

Catch up: Zelensky “committed” to peace talks; Iran rejects Trump talks



Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelensky, said he is “fully committed” to talks with [America](#) in Saudi Arabia next week on ending the war. Earlier, he urged allies to tighten sanctions on **Russia** after strikes killed at least 14 people and wounded 37, officials said. Missiles hit homes in Dobropillia, a town in the east, killing 11, while three more died in Kharkiv, in the north.

Iran’s Supreme Leader, [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#), said he would not negotiate under “bullying”. His comments follow **Donald Trump’s** letter proposing the talks. Mr Khamenei accused America of imposing new demands on Iran’s missile programme. During his first term America’s president abandoned a nuclear pact with Iran, which he said was too generous, but failed to secure a stricter agreement.

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.

South Korea's impeached president, **Yoon Suk Yeol**, was released from detention after a court quashed his arrest warrant, citing flaws in the indictment process. He remains suspended from presidential duties as his criminal and impeachment trials continue. The Constitutional Court is expected to rule soon on his [removal from office](#). Tens of thousands protested near the court, calling for his dismissal, while supporters rallied in central Seoul.

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.

More than 1,000 people were killed in two days of clashes between Syrian security forces and supporters of **Bashar al-Assad**, the deposed president, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor. 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—and 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.](#)

No eggflation in China



Can China beat [deflation](#) this year? A broken property market, cautious consumers and tense geopolitics have sapped demand in the world's second-biggest economy. That has put downward pressure on prices. Against this backdrop, the government this week cut its inflation target to 2%, down from 3% in recent years.

Most commentators saw the shift as a simple recognition of reality. Inflation undershot the official target by a wide margin in 2024. Figures released on Sunday are likely to show that consumer prices actually fell year on year in February, partly because the Spring Festival was relatively early this year. Even eggs are cheaper than they were in January.

China was, then, never going to hit an inflation target of 3%. But lowering the goal may still send a damaging, defeatist signal. It could suggest that the government is resigned to the economy's underperformance and less determined to reverse it. By bowing to China's deflationary reality, the new target could further entrench it.

Who will lead Canada's Liberals?



Canada's Liberal Party will select a [new leader](#) on Sunday. The victor will automatically become the country's prime minister, succeeding Justin Trudeau. An internal party revolt and record-low polling numbers forced him to announce his resignation in January. Surveys of Liberals, endorsements from Liberal lawmakers and fundraising figures all point to Mark Carney as the probable winner. The former governor of central banks in Canada and England is the contender least associated with Mr Trudeau's unpopular government.

Donald Trump will be the new leader's biggest headache and biggest opportunity. His tariffs threaten Canada's economy, and possibly its security. Canada can avoid them by becoming the 51st American state. Yet Mr Trudeau's tussle with the truculent Mr Trump caused a revival of the Liberals' popularity. [According to our poll tracker](#), they have a chance of beating the Conservatives in an election that must be called this year. In part to capitalise on the Trump bump, the next prime minister may call the election within days.

A mass without the pope



This Sunday is a big day for Roman Catholics. The day marks the first Sunday of Lent, the 40-day period of fasting and abstinence that Christians observe before Easter. At the Vatican, a mass will be celebrated in front of St Peter's Basilica, one in which a number of Roman Catholic prelates normally take part—but this year without [the pope](#).

Francis will be in the Gemelli hospital in Rome, where he has been treated for double pneumonia since February 14th. The Vatican said on Saturday that there has been “a gradual, slight improvement” in his condition. Francis would doubtless like to resume his normal activities, especially because 2025 is a papal Jubilee, a special year of pardon and pilgrimage in which more than 30m people are expected to visit Rome. But in a recording he released on Thursday to thank those who have prayed for him, he sounded alarmingly breathless. It scarcely reassured those who question whether he will ever be fit enough again to assume the heavy workload of a pope.

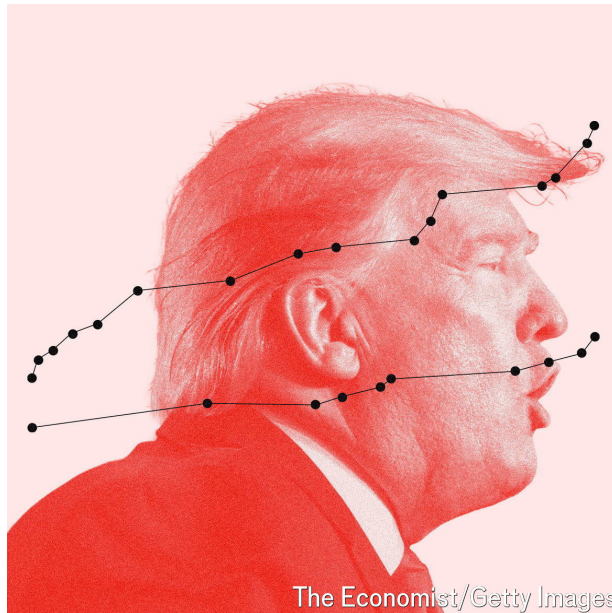
Beware the Black Caps



Any sports institution wanting to learn how to maximise its resources ought to travel to Canterbury, on New Zealand's south island, to visit its cricket governing body. At \$60m in 2024, its annual income is a fraction of that of its rivals in [India](#) (\$820m), England (\$420m) and Australia (\$265m), but its teams compete with the best. On Sunday the men's one-day side, known as the Black Caps, will contest the final of the Champions Trophy against India in Dubai.

India's advantages are not just financial. Match conditions in Dubai will also be closer to those in Ahmedabad than Auckland. But New Zealand are well-drilled and unafraid of the big stage. They beat India to win the inaugural World Test Championship in 2021, and also in the one-day World Cup in 2019. Fast bowler Matt Henry and batsman Rachin Ravindra have also been two of the tournament's best players. India won't be underestimating them.

Our Trump legal tracker



Donald Trump wasted no time on his return to office, signing 26 executive orders on his first day. Neither did his critics, who began filing lawsuits that same day and haven't stopped. Judges have allowed some of the administration's policies, such as transferring migrants to a detention facility in Guantánamo Bay in Cuba, to remain in place while cases proceed. They have also blocked several, including a freeze on foreign aid spending. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Elon Musk and the Department of Government Efficiency have [attracted a lot of litigation](#).

The Economist has added a legal section to our [presidential tracker](#) to help you cut through the reams of court papers. We will keep you up to date on the most important challenges to the administration's actions as they progress from district courts all the way up to the Supreme Court. With so many lawsuits filed, the justices may have a busy four years ahead of them.

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?

Sertanejo

Brazil's most popular music genre, a country-inspired style reflecting the country's rural and agricultural roots.

Read the full story.

**The luck of having talent is not enough;
one must also have a talent for luck.**

Hector Berlioz