

Catch up: America and Ukraine begin crucial talks; Trump announces more Canada tariffs



Figure of the day: 98%, the proportion of time in which gas set the price of electricity in Britain in 2023. [Read the full story.](#)

Donald Trump's tariffs and inflation

Investors around the world fret that America is slipping towards stagflation: a feared combination of sluggish growth and high inflation. Data on Wednesday may provide some reassurance. They are expected to show that consumer prices rose about 0.3% month on month in February, down from a 0.5% rise in January. But that may not be enough to allay worries in [financial markets](#).

The slower monthly pace of inflation would still equate to an annualised rise of about 3.7%, well above the Federal Reserve's target of 2%. Moreover, consumers have yet to experience the higher prices caused by Donald Trump's tariffs. Indeed, tariffs of 25% on steel and aluminium only take effect on Wednesday. If Mr Trump follows through on his plans to impose tariffs on far more products early in April, the threat of stagflation will be even bigger.

Is Syria spiralling downwards again?



Syria has been shaken by its worst sectarian violence since the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad's regime three months ago. Insurgents from the Alawite ethnic group, from which the Assads came, [launched a co-ordinated assault](#) on government buildings across their heartlands in western Syria. Troops loyal to a newly formed Alawite military council and led by one of Assad's former generals ambushed vehicles and seized hospitals.

In response, fighters loyal to Syria's new leader, [Ahmed al-Sharaa](#), along with jihadist factions, began advancing into Alawite-populated territory on March 6th. The Syrian Network for Human Rights reported that at least 779 people were killed—roughly half by pro-government forces and half by pro-Assad militants. Videos posted on social media appeared to show evidence of summary executions of civilians by government security forces. Mr Sharaa has said that a seven-member committee will investigate the violence and report back within 30 days. The attacks pose the most serious threat to date to his rule.

South Africa's crucial budget

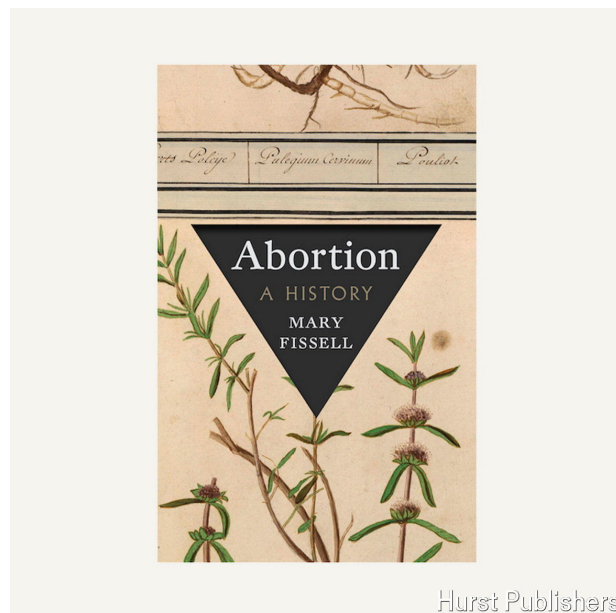


South Africa's budgets are rarely dramatic events. But the statement on Wednesday by Enoch Godongwana, the finance minister, will be one of the most important since the end of white rule in 1994. It will determine whether the country is serious about reversing almost two decades of rising debts and stagnation. Since 2008 the share of debt in GDP has risen more than three-fold, from 24% to 75%, and income per person is lower than it was 17 years ago.

The budget will also reveal much about the Government of National Unity, the coalition that the African National Congress was forced into forming after it lost its parliamentary majority at the [general election](#) last year. Last month, during Mr Godongwana's aborted first attempt at a budget speech, the second-largest party in the GNU, the Democratic Alliance, opposed his proposals. If the ANC fails to win the support of the DA this time, observers may question how long the GNU can last.

Turkey tk

An insightful history of abortion



The ancient Greeks believed that vigorous jumping and sneezing could end an unwanted pregnancy. In medieval Europe, purging blood from the foot was considered effective. Abortifacient plants were ultimately the prevailing method: for centuries women consumed pennyroyal, part of the mint family, so that their bodies might reject a foetus. Enslaved women in the American South chewed cotton-root bark.

The message of “Abortion: A History”, a book published this week, is clear: “Abortion does not go away just because it is forbidden.” Women have always sought to control whether they have children, Mary Fissell argues. But attitudes towards abortion have varied widely. (“For most of the past two millennia,” for instance, “the foetus was not at the centre of concern about abortion.”) For anyone dismayed by the rollback of reproductive rights in [America](#) and elsewhere, this insightful medical and social history makes a heartening observation. Over the centuries “periods of extreme repression” have invariably given “way to times of quiet toleration”.

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. We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Wednesday: What term, linked to a South American country, was used to describe the series of negotiations that led to the establishment of the World Trade Organisation?

Tuesday: Which 1975 Australian film, directed by Peter Weir, concerns the disappearance of a group of schoolgirls?

Among all the diseases of the mind there is none more epidemical or more pernicious than the love of flattery.

Richard Steele.