

## Catch up: EU says Russia “doesn’t want peace”; Trump warns Iran



**Kaja Kallas**, the European Union’s foreign policy chief, said that **Russia’s** ceasefire terms show it “doesn’t really want peace” in Ukraine. Earlier Donald Trump said he would speak to Vladimir Putin on Tuesday in an attempt to broker a [ceasefire](#). Russia and Ukraine exchanged drone strikes overnight; a Ukrainian civilian was killed in Myrnohrad, a town in the east, and power outages hit several regions.

Mr Trump said that he would hold **Iran** responsible if the **Houthis** retaliate against **America’s** air strikes on Yemen, and impose “dire” consequences. America launched strikes against the Iran-backed militant group over the weekend, killing at least 53 people, and carried out more on Monday, the group said. Since October 2023 the Houthis have been [attacking commercial ships](#) in the Red Sea.

The EU pledged €2.5bn (\$2.7bn) to **Syria** to support the country’s reconstruction after the fall of **Bashar al-Assad**. Separately, Germany pledged an additional €300m, while Britain offered £160m (\$208m). Fourteen years of civil war have devastated

[Syria's economy](#), leaving millions displaced and critical infrastructure in ruins.

**Mark Carney**, Canada's new prime minister, made a statement by making his first trip abroad to Paris instead of to Washington, DC. He will visit London on Monday evening. Mr Carney is aiming to strengthen European alliances after Donald Trump imposed [tariffs on Canadian goods](#) and questioned its sovereignty. His government is also reviewing the purchase of American-made F-35 fighter jets.

**AstraZeneca** said it would buy **EsoBiotech**, a Belgian firm, for up to \$1bn. The British pharmaceutical giant wants to boost its cell-therapy capabilities to accelerate the development of [cancer treatments](#). The deal, set to close by mid-2025, includes a \$425m upfront payment. AstraZeneca will pay the rest only if drug-development and regulatory targets are achieved.

**America** reported an outbreak of H7N9 **bird flu** on a poultry farm in Mississippi, the first detected in the country since 2017. That strain of the virus is thought to be more harmful to humans than H5N1, another form of [bird flu](#) that is already affecting American poultry and dairy cows. Authorities are culling infected flocks.

**PepsiCo** acquired Poppi, a healthy soda brand, for \$1.95bn. The food giant, which fell short of revenue estimates in the fourth quarter, said the deal comes amid “growing interest in [health and wellness](#)” from consumers. Poppi markets its beverages, which contain prebiotics and apple cider vinegar, as an alternative to sugary sodas. Coca Cola recently launched its own rival prebiotic line.

**Figure of the day:** 40%, the amount that American homelessness has risen by since 2018. [Read the full story.](#)

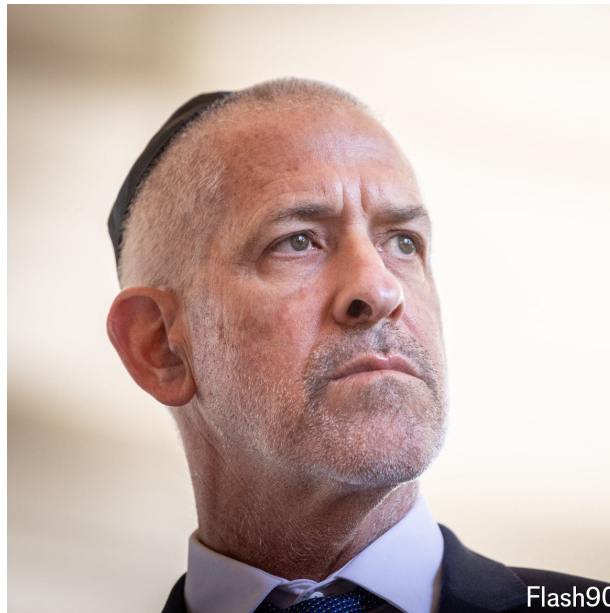
# Will Germany loosen its purse strings?



On Tuesday Germany's Bundestag votes on a huge spending package proposed by [Friedrich Merz](#) of the centre-right Christian Democrats. He will probably soon become Germany's chancellor. Should the package pass (and then be approved by the upper house of parliament), it will be the biggest fiscal expansion in Germany's post-war history.

Mr Merz has agreed with the centre-left Social Democrats and the Greens to relax the "debt brake", a legal limit on government borrowing. The package will establish a €500bn (\$545bn) off-budget fund for infrastructure investments. It will also exempt from the debt brake any defence spending beyond 1% of GDP. That is a response to growing alarm over America's rapprochement with Russia and its implications for European security. The timing of the vote is apt: Donald Trump is set to speak to Vladimir Putin about Ukraine on Tuesday. Many Europeans fear that Mr Trump will cede too much to Russia's president to reach a ceasefire deal.

## Netanyahu takes on Shin Bet



On Sunday Israel's prime minister, [Binyamin Netanyahu](#), said he would fire Ronen Bar (pictured), head of Shin Bet, the domestic-security service. The decision is threatening to cause a constitutional crisis. By law, the cabinet has the power to dismiss the Shin Bet chief, should the courts consider the decision reasonable. Mr Bar has already said he intends to resign because of the service's failure to prevent the Hamas attack in October 2023. But the timing of his dismissal raises questions. Shin Bet is leading investigations of close aides of Mr Netanyahu who are suspected of leaking secret documents to Qatar's government in exchange for cash.

Israel's attorney-general has told Mr Netanyahu that he may not have the power to summarily fire Mr Bar because of a possible conflict of interest. The Supreme Court is expected to challenge the dismissal. A clash looms between Israel's government and its judiciary over who wields ultimate power.

# Europe, the last free-trader?



On April 2nd Donald Trump intends to apply “reciprocal” tariffs on foreign imports to match the rates countries already put on American goods. The results could be messy. The [European Union](#), for instance, applies a 10% tariff on imported cars, compared with America’s 2.5% for most vehicles. However, for pick-up trucks the American tariff is higher, at 25%, so that rate would theoretically need to fall (fat chance).

International commerce remains vital to the European economy. The euro zone’s trade figures for January, released on Tuesday, are expected to show a healthy surplus, albeit smaller than the €15.5bn (\$16.2bn) recorded in December 2024. And many other countries would like trade to remain open. The EU has recently signed agreements with Mexico and Mercosur, a south American bloc. Still, such deals come nowhere close to replacing America as a trading partner.



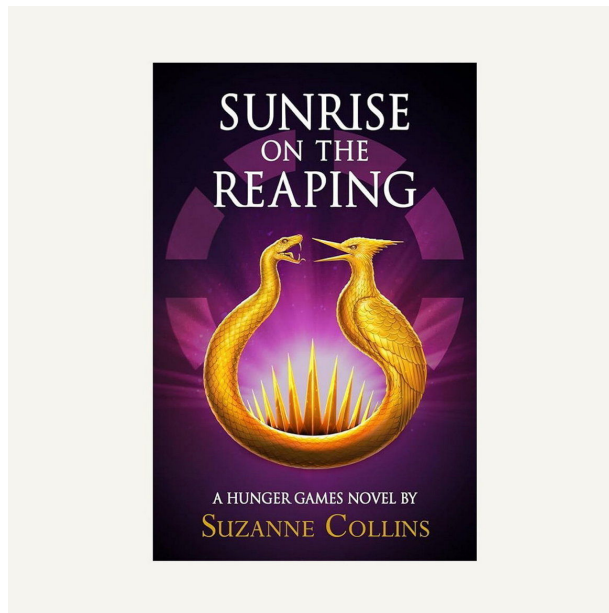
# Big tech's alternatives to fact-checking



Meta will try out “community notes”, an alternative to third-party fact checking, across its social networks from Tuesday. The crowd-sourced system mimics the approach championed by Elon Musk’s X, where users add labels to posts they deem misleading. Initial tests, on Facebook, Instagram and Threads in America, will involve 200,000 volunteers writing and rating notes, which will not at first appear publicly. To minimise bias, notes will be published only if contributors with a range of viewpoints agree.

It marks a big shift in Meta’s approach to moderation. Following concerns about everything from Russian disinformation to anti-vax gobbledygook, the company has overseen one of the world’s largest independent fact-checking networks in recent years. But ahead of Donald Trump’s inauguration in January, Meta’s boss, [Mark Zuckerberg](#), said his company’s rules were “out of touch with mainstream discourse” and promised a more hands-off approach. Free-speech advocates cheered. The trade-off: more of what Mr Zuckerberg calls “bad stuff” on his platforms.

# Return to the Hunger Games



The tributes have been prepared. The audience in Panem is waiting. The 50th Hunger Games—or at any rate the latest book about them by Suzanne Collins—are about to begin. The audience in this world is as eager as those in Ms Collins’s fictional Panem: bookshops are planning midnight openings and parties to mark the prequel’s release.

With good reason. The books are a romp. For those who have not yet set foot in Panem, a primer. Each year, 24 of its children are sent to fight to the death in the wilderness around its [dystopian](#) Capitol: picture “Gladiator” goes on scout camp; or George Orwell’s “1984”, with a bit more archery—and a lot more things going splatter. All seasoned with some nifty costumes and catchphrases, including its most famous: “May the odds be ever in your favour.” They are in Ms Collins’s—the book is already number one on Amazon.

## 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](mailto:QuizEspresso@economist.com). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

**Tuesday:** How is Haydn's 45th symphony generally known?

**Monday:** How many fluid ounces equal a pint in the US?



**There comes a time in a man's life when to get where he has to go—if there are no doors or windows he walks through a wall.**

*Bernard Malamud*