

1576

Henry of Navarre (later Henry IV of France) abjures Catholicism at Tours

1597

A group of early Japanese Christians, known as the 26 Martyrs, are killed by the new government of Japan for being seen as a threat to Japanese society



1885

King Leopold II of Belgium establishes the Congo as his personal colonial possession

1945

WWII: US troops under General Douglas MacArthur enter Manila in the Philippines after a month-long battle, ending three years of Japanese military occupation

X

TOP  
4  
TWEETS

01



The two-State solution with Israelis & Palestinians living side by side in peace & security is the only viable path to a just & lasting peace. The occupation must end. The inalienable rights of the Palestinian people must be realized. International law must be respected.

@antonioguterres

02



Good exchange with @KGeorgieva on Europe's competitiveness. A strong starting point for today's discussions at our College seminar. In a world of sharp competition and short horizons, we are building Europe's competitiveness. It begins with strength at home.

@vonderleyen

03



Four in 10 cancer cases worldwide could be prevented. •15% of all new cancer cases are caused by tobacco •10% by infections •3% by alcohol A new @WHO study has examined 30 preventable causes, including high body mass index, physical inactivity, air pollution, ultraviolet radiation – and for the first time – nine cancer-causing infections.

@DrTedros

04



We await the reaction of America to the Russian strikes. It was the U.S. proposal—to halt strikes on energy during diplomacy and severe winter weather. The President of the United States made the request personally. Russia responded with a record number of ballistic missiles.

@ZelenskyyUa

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stance)

# Xi, Putin hail 'stabilising' China-Russia alliance

Xi also held a phone call with US President Donald Trump



Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) and Chinese President Xi Jinping are seen during news coverage about a video call between the two leaders, on a giant screen outside a shopping mall in Beijing

## ● The pair discussed "opinions" on the United States

## ● Putin had told Xi that Moscow intends to act "responsibly" after a key nuclear pact with the US expires on Thursday

## ● The video call took place as Russian, Ukrainian and US negotiators met in Abu Dhabi

AFP | Beijing, China

China's President Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin hailed the strengthening of bilateral ties in the face of a "turbulent" global situation, in a video call yesterday.

Several hours later, Chinese state media said Xi held a phone call with US President Donald Trump, without immediately providing further details.

China and Russia have sought to present a united front against the West, with ties deepening since Moscow's 2022 Ukraine

invasion. The Xi-Putin call, which a Kremlin aide said lasted nearly an hour and a half, came ahead of the fourth anniversary of Russia's military campaign later this month.

"Since the beginning of the year, the international situation has become increasingly turbulent," Xi told Putin in a readout reported by Chinese state broadcaster CCTV.

"Both sides should... ensure that China-Russia relations continue to develop steadily along the right track, through deeper strategic coordination and a more proactive and effective commitment as major powers," the Chinese president said.

Addressing Xi as his "dear friend", Putin expressed a similar message, saying "the foreign policy alliance between Moscow and Beijing remains an important stabilising factor".

"The Russian-Chinese comprehensive partnership and strategic cooperation is exemplary," Putin said in the video broadcast on Russian state TV.

Neither leader went into detail on what strategic areas they would deepen coordination on.

## Matching 'opinions' on US

The Kremlin said Putin had accepted invitations to visit China in the first half of 2026 and attend the APEC regional

summit hosted by Xi in November. "The conversation lasted one hour and 25 minutes," Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov told reporters from AFP and other media outlets, saying the call was held in a "friendly and trusting atmosphere".

Putin praised trade ties, with Moscow redirecting its exports to Asia after Western countries imposed massive sanctions on Russia over the Kremlin's Ukraine offensive.

The video call took place as Russian, Ukrainian and US negotiators met in Abu Dhabi for a round of talks on ending the almost four-year war, which has turned into Europe's worst conflict since World War II.

Putin made no mention of Ukraine during the part of the call broadcast by Moscow, but the Kremlin later said Xi expressed support for the Abu Dhabi negotiations.

The pair discussed "opinions" on the United States, views that according to the Kremlin "practically matched" each other.

The Kremlin also said Putin had told Xi that Moscow intends to act "responsibly" after a key nuclear pact with the US expires on Thursday.

And "special attention was given to the tense situation in Iran", Kremlin aide Ushakov added.

## India's factory growth improves slightly in January, PMI shows



A worker grinds a metal gate inside a household furniture manufacturing factory in Ahmedabad, India

Reuters | Bengaluru

India's manufacturing activity inched up in January as demand improved slightly but the gain wasn't strong enough to lift business optimism or meaningfully increase hiring, according to a private survey released Monday.

The HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), compiled by S&P Global, rose to 55.4 in January from December's two-year low of 55.0. However, it came in below the preliminary estimate of 56.8.

The PMI has stayed above the 50.0 threshold, which separates growth from contraction, since July 2021.

Factory output strengthened compared with December, when growth had slowed to a 38-month low. New orders, a key measure of demand, also regained some of the momentum lost in the previous month.

Export demand, however, remained weak. Export orders improved only marginally from December, suggesting

the overall pickup was driven mainly by domestic demand. Manufacturers reported receiving orders from clients across Asia, Australia, Canada, Europe, and the Middle East.

Despite the improvement in activity, job growth stayed subdued. Hiring rose to a three-month high, but the pace of recruitment remained modest as firms adjusted staffing levels to meet higher operating needs.

At the same time, business confidence slipped to its lowest level in three-and-a-half years. Only 15% of surveyed companies expected output to increase over the next year, while most anticipated no change.

Price pressures painted a mixed picture. Input costs increased moderately but at the fastest pace in four months with companies citing higher prices for chemicals, copper, iron, steel, and transportation.

Even so, output price inflation fell to its lowest level in nearly two years, suggesting manufacturers still have limited pricing power despite firmer demand.



A Cameroon-flagged cargo ship that ran aground on a beach in the town of Maria Chiquita due to strong winds recorded in the area, in Colon, Panama

# Russia demands Ukraine give in as UAE talks open

AFP | Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Moscow yesterday demanded Kyiv accept its conditions to end the four-year-war and vowed to press on with its invasion otherwise, as negotiations between the two sides opened in Abu Dhabi.

The US-mediated talks are the latest round of negotiations in a flurry of diplomacy that has so far failed to strike a deal to halt the war, unleashed by Russia's February 2022 invasion.

"Our position is well known,"



Moscow is demanding that Kyiv pull its troops out of swathes of the Donbas, including heavily fortified cities atop vast natural resources, as a precondition of any deal. It also wants international recognition that land seized in the invasion belongs to Russia.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Wednesday as the talks got underway.

"Until the Kyiv regime makes the appropriate decisions, the special military operation con-

tinues," he said, using Russia's term for the offensive.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had on Tuesday said that Russia's strikes on Kyiv's energy system "confirms that attitudes in Moscow have



not changed: they continue to bet on war and the destruction of Ukraine, and they do not take diplomacy seriously."

"The work of our negotiating

team will be adjusted accordingly," he said, without elaborating.

US President Donald Trump, however, said Russian President Vladimir Putin had "kept his word" with a week-long promise not to hit the capital or critical energy facilities.

"It's a lot, you know, one week, we'll take anything, because it's really, really cold over there," Trump said Tuesday.

"I want him to end the war," Trump added of Putin. Asked if he was disappointed Putin had not extended the pause, he replied: "I would like him to."