

Catch up: Trump's car tariffs; more anti-Hamas protests in Gaza



Donald Trump announced a 25% [tariff](#) on all imported **cars** and some automobile parts. American stock indices fell in anticipation of the announcement: the S&P 500 by more than 1%, and the NASDAQ by around 2%. Asian stockmarkets also slipped during early trading on Thursday. Mr Trump said the levies on cars would come into effect on April 3rd, and those on parts a month later.

Hundreds of people took to the streets in northern **Gaza** for a second consecutive day to protest against **Hamas**. A senior official from the militant group suggested there were “suspicious political agendas” behind the rallies. Meanwhile Binyamin Netanyahu, [Israel's](#) prime minister, threatened to seize territory in Gaza should Hamas refuse to release the remaining Israeli hostages it holds.

Russia launched drone strikes on several **Ukrainian** cities overnight, injuring at least 21 people in Kharkiv, Dnipro and Zolochiv. The strikes came hours before a summit in Paris where [Volodymyr Zelensky](#), Ukraine's president, met European leaders. France pledged €2bn (\$2.2bn) in defence aid and revived calls for

deploying European peacekeepers in Ukraine after a potential peace deal.

Israel's parliament passed a law giving politicians greater control over judicial appointments. It takes effect after the next election, expected in late 2026. The law reshapes the nine-member committee that selects judges, giving government and opposition politicians veto power. Critics say it undermines judicial independence and protects [Binyamin Netanyahu](#), the prime minister, who is on trial for corruption.

Profits at **Chinese** industrial firms declined by 0.3% year on year in the first two months of 2025, reinforcing [fears](#) about the country's **economy**. Industrial firms are defined as those with an annual revenue of at least 20m yuan (\$2.8m). Chinese businesses have struggled since the pandemic and the escalating trade war is doing little to enhance their prospects.

Anthony Albanese, **Australia's** prime minister, said he would call a **general election** "imminently". His centre-left Labor government has spent recent months trying to woo voters, including by introducing tax cuts. Opinion polls put Labor neck and neck with the opposition Liberal-National coalition. May 3rd is reportedly Mr Albanese's preferred date for the vote.

The death toll from **wildfires** in **South Korea** rose to 26, as blazes doubled in size on Thursday. The country's disaster chief called the fires, which began in the central county of Uiseong and have burnt more than 33,000 hectares, the "worst on record". He added that the tragedy "exposed the harsh reality of a climate crisis".

Figure of the day: \$350m, the price of one of the latest extreme-ultraviolet lithography machines made by ASML, a Dutch firm.
[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](#).*

Europe and America remain split over Ukraine



On Thursday Emmanuel Macron, France’s president, will host the “coalition of the willing” in Paris. The mainly European gathering of Ukraine’s allies will discuss plans to provide Ukraine with security guarantees in the event of a ceasefire. The group has been full of energy in recent weeks. But the question of an American “backstop”, which would support a “reassurance force” in Ukraine, remains unresolved.

The meeting comes two days after America said that Russia and Ukraine had agreed to a ceasefire in the Black Sea. In return Russia expects [relief from sanctions](#) relating to agriculture, shipping and banking—something that is not solely in America’s gift. It is clear what Russia stands to gain from the deal. Less so Ukraine, which agreed to it before Russia said that it expected further concessions. Ukraine has already secured export routes for grain by using drones to weaken Russia’s Black Sea fleet. And there is no indication that Russia will stop bombing Ukrainian ports.

El Salvador's endless “state of exception”



On Thursday El Salvador marks its third anniversary under a “state of exception”. President Nayib Bukele initially demanded the temporary measure, which suspends certain constitutional rights, to help him [crack down on gangs](#). But the legislative assembly, which he controls, has renewed it monthly. El Salvador has jailed thousands under the policy; 1.7% of the population are now incarcerated. That has dramatically reduced violence and extortion, but at a cost of many abuses. Human-rights groups have documented arbitrary detentions and deaths in custody.

Now Mr Bukele’s vast powers are serving a second purpose, to help him cosy up to his hard-right soulmate, Donald Trump. In February Mr Bukele said he would accept criminals deported from America. On March 15th America sent more than 250 people, many of them Venezuelan, to El Salvador; Mr Trump alleged they had criminal ties. They were filmed being locked up in the mega-prison that Mr Bukele built for his domestic crackdown. More could follow.

Will profits dip at Britain's largest fashion retailer?



In 2023 Next, [Britain's largest clothing retailer](#), warned of higher costs and sluggish sales. The following year it said that disruptions to shipping lanes could delay deliveries. Yet it went on to raise its profit guidance more than a dozen times in two years. Other high-street retailers, including Debenhams and Topshop, have collapsed. Shares in Boohoo and ASOS, online retailers, have plummeted. Next has thrived.

Will that continue? On Thursday it reported annual profits of over £1bn for the first time, up more than 10%. But analysts will pay close attention to warnings of growing risks to the British economy. Next has avoided the fate of its competitors by embracing automation and branching out into homewares and third-party brands. But higher national-insurance contributions and an increase in Britain's minimum wage, which take effect in April, will cost £67m. Simon Wolfson, Next's boss, said the retailer had mitigated previous effects of rising wages by becoming more efficient. "That pot has pretty much run dry," he warned last September. If Next cannot keep its costs down, profits may begin to run dry, too.

The fallout from cuts to PEPFAR



Donald Trump's assault on American foreign-aid programmes has hit PEPFAR hard. Congressional authorisation for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief expired earlier this week. That does not end the initiative, but restricts funds available to it. These have, in any case, largely been on hold since a 90-day freeze on American aid was promulgated on January 20th (though an exception was made on January 28th for work deemed life-saving). The programme's long-term future may become clearer when the Trump administration's review of America's foreign aid reports its recommendations next month.

How bad could things get if funding for AIDS programmes come to an end? A paper published on Wednesday in the *Lancet*, a British medical journal, set out some worrying estimates. The authors calculated that if PEPFAR ceased, and recently announced cuts in other countries' aid budgets also went ahead, the result would be between 770,000 and 2.9m HIV-related deaths over the next five years.

Baseball's homeless millionaires



This year's [Major League Baseball](#) season begins in North America on Thursday. The league is in good health. Total revenue grew to a record \$12.1bn in 2024, while average attendance rose to nearly 30,000—the highest since 2017. But a couple of teams are facing big changes. The Tampa Bay Rays were made homeless last year after Hurricane Milton caused extensive damage to their stadium, Tropicana Field. They will play instead at Steinbrenner Field, which has just 25% of Tropicana's capacity. Last week the Rays' owner, Stu Sternberg, walked away from a \$1.3bn plan to build a new stadium after the city said that it would not share the cost of any overruns.

On the west coast, the Oakland As left the Coliseum after 57 years in 2024. For three seasons, while a new permanent home costing almost \$2bn is built in Las Vegas, they will play at a minor-league venue in Sacramento. For two teams, this season's [baseball games](#) could feel rather cramped.

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. We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

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

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

History is a novel written by the people.

Alfred de Vigny