

Catch up: Fed “not in a hurry” to cut rates; Trump asks Iran to negotiate nuclear deal



Jerome Powell, chairman of the Federal Reserve, said **America's** economy was “in good shape” despite “[elevated](#)” [uncertainty](#). He added that officials “do not need to be in a hurry” to cut interest rates. On Friday official data showed that America's economy added 151,000 jobs in February, missing forecasts of 160,000. The unemployment rate rose from 4% to 4.1%. The S&P 500 ended the week down by 3.1%, its worst run since early September.

Donald Trump said he had written to [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#), **Iran's** supreme leader, about negotiating a nuclear deal. During his first term America's president [abandoned a nuclear pact with Iran](#), which he said was too generous. Yet he failed to secure a stricter agreement. Earlier Mr Trump said he was “strongly considering” sanctions and tariffs on **Russia** until it makes peace with Ukraine.

China announced tariffs on **Canadian** food products, [retaliating](#) for Canada's own tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, as well as

steel and aluminium products, in October. The new levies, which will take effect on March 20th, further heighten global trade tensions, which had already risen due to Donald Trump's [erratic](#) policy.

At least 14 people were killed and 37 wounded in **Russian** strikes on **Ukraine**, officials said. Missiles hit homes in Dobropillia, a town in the east, killing 11, while three more died in Kharkiv, in the north. The attack came after America paused [intelligence sharing](#), weakening Ukraine's air defences. Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's president, called for allies to toughen sanctions to restrict Russia's war funding.

Infighting between factions of the Los Tiguerones gang in Guayaquil, **Ecuador's** largest city, left 22 people dead, authorities said. Police arrested 14 suspects, including minors, and seized weapons. After the clashes, Daniel Noboa, the president, vowed that security forces would have free rein, saying, "Defend the country, I will defend you." The violence comes as he escalates his [war on gangs](#) ahead of April's election runoff.

Over 140 people have been killed in two days of clashes between **Syrian** security forces and supporters of **Bashar al-Assad**, the deposed president. A pro-Assad militia has vowed to overthrow the new [Islamist-led government](#). Authorities imposed curfews and deployed reinforcements to the coast, home to many Alawites—Mr Assad's sectarian stronghold.

The Trump administration cancelled \$400m in federal grants to **Columbia University**, citing its "continued inaction in the face of persistent harassment of Jewish students" and warning that the cuts were merely the "first round of action". Last spring protests against the war in Gaza [rocked the university](#), fuelling debates about free speech and campus policing. The administration said that Columbia holds more than \$5bn in federal grants.

Word of the week: *Sertanejo*, Brazil's most popular music genre, a country-inspired style reflecting the country's rural and agricultural roots. [Read the full story.](#)

The left challenges Trump



Bernie Sanders, a left-wing senator who twice sought the American presidency, brings his “Fighting Oligarchy” tour to Michigan and Wisconsin this weekend, to cities that Democrats lost in the 2024 election. The 83-year-old Mr Sanders, an independent who caucuses with the Democratic party, has been hammering the same message for years: a billionaire class is growing ever richer and more powerful at the expense of ordinary Americans. [Elon Musk’s DOGE](#) adds fresh urgency to his spiel.

But Mr Sanders has always been to the party’s left, and the broader Democratic coalition is [unsure of how to counter Donald Trump](#). After Mr Trump’s first victory, a massive resistance movement benefited the party’s progressives. This time, the moderates are ascendant, arguing that the party veered too far left and turned off the non-white and working-class voters that were the party’s traditional base. Out of power in Congress until at least 2027, the party will have a few years to ponder how to get them back.

Sir Keir Starmer's Churchill moment?



Britain's Labour government has drifted and dithered since Sir Keir Starmer's election victory last July. A huge parliamentary majority was directed at small-bore projects; MPs grumbled about Sir Keir's abilities; Labour's support in the polls waned. Yet the crisis in Europe, as Donald Trump demands it spend more on defence, has given his premiership a [sense of purpose](#).

Sir Keir has tried to act as a bridge between Europe and America, mediating between Mr Trump and Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's president. For the first time, his restrained manner—and aversion to getting into social-media spats—has played in his favour. “Some will take to the keyboard as warriors; I picked up the phone to world leaders to try to resolve the situation,” he said this week. Yet Sir Keir must ensure the crisis spurs him to [pursue his domestic agenda](#) more boldly, too. Instead, the planning reforms in which he has placed great hope seem too timid to make a difference.

An enthralling rugby match in Dublin



On Saturday Ireland face France in the Six Nations, Europe's big international rugby tournament. The clash in Dublin is in effect a title decider: Ireland are so far unbeaten in this year's competition and France have lost just once. For the Irish it will be an emotional occasion. They are chasing an unprecedented third successive Six Nations title. Moreover three stalwarts of the side—Conor Murray, Peter O'Mahony and Cian Healy, who have 372 caps between them—will play for the team in the Irish capital for the final time, seeking the perfect conclusion to their careers.

Ireland are the higher ranked side (second in the world only to South Africa) but their squad is ageing. In contrast, the French team is approaching the peak of its powers. France's captain, Antoine Dupont, full of creativity and improvisation, is widely considered the world's best player. Louis Bielle-Biarrey, a pacey winger, has five tries in this year's tournament already. Still, Ireland remain marginal favourites.

Hollywood's fascination with doppelgangers



What would it take to leave your earthly troubles behind? In “Mickey 17”, released in cinemas this week, Mickey (Robert Pattinson) escapes his debts by joining a scientific mission on an icy planet. There’s one catch: he must agree to become an “expendable”, dying several grisly deaths before being brought back to life for research. When demise number 17 goes wrong, Mickey meets an evil clone of himself: Mickey 18.

The latest release from Bong Joon-ho, the director of [“Parasite”](#), is one of several recent films about doppelgangers. The premise has long fascinated filmmakers. In “The Four Troublesome Heads”, a silent French film released in 1898, a magician duplicates his head three times. Social media enable amateurs to clone their own images—and even track down lookalikes. [In the age of AI](#) “expendables” are one of the ways that Hollywood is grappling with humanity’s fear of being replaced.

Weekend profile: Mark Carney, the former central banker who may lead Canada



In July a polling firm showed 1,989 randomly selected Canadians a photograph of a stern-looking gentleman wearing a dark-blue necktie and a darker jacket. Only 7% could identify him as [Mark Carney](#). Now the former central banker is on the verge of becoming prime minister.

Canadians still don't know much about Mr Carney, but they have been speed-dating him since January, when he launched his candidacy to lead the country's governing Liberal Party. Polls suggest that a growing number of voters are impressed by his CV, if not his charisma-free campaign style. On March 9th Liberal Party members are expected to choose him to succeed Justin Trudeau as the party's leader.

If that happens he will be sworn in as Canada's 24th prime minister a few days later. His main initial challenges will be to defend Canada from [Donald Trump's economic onslaught](#) and to prepare

the Liberals for an election that must be held this year. While voters in many Western countries increasingly support Trumpish politicians, Canada may be about to choose a leader who is nothing like the American president.

Mr Carney piloted the Bank of Canada through the Great Recession of 2007-09 and the Bank of England through Brexit. He has the economic credentials to confront Mr Trump, who threatens to use “economic force”, in the form of punishing tariffs on Canadian goods, to coerce his northern neighbour into becoming the 51st American state. But he is also sceptical of Mr Trudeau’s unpopular government and well-positioned to correct its economic mistakes.

Born almost 60 years ago in the remote Northwest Territories hamlet of Fort Smith, Mr Carney grew up in Edmonton, capital of the oil-producing province of Alberta. His father was a teacher. Mr Carney played hockey there and regularly attended mass. He studied at Harvard and Oxford, worked for Goldman Sachs on Wall Street and has been a regular at the World Economic Forum in Davos, a globally-minded gathering of honchos.

But Mr Carney is not a political neophyte. In whispered conversations in Ottawa, politicians have talked of his ambitions for a dozen years at least. He spoke at the Liberal Party’s convention in 2021. Six months ago he agreed to lead a task force that would advise Mr Trudeau’s government on economic growth.

If he does win the prime ministership, keeping it in an election will not be easy. His French is bad, which may hurt the Liberals in Quebec. He will be up against the Conservative Party’s leader, Pierre Poilievre, a lifelong political brawler who can seem a bit Trumpian—in a Canadian sort of way.

Six months ago a Liberal like Mr Carney would have had little chance. But now Canada’s sovereignty and economy are under

threat. Populism looks less like a refreshing change from Mr Trudeau's wokeism and more like an American disorder. Mr Carney's globalist gravitas [seems more appealing](#). He can thank Mr Trump for that.

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 Distant place has protester rioting (12)

1 across Precious metal found in fossil vertebrae (6)

2 across Men stop European leader (5)

3 across Strange kiss and hug used for mass departure (6)

Factual clues

1 down What dead satellites end up polluting (12)

1 across An asset that's becoming increasingly popular (6)

2 across Politician who is a staunch Russian ally (5)

3 across Something New Zealand is currently experiencing (6)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am GMT 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:

Don McKinley, Calgary, Canada

Beatrice Ballini, Milan, Italy

Andrej Galogaza, Zagreb, Croatia

They all gave the correct answers of Minnesota Twins, Conan O'Brien, Robin Wright, TotalEnergies and Predator drones. The theme is films starring Arnold Schwarzenegger: *Twins*, *Conan the Barbarian* (and *Conan the Destroyer*), *Batman & Robin*, *Total Recall* and *Predator*.

The questions were:

Monday: Which baseball team last won the World Series in 1991?

Tuesday: Who briefly replaced Jay Leno as host of *The Tonight Show* from 2009 to 2010?

Wednesday: Which actress is known for roles in *The Princess Bride*, *Forrest Gump* and *House of Cards*

Thursday: Which French group is generally regarded as one of the

world's energy supermajors?

Friday: Which remote air force weapon was replaced with the Reaper in 2018?

**No written law has ever been more binding
than unwritten custom supported by
popular opinion.**

Carrie Chapman Catt