

Catch up: Myanmar junta's plea for help; tumbling American stocks



General Min Aung Hlaing, the head of **Myanmar's** junta, appealed for international assistance to deal with the aftermath of a 7.7-magnitude earthquake that struck on Friday. The regime said that blood was in short supply and that the death toll had breached 1,000. America, ASEAN, China and the EU are among those pledging assistance. In neighbouring **Thailand** authorities declared a state of emergency in Bangkok, where at least ten people died and scores are trapped under rubble.

American stocks tumbled amid [mounting concerns](#) that Donald Trump's tariffs could stoke inflation. The Dow dropped by over 700 points, or 1.7%, when markets closed on Friday; the S&P fell by 2%. Earlier the **Federal Reserve's** preferred inflation gauge, the core personal consumption expenditures price index, rose by 0.4% month on month in February, the biggest jump in a year.

One of Elon Musk's companies, **xAI**, bought another, **X**, for \$33bn. Mr Musk said the deal to join together the artificial-intelligence lab and social-media platform would lead to the combining of "data,

models, computing power, distribution and talent”. The new entity is valued at \$80bn. xAI is among the most valuable parts of Mr Musk’s [harried empire](#).

America’s vice-president said **Greenland** would be “much more secure” if it chose to “partner” with America. During a visit on Friday J.D. Vance said Donald Trump believed the semi-autonomous Danish territory to be important to American security, and that Denmark had failed to keep it safe from Russia and China. Unlike his boss, Mr Vance played down the prospect of [acquiring the island](#) by force.

The Trump administration asked America’s Supreme Court to allow it to [deport alleged gang members](#) using the **Alien Enemies Act**, an eighteenth-century law. Lower courts have ordered the government to halt such deportations. The administration argues that the pause infringes the president’s power and jeopardises “delicate national-security operations”. It has not disclosed evidence that the deportees are gang members.

Novo Nordisk, a Danish drugmaker, will license an experimental obesity drug from Lexicon Pharmaceuticals, an American biotech firm, in a deal worth up to \$1bn. It will gain global rights to develop and sell the oral treatment. The move follows Novo’s \$2bn deal for a Chinese [weight-loss drug](#) earlier this week. Lexicon’s shares doubled after the announcement.

The former boss of **Frank** was convicted in a New York federal court for defrauding **JPMorgan**, a bank. In 2021 Charlie Javice sold the platform, which helped Americans apply for student financial aid, to JPMorgan for \$175m. She was charged with faking a customer list that dramatically inflated the start-up’s client base. She could face decades in prison.

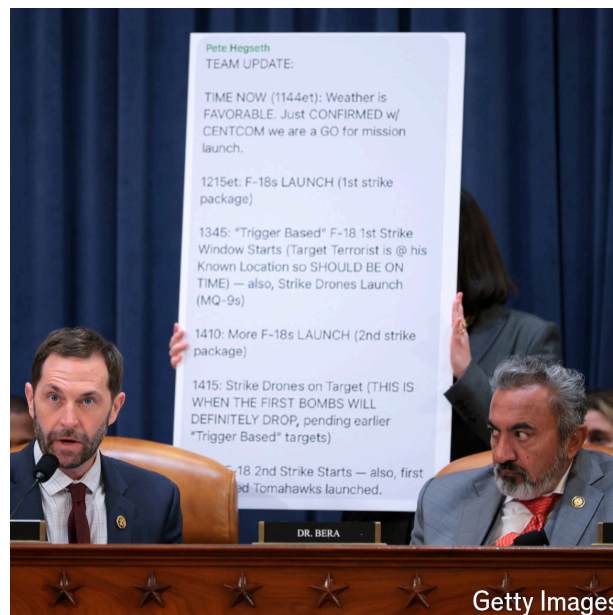
Word of the week: *Hatarakanai ojisan*, a Japanese term meaning “older men who don’t work”, used by younger employees to

describe senior colleagues who contribute little. [Read the full story.](#)

How closely have you followed the week's news? Play our [pint-sized news quiz](#) to test your knowledge and reveal the headlines you might have missed.

Correction: *A previous edition of the World in Brief incorrectly stated that J.D. Vance would arrive in Greenland's capital during a visit to the island. Sorry.*

The fallout from the Signal leak



The second Trump administration has moved at breakneck speed. Observers can hardly keep up with the [hurricane](#) of tariff threats, executive orders and radical foreign-policy pronouncements. Yet this week one story held politicians' attention for days: Jeffrey Goldberg, editor of the *Atlantic* magazine, revealed he had [accidentally been added to a chat on Signal](#), an encrypted messaging app, with Donald Trump's national-security team. They were discussing America's plans to [bomb Yemen](#).

The officials [implausibly denied](#) that classified material was shared; the magazine then published a transcript of the conversation containing operational details of the strikes. America's national security adviser, Mike Waltz, took "full responsibility" for the leak, yet claims the journalist's number "somehow" was "sucked in" to his phone as a contact. Democrats are calling for Mr Waltz and Pete Hegseth, the defence secretary, to resign or be fired. So far no heads have rolled. Mr Trump, [unsurprisingly](#), has dismissed the backlash as a "witch hunt".

America and Japan remember Iwo Jima



The Pentagon's diversity purge has claimed awkward casualties. Among 26,000 images flagged by an algorithm for deletion from its website was the *Enola Gay*, the aircraft that dropped an atomic bomb over Hiroshima. So was a 1945 photo of marines raising the American flag on Iwo Jima, a Japanese island, possibly because it featured a Native American soldier.

Yet this weekend Pete Hegseth will become the first American defence secretary to meet his Japanese counterpart on Iwo Jima. They will mark the [80th anniversary](#) of the Pacific's deadliest battle. The two countries emerged from the second world war to form one of the 20th century's strongest alliances.

But relying on America is a tricky proposition these days. It is pressing Japan to raise defence spending to at least 3% of GDP—a demand that Ishiba Shigeru, the prime minister, has brushed off. “We have to protect them, but they don't have to protect us,” Donald Trump recently complained.

How to bring tourists back to Hong Kong



Hong Kong has had a tough few years. It saw huge [pro-democracy protests](#) in 2019, then pandemic restrictions and a [political crackdown](#) in 2020. Tourists numbered 65m in 2018, but just 45m in 2024. The government wants to bring them back, and has launched a \$16bn blueprint to do so. Two very different events this week will lend a helping hand: Art Week, a city-wide offering of exhibitions and cocktails, and the Sevens, a rugby tournament defined by raucous revelry.

Thousands of art aficionados descended for Art Basel, the biggest event of Art Week, which features 240 exhibitors from 42 countries and territories. More than 130,000 tickets have been sold for the Sevens, which this weekend is expected to draw its largest crowd ever inside a new stadium. The events may not solve all of Hong Kong's woes. But they are off to a decent start.

The Beatles' hits keep on coming



Chicken or egg? (Or, for that matter, walrus?) Does the world's continued fascination with The Beatles drive the supply of excellent discussions of their work, or do the best such books and films keep the fascination alive? Recent years have seen not just Peter Jackson's touching and monumental documentary, "Get Back" (2021), but also lovely books such as Craig Brown's "One, Two, Three, Four" (2020) and John Higgs's "Love and Let Die" (2022).

Ian Leslie's "John and Paul", published this week, is a worthy addition. With a fan's love and an essayist's pen, Mr Leslie charts the relationship between Paul McCartney and John Lennon from a teenage crush to an unparalleled collaboration of geniuses, with the aid of close readings of their songs.

And for those who want to [hear something new](#), April brings the release of "One to One: John & Yoko", directed by Kevin Macdonald and Sam Rice-Edwards. The documentary features footage from the last full-length concert Lennon ever played in a wonderfully fresh remix.

Weekend profile: Jonathan Powell, Britain's foreign-policy fixer



Jonathan Powell, Britain's national security adviser, has emerged as a crucial participant in negotiations over a [possible Russia-Ukraine ceasefire](#). He is one of many senior advisers from the 1997-2007 Blair administration to have taken up government positions under today's Labour prime minister, [Sir Keir Starmer](#).

Mr Powell served as Sir Tony Blair's chief of staff throughout his ten years in office, and was the main No 10 negotiator throughout the tense talks that led to the [Good Friday Agreement](#) in April 1998. One lesson he drew from this was the importance of bringing in all sides, even those considered terrorists. In Northern Ireland that meant talking to the Irish Republican Army as well as to the Ulster Unionist leader. A second lesson was the enormous value of direct person-to-person contacts through shuttle diplomacy.

Those who have dealt with him say that Mr Powell can be blunt and even abrasive, and sometimes talks like a machinegun. But he also stays calm, is often persuasive and is prepared to sit through lengthy negotiations. He learnt from Northern Ireland the value of

confidence-building measures to keep talks going and to coax those who might otherwise prefer to continue fighting into understanding that there may be a better case for some mutual concessions to resolve conflicts.

As national security adviser, Mr Powell has applied the same habits and lessons to talks over a ceasefire in Ukraine. He has been back and forth to Washington, keeping in close touch with his American counterpart, Mike Waltz. He has similarly shuttled to and from Kyiv to talk to President Volodymyr Zelensky's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak. If a ceasefire deal is eventually agreed over Vladimir Putin's initial objections, it will bear Mr Powell's fingerprints as much as anybody's.

Mr Powell's background is key to both his clout and his performance. After a short stint as a journalist, he joined the British Foreign Office in 1979. He helped negotiate Hong Kong's handover and was later posted to Washington, where he made it his business to get to know Bill Clinton before the 1992 presidential election.

Mr Powell may get better press than some others thanks partly to his links with journalists: he is married to Sarah Helm, a long-time correspondent for *The Independent*. Sarah's brother Toby is the political editor of the *Observer*. And Toby's own ex-wife, Emma Tucker, is now editor-in-chief of the *Wall Street Journal*. Mr Powell tries hard to stay out of the limelight, but the years ahead will surely test him. For now at least, most of the publicity surrounding him is largely favourable.

Weekly crossword



We now publish an interactive edition of our crossword, allowing you to enter and check the answers, and see explanations, instantly. Try it [here](#). Or, if you prefer to do things the old-fashioned way, use the grid below.

Our crossword has two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers, all of which feature in articles in this week's edition of *The Economist*:

Cryptic clues

1 down Employer of unexpected guest let in chat at fault? (3,8)

1 across Take thanks first for duty (6)

2 across Little penal enclosure for politician (2,3)

3 across Carney announced national approval date at first here (6)

Factual clues

1 down Publication whose editor-in-chief was added to a surprising group chat (3,8)

1 across Levy on imports, frequently imposed and rescinded by Donald Trump (6)

2 across Leader of hard-right party, perhaps disappointed by America's disregard for Europe (2,3)

3 across Country whose impending election has recently become a lot more interesting (6)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am BST on Monday to crossword@economist.com. We will pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners in next week's edition.

The winners of this week's quiz



The Economist

Thank you to everyone who took part in this week's quiz. The winners, chosen at random, were:

Yuval Gazit, Newton, Massachusetts, America

Anneli Hildeman, Stockholm, Sweden

Katarzyna Samocka, Warsaw, Poland

They all gave the correct answers of: Venice, Richard Rogers, Henry Ford, Windsor, Edward Lear. The theme is Shakespeare plays: The Merchant of Venice, Richard II (and III), Henry IV (and V and VI), The Merry Wives of Windsor and King Lear

The questions were:

Monday: The acronym DOGE is much in the news. But which Italian city was ruled by a Doge until 1797?

Tuesday: Which composer wrote musicals such as Carousel and South Pacific with Oscar Hammerstein II as the lyricist?

Wednesday: Which American car magnate was a notorious antisemite and was awarded the “Grand Cross of the German Eagle” by the Nazis?

Thursday: In 1917, the British royal house changed its name from Saxe-Coburg and Gotha to what?

Friday: Which Victorian poet wrote “The Owl and the Pussycat”?

Fantasy, abandoned by reason, produces impossible monsters; united with it, she is the mother of the arts and the origin of marvels.

Francisco Goya