

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

Donald Trump called **Elon Musk** “crazy” as the relationship between the pair imploded. The feud, which played out largely on social media, began when the president said he was “disappointed” in Mr Musk’s repeated criticisms of his [budget bill](#). In a flurry of retaliatory posts Mr Musk, who [recently left the government](#), accused Mr Trump of “ingratitude”. Mr Trump subsequently threatened to cut Mr Musk’s federal contracts. Shares in Tesla, Mr Musk’s electric-vehicle firm, plunged by more than 14%.

Russia launched a wave of strikes on cities across **Ukraine**, including Kyiv, the capital. At least five people were killed, according to local officials. The attack came days after a [Ukrainian raid](#) deep into Russian territory damaged more than 40 aircraft. Meanwhile Mr Trump cast doubts over a ceasefire by suggesting that it may be better for both sides to “fight for a while” instead of “pulling them apart”.

A judge temporarily blocked the Trump administration’s ban on international students entering **Harvard**. Mr Trump’s proclamation cited national-security concerns; the university argued it contravened the First Amendment and was a “government vendetta” against Harvard’s resistance to attempts to control its curriculum and governance. Mr Trump has already cancelled more than \$3bn of the university’s government funding amid a [weeks-long battle](#).

Mr Trump and **Xi Jinping**, China’s leader, agreed to launch a new round of trade talks after they spoke on Thursday. Mr Trump described their call, which was their first conversation since he returned to office, as “very good”. The pair discussed [rare-mineral](#)

[exports](#). Chinese media suggest the call was made at Mr Trump's request.

The **European Central Bank** lowered **interest rates** by a quarter of a percentage point, to 2%, the eighth such cut in the past year. Data released on Tuesday showed the annual inflation rate was 1.9% in May, below the ECB's 2% target. The bank hopes to bolster Europe's economy amid Mr Trump's [trade war](#).

Procter & Gamble said it would cut 7,000 jobs, or around 15% of its non-manufacturing workforce, over the next two years. An executive at the consumer-goods company cited "uncertainty" among shoppers. In April P&G, which includes Pampers and Tide among its brands, said it would raise some prices to "mitigate the impact" of tariffs.

ispace failed for a second time to become **Japan's** first private company to land on the Moon. The startup said its lunar lander, Resilience, was presumed lost after it probably crashed during touchdown on Friday. The company first tried to stage a landing in 2023. [Two American firms](#) have pulled off the feat, as have state-run missions from China and India.

Figure of the day: 18%, the decrease in the average length of songs that topped the *Billboard* Hot 100 between 1990 and 2024. [Read the full story](#).

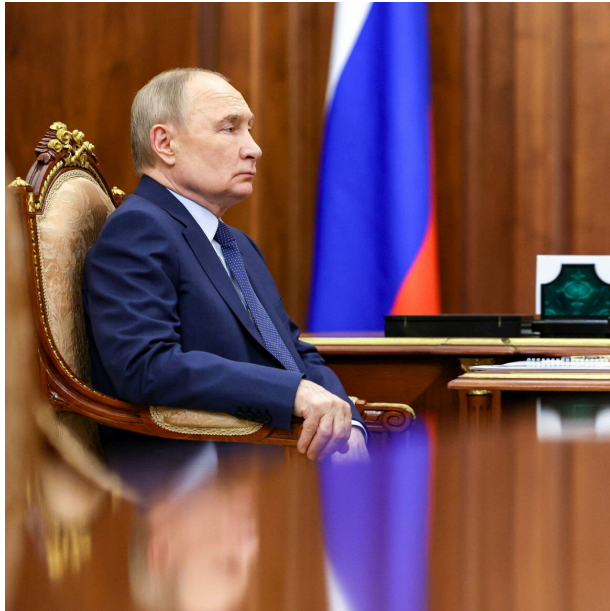


Photograph: AP

Jobs anxiety in America

America's labour market has held up [surprisingly well](#) amid Donald Trump's trade war. In April employers added 177,000 jobs, above last year's monthly average, and unemployment stayed at 4.2%, near historic lows. On Friday the Bureau of Labour Statistics will release the jobs report for May, which is expected to show a more modest gain of 125,000 jobs.

But there are jitters. A payroll processor, ADP, reported this week that private-sector hiring slowed to just 37,000 jobs in May—the weakest reading in over two years. A business survey by the Institute for Supply Management also showed a sharp contraction in services activity, with firms blaming the uncertainty over tariffs. If Friday's numbers disappoint, Mr Trump will probably [point the finger at Jerome Powell](#) for keeping interest rates high. After the ADP release Mr Trump called the head of the Federal Reserve “Too Late.” But the real culprit is the confusion unleashed by Mr Trump's tariffs.



Photograph: EPA

The Putin paradox

On Friday Russia's central bank meets to decide whether to change its key interest rate of 21%. Policymakers instituted the uber-tight monetary policy in order to deal with Russia's high inflation, which reached over 10% year on year in February. The medicine is, slowly, working: inflation appears to be falling. But the policy has also helped bring the economy to a [near-standstill](#), and made the bank deeply unpopular. The economy minister recently accused it of causing Russia's economy to develop "hypothermia". So will the bank bow to pressure and cut rates?

Not a chance. And this, in turn, illustrates a paradox of [Vladimir Putin's style of government](#). Mr Putin launches wars when he wants; he crushes dissent; he will rule for ever if he can. But when it comes to the economy, he largely leaves it in the hands of experts. Russian rates will stay high until inflation is truly down.

Gremlin in the Kremlin

Russia, consumer prices
% increase on a year earlier



Source: Haver Analytics



Photograph: Alamy

Meloni's chum Milei comes to Rome

Javier Milei arrived in Rome on Friday at the start of a journey that will also take him to Spain, France, Israel and finally back to Spain. [Argentina's president](#) can expect a warm welcome from Giorgia Meloni, Italy's hard-right prime minister.

They are both conservative populists, and chums. They differ somewhat on economic policy (Mr Milei is a free-market radical, whereas Ms Meloni's Brothers of Italy party has roots in protectionist, statist neo-fascism). But that has not stood in the way of moves towards collaboration between Argentina's state energy company, YPF, and Italy's partly state-owned ENI. The aim is to produce and export 12m tonnes a year of liquefied natural gas from [Argentina's giant Vaca Muerta field](#).

On Saturday Mr Milei meets [Pope Leo](#), whose Argentine predecessor he once called a "leftist son of a bitch". He has also said he intends to convert to Judaism after leaving office. They should have lots to discuss.



Photograph: Reuters

Basketball's first-time champions

America's [National Basketball Association](#) will have a first-time winner this season. The best-of-seven finals, spread over the next couple of weeks, sees the Oklahoma City Thunder take on the Indiana Pacers. The Thunder have one previous finals appearance, when they were defeated by Miami Heat in 2012. They have been the best team in the NBA this year, winning 68 of their 82 games to top the Western Conference. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, their guard, was named the league's most valuable player and scored more points than anyone else.

The Pacers have also reached one previous finals. Their regular season in 2025 was more modest, finishing fourth in the Eastern Conference and winning 50 games. But they have been excellent in the playoffs, disposing of a resurgent New York Knicks, among others. They have no superstars, but do have a deep roster of players. That helped them claim a 111-110 victory in the first game of the series, played on Thursday night. Nonetheless, bookies still expect the Thunder to break their duck.



Illustration: The Economist

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: What is defined in mathematics as the product of a complex number and its conjugate? The term is also used as a synonym for something that is typical.

Thursday: Which Jamaican reggae artist sang “Many Rivers To Cross” and “You Can Get It If You Really Want”?



Illustration: The Economist

The winners of this 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:

Gregory Sanial, Grand Rapids, Michigan, America

Hasit Raja, Nairobi, Kenya

Peter Grodzinski, London, Britain

They all gave the correct answers of [poison](#), [Paris](#), [nation](#) and [Philip Larkin](#).

*A writer is somebody for whom
writing is more difficult than it is
for other people.*

Thomas Mann