10 per cent of revenues, or about \$450m, for closing the deal despite opposition from regulators.

Analysts say the bad news is prompting investors to question the strategy of buying Grail, which Illumina expects to generate an operating loss of \$670m in 2025 on revenues of \$90m-\$110m. Illumina shares are near five-year lows and it is worth \$53bn.

Data Breman, analyst at Cowen, an investment bank, said many investors



Illumina has been besieged by problems since its pandemic highs
Share prices and Index (rebased)



are not "fans of the deal" and it came up in almost every conversation he had with them. He said Illumina has over the past decade been an attractive, high-growth investment because it sold its sequencers at high prices (up to \$1.25m each) and had recurring revenues from the reagents and other products required to operate them. Grail was riskier because it was burning lots of cash and there was uncertainty about whether its technology would be a commercial success, said Breman.

Grail has developed one of the world's first early detection blood tests. The test, which it named Galleri, aims to detect up to 50 different types of cancer, including many that are not part of

national screening programmes. It is currently being tested in trials, including a UK National Health Service study involving 140,000 people.

In an interview with the Financial Times, deSouza said Illumina was right to buy Grail and press ahead with completion of the deal, adding it was "in the interests" of shareholders because of its high growth potential.

"The stakes are really high here in terms of human lives. This isn't just another deal; if Illumina prevails it can bring Grail's life-saving test to countries beyond just the US and the UK, which is what Grail is planning to do," he said.

DeSouza said Illumina had a "large amount of respect" for regulators but insisted it would fight the EU's order blocking the merger in court, arguing that Brussels had no jurisdiction as Grail had no revenues in the bloc. Any EU fine for "gun-jumping" — closing the deal despite opposition from regulators — was likely to be similar to the \$500m break fee in the merger contract it signed with Grail, he said.

But Illumina's course of action angered senior EU officials, including competition commissioner Margrethe Vestager, who said at the time: "Companies have to respect our competition rules and procedures."

The EU's prohibition of the merger is a test case for regulators, which are seeking to expand their powers against "killer acquisitions" — where big companies buy small innovative rivals before they become serious contenders, thereby undermining competition.

Grail's competitors argue that the deal would leave them unable to compete on fair terms with a combined Illumina/Grail, because they rely on its DNA sequencing technology.

Illumina has said the deal is not a rival. It has also said it has no plans to cut off rivals from its sequencers.

Critics say Illumina's dogged pursuit of Grail is misguided because it is soaking up management attention at a time when competition in its core business is rising and the high cost of funding the cancer test company is having an effect on earnings. This month, the company forecast profits will be between \$1.25 and \$1.50 a share this year, well below Wall Street forecasts of \$2.55.

Jay Flatley, who was chief executive of Illumina for 17 years until 2016 and then chairman until 2021, also questioned the economics of the \$8bn takeover, which was negotiated in 2020 near the top of the market. "If they had waited a year

then it would have been a \$2bn acquisition," he said.

Flatley, who persuaded deSouza to join Illumina in 2015, told the Financial Times that he did not think the deal was a "strategic mistake" but it had not gone the way management had hoped. It was a "huge disappointment" and investors want it spun back out, he said.

"Some investors frankly don't care how much Illumina is going to get for it. In some ways it's kind of a sunk cost. If they can split it back out, then the earnings numbers get back to where they should be," he said.

It is not the first time Illumina has been tripped up by its M&A strategy. In January 2020, it abandoned its \$1.2bn takeover of rival Pacific Biosciences after opposition from regulators.

The departure of Sam Samad, Illumina's former chief financial officer, had also unnerved some investors, analysts said. Jaydeep Goswami, Illumina's chief strategy and corporate development officer, has done the job in the interim since July, while the company seeks a replacement.

Four of Illumina's largest investors — Baillie Gifford, Vanguard, BlackRock and Edgewood — all declined a request for comment.

One investor, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Grail was a "natural extension" of Illumina's technology and worth pursuing. Another said the company was "blindsided" by the EU and would probably have to spin off Grail.

A final EU court ruling on the Grail takeover could take years. In the meantime, abandoning it would be challenging for Grail in particular. It scrapped a planned initial public offering at a time when markets were booming following Illumina's approach in 2020.

But there is also pressure on Illumina to diversify. It is launching the NovaSeq X into a market that is attracting new entrants at a good rate.

At a JPMorgan healthcare conference this month Element Biosciences, a company founded by several former Illumina executives, announced that its sequencers could read a whole human genome for as little as \$200.

Twelve years ago, the process cost \$100,000. Illumina's benchmark in 2020 was about \$600 but it plans to reduce this to \$200 with its new machine.

Another early-stage company, Ultima Genomics, has said it can cut sequencing costs to \$100. MG, which was spun out from BGI last year through an IPO, has begun selling its sequencers in the US market following the expiration of key Illumina patents last year.

"Illumina has really been dominating the market for more than a decade and customers need competition," said Molly He, a former Illumina executive who is chief executive and founder of Element Biosciences.

She said Illumina started offering Element customers big discounts when the company entered the market last year. But Element has also benefited from increased interest in its products from Grail competitors that use DNA sequencing, she added. "They [customers] are obviously worried about what is going to happen after Illumina acquires Grail: would they still have access to high quality, low-cost sequencing?"

Illumina rejected any suggestion that its ownership of Grail would influence its relationship with customers of its DNA sequencing business. But this was a key concern highlighted by European authorities when they blocked the Illumina-Grail merger.

Vijay Kumar, analyst at Evercore ISI, said it was a "bold and aggressive" move by Illumina to buy Grail because Illumina was paying \$8bn for a company with very little revenues at the time.

But the decision to close the Grail deal despite opposition from Brussels was a gamble, he said, adding: "Francis bet big on this. Ultimately the buck stops with the CEO."

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

CITY OF ST. CLAIR SHORES POLICE AND FIRE
RETIREMENT SYSTEM, Individually and on Behalf of All
Others Similarly Situated,

Plaintiff,

vs

CREDIT SUISSE GROUP AG, THOMAS GÖTTSTEIN,
DAVID R. MATHERS, LARA J. WARNER AND BRIAN
CHIN,

Defendants.

X
Civil Action No. 1:21-cv-03385-NRB
CLASS ACTION
SUMMARY NOTICE

X

TO: ALL PERSONS WHO PURCHASED OR OTHERWISE ACQUIRED AMERICAN DEPOSITORY
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OCTOBER 29, 2020 THROUGH MARCH 31, 2021, INCLUSIVE (THE "CLASS")

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED, pursuant to Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and an Order of the United States District
Court for the Southern District of New York (the "Court"), that the above-captioned litigation (the "Litigation") has been certified for
the purpose of settlement only as a class action on behalf of the Class, except for certain persons and entities who are excluded from the
Class by definition as set forth in the full printed Notice of Pendency and Proposed Settlement of Class Action (the "Notice").

YOU ARE ALSO NOTIFIED that Lead Plaintiff in the Litigation has reached a proposed settlement of the Litigation for \$32,500,000.00,
that, if approved, will resolve all claims in the Litigation.

A hearing will be held on May 11, 2023, at 11:00 a.m., before the Honorable Naomi Reice Buchwald, United States District Judge, at the
United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, Daniel Patrick Moynihan United States Courthouse, 500 Pearl
Street, Courtroom 21A, New York, NY 10007-1312, for the purpose of determining: (1) whether the proposed settlement of the claims in
the Litigation for the principal amount of \$32,500,000.00, plus interest, should be approved by the Court as fair, just, reasonable, and
adequate; (2) whether a Final Judgment and Order of Dismissal with Prejudice should be entered by the Court dismissing the Litigation
with prejudice against Defendants, and the Released and described in the Stipulation of Settlement (the "Stipulation") dated
September 12, 2022 (and in the Notice) should be granted; (3) whether the Plan of Allocation is fair, reasonable, and adequate and
should be approved; and (4) whether the application of Lead Counsel for an award of attorneys' fees and expenses and an award to Lead
Plaintiff in connection with its representation of the Class should be approved.

IF YOU PURCHASED OR OTHERWISE ACQUIRED CREDIT SUISSE ADRS DURING THE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 29,
2020 THROUGH MARCH 31, 2021, INCLUSIVE, YOUR RIGHTS MAY BE AFFECTED BY THE SETTLEMENT OF THIS
LITIGATION. If you have not received a detailed Notice and a copy of the Proof of Claim and Release form, you may obtain copies by
writing to Credit Suisse Securities Settlement, Claims Administrator, c/o Gilardi & Co. LLC, P.O. Box 6159, Novato, CA 94948-6159,
or at www.CreditSuisseSecuritiesSettlement.com.

If you are a Class Member, in order to share in the distribution of the Net Settlement Fund, you must submit a Proof of Claim and
Release by mail **postmarked no later than April 6, 2023** or electronically (no later than **April 6, 2023**), establishing that you are
entitled to a recovery. If you are a Class Member and do not submit a proper Claim Form, you will not be eligible to share in the
distribution of the net proceeds of the settlement, but you will nevertheless be bound by any judgments or orders entered by the Court
in the Litigation.

If you are a Class Member and you desire to be excluded from the Class, you must submit a request for exclusion, in writing and
in accordance with the instructions set forth in the Notice, to Credit Suisse Securities Settlement, EXCLUSIONS,
c/o Gilardi & Co. LLC, P.O. Box 5100, Larkspur, CA 94977-5100, **postmarked no later than April 20, 2023**. All Class Members
who do not timely and validly request exclusion from the Class in response to the Notice will be bound, to the extent approved by the
Court, by the proposed settlement and any judgment entered in the Litigation pursuant to the Stipulation.

Any objection to the settlement, the Plan of Allocation, or the fee and expense application must be in accordance with the instructions
set forth in the Notice and received by each of the following recipients **no later than April 20, 2023**:

CLERK OF THE COURT
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE
500 Pearl Street
New York, NY 10007-1312

Lead Counsel:
ROBBINS GELLER RUDMAN
& DOWD LLP
JASON C. DAVIS
Post Montgomery Center
One Montgomery Street, Suite 1800
San Francisco, CA 94104

Defendants' Counsel:
CAHILL GORDON & REINDEL LLP
HERBERT S. WASHER
JONATHAN J. HASKINS
ADAM S. MINTZ
32 Old Ship
New York, NY 10025

PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT THE COURT, THE CLERK'S OFFICE, CREDIT SUISSE OR DEFENDANTS'
COUNSEL REGARDING THIS NOTICE. If you have any questions about the settlement, you may contact
Lead Counsel at the address listed above or by an email to Lead Counsel at settlementinfo@gilardi.com. Copies of
certain pleadings and other documents filed in the Litigation can also be found at www.CreditSuisseSecuritiesSettlement.com.

DATED: December 23, 2022

BY ORDER OF THE COURT
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

Mining

Rio 'sorry' for losing highly radioactive capsule

GILL FLIMMER — LONDON
NIC FIELDS — SYDNEY

Rio Tinto has apologised for losing a highly radioactive capsule that fell off a truck on a 1,400-kilometre stretch of desert highway in Western Australia, as the mining company sought to limit the damage from the incident.

The miner and Australian authorities are scrambling to find the missing part from a sensor used in mining, which measures just 6mm by 8mm and was lost on its way from a site in the Pilbara region to a depot in the state capital Perth.

The silver capsule contains a small amount of caesium 137, and is intensely radioactive. An hour of exposure

from a metre away is the equivalent of having 10 X-rays, and prolonged contact can cause skin burns, acute radiation sickness and cancer, experts said.

Rio's role in the radioactive hunt across such a long stretch of the state is the latest episode for a company that is still trying to repair its reputation after the destruction of a 46,000-year-old Aboriginal heritage site at Juukan Gorge in Western Australia in 2020, which ultimately led to the exit of its then chief executive and chair.

In the past year it has issued a report that showed systemic levels of sexual harassment, bullying and racism at its mine sites. It also suffered a blow in its bid to mine uranium after the Scottish government knocked back its licence to

develop a \$2.4bn mine in the country owing to strong environmental and public opposition to the project.

The search for the missing capsule has involved people scanning for radiation levels from the device along the vast trucking route. The device had been used at the Gudai-Darri mine to measure the density of iron ore.

Simon Trott, head of the iron ore division who was appointed shortly after Danish finance director Jakob Stausholm became Rio chief executive in 2021, apologised for the "alarm" incident.

"We are taking this incident very seriously. We recognise this is clearly very concerning and are sorry for the alarm it has caused in the Western Australian community," Trott said yesterday.

'If Illumina prevails it can bring Grail's life-saving test to countries beyond just the US and the UK'

COMPANIES & MARKETS

Financials

BlackRock splashes out on US lobbying

Asset manager on defensive after criticism of its ESG-friendly stance

BRUCE MASTERS — NEW YORK

BlackRock sharply increased its spending on lobbying in the US last year as the world's largest asset manager came under attack over its use of environmental, social and governance factors in investing.

BlackRock disclosed spending of \$2.4m on federal lobbying in 2022, up 65 per cent from 2021. Within that, it more than doubled the amount of

money it paid to high-powered lobbying companies to \$1.2m.

State lobbying registers show that the company also added five registered lobbyists in Texas and two in Florida, up from none in either state in 2020.

Republican politicians in those states have been leading the attack on investment groups they consider hostile to fossil fuel. Congress is expected to pick up the baton now that Republicans control the House of Representatives.

Texas has declared BlackRock to be hostile to fossil fuel and earmarked for divestment. Florida's treasurer last year pulled \$2bn away from BlackRock over ESG, although the state's pension funds

are still using the money manager. BlackRock said in a statement that it works with US policymakers to ensure the voices of investors are heard in considering critical issues like retirement security, market structure and the safeguarding of investors' freedom to choose financial products that best suit their individual needs and goals.

Spending by money managers on lobbying tends to go up and down depending on the issues under discussion in Washington, with big peaks around bills focused on taxes, retirement accounts and securities regulation. Last year, Congress passed tweaks to the rules for employer-sponsored retirement plans

and held hearings on securities regulation and index funds in addition to the growing focus on climate investing.

BlackRock's lobbying spending trails Fidelity and Invesco, which are some of the top users of federal lobbyists among asset managers in recent years. Fidelity disclosed \$2.4m in spending in 2022, up 10 per cent, and Invesco reported \$4.9m, up 21 per cent. Asset managers in general lag behind the national leaders, which include Amazon, Meta and Pfizer, claims the OpenSecrets website.

State Street, which was pilloried alongside BlackRock at a December hearing by Texas legislators on ESG investing, also increased its spending in

2022, from \$1.1m to \$1.8m. The group, which includes a bank as well as an asset manager, pointed out that its spending in 2020 was similar to 2022 and said that the dip had to do with the timing of a large annual payment. It declined to comment on the matter.

Rival index fund provider Vanguard slightly decreased its disclosed federal lobbying spending in 2022, dropping 14 per cent to \$1.8m, but it went from zero lobbyists in Texas in 2021 to two last year. Vanguard was excused from Texas's anti-ESG hearing after it announced it was quitting the major global climate alliance, the Net Zero Asset Managers initiative.

Oil & gas

BP pares back its long-term forecasts for fossil fuels

TOM WILSON — LONDON

BP has trimmed its outlook for oil and gas demand in its latest annual forecast, arguing that the upheaval unleashed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine will push countries to pursue greater energy security over the next decade by investing in renewables.

As a result, global carbon emissions could peak earlier in the 2020s than it had previously suggested, BP said in its annual energy outlook today.

But even with increased political support for the shift away from fossil fuel, governments and industry are still far behind in the race to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, the analysis showed.

The outlook describes three scenarios for the evolution of the energy sector through to 2050. Under its "New Momentum" scenario, which is designed to "reflect the current broad trajectory" of the world's energy system, oil demand would be about 95m barrels a day in 2025, 5 per cent lower than in 2019, and natural gas demand would be 6 per cent weaker.

The lower forecasts reflect an increased role for domestic renewable energy as countries reduce dependence on imported hydrocarbons, but also expectations of weaker economic growth in the next decade because of the lasting impact of the energy crisis.

"The experience from the major energy supply shocks of the 1970s suggests that events that heightened energy

Market questions. Week ahead

Central banks poised to reveal latest rate rises

Will the Fed be able to engineer a 'soft landing' for the US economy?

The Federal Reserve is widely expected to slow its pace of interest rate increases at its meeting tomorrow and on Wednesday, delivering a 0.25 percentage-point increase amid mounting evidence that inflation in the US has begun to cool.

Federal Open Market Committee members — including the hawkish Christopher Waller — have come out ahead of this week's meeting in favour of a 0.25 percentage point increase. This raise would mark a return to a more normal tempo of policymaking after the Fed last year delivered four consecutive 0.75 percentage point increases before decelerating to 0.5 percentage points in December.

The shift in the Fed's approach can be attributed in part to the recent chill in inflation. Consumer price growth in December slowed for the sixth straight month, with inflation clocking in at 6.5 per cent.

Though inflation remains far from the Fed's 2 per cent target, December's level was the lowest since October 2021.

The meeting will also come on the heels of news that the US economy grew more than expected in the fourth quarter — with gross domestic product increasing at an annual rate of 2.9 per cent, compared with the 2.6 per cent forecast by economists.

Slower inflation and a better economic outlook mean the Fed's hope of engineering a "soft landing" — raising rates enough to stamp out inflation but not enough to push the US into recession — can live on. *Kate Dugdale*

What will the ECB decision signal about its pace of tightening?

Economists largely consider it a "done deal" that the European Central Bank will raise interest rates by 0.5 percentage points on Thursday at its next monetary policy meeting.

Christine Lagarde, president of the ECB, signalled this month that the bank will "stay the course" of large interest rate increases, suggesting the same half percentage-point increase as at the last meeting, which would take the deposit rate to 2.5 per cent, up from minus 0.5 in June last year.

With little uncertainty on the rate change, the main point of interest of the ECB meeting will be any messaging about further rate decisions, said Andrew Kenningham, chief Europe



Leveling out: the US Federal Reserve is expected to raise interest rates by 0.25 percentage points at the next two meetings, bringing it to a peak of 3.5 per cent.

But the pace of monetary tightening will depend on the resilience of the eurozone economy and the persistence of high price pressures, with most of the key data being released this week.

Economists polled by Reuters expect gross domestic product data released today to show that the German economy stalled in the fourth quarter of 2022. The same figure for the eurozone — out tomorrow — is also forecast to show no growth over the same period, confirming a much smaller fall from the surge in energy costs and rising borrowing costs than what was forecast a few months ago.

Analysts also expect eurozone inflation to have eased to 9.1 per cent in January, down from 9.2 per cent in the previous month and further below the all-time peak of 10.6 per cent recorded in October. *Valentina Romei*

By how much will the Bank of England lift interest rates?

Markets are pricing in that the Bank of England will raise interest rates by 0.5 percentage points at its meeting on Thursday. That would take the bank rate to 4 per cent, up from the historical low of 0.1 per cent in late 2021 and the highest since 2008.

"We believe the Monetary Policy Committee will raise the bank rate by [0.5 percentage points] in February in response to stubbornly high services inflation and wage growth," said Andrew Goodwin, chief UK Economist at Oxford Economics.

Supported by a tight labour market, where unemployment levels are relatively low and job vacancies high, UK nominal wages rose at a near record pace in November, with private sector pay rises reaching an annual rate of 7.2 per cent. Headline inflation ticked down

in December but services inflation, a better measure of underlying price pressure, accelerated.

Goodwin added that February's rise might be followed by a smaller rise in March, "but that should bring the current cycle of rising borrowing costs to a close".

He also noted that the MPC had avoided tightening less than market expectations in recent meetings and might still be reluctant to take the risk of appearing more dovish than expected.

However, Elizabeth Martins, economist at HSBC, thinks the MPC will go for a quarter of a percentage point rate increase on Thursday.

She conceded that there are "significant risks" of a larger rise but noted that "the combination of lower near-term inflation, receding inflation expectations, the rapid slowdown in the housing market and the BoE's own sub-target, medium-term inflation forecast, mean that the MPC will opt for a slower pace of tightening". *Valentina Romei*

"We believe the MPC will raise the bank rate... in response to stubbornly high services inflation and wage growth"

"We believe the MPC will raise the bank rate... in response to stubbornly high services inflation and wage growth"

"We believe the MPC will raise the bank rate... in response to stubbornly high services inflation and wage growth"

'Heightened energy security concerns can have significant and persistent impacts on energy markets'

security concerns can have significant and persistent impacts on energy markets," Spencer Dale, BP's chief economist, said in the report.

As a consequence, global carbon emissions under the New Momentum scenario would peak in the 2020s and reach 57.8 gigatonnes in 2030 — about 4 per cent lower than its estimate last year that emissions would peak in the "late 2020s". The International Energy Agency has forecast that greenhouse house gas emissions will peak in 2025.

US president Joe Biden's multi-billion dollar support package for clean energy research, the Inflation Reduction Act, had also helped to improve the outlook for carbon emissions. But "the scale of the decarbonisation" means greater support is required, the report said.

Despite the declines, in the New Momentum scenario global emissions would only fall 50 per cent from 2019 levels by 2050, according to the report, which added that a 95 per cent drop from 2019 levels was required for the world to achieve net zero emissions.

In that scenario, oil demand would remain around current levels, close to 100m b/d, through "much of this decade" before declining gradually to about 75m b/d by 2050. Under the "Net Zero" scenario, the study's most ambitious outlook for a reduction in emissions, demand would drop to 70m b/d in 2050, falling to 20m b/d by 2050.

However, BP argues natural declines in oilfields mean investment in oil and gas production will be required for the next 50 years, even under "Net Zero".

Agriculture. Grain pipelines

Weather patterns and low stocks leave food supplies at risk

Forecasters expect benefit of price falls to be limited amid uncertainty over Ukraine

EMIKO TERAZONO — LONDON

Fertiliser and crop prices have fallen sharply since their peaks after last year's Russian attack on Ukraine. Yet agriculture specialists and analysts have warned that the world's food supplies are still under threat.

Food prices were already elevated before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine early last year, due to droughts and coronavirus pandemic-related hoarding by governments and businesses. The crop nutrient prices soared as a result of Moscow's position as the world's largest fertiliser exporter, while the jump in natural gas prices, a critical ingredient for nitrogen fertilisers, also piled pressure on to agricultural markets.

Last year's Black Sea grain deal between Moscow and Kyiv played a crucial role in subduing prices, along with

plentiful supplies from Russia, while lower natural gas prices have calmed fertiliser markets. However, analysts warn that the grain deal could unravel, while volatile energy prices and climate change also threaten to undermine crop production.

"It's like flying with one engine," said John Baffes, senior agricultural economist at the World Bank. "As long as that engine works it's fine, but if the engine stops then you have problems... Many of [these risks] materialise, we'll see a [rise in prices] very, very quickly."

The most immediate danger is the UN-backed grain deal, which is due to be renewed in March. Any failure to extend it would block exports of Ukrainian grain, sending prices rocketing again.

While many crops, along with food fertilisers, are exempt from sanctions imposed on Russia by Ukraine's allies, many banks, insurers and logistics groups have been reluctant to handle their farmers' produce, according to Russian and European officials. Geopolitical tensions could disrupt supplies.

Another threat is climate. Last year's

record-breaking temperatures in Europe and other parts of the world occurred despite the La Niña weather phenomenon, which involves the cooling of the Pacific Ocean's surface. After three consecutive years of La Niña conditions, many meteorologists have warned about the rising chances of the opposite — the El Niño phenomenon,

which has a warming effect — occurring this year. Regionally, El Niño conditions have previously caused droughts in south and south-east Asia and Australia and floods in Latin America, including in Brazil and Argentina.

Relatively low grain inventory levels have added to analysts' concerns about global food supplies. For wheat, the

stocks-to-use ratio, a measure used by grain market participants and agricultural economists to assess the availability of commodities, shows projected stocks for the end of the crop year in June are forecast at 58 days, the lowest level since 2008, when international food prices soared after droughts and an increase in global energy prices.

"Because of the low global stock situation, prices will remain volatile and could head sharply higher if a drought or significant weather event emerges this spring," said Joseph Glauber, senior research fellow at food security think-tank IFPRI and former chief economist at the US Department of Agriculture.

Currency movements are also important for food supplies in many developing countries. Despite the recent falls in food prices on international markets, the strength of the dollar could keep costs in local currencies high. That means food inflation for consumers is likely to persist for several quarters due to the lag of about a year for internationally traded prices to work their way through to retail supply chains.

"Food inflation as measured by the

food consumer price index remains in double digits in most areas of the world. I expect food CPI to decline as overall inflation abates, but it will come down slowly," said Glauber.

But there are some signs of improvement. The UN Food and Agricultural Organization's food price index of internationally traded agricultural commodities has posted monthly declines for nine consecutive months, and prices for crucial nutrients and wheat are more than 40 per cent below last year's highs.

A record wheat crop in Russia and bumper corn and soybean harvests in Brazil have relieved tightness in international grain and vegetable oil markets, while a recent fall in the price of natural gas, a feedstock, has increased production of nitrogen crop nutrients.

Cheaper internationally traded prices, including for fertiliser, will remove some pressure on growers.

"We are very much at an inflection point. The input [costs] and the margin pressure for the farmer appears to be easing substantially," said Michael Magdovitz, grains and oilseeds analyst at Rabobank.



Crop prices have fallen back after a Moscow-Kyiv grain deal — Valeriy Gerasimov/Reuters

MARKET DATA

WORLD MARKETS AT A GLANCE

Table showing market movements for various indices: S&P 500 (0.27%), Nasdaq Composite (0.70%), Dow Jones Ind (0.17%), FTSE 100 (0.05%), FTSE EUROFIRST 300 (0.23%), Nikkei (0.07%), Hang Seng (0.54%), FTSE All World S (0.27%), \$ per € (-0.92%), \$ per £ (No change), \$ per ¥ (-0.36%), € per £ (-0.22%), Oil Brent S&P (1.23%), Gold S (0.09%).

Stock Market movements over last 30 days, with the FTSE All-World in the same currency as a comparison



Table of stock market indices by country, including Country, Index, Lastest, Previous, and % Change. Includes indices like S&P 500, Nasdaq Composite, Dow Jones Ind, FTSE 100, FTSE EUROFIRST 300, Nikkei, Hang Seng, FTSE All World S, \$ per €, \$ per £, \$ per ¥, € per £, Oil Brent S&P, and Gold S.

STOCK MARKET: BIGGEST MOVERS

Table of stock market movers categorized by Active Stocks, Active Bonds, Active Commodities, and Active Currencies. Lists stock symbols, prices, and percentage changes.

CURRENCIES

Table of currency exchange rates for DOLLAR, EURO, POUND, and YEN. Columns include Currency, Rate, Change, and % Change.

FTSE ACTUARIOS SHARE INDICES

Table of FTSE Actuarial Share Indices for various countries and regions, including UK, Europe, and Asia.

FTSE 100 INDEX

Table of FTSE 100 Index performance metrics, including Sector, % Change, and % of Index.

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Table of FTSE Asia Index performance metrics, including Sector, % Change, and % of Index.

FTSE ALL-WORLD INDEX

Table of FTSE All-World Index performance metrics, including Sector, % Change, and % of Index.

UK STOCK MARKET TRADING DATA

Table of UK Stock Market Trading Data, including Volume, Value, and % Change for various sectors.

UK FIRMS OFFERS

Table of UK Firms Offers, including Company Name, Offer Size, and Offer Type.

UK COMPANY RESULTS

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UK RECENT EQUITY ISSUES

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MARKET DATA

FT500: THE WORLD'S LARGEST COMPANIES

Table listing FT500 companies with columns for Rank, Price, % Change, Dividend Yield, and Market Cap. Includes companies like Amazon, Microsoft, Apple, Google, and Meta.

FT500: TOP 20

Table listing the top 20 FT500 companies with columns for Rank, Price, % Change, Dividend Yield, and Market Cap.

FT500: BOTTOM 20

Table listing the bottom 20 FT500 companies with columns for Rank, Price, % Change, Dividend Yield, and Market Cap.

BONDS: HIGH YIELD & EMERGING MARKET

Table listing high yield and emerging market bonds with columns for Issuer, Maturity, Coupon, and Yield.

BONDS: GLOBAL INVESTMENT GRADE

Table listing global investment grade bonds with columns for Issuer, Maturity, Coupon, and Yield.

INTEREST RATES: OFFICIAL

Table listing official interest rates for various countries and currencies.

INTEREST RATES: MARKET

Table listing market interest rates for various countries and currencies.

BONDS: INDEX-LINKED

Table listing index-linked bonds with columns for Issuer, Maturity, and Yield.

BONDS: BENCHMARK GOVERNMENT

Table listing benchmark government bonds with columns for Issuer, Maturity, and Yield.

BONDS: VOLATILITY INDICES

Table listing volatility indices with columns for Index Name and Value.

COMMODITIES

Table listing commodity prices for various goods like oil, gold, and wheat.

BONDS: TEN YEAR GOVT SPREADS

Table listing ten-year government bond spreads for various countries.

GLTS: US CASH MARKET

Table listing US cash market data for various maturities.

GLTS: US FTSE ACTUARIES INDICES

Table listing US FTSE actuaries indices for various categories.

Advertisement for Moringstar Equity Research, featuring the company logo and text: 'Make confident investment decisions powered by our independent global insights and a consistent methodology across our qualitative and quantitative universes.' Includes contact information and a 'Data provided by Moringstar' note.

Large advertisement for Moringstar Equity Research with a prominent logo and the text: 'Equity Research from Moringstar. Make confident investment decisions powered by our independent global insights and a consistent methodology across our qualitative and quantitative universes.' Includes a URL: 'https://ft.pressreader.com/v99f/2023130' and a page number '11/20'.

MANAGED FUNDS SERVICE

SUMMARY

FT.COM/FUNDS

Table with columns: Winners - EAA Fund Japan Large-Cap Equity, Losers - EAA Fund Japan Large-Cap Equity, Morningstar Star Ratings, Global Broad Category Group - Allocation. Includes fund names, returns, and risk metrics.

Advertising Feature

EdenTree Investment Management logo and text: 'EdenTree UK Equity Focus Divd A Inc' with performance chart and key metrics.

Performance



Weights - As of 30/1/2023



Risk Measures - As of 31/12/2022

Table with columns: Alpha, Beta, Information Ratio, R Squared, Sharpe Ratio. Values are provided for various funds.

Top 10 Holdings - As of 30/1/2022

Table with columns: Holding, Sector, Weighting. Lists top 10 holdings for various funds.

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MANAGED FUNDS SERVICE

Fund Bid Offer +/- Yield 1Y 3Y Fund Bid Offer +/- Yield 1Y 3Y Fund Bid Offer +/- Yield 1Y 3Y Fund Bid Offer +/- Yield 1Y 3Y

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Regulated
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UK Equity Fd CA Solutions F1 19.06 386.17 27 0.00 -13.36 1.91

PLATINUM CAPITAL MANAGEMENT
Other International Funds
Platinum All Star Fund A £ 142.20 - -11.86 1.79

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Other International Funds
Stonehage Fleming Best Ideas Equity Fund £ 122.12 - 1.26 - 9.00 4.93

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Maryvyn World Investors E59.72 - -6.14 0.00 - 7.57

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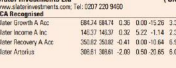
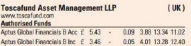
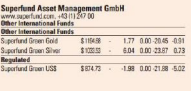
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WORK & CAREERS

If you invite someone to a meeting, there has to be a purpose



Stefan Stern Office life

We must stop meeting like this. By "this" I mean the catalogue of irritations which are all too familiar from working life overlong, overcrowded, hijacked, unproductive meetings...

Martin argues that leaders have to develop a new skill: how to curate an experience. "There has to be a purpose for every person who's invited to the meeting," he says.

of meetings (as an observer) of an international medical devices company. In one crucial meeting the chief executive was present, along with the heads of HR, sales, and marketing...

In the pre-Covid world we got together for way too many things. You're going to have to carefully curate physical gatherings now

More positively, this suggests that with sensitivity and planning constructive meetings can be held which take account of the different roles people might be playing. At the very least, some of the classic pitfalls could be avoided.

The writer is author of 'How to Be a Better Leader'

Employment

A new generation refuses to keep quiet on age discrimination at work



Louise McCabe says that since winning her tribunal case she has been thanked by whistleblowers for standing up to ageist practices at work.

Staff willingness to whistleblow is finally shining a light on those who tolerate such practices, writes Jane Croft

After business executive Louise McCabe won a high-profile employment tribunal case for age discrimination and whistleblowing she found herself being contacted by people from all over the world sharing similar stories.

McCabe, 57, was awarded £125,604 compensation including £20,000 for injury to feelings after winning her case against Scelzar, an e-commerce fulfilment service platform where she was a director. The judge found that the company had unfairly dismissed her and subjected her to discrimination for age and for raising whistleblowing disclosures about the treatment of other staff.

aged over 50 leaving the workplace - sometimes not voluntarily. The employment tribunal in England and Wales recorded 15,366 age discrimination case receipts in the financial year 2020-2021, the highest annual figure since 2007-2008 and the most recent available.

they judged that there was little risk of her leaving the business no matter how she was treated. We find they probably thought this in significant measure because of her age.

discussed "knifing Tony" and said he "isn't going to be around for ever". A decade on, Shiret is as busy as ever working as an equities analyst covering retailers.



Anjali Raval

After almost 8.5 years working at Google, I received notice this morning that I was impacted by the workforce reduction and no longer have a role at the company.

So-called survivors, like my friend, are now less likely to trust their employer and will be anxious about future lay-offs. This remaining workforce may resent having to take on a heavier workload in more trying circumstances - which in turn will prompt further staff exits.

The so-called survivors, like my friend, are now less likely to trust their employer and will be anxious about future lay-offs. This remaining workforce may resent having to take on a heavier workload in more trying circumstances - which in turn will prompt further staff exits.

So-called survivors are less likely to trust their employer

FEATURES

The Henry Mance Interview

‘Privacy has been extinguished. It is now a zombie’

SHOSHANA ZUBOFF

The professor who predicted that computers would change our lives demands a right to sanctuary from data ‘theft’



Douglas Beatty

These are uncertain times for Silicon Valley. Tech companies are firing staff who they hired in the pandemic. Twitter, under Elon Musk, has repelled advertisers. Apple, a self-proclaimed privacy champion, wants to reduce the reach of Google. It's possible to imagine that the digital wild west will become more genteel.

Yet for the critics of Big Tech, there is little relief. Shoshana Zuboff, a professor emerita at Harvard Business School, published *In the Age of Surveillance Capitalism* in 2019 – a blast about how tech companies had made billions of dollars by sucking up private data. “We thought we were searching Google, but Google was searching us,” she summarised.

Today she's frustrated that efforts to restrain tech companies are so fragmented. “We have fantastic scholars, researchers, advocates who are focused on privacy, others who are focused on disinformation, others who are focused on the nexus with democracy,” she says, when we meet in London. This “Balkanisation” reduces the ability to pinpoint the “actual source of harm”: people's data is treated as a costless resource, just as forests and other parts of nature were in centuries past.

Zuboff cites data that, in the US, which has no federal privacy law, people have their location exposed 747 times a day. In the EU, which she says has the “best regulation”, it's 376. “It's better, but it's not nearly better enough.” Mark Zuckerberg once promised you that a predictive model would tell you, on arriving in a strange city, which bar to go to and a bartender would already have prepared your

‘We’re regulating with blinders on . . . We don’t understand our adversary well enough’

favourite drink. That dream has faded only on the basis of practicality, not principle.

In a paper published in November, Zuboff argued that Apple and Google had strong-armed European health officials over Covid tracing technology. “It is possible to have surveillance capitalism, and it is possible to have a democracy. It is not possible to have both,” she wrote. Apple had created the illusion of acting as Robin Hood, when only democratic oversight could protect individual rights.

She sees its move against Google as simply an “expansion” of surveillance capitalism. Tim Cook's promises to protect privacy can be withdrawn any time: “Users have no say.”

Tech surveillance matters, Zuboff argues, because it robs us of “life-sustaining inwardness”. Nor can individuals realistically opt out by themselves. What we need is a right to sanctuary.

Last year Brussels introduced the Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act, its most comprehensive tech legislation to date. The UK parliament is currently debating the online safety bill. Zuboff wants these to be stepping stones.

Normally in newspaper interviews, the journalist asks questions, and the interviewee answers them. An interview with Zuboff is different. You ask questions and, more often than not, she

responds with first principles – step-by-step explanations of how she believes that surveillance capitalism has taken hold and to collect less data from them. The UK pioneered age-appropriate design, but after Brexit will miss out on Brussels’ “more muscular” power against surveillance capitalism, says Zuboff. She also sees “a move to weaken and denature the existing data protection regime with a data protection bill that favours the big tech companies and perpetuates the misbegotten idea that democracy must get out of the way.”

This particular mind is, in tech terminology, a feature, not a bug. It enables Zuboff to take the long view. In 1988, she published *In the Age of the Smart Machine*, which argued that computers would change companies in a way that previous technologies had not. She later ran Odyssey, a Harvard Business School education programme to help successful people decide how to spend the later part of their lives.

Her opus on surveillance capitalism was her own late-career flourish. It was published when she was 67, after a lightning strike had burnt down her family home in Maine and after the unexpected death of her husband and sometime co-author, the businessman Jim Maxmin.

Zuboff argues that tech companies knew that the public would never support their data collection. “Right from the start, they were understood as things that had to be secret, had to be camouflaged from users, lest they provoke resistance.” She quotes a recent Google executive as saying: “Won't it creep people out to know how much we are paying attention?”

Today tech companies “are becoming much more reluctant to patent their discoveries, because they don't want the public to know exactly what they're doing. They're no longer in most cases making their own data available to researchers.”

So Zuboff sees the need for a regulatory fishing expedition. The EU's tech laws will create “new cadres of people with new mixes of skills that are going to go inside the corporations. Their brief will be to lift the hood, to understand what's really going on. One of the huge problems that we have is that most of the information that comes out of the companies is intentionally designed to be misleading. Gaslighting is a rhetorical art form that is genuinely practised by these companies.”

Zuboff rarely uses short answers or plain terminology. Nonetheless, she is direct about content moderation – companies’ attempts to remove harmful content – which she describes as “quicksand . . . an utterly losing proposition, designed in fact to keep us occupied as long as possible so that they can keep getting away with what they're really doing.”

“We're regulating with blinders on . . . We don't understand our adversary well enough.”

“Our information spaces must exist under public law and be governed by democratic institutions”

“We're regulating with blinders on . . . We don't understand our adversary well enough.”

“Our information spaces must exist under public law and be governed by democratic institutions”

She is more positive about age-appropriate design, where platforms are engineered to minimise harm to children and to collect less data from them. The UK pioneered age-appropriate design, but after Brexit will miss out on Brussels’ “more muscular” power against surveillance capitalism, says Zuboff. She also sees “a move to weaken and denature the existing data protection regime with a data protection bill that favours the big tech companies and perpetuates the misbegotten idea that democracy must get out of the way.”

The problem for privacy advocates is that their cause seems to offer too few advantages and too many drawbacks. For most European citizens, the biggest impact of privacy legislation is annoying cookies pop-ups. Regulation seems impractical: the UK and France have both wanted to place age limits on porn sites, but have so far failed to find effective ways of doing so.

Similarly, Zuboff criticises Apple and Google for taking control of Covid tracing, but what if their system simply worked better than the centralised ones favoured by European health officials? She laughs at the suggestion.

But she admits regulation is hindered “because we can't get inside [tech companies] to know what's really going on.”

“Our information spaces must exist under public law and be governed by democratic institutions”

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“Our information spaces must exist under public law and be governed by democratic institutions”

oligarchs like Musk and Zuckerberg as the first primitive missteps of a new civilisation.”

She compares the west's tech giants to China's surveillance state. “This is a world in which privacy has been extinguished. Privacy is now a zombie category. None of us have privacy, even as we thought about it in the year 2000.”

Her sense of dystopia is visceral. “Somebody just invented a type of paint that you can put on your face that con-

found facial recognition. Young people on Reddit are very excited about this. This is terrible, Henry!” The abolition of surveillance capitalism requires new laws that allow societies to decide “what becomes data in the first place, what we share, with whom, and to what purpose”.

Instead, tech marches onwards, particularly in the form of artificial intelligence. “ChatGPT has shaken us up. It has shocked people, forcing us to recog-

nise how far AI has come, with virtually no law and democratic governance to shape or constrain its development and application.”

AI's development has relied on stealing human data, she argues. She points hopefully to the EU's proposed AI Act – “the first law to assert democratic governance over the application of AI”. But it's hard not to feel that, even when Silicon Valley stumbles, it is still a step ahead.

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ARTS

‘I make films to conjure ghostly presences’

French director Alice Diop's new movie 'Saint Omer' dramatises the trial of a woman who left her child to die. She talks to Tobias Grey

When Alice Diop decided to attend the 2016 trial of Fabienne Kabou, a young Senegalese woman found guilty of leaving her 15-month-old daughter to drown on a French beach, she wasn't expecting to break down in tears. "I was ashamed to find myself crying," Diop says. "But when I turned around I saw that many of the women attending the trial – and there were a lot of them, not just locals but others who had travelled from afar – were also weeping."

It was at this moment, on the last day of the trial in Saint-Omer, northern France, during a compassionate summing up by Kabou's defence lawyer, that Diop, 45, knew she wanted to make her first fictional feature film, having already directed a string of lauded documentaries. "I think each of us women had been caught up in inextricable feelings of what it means to be a mother," Diop says. "It was this universal dimension touching so many women at once, which convinced me I wanted to make a film about the trial. But it couldn't be a documentary because otherwise I would have been confined to a lurid news story."

We are sitting in a shabby-chic café in Montreuil, on the eastern outskirts of Paris, and Diop is on tenterhooks as she is about to find out if her film *Saint Omer* is one of the five nominees for Best International Feature Film at this year's Academy Awards. As it turns out *Saint Omer* failed to make the cut but the fact it made the shortlist as France's entry for the awards is a kind of victory in itself. In 70 years of French entries, *Saint Omer*, which already won the Grand Jury Prize at last year's Venice Film Festival, is the first to have been directed by a black woman.



The distinction is not one that Diop particularly likes to dwell on. "I think of myself as a film-maker and not as a black woman," she says. "I was just very honoured to have been chosen by my peers for a film like this, which treats the question of black women's bodies in a universal way. In that respect my film is very political. "I've always had the conviction that the black body can be universal. When I

Above: film-maker Alice Diop. Above right: Gustlagie Malanda in 'Saint Omer' - Christopher Smith/Instagram

read Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, I recognised a part of my own humanity. Why shouldn't people recognise themselves in a film about black women and the question of motherhood?"

Saint Omer stars Gustlagie Malanda as Laurence Coly, a woman loosely based on Fabienne Kabou, and Kayije Kagame as Kanna, a newly pregnant writer who attends Coly's trial in the hope of turning it into a novel.

"By creating the fictional character of Rama I could put my finger on what interested me about everything I heard during the trial," Diop says. "This is not a film that investigates a crime, but one that questions the complexity of the maternal bond. The difficulty of being a mother is very rarely talked about. The profound anguish of what it means to be a mother or to become a mother is hardly ever spoken of. That's what interested me."

Diop, who has a son, worked on the script for *Saint Omer* in parallel with her 2021 documentary *Nous*, which won the Encounters Award at that year's Berlin Film Festival. She found that research for *Nous*, which drew inspiration from the experience of her parents, who emigrated to France from Senegal, subtly nourished her screenplay for *Saint Omer*. She co-wrote it with regular collaborator Amrita David and Prix-Goncourt-winning novelist Marie Ndiaye. "Now I can see that there are echoes in



each film, which I didn't notice when I was writing them," she says.

Diop based the look of the apartment in *Saint Omer*, where Rama lives with her husband and mother, on the one she grew up in on the outskirts of Paris. "Perhaps it was a way of taking some distance and protecting myself from the story that *Saint Omer* tells," she says. In *Nous*, Diop's mother, who died when she was 17, is a fleeting presence shown briefly in a home movie that the film-maker rediscovered many years after her death. For *Saint Omer*, Diop created home movies of Rama's family inspired by the ones in *Nous*.

"In a way, it felt like I was recreating the life of my own mother if she had lived longer," she says. "One of the reasons I make films is to conjure these ghostly presences and recount the lives of these invisible bodies."

In various ways, all of Diop's films explore the migration experience. Her 2007 documentary *Les Sénégalaises et la Sénégalaise* analysed the emotional and psychological impact that it can have on the children of immigrants, while 2016's *La Permanence* is about a doctor who heals men traumatised by the experience of exile. In *Saint Omer* Laurence is depicted as an intelligent woman who nonetheless has a tenuous grasp on reality. Her lawyer wonders what happened to the once-confident young woman

who travelled to France from Senegal to study law and philosophy: "Consider this young lady, full of ambitions and desire, arriving in Paris, and ask yourself this question: how did she become this isolated, invisible woman, hiding in her partner's studio?" he asks.

Diop, who studied colonial history at the Sorbonne before becoming a film-maker, found herself identifying with Kabou, the inspiration for Coly, on several levels. Her artfulness, for one: "I wondered why French journalists were making such a big deal out of the fact that she is extremely well-spoken. She is an academic after all."

There is a moment in the film when one of Coly's former teachers is testifying and declares that she doesn't understand why an African woman would want to write her thesis on Wittgenstein: "Why not choose someone closer to her own culture?"

Diop notes that this was something she transcribed verbatim from Kabou's trial. "If I picked up on it, then no doubt it's because I'm a black woman and I know what this means," she says. "This film is linked to who I am and what I saw

'The film is linked to the way people perceived this woman. It reveals a form of racism that is very French'

in the way people perceived this woman. It's something that reveals a form of racism that is very French."

Diop is not sure yet what her next film will be. But as a true formalist she already has a good idea of how she will approach it. "I'm sure it will be an extension of something I have learnt or experienced in a previous film," she says. "I don't yet know whether it will be a documentary or a fiction, but I do really see there being much of a separation between the two. The subject is what will determine my decision."

'Saint Omer' is in UK cinemas from February 3



Kayije Kagame, left, and Salmata Kamaté in 'Saint Omer'

Enigma of the 'immaculate concussion'

PODCASTS

Fiona Sturges

many will know from the excellent *Finding Q* podcast, in which he searched for the architect of the online movement QAnon. Here he has alighted on a similarly knotty story, one that is a mystery, a conspiracy theory and a tale of espionage and geopolitical strife rolled into one.

He hears from neurologists, political analysts and sound experts, and talks to Havana syndrome patients – or, rather, he interviews their partners since many of those afflicted still find it difficult to talk. The series goes heavy on the drama, deploying chilling sound effects imitating the experiences of victims and opening with choirs singing "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho", as Woolf recounts the Old Testament tale of God commanding the Israelites to besiege Jericho with the sound of massed trumpets.

The writing is also terrific. Reflecting on the destructive properties of sound, Woolf observes: "A powerful enough

soundwave is a shockwave, a powerful enough shockwave destroys everything in its path. That's the quality of sound. It can create beauty or pandemonium."

Havana Syndrome, a new podcast from Vice, similarly ponders how and why this mysterious illness took hold. It is the work of journalists Jon Lee Anderson and Adam Entous, who began their investigations in an article in *The New Yorker*, published in 2018. Here, they open with the case of Tina Oufar, a Foreign Service officer who was struck by an intense pain while washing the dishes in her Havana home, after which they dig deep into the political backdrop, specifically the thawing of relations between Cuba and the US during the Obama years. While their series doesn't have the lyricism and stylishness of Woolf's, it's no less gripping and authoritative.

'The Sound': podcasts.apple.com 'Havana Syndrome': podcasts.apple.com

Havana syndrome sufferers reported hearing a buzzing noise and feelings of intense pressure in the head



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FT BIG READ. LAW

How the rise and fall of the high-profile Greek MEP at the centre of cash-for-votes allegations rocking the European parliament has prompted calls for widespread anti-corruption reforms.
By Eleni Varvitsioti, Andy Bounds, Alice Hancock and Silvia Sciorilli Borrelli

Inside the EU's 'Qatargate' scandal

The links in the Qatar investigation

Red circles show those who are or were affiliated with the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats grouping in the European parliament
Blue circles show links to Fight Impunity, an NGO founded by Pier Antonio Panzeri



Luca Visentini, 54

Italian trade unionist, arrested and released. He has admitted running a group that took bribes to influence policy in the European parliament. Police say he earned at least €1m from Fight Impunity.



Niccolò Figà Talamanca

Secretary-general of No Peace Without Justice, an Italian human rights campaign group that worked with Fight Impunity and had offices at the same address. Charged with corruption, but denies wrongdoing.



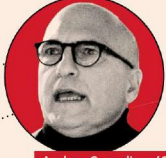
Marc Tarabella, 54

Belgian Socialist MEP who attended many events with Panzeri. Vice-chair of the delegation for relations with the Arab world. His house was raided by police and prosecutors have asked for his parliamentary immunity to be lifted. Denies wrongdoing.



Pier Antonio Panzeri, 67

An Italian MEP from 2004 to 2019 who has admitted running a group that took bribes to influence policy in the European parliament. Police say he earned at least €1m from Fight Impunity.



Andrea Cozzolino, 62

An Italian Socialist MEP who employs Giorgi. Prosecutors have asked for his parliamentary immunity to be lifted. Followed Panzeri as chair of the delegation for relations with the Maghreb countries. Denies wrongdoing.



Eva Kaili, 44

Greek MEP and a vice-president of the European parliament, charged with corruption after handing a suitcase with €300,000 to her father. Denies wrongdoing.



Francesco Giorgi, 35

Partner to the Greek MEP Eva Kaili and former parliamentary assistant to Pier Antonio Panzeri, also charged. His LinkedIn profile lists him as a co-founder of Fight Impunity. Has confessed to being the bagman for the operation.

For a member of the European parliament, Eva Kaili lived life more like a movie star. The Greek politician spent her free time on yachts in the Aegean, glitzy nightclubs in Athens, hanging out at events with supermodels such as Naomi Campbell and spending summer vacations at tycoon Sir Richard Branson's Necker Island Caribbean hideaway.

Work involved panel discussions with crypto billionaires and trips abroad including to Qatar ahead of the World Cup, besides the more mundane task of chairing debates in her role as a vice-president of the European parliament.

Now the former TV news anchor, 44, is confined to a prison on the grimy industrial outskirts of Brussels, under constant surveillance, with just two visits a month from her two-year-old daughter.

She stands accused by Belgian prosecutors of accepting cash and gifts from Qatar and Morocco in exchange for her votes in key parliamentary resolutions. The final plot twist is yet to be written: is Kaili innocent, as her lawyer claims, seduced and duped by her Italian partner? Or did she take advantage of lax parliamentary oversight to line her own pockets?

Whatever the answer, there is no doubt that the so-called Qatargate scandal has rocked the EU and forced it to confront uncomfortable truths about how it manages lobbying by foreign powers.

The parliament, a junior partner in many areas of EU policy, has cast itself as a champion of human rights and the rule of law. The three human rights resolutions it passes each month can have material impact on the ground, activists say, pressuring governments and raising the profile of local campaigners.

Prosecutors allege Qatari paid bribes to reduce parliamentary criticism of its treatment of migrant workers building stadiums and hotels for the football World Cup last December. Doha denies the allegations.

Meanwhile, Morocco was lobbying for a deal on fishing rights and the recognition of its sovereignty over the disputed territory of Western Sahara. It too denies paying bribes.

EU lawmakers this month have begun the formal process to lift the immunity of two more of their colleagues suspected of wrongdoing. They have also announced reforms to limit so-called revolving doors, where public officials take roles in the private sector, especially lobbying.

Stéphane Séjourné, leader of the Renew Liberal group in parliament, says unless it reforms swiftly, the scandal will increase Euroscepticism. "If we do not resolve it before summer then it will feed into the extremist debates at the next European elections [in May 2024]," he says.

The scandal undermines the legitimacy of the whole European project, says Arancha González, a former Spanish foreign minister and ex-adviser to the European Commission. "Legitimacy rests on the national parliaments and the direct electoral representatives of the citizens in the European parliament. It has to send a message of zero tolerance for corruption and foreign interference."

Antony of Scandal Kaili's own fall was quick and brutal. She was in the garage of her apartment block in Brussels at about 10.30am on December 9, when police arrived to arrest her partner Francesco Giorgi and impounded his car.

Returning to her flat, she read a local newspaper report that Giorgi, a parliamentary assistant, had been arrested along with two others on suspicion of corruption, her lawyer Michalis Dimitrakopoulos said.

Softel hotel near the parliament where an unnamed friend of Panzeri would collect it. The police, who had been watching throughout, picked her father up and hauled him off. He was released later that day but Kaili's role was enough to invalidate her immunity as an MEP - she had been caught "in flagrante", prosecutors said, and was arrested and charged with corruption and money-laundering.

Kaili has been put through "torture" in custody, Dimitrakopoulos alleges - held in a cold cell at one point with a bright light on keeping her awake for more than 16 hours, and denied contact with her lawyer for three days. He is filing an official complaint. The Belgian federal prosecutor's office declined to comment.

Luca Visentini, the director-general of the International Trade Union Confederation, and Niccolò Figà Talamanca, who ran an established human rights campaign group, were also detained while several offices in parliament were raided.

Visentini was released without charge but Kaili, Panzeri, Giorgi and Figà Talamanca were charged with corruption, money laundering and membership of a criminal organisation. Some €1.5m in cash was seized in total, including the suitcase and more from Kaili and Panzeri's homes.

Figà Talamanca, whose NGO shared its Brussels office with one run by Panzeri, denies wrongdoing. Giorgi has made a partial confession, according to media reports verified by the FT. His lawyer declined to comment.

Prosecutors allege that the Italian, 67, had also taken money from Qatar to improve perceptions of its human rights record ahead of the World Cup there last December.

He and Giorgi, his former assistant, were filmed on CCTV heading into a meeting with a Qatari delegation led by labour minister Ali Bin Samikh al-Marri at a Brussels hotel on October 10.

Panzeri enters with an empty bag Giorgi with his daughter in a pushchair Giorgi was then working for Cozzolino, the Italian MEP, and living with Kaili.

The Greek MEP had become Panzeri's inside woman, according to legal documents seen by the FT. She met Qatari ministers in Brussels, visited the country twice, tried to water down a parliamentary resolution condemning labour rights in the country and turned up to vote in favour of abolishing visas for Qataris visiting the EU in a committee of which she wasn't a member.

Prosecutors allege that the Italian, 67, had also taken money from Qatar to improve perceptions of its human rights record ahead of the World Cup there last December.

She was elected a councillor in her home city of Thessaloniki at the age of 24. Evangelos Venizelos, a future deputy prime minister, took her under his wing and two years later she secured a job as a news anchor for the Greek news station Mega TV.

Kaili was regularly photographed in the trendiest bars and restaurants of Athens in the company of TV executives and well-heeled Athenian socialites and business scions. She was seen at the VIP tables of nightclubs and music venues, often accompanied by Greek-Russian oligarch Ivan Savvidi, who used to be a member of the Russian parliament.

She successfully ran for the national parliament with the leftwing Pasok party in 2007 aged only 23, before being forced to relinquish her seat by the party hierarchy in 2012. She got a job as the head of media relations to a powerful Greek businessman who owned media and insurance companies.

Then in 2014 she was elected to the European parliament, where she worked principally on technology and cryptocurrency policy before being elected one of the 14 vice-presidents of the European parliament last year.

In Greece she was described in the media as a "rising EU star", but her haughty manner alienated people who worked for her - they dubbed her "Queen Elizabeth", a staff member says.

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The FT View



FINANCIAL TIMES
'Without fear and without favour'

Another threat to UK media freedom

A loosely worded bill conflates journalists and whistleblowers with spies

The Official Secrets Act, so an old joke runs, exists not to protect secrets but to protect officials. An overhaul of the UK's espionage apparatus — the first since the Official Secrets Act was updated in 1989 — means this is now no laughing matter.

The national security bill makes it a criminal offence to publish or disclose protected information that could prejudice the UK and assist, directly or indirectly, a foreign power. The bill does not differentiate between hostile powers and allies — and does not distinguish between spies and overseas civil society groups that receive some state funding.

which are over 100 years old. They currently fail to capture 21st-century threats from hostile states that can attack British infrastructure and institutions with impunity from an overseas computer. New laws to deter state-sponsored cyber attacks and foreign influence campaigns are needed, particularly in the context of Russia's war in Ukraine and an assertive China.

The national security bill, if passed as drafted, could become a draconian tool for a future government even more shy of accountability than those of recent years

found out. But responsible journalists must already contend with a UK framework where there is no US-style constitutional protection of free speech, and where contempt of court, claimant-friendly libel laws that favour deep pockets, the threat of private prosecution and data protection laws are all invoked to suppress unparliamentary articles. Little wonder the UK has slipped down the Index on Censorship's rankings of press freedoms. Yet another punitive, vague law means newswriters and whistleblowers will self-censor.

Opinion Asia

The problem with Japan's 'new capitalism' ideology

Maria Popovic



Leo Lewis

When things were downright dismal at Nintendo in 2013, its late, remarkable president Satoru Iwata told shareholders exactly why two straight years of operating losses was no reason at all to sack anyone.

In theory, US tech lay-offs might be an opportunity for Kishida to press harder on his narrative

only way to secure the future of an old, shrinking society. Iwata, rather unexpectedly, is now being quoted on social media from beyond the grave — his assertions about how to run a happy software shop in rough seas have been repeated by the tearful and newly jobless of Silicon Valley. But was he right?

For those who see the cull as necessary, the large-scale lay-offs at Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Salesforce and other technology sector titans should, in principle, be a masterclass for the likes of Japan in how "real" shareholder capitalism does corporate evolution. Instead, even in the US, it has reignited questions about how desirable and beneficial shareholder-focused savagery really is.

In theory, then, this might be a golden opportunity for prime minister Fumio Kishida to press harder and more globally on his "new capitalism" narrative — a formidable-sounding economic howitzer he introduced in 2021 but which has so far done little more than unfurl a flag that reads "bang".

There was a chance that a well-formulated blueprint for "new capitalism" could be Japan's gift to the world at the precise moment that old capitalism was looking rather too blood-thirsty. It might, with some serious thought, have provided a framework

for toning down the shareholder primacy pressures in favour of the sort of broader stakeholder capitalism with which Japan was more comfortable anyway.

Japanese companies, despite pressure from more vocal investors to show them the money, have largely stuck to their line that employees should carry equal weight with shareholders among the priorities of CEOs. A lot of that is the self-justifying bluff of ossified management, but much of it is genuine.

Kishida has made substantial speeches on new capitalism — one last year in London and one last week at the opening of parliament. He has also established a steering committee of outside experts on how to shape policy around the simultaneous ideals of greater wealth equality, stronger national economic security and the promotion of innovation. Concrete measures, and even a proper definition of "new capitalism", remain largely elusive, and people on the committee say privately that its approach is too scattergun.

Two reasons are likely to prevent a great coming out party for new capitalism, an even vindication of Iwata's. The first is that Kishida seems to have realised the idea works better, the more vaguely it is defined. He is not, say, people close to him, especially doctrine, and has not precisely worked out where problems are faults of capitalism, and where they are simply those of a self-preservative management cohort, inefficiency and inherited risk-aversion. To tightly define new capitalism would commit him to major reforms he does not, 15 months into the job, appear eager to push through.

A second reason is that there is a growing — very quiet — recognition among many Japanese CEOs that the sort of mass lay-offs hitting the US tech sector, while ugly and sad in themselves, reveal something highly desirable about the liquidity of the US job market into which those ex-Google and ex-Microsoft people have now been jettisoned. They will get other jobs, and different sectors will benefit from the cross-pollination of talent.

Larger, listed Japanese companies, at the cost of corporate innovation and other issues, have never encouraged that liquidity: many may now wish that they had. To produce a new capitalism with a promise of far greater vitality, Kishida must, unfortunately, acknowledge the need to accelerate one of the nastier and more destabilising features of old capitalism.

The great problem with Iwata's, is that — as the man himself said — its contention relies on his own "sincere doubt" rather than the empirical facts that the US has been running for years.

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Letters

Danone has thrown down a methane challenge

Danone became the first dairy company to announce its commitments to cut methane — a move that was rightly welcomed by the FT ("Danone: chewing over emissions", Lex, January 21).

over 150 governments to cut methane by 30 per cent compared to the 2020 baseline — will be difficult to deliver in the rich world without tackling agriculture.

Failures of free trade have a lot to answer for

Janan Ganesh's diatribe against protectionism ignores a few important bits of reality (Opinion, January 25).

Our research shows that the EU is on track for a mere 17 per cent methane reduction by 2020, because of its failure to get to grips with emissions from the meat and dairy sector.

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Taiwan's next election: why the US might be worried

The concerns regarding Taiwan's vice-president Lai Ching-te as mentioned in Kaitlin Hill's "Taiwanese presidential contender with firm line on independence takes centre stage" (Report, January 17) are misplaced.

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Feedback loops and mother's milk

The underlying theme of Martin Wolf's "In defence of democratic capitalism" (The Week-end Essay, Life & Arts, January 21) is the proposition that the sustainability and success of the marriage of universal suffrage democracy (USD) and the market capitalist economy (MCE) is theoretical sound in that the two systems support and reinforce each other in feedback loops whereby USD provides the space for citizens' initiatives, the mother's milk of MCE.

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Investors should look at Salesforce's stock issuance

Your article about Salesforce ("Activists call Salesforce to account with campaign for focus on profits", Report, January 26) contains clues to a core underlying problem for investors — profligate stock issuance, both for employee compensation and expensive acquisitions.

Also misleading is the statement that Salesforce is trading "at its cheapest ever multiple of free cash flow". Nearly half (46.5 per cent for FY22) of "free cash flow" stems from the issuance of equity for stock-based compensation. It is improper to capitalise cash flow generated by shaving off part of the capital structure to pay an operating expense.

Many of Silicon Valley's leading firms tout similarly misleading financials, but the one constant area of growth for these firms is growth in shares outstanding. Salesforce grew its share count by 26.4 per cent over the past three years alone, which is the financial equivalent of quackness from a shareholder value perspective.

Ken Broad Mill Valley, CA, US

Weighing the relative merits of T-bills and CDs

Lex is certainly correct to point out the utility of certificates of deposit at Treasury bills (January 26) in the present environment. However, several advantages of the latter over the former are neglected. First, three and six-month T-bills have a yield advantage over CDs. Second, interest on T-bills is exempt from state income taxes. Hence, depending on where one resides, the difference in yield can be significantly increased.

Finally, T-bills are guaranteed by the federal government.

Oops! Well, two out of three is not too bad. Randolph M. Stiverson Distinguished Professor Department of Political Science University of California, Davis Davis, CA, US

And finally, a Brexit benefit

I believe I have found a Brexit benefit ("Plastic bottle recycling plant delayed to 2025", Report, January 21)

My new hobby — colouring the new clear milk bottle lids in green, red or blue — has required an investment in red, green and blue permanent marker pens that I've never needed until now. I assume that if this hobby has to be taken up widely it will result in a significant boost in sales. Or a niche black market in the re-sal of green lids from empty semi-skimmed milk bottles.

So back to my colouring. Heather Locke Surbiton, Surrey, UK

Opinion

We are not ready for the long grind to come



MARKETS
Ruchir Sharma

Over the past half century, as governments and central banks teamed up ever more closely to manage economic growth, recessions became fewer and farther between. Often they were shorter and shallower than they might have been. After so much mildness, most people cannot imagine a painfully lasting business cycle. But the global economy is heading into a period unlike any we have seen in decades.

World war in 1945 and 1950, and more than 40 per cent between 1870 and 1945. One increasingly important reason is government rescues. Combined stimulus in the US, the EU, Japan and the UK, including government spending and central bank asset purchases, rose from 1 per cent of gross domestic product in the recessions of 1980 and 1990 to 5 per cent in 2001, 1.2 per cent in 2008 and a staggering 55 per cent in 2020.

Though the 2020 recession was sharp, it was the shortest since records began, lasting just two months. Government bailouts in the pandemic came so fast and large that it felt to many people, particularly white-collar employees working from home, as if the recession never happened. Their incomes and credit scores went up. Their wealth exploded with rising stock and bond markets. Now this experience of recession as a non-event seems baked into the professional psyche.

They continue to expect the mildest recession since the second world war, starting soon and lasting less than six months, as the Federal Reserve again comes to the rescue. This consensus view may be wrong in key respects, whether on how soon the next recession arrives, how long it lasts or how generous the rescue effort can be.

In 2020, governments injected so much money into the economy that consumers are still sitting on much of it two years on – \$3.8tn in the US alone.

Investment by US and European business barely broke stride. Governments continue to spend. Because of this, the next downturn may come later than expected, a view bolstered by the latest US GDP data, which showed a resilient economy.

When the pandemic stimulus finally runs out by year end, the next downturn, once it comes, may not pass so quickly. The key sticking point is inflation. This is now retreating almost as quickly as it surged last year – as supply chains normalise and “revenge spending”, unleashed by the end of lockdowns and boosted by stimulus, calms down. But it is not likely to return to its pre-pandemic level of under 2 per cent. The most lasting legacy of Covid may be its impact on work and wage inflation. One in eight people say they plan “no return” to pre-pandemic activities, including work. The number of hours people of all ages want to work plunged, and their attitude has changed as well. Social media celebrates “quiet quitting” and “acting your wage” – meaning do what you are paid for, and no more. I hear chief executives saying that they have “priced power” for the first time in decades. Inflation for goods such as cars is slowing, fast, but that for services is stickier. The Fed tracks a special index for “sticky services” like real estate and recreation – in which prices move slowly – and it is rising.

Meanwhile, the world is changing in fundamentally inflationary ways: birth rates have been falling for years but are now rapidly shrinking working-age populations. Countries are retreating inward, offshore to the nearest and most friendly nations rather than to the least costly. The pressure from demographics and deglobalisation will push the new normal for inflation higher, closer to 4 than to 2 per cent. This will make it harder for central banks to cut rates to counter the next recession. Higher rates mean governments can borrow and spend heavily to stimulate sluggish economies only at risk of forcing a position in the global bond markets, which are already much less tolerant of free spending. While the next downturn may take longer to hit, it is likely to take an unfamiliar slant, possibly not much deeper but more enduring, as stickier inflation forces central banks and government rescue teams to the sidelines. The world is not ready for the long grind ahead.

The writer is chair of Rockefeller International

Pressure from deglobalisation will push the new normal for inflation higher

much money into the economy that consumers are still sitting on much of it two years on – \$3.8tn in the US alone. Investment by US and European business barely broke stride. Governments continue to spend. Because of this, the next downturn may come later than expected, a view bolstered by the latest US GDP data, which showed a resilient economy.

Beware hollowing out the City of London



ARCHITECTURE
Edwin Heathcote

A 1651 population of the City of London was estimated at 120,163. In 1901 it was 26,923. Today it is about 8,600. It is hardly a thriving 24-hour metropolis. In business we have become so used to the ideas of US journalist and activist Jane Jacobs about the ideal city embodying a mix of uses and classes that we might forget it is not the only template for success. Jacobs took her native Greenwich Village as the model of urban complexity and community, but she has been partly blamed for the gentrification that ultimately destroyed the very milieu she was advocating. The City presents a different model. Reimagined from the 19th century as a core of finance, it was rebuilt as a place of pure business. Ten proposed new office towers (peaking with the 65-storey 55 Bishopsgate) will continue to reshape its spiky skyline. Yet the City was never entirely a monoculture. It had markets and hospitals, housing estates, churches, restaurants, a proliferation of pubs and a huge newspaper industry (those latter two largely inseparable). This complex ecosystem emerged from centuries of an intense concentration of trade. New housing (with a few exceptions, notably the Barbican) was excluded. The last thing the post-war City wanted was residents complaining about a new office tower blocking their light or, heaven forbid, more voters. But east London's skyline has since shifted from offices and council blocks to kitschy new residential towers aimed

Hanging carcasses and white-coated porters kept Smithfield market vibrant as nightclubs moved in

at foreign investors. Housing's allure has sharpened, particularly after the pandemic shock looked likely to undermine the workplace. With residential developments now the majority of construction at London's other financial centre, Canary Wharf, apartments are sneaking in along the City's riverside and north and east fringes. Housing (so much easier to finance due to presales) is encroaching on the Square Mile in very visible towers like One Bishopsgate Plaza and serviced apartments at The Moorgate. The problem, former City planner Peter Rees says, is not the properties but their emptiness. Already 26 per cent of City residences are classified as second homes (the national average is 1 per cent). Others are investments for children who might study here, or are occupied a couple of nights a week. This pool of scarce land adds little to street life. The cautionary tale is the City's cantonment twin, Wall Street. Trading floors have gone, business has moved midtown and bank towers are now luxury residences. The once-buzzing street and myriad small businesses are dying, while empty apartments atrophy. So far, the City has had enough of a mix to stay alive. The unique cocktail of iron-fanged blood, hanging carcasses and white-coated porters kept Smithfield meat market vibrant as nightclubs moved into the vast cold storage spaces. Post-clubbers mixed with truckers and porters in cafes and early morning pubs. Yet Smithfield market is being relocated to the town of Dagenham. The halls will become “culture”, supplementing the new Museum of London. But look at Covent Garden, a beautifully preserved market hall and tourist extravaganza that Londoners avoid like the plague. Or New York's Meatpacking District, once a gritty piece of real city, now a dull neighbourhood of upscale boutiques and empty penthouses. The Square Mile can be a strange place, deserted at weekends, eerily quiet after half a million commuters depart. But it has maintained a unique status as a place of global exchange in a market network of streets now overshadowed by hypertrophied towers. It was Michael Gove, as housing secretary, who rejected the ghastly Tulip, a 305-metre sperm-shaped gargantuan ride, against the City of London Corporation's wishes. The City needs to be careful to avoid filling up with empty flats and tourist attractions, making it that little bit more like everywhere else.

The writer is the FT's architecture critic

The real cost of shadow work



BUSINESS
Rana Foroohar

One of the great economic mysteries of the moment is why worker productivity, particularly in the US, is falling. Some economists say that it's simply a correction from the unsustainably hard work that many of us did during the Covid-19 pandemic. But there was a productivity dip after the Great Recession, as well. And while there are certainly big long-term factors at play here, such as the failure of education to keep up with technology (which in turn reduces productivity) I think there are other, under-explored issues. These include the rise of shadow work. Shadow work is a term that was coined by the Austrian philosopher and social critic Ivan Illich in 1980. For him, it included all the unpaid work done in economies, such as mothering and housekeeping. But more recently, the term has expanded to include the work that companies have been able to turn over to their own customers, via technology. In the 2015 book *Shadow Work: The Unpaid, Unseen Jobs That Fill Your Day*, former Harvard magazine editor Craig Lambert focused on the myriad tasks

that used to be done by other people, which most of us now do for ourselves, usually with the help of digital devices. This includes everything from banking to travel bookings, ordering food in restaurants to bagging groceries, not to mention downloading and navigating the apps we need to pay for parking tickets or track our children's school assignments or even troubleshoot our own tech problems.

While neither Lambert nor groups like the BEA's Statistical Agency have a good estimate of the total amount of extra work represented by such tasks, it's clearly substantial, and growing, particularly if you consider research that shows that a quarter of all jobs in the US will be severely disrupted by automation by 2030 (indeed most jobs will experience some level of disruption). "I'm just amazed how we've been suckered into spending our own time straightening out things that other people used to do for us," says Lambert. In one recent and not unusual week, I downloaded and used several new apps on my phone, in order to do things like pay college prep tutors, book classes and manage an overseas vacation. Then there was the uniquely American hell of healthcare shadow work. This included inputting medical information for pre-work fitness assessments for multiple family members, and the effort of trying to get reimbursed or correct the frequent mistakes that pop up in a highly fragmented and complex system in which various entities are all trying to push costs on each other.



I lost a couple of hours trying to resolve (unsuccessfully) an order issue with a department store, moving from multiple helpemails to chatbots to overseas call centre conversations, which promised to fix things but didn't. Eventually turned the matter over to my credit card company, Visa, which then in turn called for additional inputting of digital information by me. A business trip required the use of an unfamiliar travel platform, which required time and effort to learn. I scanned my own lunch items into a kiosk at the airport, which asked me if I wanted to leave a tip (to myself). When the flight was delayed, I sat in a coffee shop where orders had to be placed via an iPad. After 50 minutes of waiting for a latte, I looked around for help but

couldn't find a human to complain to (the guy next to me claimed to have been waiting 40 minutes). I eventually bowed without coffee or a refund. One could argue that all of this shadow work drives consumer prices lower, by reducing human labour. Perhaps. But is it productive for the economy as a whole? You have to wonder. Does it make sense for me, as a well-paid knowledge worker, to spend several hours a week struggling with tasks that used to be done far better by entry-level workers who needed the employment? This isn't a snug question, it's a reasonable one. Economists such as Joseph Stiglitz have cited shadow work as a negative externality of a market system in which companies are incentivised to offload labour costs. Lambert points to one of the negative consequences of automation, which is being the loss of entry-level work in the service sector. A 2019 Brookings study noted that the lowest wage jobs are most at risk from automation, which in turn means that younger people and minorities in particular are at risk from the kind of labour market

All of this may drive consumer prices lower, by reducing human labour. But is it productive?

Europe should welcome a green subsidy race



ECONOMICS
Martin Sandbu

TO IRA or not to IRA? That is the question for EU leaders as they try to agree on how to respond to the Inflation Reduction Act. Washington's belated but punchy commitment to subsidise the green transition. Europeans are at loggerheads. French and German ministers want a new green industrial policy and European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen has called for “our European IRA”. Frugal free-traders such as Sweden and the Netherlands resist further subsidies. The commission itself is divided on how interventionist to be. It has challenged the US's most egregious protectionism and promised to loosen subsidy rules somewhat. A “sovereignty fund” for EU-level subsidies is endorsed by European

Council president Charles Michel but is hotly contested among member states. The disagreements all revolve around one big difference of judgment as to which of two dangers is the greatest: the competitive threat to EU industry or a subsidy race to the bottom? The problem for cogent decision-making is that both “dangers” are misconceived. To see US spending on greening its energy, industry and transport as a threat reveals a European inferiority complex. The real threat is that the US fails to make good on its belated intention to address climate change. With debt ceiling politics keeping Washington's ability to spend down what it has already budgeted, it is misplaced to fear it is doing too much. European leaders already worry that internet services are dominated by US giants. If European business leads America's green tech transformation, why not celebrate that the tables are turned? Or would they prefer if the other way round? Surely not, seeing how they fret at China's ambitious construction of battery factories in the EU. Nobody in their right mind would think

that those threaten Chinese competitiveness. The tacit presupposition is that European companies can only invest in one place, and if that place is America then European economies will fall behind (though European shareholders would not). But the idea that there is only so much investment to go around in the world is a lump of investment fallacy. Even where true for any particular capital-constrained company, it is not true in aggregate. If too little capital flows to the European economy, it's the flipside of domestic policies that have for too long resulted in export surpluses rather than higher domestic investment. The task is not to stop a European company from building a wind farm, battery factory or electric vehicle plant

in the US, but to ensure they get built in Europe regardless. Europe has the wherewithal to do so: a firm commitment to phasing out carbon-intensive activities, a carbon pricing system, soon a carbon border tax and – yes – subsidies that range from the Covid recovery fund to EU-financed “important projects of common European interest” in sectors like batteries and hydrogen. What the EU needs is to make these types of tools more efficient, faster to access and better funded. Further raising the cost of emissions while subsidising that of decarbonising more will accelerate the necessary investments, IRA or not. That means expanding the carbon pricing and tariff policies. But it also means boosting public money for research, capacity and production. Scenarios of new funds are right that the priority is to get money already granted out the door faster. But they should not oppose more subsidies too. Unlike some other sectors keen on subsidies, such as commoditised semiconductor, the world is nowhere near saturated with green technology and infrastructure. Climate change is the biggest

market failure the world has ever known and a subsidy race in green tech and carbon-free energy would be a race to the top, not the bottom. Europe's embrace of carbon pricing means such subsidies can have a greater effect than on the other side of the Atlantic. The most valid complaint by business is that Europe's financial support is too cumbersome, whereas US-style tax credits are virtually automatic. Tax credits are no silver bullets: they only help companies in a position to pay tax, which favours established players over newcomers. But they are quick and easy. The EU is hamstringing, as tax remains a national prerogative. Still, all members can treat green investment much more generously in their tax codes. Swift EU effort to co-ordinate and encourage such action, through better state aid and fiscal rules, would be a good idea. The job of EU leaders is to make business confident of a lag and growing market for green solutions. There is no reason why the IRA should make that harder.

The EU's embrace of carbon pricing means such grants can have a greater effect than in the US

The writer is the FT's architecture critic



Sacking staff en masse
How brutal short-term cost cuts can create long-term problems
WORK & CAREERS

Inside the grim world of office spyware



Pilita Clark
Business Life

In the space of seven days this month, the chief executive of one global company worked for more than 57 hours, or an average of eight hours a day.

He slept for almost exactly the same number of hours. Family and friends got a more meagre 17 hours of his time and he devoted an even more meagre three hours to relaxing and having fun.

I know all this because the chief executive was the 34-year-old Kamil Rudnicki, and he revealed it in a post on LinkedIn.

As well he might. Rudnicki is the founder of TimeCamp, a company he set up in his home country of Poland that sells what it calls time-tracking software and the rest of us call workplace spyware, bossware or tattlere.

These Big Brotherish apps can monitor the websites workers visit and the programs they use to tally up how much time is spent on, say, Twitter vs Excel — even if people are working at home, as many more are thanks to Covid.

Some apps can also log workers' keystrokes and physical whereabouts, or take screenshots of their screens.

Rudnicki's company made headlines around the world this month when a



Kenneth Anderson

civil tribunal in Canada ruled an accountant owed her old employer more than C\$2,700 (US\$1,630) after TimeCamp showed she had committed "time theft".

The accountant had logged just over 50 hours of work that her employer said did not appear to have been spent on "work-related tasks". She protested she had spent a lot of time working on paper copies of client documents that would not have been spotted by the TimeCamp software installed on her work laptop. But her bosses said TimeCamp could show the time she had spent printing and its data revealed she could not have printed the large pile of documents she would have needed to work on hard copies.

Also, she would have had to upload the work she did offline into the company's computer system, and TimeCamp didn't show she had done that either. It looked like a clear win for

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the spyware versus the human, which made me wonder how TimeCamp felt about its role in this emerging era of worker surveillance.

A bit mixed, is the impression I got from speaking to TimeCamp's Rudnicki last week.

On the upside, the Canadian accountant's case had boosted business at his company, whose 50 employees serve about 4,000 clients in sectors such as software, consulting and business-to-business professional services.

"For us, it's good publicity," he says, explaining that requests for customer demonstrations of TimeCamp's software nearly doubled after the story broke. But the news had also amplified concern about software that Rudnicki insisted was not always used in the sinister way widely imagined.

TimeCamp sometimes helps employees prove they have worked unpaid overtime, he says. Also, most of his customers used the software only to monitor work done on specific projects so they could show their clients how many hours the jobs had taken.

Other companies used it only to check if a work computer had been used or not, rather than logging every

website visited, and some regions require workers to be informed before the software is used.

TimeCamp employees have the software installed, which allowed Rudnicki to flourish a list detailing the thousands of productive hours his team had spent in Google Docs, Gmail and so on. And the fact that he was the company's second biggest Twitter user this month. "We don't strive to have 100 per cent productivity," he says. "It's not healthy."

That is a relief. So too is his confirmation that people have come up with ruses to trick time-tracking software, such as devices that jiggle a computer mouse to make it look as if it's in constant use. Or the low-tech ploy of putting a cup on a keyboard to press a key down constantly.

I found this news very cheering. The idea of being under constant digital surveillance is awful and I feel fortunate to have dodged it so far. For those who have not, I hope you can move elsewhere, or find a way of making monitored life less onerous. And in the meantime, remember the cup.

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Lex.

3D printed homes: tech advance



Building houses has always involved digital solutions — in the form of tradespeople's skillful fingers. Recently, fintechs have joined in — simplifying the mortgage process, disrupting how properties are bought and sold and even selling fractional ownerships in homes.

New technology has staged a more radical intervention. US start-ups are pioneering 3D printing of whole houses. A giant print head resembling the nozzle of an icing bag squirts out concrete to build whole walls in layers and in situ. This is weirdly compelling to watch. But can it make a real difference to the affordability of US housing, as proponents claim?

High prices and mortgage rates have together put home ownership out of reach for many. The most recent reading for the Housing Affordability Index, measured by the National Association of Realtors, was 91.3, down from 143 a year ago and the lowest reading since September 1995. An index below 100 means that a family with the median income earned too little to afford a median-priced home.

House printers say their method is faster and cheaper than traditional construction, which builds homes on site using wooden frames.

The added speed could help address severe US housing shortages, particularly for low-income housing. That might reduce overcrowding, evictions and homelessness.

The business of printing houses is at an early stage. Two of the biggest companies — Mighty Buildings and Icon — have delivered fewer than 100 houses between them.

Interest is growing, however. Icon is working with US homebuilder Lennar to build 100 3D printed houses near Austin, Texas. Venture capital groups have invested nearly \$400m in 3D building construction companies in 2022, according to PitchBook — eight times more than the sum raised in the previous five years combined.

But 3D house printing can only do so much to improve affordability. Land prices are usually the bulk of a developer's cost. And it is not clear that 3D house printing, with its complicated building rigs, would work in densely populated urban areas.

Land prices are usually the bulk of a developer's cost. And it is not clear that 3D house printing, with its complicated building rigs, would work in densely populated urban areas. This technology has bags of promise. But this resides primarily in its ability to afford low-cost buildings. House printing could supersede traditional factory-based prefabrication in cheapness and flexibility. It cannot, on its own, solve America's housing crisis.

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