

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

**America's** economy added 177,000 jobs in April, as the unemployment rate remained steady at 4.2%. Economists polled by Bloomberg had expected a gain of 138,000 jobs. The better-than-expected data came despite concern about the effect of Donald Trump's trade war; GDP figures released on Wednesday showed that America's economy [shrank](#) at an annual pace of 0.3% in the first quarter of 2025.

Mr Trump proposed cutting \$163bn from **America's federal budget** next year, including reductions across healthcare, education and energy. Defence and [immigration](#) spending would get a boost. Several Republicans opposed the plan, which is largely seen as a guide for Congress as it negotiates its own version of the budget. A spending bill must be approved by September 30th to avoid a shutdown.

**India** banned the import of all goods from **Pakistan**. The embargo applies both to items made in the country and those transiting through it. The nuclear-armed neighbours have been at a [stand-off](#) since terrorists shot dead 26 tourists in Indian administered Kashmir last month. India says Pakistan was behind the attack; Pakistan denies involvement.

Reuters reported that the Trump administration had finalised a list of new **sanctions on Russia**, including measures hitting energy and banking. However the news wire said it was unclear whether Mr Trump would sign the measures into effect. The president has often sympathised with the Kremlin, but has grown frustrated at Russia's foot-dragging over his [peace plan](#) for Ukraine.

**Temu**, a Chinese online emporium, said it would stop selling goods shipped from China to American customers. The change [comes as America eliminates](#) the *de minimis* exemption for Chinese wares, which spared packages valued below \$800 from **tariffs**. Temu is instead relying on what it calls “local” sellers, most of which are Chinese companies that have set up shop abroad.

**Israel** carried out further strikes on **Syria**, targeting an unspecified site near the presidential palace in the capital, Damascus. In a joint statement Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel’s prime minister, and Israel Katz, the defence secretary, said the strikes sent a “clear message” to the Syrian government that Israel would protect the [Druze](#), a religious minority, following the recent outbreak of sectarian violence.

**Ireland’s** Data Protection Commission fined **TikTok** €530m (\$599m) for illegally transferring European user data to China (TikTok’s European headquarters are in Dublin). The watchdog said the video-sharing app was not transparent about sending data to China and failed to show that Chinese authorities could not access Europeans’ personal information. [TikTok](#) said it would appeal the decision.

**Word of the week:** econometrics, what Mark Carney said he’ll govern Canada in during his final campaign speech. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Reuters

## Australia's Trump-inflected election

Polls are open in Australia's general election. Not long ago the opposition—a Liberal-led coalition—looked likely to trounce the Labor Party. The Liberals' leader, Peter Dutton, a hard-right, hard-edged former copper and Trump wannabe, was pummelling Anthony Albanese, the Labor prime minister, over high immigration and the cost of living. But Donald Trump, having recently scrambled Canada's election, [looks set to influence](#) the outcome of Australia's.

Australians no longer trust America as a security partner and are appalled at Mr Trump's tariffs. Mr Dutton's popularity has slumped, while the boring but trusted Mr Albanese looks likely to serve a second term. Voters may not give him a governing majority. If that happens he will need the support of Greens and so-called Teal independents: business-friendly, climate-conscious and socially liberal types who have fled the Liberal Party. It would be no bad thing if they bring along bright initiatives to boost house-building and productivity. For this election campaign, policy-wise, has been disappointingly small-bore.



Photograph: Getty Images

## Saudi Arabia's uneven march to football glory

Saudi Arabia is **determined to become** a sporting superpower. When it comes to football, the kingdom has done a good job of picking the low-hanging fruit. It is hosting more competitions, from the Italian Supercoppa to the Asian Cup, an international tournament. The government has spent **billions of dollars** on foreign players to add star quality to its domestic Saudi Pro League. This accumulation of talent was evident in this year's Asian Champions League, which pits clubs from across the region against each other.

Three Saudi clubs reached the semi-finals. Al-Ahli, based in Jeddah, qualified for Saturday's final, where it will meet Kawasaki Frontale of Japan. But for Saudi to become a true football force it needs to deepen its pool of local talent, ideally before it hosts the 2034 World Cup. Here, progress is harder to discern: the national team's FIFA ranking of 58th is below where it was a generation ago.



Photograph: AP

## The perils of Warren Buffett's success

At the age of 94 [Warren Buffett](#) is still wowing investors. Fans of the boss of Berkshire Hathaway, an investment firm, are assembling in Omaha this weekend for the firm's annual shareholder meeting—a festival of American capitalism.

They have much to celebrate: Berkshire Hathaway shares are up 19% this year. The s&p 500 index, by contrast, is down 3.6%. Berkshire Hathaway has outperformed, in part, because Mr Buffett sold stocks last year. The company had a [pile of cash](#) and short-term investments worth a record \$334bn at the end of 2024, twice as much as it held in 2023.

But working out how to spend such a gargantuan sum is a problem. Mr Buffett has complained before that it is difficult to find reasonably priced companies to invest in. With several hundred billion dollars now on the sidelines, Mr Buffett is surely finding his task more urgent.





Photograph: Getty Images

## A test for Singapore's new leader

After a typically brief nine-day campaign, on Saturday Singaporeans are voting to elect representatives to the 97-seat national parliament. The election is widely seen as a referendum on [Lawrence Wong's](#) leadership since he became prime minister last May. His People's Action Party has enjoyed uninterrupted rule for seven decades. But in 2020, despite winning 89% of seats, its share of the popular vote fell to 61%, near a record low

Mr Wong called an early election, citing profound global shifts. After battling high inflation in 2022 and 2023, Singapore saw its core inflation fall to 0.5% in March—a welcome relief for consumers, but a sign of a possible growth slowdown. [Donald Trump's trade war](#) has introduced new uncertainties in the region. Mr Wong acknowledges that the opposition, which has made steady gains in parliament over the years, “is here to stay”, but cautions Singaporeans that a vote for it “weakens” his party at a time of crisis. It remains to be seen whether voters agree.



Photograph: Getty Images

## **Weekend profile: James Boasberg, the judge losing his patience with the Trump administration**

Donald Trump likes [picking fights with judges](#). In 2016 he said a judge's Mexican heritage made him incapable of fairly adjudicating fraud cases against Trump University, a for-profit institution that closed in 2011. Two years later the president condemned a ruling against his immigration policies as a “disgrace”. Lawsuits against him during the Biden years—including one for conspiring to steal the 2020 election—spurred many attacks.

The clash with James Boasberg marks a significant escalation. On March 18th Mr Trump demanded his impeachment. His supposed high crime or misdemeanour? Temporarily blocking the administration from flying hundreds of mostly Venezuelan migrants to a mega-prison in El Salvador without due process and under dubious legal authority. Six Republican congressmen fell into line with Mr Trump, filing articles of impeachment claiming that Judge Boasberg's ruling “jeopardises the safety of the nation”.

Judge Boasberg explicitly [ordered the administration to turn the planes around](#) while they were in mid-air and return the men to

America. The administration sat on its hands. When El Salvador's president made light of its defiance on social media ("Oopsie...too late"), Marco Rubio, America's secretary of state, reposted the comment. This brazenness provoked a thundering reaction from the judge: a 46-page ruling on April 16th finding probable cause for criminal contempt charges against Trump-administration officials—which could lead to fines or even imprisonment. (The appeals court in the District of Columbia has paused the judge's original order and is reviewing it.)

Judge Boasberg studied at Yale, where he played basketball (he's 6'5", or 196cm), then took a master's degree from Oxford University. He returned to Yale for law school, and lived with his friend, Brett Kavanaugh, in a red-brick house. He spent five years in private practice and six as a federal prosecutor before George W. Bush appointed him to a local Washington, DC court in 2002. Nine years later he was elevated to the federal district court by Barack Obama—a selection the Senate confirmed 96-0.

Judge Boasberg is a familiar figure in Washington legal circles, conservative ones included. In the mid-1990s he practised law at the same firm as Neil Gorsuch, who would become Mr Trump's first Supreme Court pick. Mr Kavanaugh went on to be the second. In politically charged cases he has avoided the appearance of partisanship. He adjudicated cases about Hillary Clinton's emails in 2016 (he ordered their release), Mr Trump's tax records (he denied a request to force their release) and January 6th rioters (his sentences were often lighter than prosecutors had proposed).

In 2018, at a mock trial of Hamlet, Judge Boasberg argued, as the prosecutor, that the Danish prince was merely feigning madness. In his real courtroom, Trump-administration lawyers arguing the El Salvador deportation case seemed to be feigning ignorance as the court issued its orders. Judge Boasberg is once again peering behind a performance—this time with America's separation of powers and the rule of law hanging in the balance.





Illustration: The Economist

## Mini crossword

We now publish an interactive edition of our crossword twice a week, 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 across Old kingdom revolution back in Asia is replicable (6)
- 2 across Sun article featuring a very hot room (5)
- 3 across A nation unknown and initially a mighty but inconsistent ally (6)
- 1 down Czar's hope: end disruptive Spanish politician (5,7)

### Factual clues

*1 across* What had Persepolis as its capital in pre-Islamic times (6)

*2 across* Site for “sweat-bathing” (5)

*3 across* An African country with few fuel alternatives to charcoal (5)

*1 down* Leader facing a backlash after a blackout (5,7)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am BST on Monday to [\[email protected\]](#). We will pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners in next week’s edition.

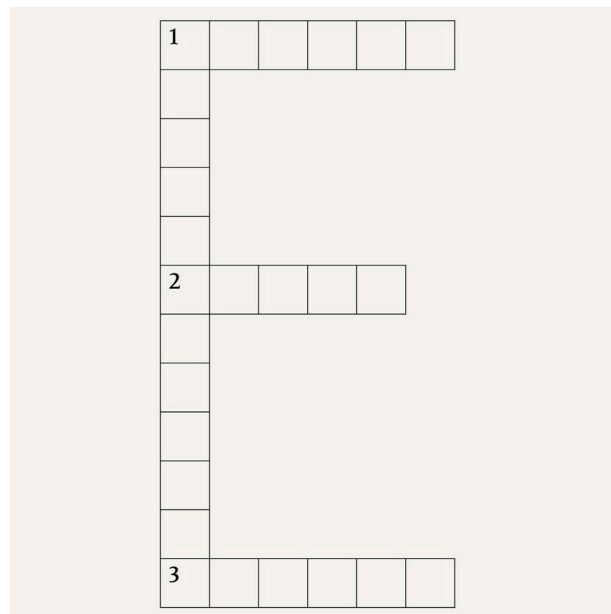


Image: The Economist



Illustration: The Economist

## The winners of this week's quiz

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

**Patrick Banham**, Black Creek, Canada

**Tracey Zellmman**, Concord, Massachusetts, United States

**Susan Narlock de Madiedo**, Hirschaid, Germany

They all gave the correct answers of meta, alphabet, the Amazon basin, Apple Corps and Nikola Tesla. The theme is the “magnificent seven” stocks that dominate the us stockmarket: Meta, Alphabet, Amazon, Apple and Tesla.

The questions were:

**Monday:** Which prefix is used to mean both “cleverly self-referential” and “occurring later than”?

**Tuesday:** What well-known word is formed from the first two Greek letters?

**Wednesday:** Which geographical area, around 7m square

kilometres in area, is bounded by the Atlantic ocean to the east and the Andes mountains to the west?

**Thursday:** Which company was founded in 1968 by the Beatles to manage their business interests?

**Friday:** Which Serbian-American inventor was a pioneer of the alternating current electricity system?

*Success is like reaching an  
important birthday and finding  
you're exactly the same.*

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***Audrey Hepburn***