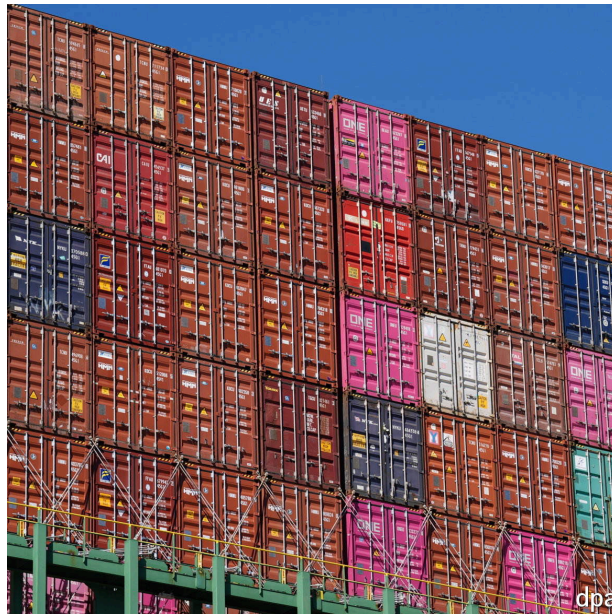


Catch up: Asian markets plunge after Trump officials defend tariffs



Asian stockmarkets fell sharply on Monday after officials in the [Trump administration](#) defended the imposition of swingeing **tariffs**. China's CSI 300 index was down 5.8% in early trading; in Japan, the Nikkei 225 declined by 6.3%. Shares in Alibaba and Tencent, two big Chinese tech firms, fell by more than 11%. Trading in TSMC and Foxconn, two Taiwanese tech giants, was halted in Taipei after a big sell-off. Earlier Scott Bessent, America's treasury secretary, said steep drops in American stocks last week was a "short-term" reaction.

Ishiba Shigeru, **Japan's** prime minister, said he would visit America soon to meet [Donald Trump](#) and ask him to cut **tariffs**. Mr Ishiba said his government "must take all available means" to protect Japan's economy in the meantime. To Lam, Vietnam's leader, reportedly asked Mr Trump to delay the introduction of a 46% levy on Vietnamese goods and offered to remove all tariffs on imports from America.

Marine Le Pen said her hard-right National Rally party was being subject to a “witch hunt”. Speaking at a protest rally in Paris, Ms Le Pen slammed last week’s [court ruling](#) that found her guilty of embezzlement and barred her from running for office in the next French presidential election in 2027. Supporters of left-wing and centrist parties also took to the streets for counter-protests.

The Israel Defence Forces admitted that its soldiers had made mistakes in the killing of 15 aid workers in **Gaza** on March 23rd. The IDF claimed at first that the workers’ convoy of vehicles had no lights on when it approached an Israeli checkpoint. But video on the mobile phone of one of the dead showed that the vehicles had lights showing.

South Korea will hold a **presidential election** on June 3rd, according to Yonhap, a local news agency. The election was triggered after South Korea’s constitutional court ruled on Friday to oust [Yoon Suk Yeol](#), the country’s president. The court declared Mr Yoon’s martial-law declaration in December unconstitutional and illegal. Lee Jae-myung, the leader of the main opposition party, is the front-runner to replace him.

The death toll from the [earthquake](#) that struck **Myanmar** on March 28th rose to at least 3,564. Heavy rains and high winds have impeded rescue efforts. Aid agencies warn that these conditions, combined with high temperatures, could cause outbreaks of disease. The UN renewed its call for aid to the country; a senior official said that the damage across Mandalay, Myanmar’s second-biggest city, was “staggering”.

The **UN** warned that cuts to **foreign aid** could have “pandemic-like effects” on maternal health. In 2023 around 260,000 women died because of pregnancy-related issues, a decrease of 40% from 2000. But the UN said progress is now under threat of “backsliding” because of [lower aid budgets](#), including in America. Women in countries that are at war are especially at risk.

Figure of the day: 380,000 tonnes, the approximate amount of tin that was refined last year globally, compared with 26m of copper.
[Read the full story.](#)

Donald Trump has begun his second term at a blistering pace. Keep up with his executive orders, legal challenges against them and what Americans think about it all on [our presidential tracker](#).

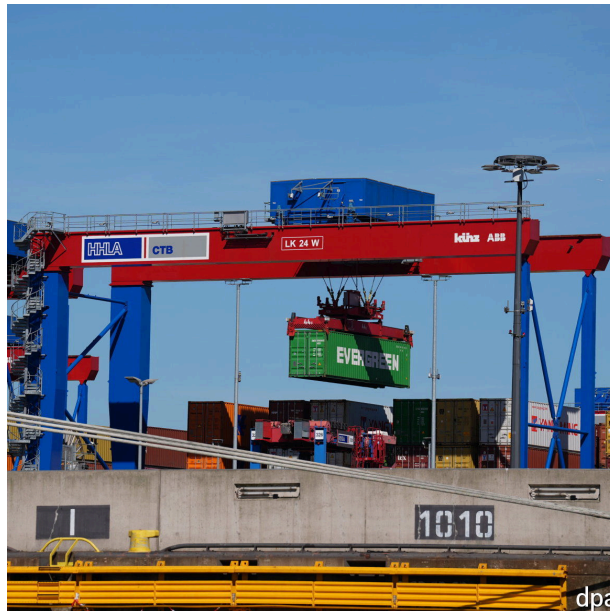
Investors brace for more pain



It'll be a nervous Monday. Stockmarkets around the world suffered one of the [fastest sell-offs](#) on record after President Donald Trump's shocking tariff announcement on Wednesday. The S&P 500 index dropped by more than 10% in two days, the steepest decline since March 2020, when the impact of the covid-19 pandemic was rippling through financial markets. Economists at JPMorgan Chase now expect that the American economy will fall into recession this year.

More market turmoil is likely if no relief arrives before the highest levies are raised on April 9th. And a look at the [unenviable job](#) now facing the Federal Reserve will calm few nerves. With growth slowing and the price of imported goods surging, America's central bankers are torn between their two mandates: to limit unemployment and keep inflation around 2%. Any investors hoping that the Fed will rush to the rescue by cutting interest rates aggressively may be disappointed.

EU trade ministers ready their response



Donald Trump's escalation of his [trade war](#) could have been worse for Europe. The EU did not have to spell out how devastating and self-defeating the latest levies are; the markets did that for them. China also helped, by immediately hitting back in kind, reducing the pressure on the EU to respond immediately. But on Monday, EU trade ministers will get down to discussing retaliation for America's steel, aluminium and car tariffs. It is a practice run, in a way, and allows the EU to fire some warning shots.

Some suspended retaliation against metal tariffs from Mr Trump's first term has already been reactivated (eg, levies on motorcycles). But on Monday ministers will respond to additional metals tariffs that Mr Trump imposed on supposed national-security grounds. The EU plans to start with tariffs on a lower total value of American goods, and then escalate if required.

Macron's push for peace in the Middle East



Emmanuel Macron begins a two-day visit to Egypt on Monday. The region's conflicts will be at the centre of discussions. On Tuesday the French president will travel to Al-Arish on the Sinai peninsula. It lies 50km from Rafah, an entry point to Gaza. The humanitarian disaster there has intensified since Israel ended a truce and launched [fresh air strikes](#) against Hamas.

Mr Macron has called the strikes “a dramatic step backwards”. Israel says it broke the truce because Hamas refuses to hand over more Israeli hostages; the militant group has rejected an American proposal to do so as part of a prolonged ceasefire. Egypt is one of the countries mediating between the two sides. Mr Macron wants to encourage discussions about the region's future. In June France and Saudi Arabia will co-host a conference on “the implementation of a two-state solution”—an idea that is anathema to Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister.

Fighting back at Trump in the courts



The battle over Donald Trump's bombshell political agenda is not being waged on Capitol Hill, where the Republicans command majorities in both the Senate and the House, but rather in the courts. A conservative organisation is challenging Mr Trump's [tariff blitz](#). And the country's 23 Democratic state attorneys-general are challenging the constitutionality of many executive orders, from shutting the Department of Education to slashing public-health funding. California and New York, the biggest and richest Democratic states, are leading the opposition. On Monday top lawyers gather in Nashville to talk shop at the National Association of Attorneys General Symposium.

Attorneys-general have increasingly [shaped national policy](#) by filing lawsuits against federal actions in friendly courts. Judges then have the extraordinary power to issue nationwide injunctions, nixing presidential orders. On this front, Democrats are seeing glimmers of hope. In the dozen-plus cases states have brought against the administration so far, Democrats have won temporary relief in at least eight.

The Baller League is taking off



In 2023 in Germany an entrepreneur, Felix Starck, partnered with two former international footballers, Lukas Podolski and Mats Hummels, to launch a six-a-side indoor competition called the Baller League. It was pitched halfway between the hallowed Bundesliga and an after-work kick-about. Broadcast on free-to-air TV and online, it amassed lots of attention and some sponsors. The competition has now started in Britain, with America to follow.

In the British league, the third round of matches take place on Monday. Several current and former pros, including Gary Lineker and Chloe Kelly, together with an array of wildly popular YouTubers, are in charge of the teams. They bring in very different audiences, which helps to explain Baller's popularity. Some of the players are academy graduates, others ex-pros. The Premier League need not worry, yet. But in an era of sky-high ticket prices, merchandise and TV subscriptions, the appeal of the Baller League is a warning that less-serious alternatives do exist.

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 BST on Friday to QuizEspresso@economist.com. We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Monday: Who won an Oscar for appearing in “The Hours” and Emmys for her roles as producer and actress in “Big Little Lies”?

You can cut the branches of the tree of liberty, but you can't destroy the roots because they are too strong and too many.

Toussaint Louverture