

## Catch up: Ukraine “ready” to accept ceasefire; Trump’s 25% tariffs come into effect



**Ukraine** agreed in principle to an **American** proposal for an “immediate” 30-day ceasefire with **Russia** following talks in Saudi Arabia. In return, America said it would “immediately” unblock the flow of American weapons and intelligence to the country. Russia has yet to agree to the interim pause in the fighting. “The ball is now in their court,” said Marco Rubio, America’s secretary of state.

**Tariffs** of 25% on steel and aluminium from Canada and all other trading partners took effect. Earlier **Donald Trump** reversed his plan to double levies on Canada to 50% hours after he announced it. The zigzagging came after Canada’s Ontario province shelved its proposed 25% surcharge on American-bound electricity. Mr Trump later told business leaders he was considering increasing tariffs more broadly.

**America’s** House of Representatives narrowly passed a six-month funding bill to avoid a partial government shutdown from Friday.

That is a victory for Mr Trump, who needed overwhelming party support for it to proceed. Only one Republican voted against the measure—and one Democrat for it. It now heads to the Senate, where it will require at least eight Democrats' support to avoid a filibuster.

**Portugal's** centre-right government collapsed after Luís Montenegro, the prime minister, lost a confidence vote. Mr Montenegro has faced a conflict-of-interest scandal over his alleged failure to divest shares in his family business. A snap election in mid-May is likely. It would be the country's [third election](#) in less than four years.

**Greenland's** pro-business opposition won 29.9% of the vote in a closely watched parliamentary election, beating the incumbent left-wing coalition. The victorious Demokraatit Party promised a gradual route to independence from Denmark and “more business to finance our welfare”. Mr Trump [has vowed](#) to make Greenland—a semi-autonomous region—part of America in order to boost his country's security.

**Reliance Jio** signed an agreement to use [Starlink](#) satellite internet in **India**, the second tie-up between an Indian telecoms giant and Elon Musk's **SpaceX** in two days. On Monday Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio's rival, inked a similar deal. India is yet to permit Starlink to operate, but in October the government said it would allocate satellite-internet spectrum rather than auction it, with SpaceX presumed to be in prime position.

Around 100 hostages were rescued from militants during an ongoing mission in **Pakistan's** [Balochistan](#) province, according to local media. The Baloch Liberation Army, a separatist militant group, had reportedly taken more than 450 train passengers hostage and threatened to begin executing them if the government did not begin releasing BLA prisoners.

**Figure of the day:** 1trn yuan (\$140bn), the size of the venture-capital fund that China's government wants to set up for tech-focused investment. [Read the full story.](#)

# Donald Trump's tariffs and inflation



Investors around the world fret that America is slipping towards stagflation: a feared combination of sluggish growth and high inflation. Data on Wednesday may provide some reassurance. They are expected to show that consumer prices rose about 0.3% month on month in February, down from a 0.5% rise in January. But that may not be enough to allay worries in [financial markets](#).

The slower monthly pace of inflation would still equate to an annualised rise of about 3.7%, well above the Federal Reserve's target of 2%. Moreover, consumers have yet to experience the higher prices caused by Donald Trump's tariffs. Indeed, tariffs of 25% on steel and aluminium only take effect on Wednesday. If Mr Trump follows through on his plans to impose tariffs on far more products early in April, the threat of stagflation will be even bigger.

# Is Syria spiralling downwards again?



Syria has been shaken by its worst sectarian violence since the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad's regime three months ago. Insurgents from the Alawite minority, from which the Assads came, [launched a co-ordinated assault](#) on government buildings across their heartlands in western Syria. Troops loyal to a newly formed Alawite military council and led by one of Assad's former generals ambushed vehicles and seized hospitals.

In response, fighters loyal to Syria's new leader, [Ahmed al-Sharaa](#), along with jihadist factions, began advancing into Alawite-populated territory on March 6th. The Syrian Network for Human Rights reported that at least 779 people were killed—roughly half by pro-government forces and half by pro-Assad militants. Videos posted on social media appeared to show evidence of summary executions of civilians by government security forces. Mr Sharaa has said that a seven-member committee will investigate the violence and report back within 30 days. The attacks pose the most serious threat to date to his rule.



# South Africa's crucial budget



South Africa's budgets are rarely dramatic events. But the statement on Wednesday by Enoch Godongwana, the finance minister, will be one of the most important since the end of white rule in 1994. It will determine whether the country is serious about reversing almost two decades of rising debts and stagnation. Since 2008 the share of debt in GDP has risen more than three-fold, from 24% to 75%, and income per person is lower than it was 17 years ago.

The budget will also reveal much about the Government of National Unity, the coalition that the African National Congress was forced into forming after it lost its parliamentary majority at the [general election](#) last year. Last month, during Mr Godongwana's aborted first attempt at a budget speech, the second-largest party in the GNU, the Democratic Alliance, opposed his proposals. If the ANC fails to win the support of the DA this time, observers may question how long the GNU can last.

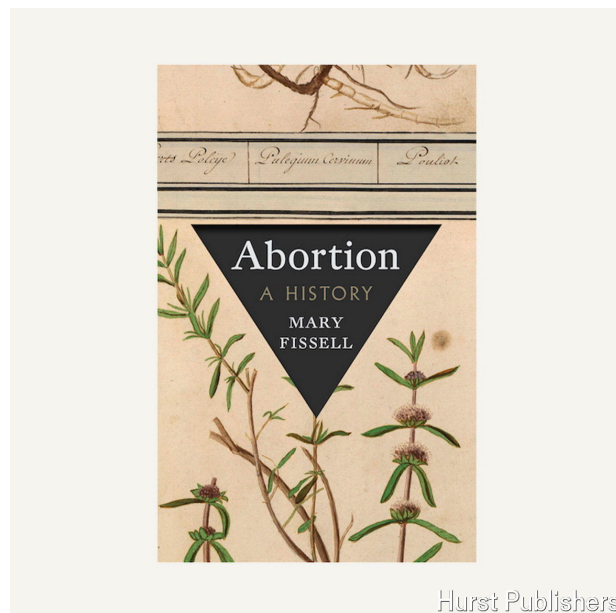
## Tusk turns to Turkey



Poland's prime minister, Donald Tusk, heads to Ankara, Turkey's capital, on Wednesday. He will discuss defence and security co-operation with Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's president. Mr Tusk will want to gauge whether his host would send peacekeepers or provide security guarantees to Ukraine, an idea which Turkish officials have previously suggested.

Alarmed by Donald Trump's pivot to Russia, Mr Tusk has called on [Europe](#) to increase defence spending and reduce its dependence on America. He recently said that Poland would consider acquiring nuclear weapons and more than double the size of its army. Turkey has NATO's second-biggest army. Over the past decade it has developed its own battlefield technology, including drones, and ramped up production of 155mm artillery shells. But Mr Erdogan will expect concessions in exchange for any help with Europe's rearmament. They would probably include visa-free travel or a new customs union with the EU. Europe needs Turkey—and Mr Erdogan knows how to drive a hard bargain.

# An insightful history of abortion



The ancient Greeks believed that vigorous jumping and sneezing could end an unwanted pregnancy. In medieval Europe, purging blood from the foot was considered effective. Abortifacient plants were ultimately the prevailing method: for centuries women consumed pennyroyal, part of the mint family, so that their bodies might reject a foetus. Enslaved women in the American South chewed cotton-root bark.

The message of “Abortion: A History”, a book published this week, is clear: “Abortion does not go away just because it is forbidden.” Women have always sought to control whether they have children, Mary Fissell argues. But attitudes towards abortion have varied widely. (“For most of the past two millennia,” for instance, “the foetus was not at the centre of concern about abortion.”) For anyone dismayed by the rollback of reproductive rights in [America](#) and elsewhere, this insightful medical and social history makes a heartening observation. Over the centuries “periods of extreme repression” have invariably given “way to times of quiet toleration”.



## 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.

**Wednesday:** What term, linked to a South American country, was used to describe the series of negotiations that led to the establishment of the World Trade Organisation?

**Tuesday:** Which 1975 Australian film, directed by Peter Weir, concerns the disappearance of a group of schoolgirls?

**Among all the diseases of the mind there is none more epidemical or more pernicious than the love of flattery.**

*Richard Steele.*