

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

Israeli strikes killed dozens of **Palestinians** in Gaza, with intense fighting around al-Shifa hospital. The hospital, Gaza City's largest, has been one of the few health-care facilities in the area to remain somewhat open, and has also been used as a shelter for displaced civilians. Israel also attacked it [earlier in the war](#), claiming Hamas was using it as a base.

Israel's High Court ordered a freeze on funding for religious institutions whose **ultra-Orthodox** students have not registered for military service despite being eligible for conscription. The ruling intensifies the in-fighting in the coalition government over whether young *Haredi* men should be [obliged to fight](#). Ultra-Orthodox parties want to codify an exemption in law, which many Israelis and some in the coalition government oppose.

Jerome Powell, the head of the **Federal Reserve**, said that he expects inflation to fall, just hours after the personal-consumption-expenditures index (the Fed's preferred measure of inflation) showed it had risen by 0.1 percentage points to 2.5% in February. Mr Powell said that, though the road was "sometimes bumpy", [inflation](#) was heading towards the central bank's target of 2%.

Poland said it had scrambled fighter jets, which were joined by "allied" aircraft, [in response](#) to **Russian** missile and drone attacks on **Ukrainian** infrastructure. DTEK, a Ukrainian power company, said three of its plants had been hit in the assault. Poland has been jumpy since a Russian cruise missile entered its airspace on December 29th; it took similar precautions last Sunday.

Jeffrey Donaldson resigned as leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, Northern Ireland's second-largest party, after being charged

with sexual offences. Sir Jeffrey, the country's longest-serving parliamentarian and the head of the DUP since 2021, was suspended from his party and will appear in court next month. Northern Ireland's parliament only came back in February after a [two-year hiatus](#) caused by a DUP walkout.

Syngenta, a Swiss pesticides firm, cancelled plans to float on the Shanghai Stock Exchange amid a prolonged [rout in Chinese stockmarkets](#). Bought by state-owned ChemChina in 2017, Syngenta had planned to raise about \$9bn, at a valuation nearing \$60bn, but had postponed its IPO several times since 2021. The firm said it would seek to list in China or elsewhere once conditions improve.

France's consumer prices rose by 2.4% year on year in March, the first time the figure has fallen below 3% in two-and-a-half years. **Inflation** across the [euro zone](#) appears to be slowing, stoking anticipation that the European Central Bank will soon begin to reduce interest rates. Francois Villeroy de Galhau, the Bank of France's governor, suggested a cut could come as soon as April.

Figure of the day: 60 metres, the rise in sea levels if Antarctica's ice sheets melted. [Read the full story.](#)



Photo: AP

Evan Gershkovich's year in jail

Friday marks one year since Russia arrested [Evan Gershkovich](#), an American reporter for the *Wall Street Journal*, on spurious espionage charges. Mr Gershkovich, the first American journalist to be arrested for spying in Russia since the cold war, has been at Lefortovo, a prison in Moscow notorious for holding high-profile detainees. On Tuesday a Russian court extended his pretrial detention until at least June 30th. If convicted, Mr Gershkovich could face up to 20 years behind bars.

Russian officials have hinted that a prisoner exchange could take place after a verdict is handed down. But the details are unclear. In a recent interview [President Vladimir Putin](#) suggested swapping Mr Gershkovich for someone he didn't name, thought to be Vadim Krasikov, a Russian hitman jailed in Germany. Mr Putin's security services seem keen to nab more prisoners to use as bargaining chips. In October Russia detained Alsu Kurmasheva, a Russian-American editor for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, an American state-funded broadcaster.



Photo: Reuters

Powell elaborates on rate cuts

Did Jerome Powell really mean to be a dove? On Friday, speaking at a conference in San Francisco, the Federal Reserve's chairman will have his first chance to adjust the message that he delivered after the central bank's policy meeting last week. At that time, to the surprise of many, Mr Powell and his colleagues reiterated their plan to cut interest rates three times this year, despite high [inflation](#) over the past couple of months.

Shortly before Mr Powell's speech, America published its personal-spending data for February. Included in that was the personal consumption expenditures price index, the Fed's preferred gauge of inflation. In core terms (stripping out food and energy), by this measure inflation fell to a month-on-month pace of 0.3% in February from a revised 0.5% in January. That gives Mr Powell a reason for sounding relatively doveish.

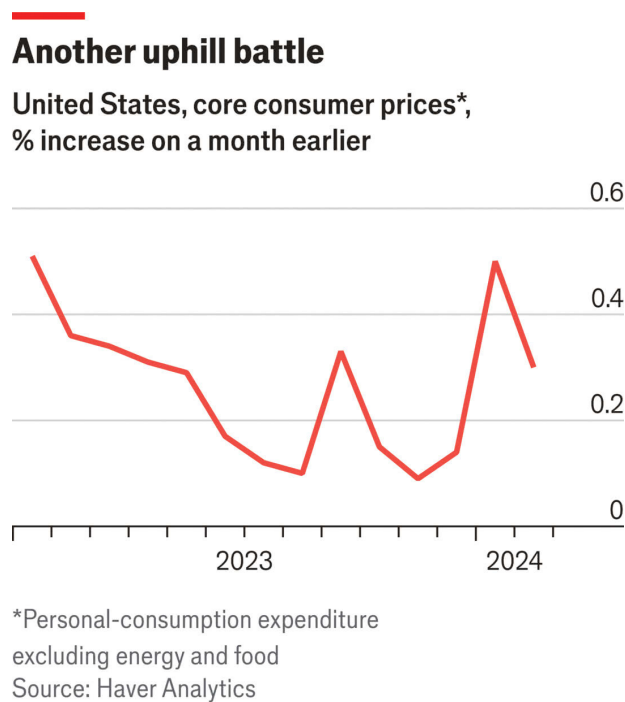




Photo: Getty Images

The downfall of India's ed-tech darling

Byju Raveendran rose to fame in India delivering maths lessons to stadiums full of children. Inspired by his success as a teacher, he turned to business, founding Byju's in 2011. When the [ed-tech](#) firm rolled out its flagship learning app in 2015, it attracted millions of users and billions in investment. By 2022 Byju's was worth \$22bn and India's most valuable start-up.

Since then, though, its decline has been precipitous. On Friday Byju's held an extraordinary general meeting, in which shareholders voted to gain access to funding raised in a rights issue earlier this year that valued the company at less than \$250m. The firm has fallen foul of its creditors and auditors. Frustrated investors have sought to remove Mr Raveendran from the firm. But he is hanging on—just about. On Thursday a local court said it would hear the case to remove Mr Raveendran in two months. His plight is now a lesson for other startups.



Photo: Getty Images

The Vatican prepares for an exhausting Easter

In the evening of Good Friday, at the Colosseum in [Rome](#), Pope Francis will preside over the traditional remembrance of Jesus's journey to his crucifixion. Normally, a different person writes each of the meditations that punctuate the ceremony. This year, though, Francis has chosen to write them all himself.

His schedule of Easter commitments would tax a pontiff in his prime. But the 87-year-old Francis, who spends most of his time in a wheelchair, looks increasingly frail. He suffered bouts of bronchitis and influenza during the winter. Last week the pope baffled worshippers at a Palm Sunday mass by skipping the sermon. But in his autobiography, published this month, he insisted that none of his health problems would require him to resign. In a remark that will disappoint his conservative critics, Francis wrote that he still had “many projects to bring to fruition”.



Photo: AP

Beyoncé's country turn

In 2022 Beyoncé released “Renaissance”, an album that took its inspiration from underground electronic dance music. Its successor, “Cowboy Carter”, released on Friday, could hardly be more different. It is a [country](#) record, with a point to make: that the genre owes no less to its black musical roots than do house and disco.

In 2016 the singer forayed into country music with the song “Daddy Lessons”. But “Cowboy Carter” is set to have a far greater impact. The advance single, “Texas Hold ’Em”, is at the top of the country chart for Billboard, which tracks America’s most popular songs in that category. Beyoncé is the first black woman whose music has achieved that—and only the eighth to appear on the list at all. Far from overshadowing existing black female country artists, Beyoncé appears to have helped them. Streaming figures recently jumped for many. The question now is whether change in the country music establishment will follow.

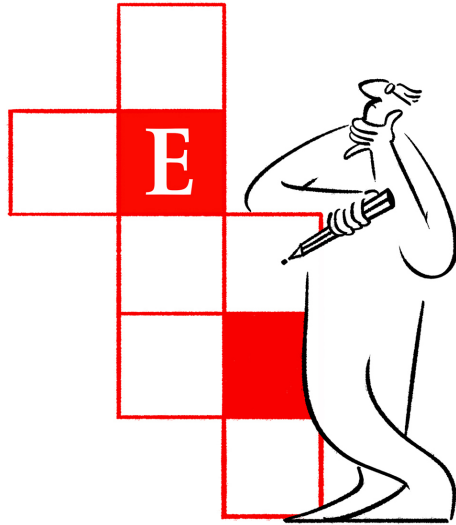


Daily quiz

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 [\[email protected\]](#). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Friday: Abyssinian, Burmese and Persian are all types of which creature?

Thursday: What was the name of the luxury train service that ran from Paris to Istanbul?



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:

Apple Schubert, Munich, Germany

Peter Noack, Lima, Peru

Anand Mahajan, Mumbai, India

They all gave the correct answers of [cyberwarfare](#), [census](#), [wages](#), and [exodus](#). Check back tomorrow for this week's crossword.

*Being in politics is like being a football coach.
You have to be smart enough to understand the
game, and dumb enough to think it's important.*

Eugene McCarthy