

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

**Israeli** forces recovered the bodies of three **hostages** in Jabalia, a town in northern Gaza. According to the Israel Defence Forces they were murdered during Hamas' attack on Israel on October 7th. Earlier, America's armed forces said that the first aid shipments had arrived at a pier on **Gaza's** Mediterranean coast. The [temporary pier](#) was built by **America**, in collaboration with several European countries, to bring relief to the war-torn enclave. The aid was loaded onto ships in Cyprus, from where it made the day's journey to Gaza.

**Chinese authorities** announced sweeping measures to stabilise the country's ailing [property sector](#). The central bank has set up a \$41.5bn lending facility to help state-owned companies buy properties and resell them as affordable housing. The People's Bank of China also cut the minimum amount that second-time buyers need for a deposit from 30% to 25%.

**Moderna** won a patent dispute against fellow drugmakers **Pfizer** and **BioNTech**. Moderna claims they [copied a chemical modification](#) in its mRNA covid-19 vaccine. The European Patent Office said one of Moderna's patents, which is driving litigation in several European courts, was valid; the other firms will probably appeal against the ruling. Coronavirus jabs earned the three firms over \$70bn in 2022 alone.

**Vladimir Putin** said that Russia has no plans to capture the city of Kharkiv in north-east Ukraine, but that the military was creating a "buffer zone" in the Kharkiv region to protect Russia's border. Russian [troops](#) have advanced 10km over the border in the past week, said **Volodymyr Zelensky**, Ukraine's president. Ukrainian

and Russian forces are locked in a fierce battle for the eastern town of Vovchansk.

Hundreds of French police arrived in **New Caledonia**, a French territory in the Pacific Ocean, following days of violent protests that have killed at least five people. Clashes began after France's government approved a bill allowing more French citizens on the island to vote, which pro-independence activists argue waters down the political sway of indigenous residents. France declared a state of emergency earlier this week.

Xi Jinping and Mr Putin promised a “new era” of relations between **China** and **Russia** and a strengthening of military ties. The two presidents said they would stand firm in the face of a “hostile” America. On Friday, the final day of his state visit to China, Mr Putin trumpeted trade between the countries, which has [flourished](#) since he launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

**Scottie Scheffler**, the world's top-ranked [golfer](#), was charged with four crimes, including felony second-degree assault on a police officer. Police say he ignored directions near the scene of a car crash in Kentucky, injuring an officer. Mr Scheffler, who had been on his way to the PGA Championship, said it was a “misunderstanding”. He made it to the tournament, and birdied the first hole.

**Figure of the day:** \$150bn, Home Depot's sales over the past 12 months. That made it America's third-largest bricks-and-mortar retailer. [Read the full story](#).

*In the run-up to America's presidential election, we've launched [The US in brief](#)—a daily update to help you keep on top of the political stories that matter. [Sign up here](#) to receive it as a newsletter, each weekday, in your inbox.*



Photo: Getty Images

## Mounting problems for Boeing's new pilot

Boeing's shareholders gather for their annual meeting on Friday at a [difficult time](#) for the aerospace giant. The question of who will replace Dave Calhoun when the chief executive steps down at the end of the year will hang over proceedings, as investors vote on whether to award him a huge pay rise. His successor will have plenty to think about.

The Justice Department said on Tuesday that recent production safety lapses mean Boeing cannot escape a deferred prosecution over fatal crashes of 737 MAX jets in 2018 and 2019. The slowing of MAX production after the mid-air blowout of a fuselage panel in January has enraged airline bosses dependent on deliveries of new planes. A whistleblower has told Congress of safety risks on widebody jets. And Boeing's once dependably profitable space and defence business has made annual losses for the past two years—and the first crewed flight of a Starliner rocket was recently delayed again. Dark days indeed.



Photo: Getty Images

## China's stuttering economy

This time last year it became painfully apparent that China's economic reopening after the covid-19 pandemic was not going according to plan. After a strong first quarter, data for industrial production, retail and property sales in April 2023 were far weaker than expected, ushering in a summer of [economic disquiet](#).

Twelve months on, doubts about the recovery have diminished, but not disappeared. Figures released on Friday showed industrial production growing by 6.7% in April 2024 compared with a year ago. But retail sales increased by only 2.3% (before adjusting for inflation) and the price of new houses declined by 3.5%. To support the [fragile recovery](#), the Ministry of Finance will begin selling what it calls "ultra-long-term" bonds on Friday, with maturities of up to 50 years. Over the next half-century, it will not want too many years like the last.



Photo: Getty Images

## Israel's cabinet divisions

Lawyers for [Israel](#) will once again argue the country's case before the International Court of Justice on Friday. This is the fourth time that South Africa will have asked the court to order a halt to Israel's war in Gaza. Judges have stopped short of such a ruling in the past. But these hearings come as Israeli troops push deeper into the southern city of Rafah, home to 1.5m displaced Palestinians (around 450,000 of whom have already fled to squalid camps elsewhere in Gaza).

While Israel's lawyers argue at The Hague, its politicians bicker at home. On Wednesday Yoav Gallant, the defence minister, urged Benjamin Netanyahu to come up with a “day-after” plan that would let the Palestinians create a new government in Gaza. The alternative, he warned, was endless Israeli military rule of the territory. Mr Netanyahu, who has refused for months to discuss post-war arrangements, called his defence minister “detached from reality”. Increasingly, cabinet splits are firmly in the open.





Photo: EPA

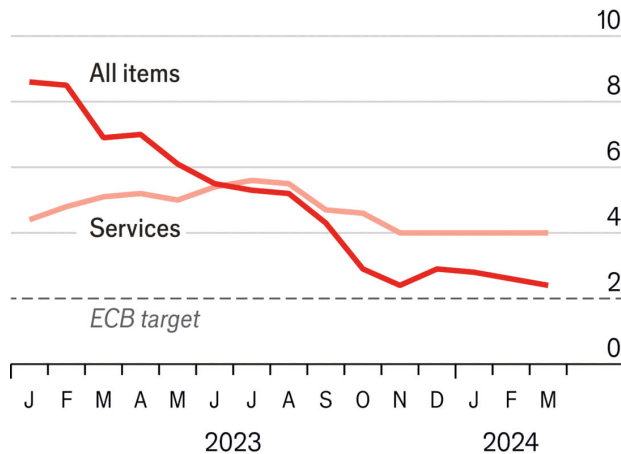
## The last mile of the ECB's inflation fight

[Inflation in Europe](#) has been proving less stubborn than the American variety. The annual rate in the euro area was 2.4% in March, close to the European Central Bank's target of 2%. On Friday the European Union will release data for April. The numbers will inform the bank's decision as to whether to cut interest rates in June.

Policymakers will be closely watching inflation in services, such as hotels, which has remained at 4% since November, mostly because of high wages. Rate cuts may still be on the cards even if it remains elevated, however. In Europe wages take time to adjust to economic conditions because they are often decided in collective-bargaining agreements. Christine Lagarde, the ECB's president, has said that elevated services inflation alone wouldn't delay a rate cut. And at this point in the economic cycle many argue that Europe's economy needs a rate cut. Suffering from weak domestic demand and an ailing export sector, it's in poor shape.

## Almost there

Euro area, consumer prices,  
% increase on a year earlier



Source: Eurostat

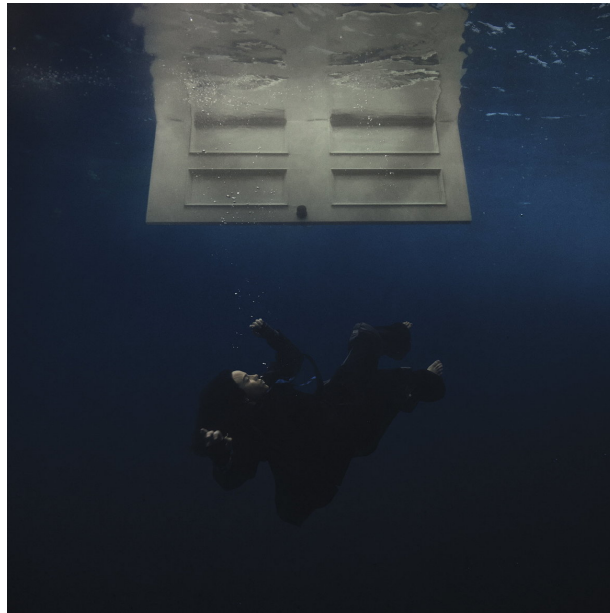


Photo: AP

## The mysterious Billie Eilish

The third studio album from alt-pop superstar [Billie Eilish](#), “Hit Me Hard and Soft”, arrives on Friday with neither the public nor the media having received so much as a taste of it. Ms Eilish has declined to issue any singles ahead of its release, citing her wish that it should be heard as a cohesive piece.

This is a seemingly counterintuitive move by Ms Eilish, whose fame rests upon her promotion by those streaming services largely responsible for the fragmentation of the album. It underlines how artists still value the format, even if their audiences, judging by their listening habits, don't always agree. Only a musician as popular as Ms Eilish can afford to overlook the dominance of playlists and individual tracks in favour of the album as a complete work, confident that her fans will eagerly embrace any new music from her, however she sees fit to deliver it.



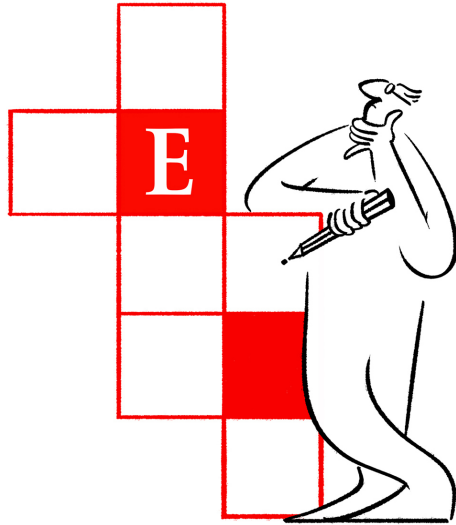
## Daily quiz

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:** Robert Caro has so far written four volumes of biography of which historical figure?

**Thursday:** In which month do most European countries celebrate Labour day?





## 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:

**Amelia Cheng**, Coquitlam, Canada

**Gareth Davies**, Burnham-on-Crouch, Britain

**Carlos Sangil**, Madrid, Spain

They all gave the correct answers of [Eurovision](#), [exile](#), [veto](#), and [niger](#). Check back tomorrow for this week's crossword.

*Those who own the country ought to govern it,  
provided they do it for the best interest of the  
whole people.*

*John Jay*