

## Catch up: Trump working towards trade deal with Britain; vows latest round of tariffs



Meeting **Sir Keir Starmer** at the White House, **Donald Trump** reported that America was working towards a [trade deal](#) with Britain “where the tariffs wouldn’t be necessary”. Regarding peace talks in Ukraine, the British prime minister said he wanted to see a durable agreement “to stop [Vladimir] Putin coming back for more”. “I think he’ll keep his word,” said Mr Trump, of Mr Putin. On Friday Mr Trump will [meet Ukraine’s president](#), Volodymyr Zelensky.

Earlier, Mr Trump said he would impose 25% [tariffs](#) on all **Mexican** and **Canadian** goods from March 4th, citing their failure to curb drug trafficking, particularly fentanyl, into America. He will also add a 10% duty on **Chinese** imports, doubling a tariff imposed earlier this month. China urged Mr Trump to address trade concerns through dialogue.

**Tencent**, a Chinese tech firm, launched a new artificial-intelligence model, Hunyuan Turbo S. It claims the model is faster than **DeepSeek's** R1, which in January triggered a [market selloff](#), hitting chipmakers like Nvidia. Investors feared that more efficient AI models would reduce chip demand. Tencent's move underscores intensifying rivalry in China's AI sector.

**Mexico** said it handed over 29 **cartel** operatives to **America**, where they will face drug-trafficking charges. Reportedly among them is [Rafael Caro Quintero](#), a Sinaloa cartel founder. In 2013 he was released on a technicality from a Mexican prison, where he was serving a sentence for murder. The extradition announcement came as Mexican and American officials met to hammer out a security agreement.

**Austria's** three main centrist parties agreed to form a coalition government, excluding the [hard-right Freedom Party](#) (FPO), which won the most votes in September's election. The government, Austria's first three-party coalition since the 1940s, could take office next week, depending on a vote among the members of the NEOS party. Herbert Kickl, the leader of the FPO, dismissed it as a "coalition of losers".

**Andrew** and **Tristan Tate** left **Romania** for America on a private jet after prosecutors lifted a travel ban. [Andrew](#), a social influencer, is popular in alt-right online spaces. The pair are under investigation for human trafficking and money laundering, charges they deny. Romanian prosecutors say the case remains open. They also face sexual misconduct allegations in Britain, which they deny.

**Japan's** birth rate fell to a record low in 2024, with fewer than 721,000 babies born out of a population of about 123m—a 5% drop from the previous year—marking a ninth straight year of decline. Deaths outnumbered births more than two to one. A drop in marriages since the pandemic has contributed to the decline, despite [government efforts](#) to reverse the trend.

**Figure of the day:** \$42bn, TSMC's planned capital expenditures for 2025, a 41% increase from the previous year. [Read the full story](#).

# Ukraine's mineral deal with America



On Friday Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, will meet Donald Trump at the White House to sign a [deal with America](#) to jointly exploit [Ukraine's minerals](#). The [negotiations](#) were difficult. Mr Trump demanded that Ukraine pay back \$500bn, the amount he wrongly claims America has spent to help defend Ukraine from Russia—and full ownership of minerals up to that amount.

Ukraine appears to have avoided those terms. Mr Zelensky will sign an initial framework deal. The two governments will create a joint fund for investments into Ukraine. The Ukrainians will give half of the revenues from future state projects for resources such as minerals and hydrocarbons, and from infrastructure, including ports. Yet the agreement is vague—likely deliberately so. A second stage of talks will clarify how much of the fund America will control and on what precisely the money will be spent. It will also spell out whether America will provide security guarantees in exchange for its participation. For now, the Ukrainians have given Mr Trump his favourite thing—a deal—and bought themselves time.

# The end of the PKK?



On Thursday Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), [called](#) for the rebel group to disarm and dissolve. His words—delivered from an island prison in Turkey's Sea of Marmara—raised hopes of a solution to one of the world's longest ongoing conflicts. It began three decades ago with a PKK insurgency in Turkey, home to roughly 15m Kurds.

On Friday, all eyes turn to the group's commanders in northern Iraq and to the PKK's Syrian offshoot, which forms the core of the American-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Will they abide by the call?

The PKK previously signalled it would back Mr Ocalan's plan. But some factions may be opposed. The picture is even more complicated in Syria, where the SDF is resisting calls by the interim government in Damascus to disband and disarm. Mazloun Abdi, the SDF's military commander, has already distanced himself from Mr Ocalan's order, saying "it's not related to us in Syria".



# America's wobbling consumers



American shoppers are suddenly looking a little less confident. Data on Friday are expected to show that spending increased by just 0.1% in January compared with December, the weakest in a year and a sharp slowdown from a 0.7% rise a month earlier. One-off factors—the end of winter holidays plus frigid weather—may explain much of the decline. But there are worries that something more fundamental is off.

Consumer confidence has slumped in recent weeks. Donald Trump's endless threats of [tariffs](#) have reignited inflation fears. That, in turn, has weighed on stock prices. Given how important financial markets are to sentiment in America, gloom could turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Still, the broader economic picture remains solid: the stockmarket was at an all-time high last week and the unemployment rate remains low. America is therefore more likely to see a softening in spending, not a collapse.

# When will Ramadan begin?



For many of the world's 2bn Muslims, Ramadan may begin on Friday. Or it may not. The holiday, a month-long dawn-to-dusk fast, is expected to begin at sunset. But it does not officially start until Muslims spot the waxing crescent moon, which marks a new month on the Islamic calendar. The date can vary a bit from country to country, or even mosque to mosque.

The calendar is not the only source of confusion. At high latitudes hours of daylight vary greatly with the seasons: summer fasts would be endless, and those in the winter would never start. Some Muslims in polar countries like Sweden follow the timings in Mecca, the holiest city in Islam. This year's fast should be relatively easy for everyone, though. The holiday falls in the northern spring and southern autumn: from Stockholm to Mecca, days are just ten to 12 hours long.

## “Streetcar” stops in Brooklyn



In show biz, fame and money are earned on the silver screen. But reputations are sometimes made in the theatre. This season several Hollywood stars tread the boards of Broadway. Denzel Washington and Jake Gyllenhaal will perform in “Othello”; George Clooney in “Good Night, and Good Luck”. Paul Mescal, the star of [“Gladiator II”](#), will lead in “A Streetcar Named Desire”, Tennessee Williams’s masterpiece from 1947, which will open at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on Friday.

Mr Mescal will play Stanley Kowalski, a salesman, reprising his role in the London run of the production. Marlon Brando, an American great, was the first Kowalski on both stage and screen. “Streetcar” is set in a squalid New Orleans apartment shared by Kowalski and his adoring wife Stella. They take in Stella’s down-and-out sister, Blanche DuBois. Bothered by DuBois’s aristocratic airs, Kowalski pries into her past, revealing secrets that upend her life. Themes like class conflict, sexual morality and mental health make Mr Mescal’s “Streetcar” as relevant as Brando’s.



## Daily quiz



*The Economist*

We will serve you a new question each day this week. On Friday your challenge is to give us all five answers and, as important, tell us the connecting theme. Email your responses (and include mention of your home city and country) by 1700 GMT on Friday to [QuizEspresso@economist.com](mailto:QuizEspresso@economist.com). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

**Friday:** Which satirical novel by George Orwell features a tyrannical pig named Napoleon?

**Thursday:** Which movie series stars Michael J. Fox as the time-travelling Marty McFly?

# The winners of last week's crossword



Thank you to everyone who took part in our weekly crossword, published in the weekend edition of Espresso. The winners, chosen at random, were:

**Thierry Rajaobelina**, Anduze, France

**Cormac Close**, Washington, DC, America

**Lisa Rehak**, Hong Kong

They all gave the correct answers of the [Mona Lisa](#), [Taiwan](#), [Norway](#) and [Africa](#). Check back tomorrow for this week's crossword.

**Architecture should speak of its time and place, but yearn for timelessness.**

*Frank Gehry*