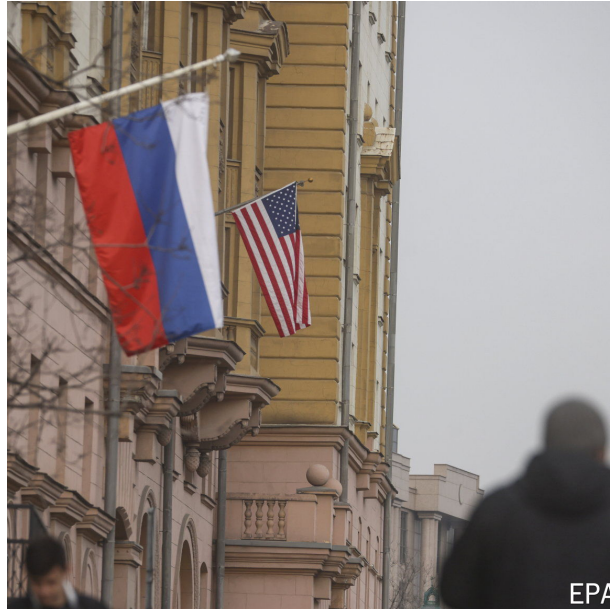


## Catch up: Putin rejects full ceasefire; Netanyahu says strikes “just the beginning”



During a call with **Donald Trump**, **Vladimir Putin** apparently rejected a [30-day ceasefire](#) with **Ukraine** but agreed to halt attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure, according to the Kremlin. The White House said that fresh negotiations on ceasefire agreements and a permanent peace would start “immediately” in the Middle East—a “region of potential co-operation” for America and Russia.

**Binyamin Netanyahu**, Israel’s prime minister, warned that his country’s [latest strikes](#) in **Gaza** were “just the beginning”. In a televised address Mr Netanyahu accused Hamas of rejecting proposals to free more hostages during [fragile ceasefire negotiations](#). He vowed that all future talks would be “conducted only under fire”. At least 400 people were killed in Gaza during **Israel’s** renewed attacks on Tuesday.

**Germany’s** Bundestag passed a huge spending package proposed by [Friedrich Merz](#), the probable next chancellor. The measure

loosens the “**debt brake**”, a strict legal limit on federal-government borrowing. It creates a €500bn (\$545bn) off-budget fund for infrastructure and exempts from the debt brake defence spending beyond 1% of GDP. The package still requires approval by the upper house of parliament.

**America’s** chief justice, John Roberts, criticised Mr Trump’s call for the impeachment of a district judge who tried to pause the [deportation](#) of more than 200 people to El Salvador. Mr Roberts said that impeachment was not an “appropriate response” to disagreement over a judge’s decision. The president referred to the judge concerned as a “Radical Left Lunatic”.

**Britain’s** Labour government said it would introduce large reforms to the benefits system with a view to cutting at least £5bn (\$6.5bn) a year from the **welfare budget** by 2030. The plans include narrowing the eligibility criteria for the main disability benefit. Ministers argue the changes will help people [return to the workforce](#). But the government faces a large rebellion on the issue from Labour MPs.

In a joint statement Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland said they will withdraw from an international convention banning the use of antipersonnel **landmines**. The countries said they needed the “flexibility and freedom of choice” to use such weapons to defend **NATO’s** eastern border with Russia. Europe is [rushing to bolster its security](#) as America pursues a rapprochement with the Kremlin.

The last of “**the few**” has died, at the age of 105. John Hemingway was a fighter pilot in the **Battle of Britain**, fought by the Royal Air Force to stave off an aerial assault by Nazi Germany in 1940. The then prime minister, Sir Winston Churchill, said of the British victory that “Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few”.

**Figure of the day:** Nearly 3m, the number of Britons aged between 16 and 64 who are not working because of poor health. [Read the full story.](#)

# The Fed's Trumpian challenge



The Federal Reserve has a tricky balancing act. Donald Trump's tariffs may cause inflation, which would normally call for higher interest rates. At the same time, hefty tariffs will weaken growth, which would normally call for lower rates. On Wednesday Fed officials will signal which they see as the bigger risk. For now, however, they are highly unlikely to change policy: investors and analysts expect the central bank to hold interest rates at the current level of 4.25-4.5%.

But the central bankers will indicate which way policy is likely to go. On Wednesday they are due to publish quarterly projections for interest rates, GDP, inflation and unemployment. Before Mr Trump took office they had predicted that lower inflation would allow for a gradual reduction of interest rates. Now, they may again forecast gradual rate cuts, but for a more worrisome reason: to prop up a [sagging economy](#).

# Welfare cuts spark anger at Starmer



Sir Keir Starmer has recently had an easy time of it at Prime Minister's Questions, a weekly debate with the leader of the opposition in Britain's Parliament. Kemi Badenoch, leader of the Conservative Party, has struggled to land blows—to the frustration of many in her party.

But the prime minister faces a difficult session on Wednesday. Welfare cuts, announced on Tuesday, have set off the most serious infighting in his Labour Party since it took power in July. The government says they will save £5bn (\$6.5bn) a year by combining assessment for different sorts of benefits for people with illness or disability and tightening eligibility. Curbing Britain's [disastrous rise in worklessness](#) was certainly necessary: nearly 1m more working-age people are not in the workforce because of ill health than was the case on the eve of the pandemic. Still, Labour backbenchers are angry. How successfully Sir Keir quells dissent will reveal the strength of his grip on the party.



## Economic wins but political trouble for Milei



Economists expect that Argentina's economy grew by 1.7% in the last quarter of 2024 year on year, ending six quarters of contraction. Meanwhile other forecasts predict strong growth in 2025 following a decline in GDP last year. The official yearly figures for 2024 are released on Wednesday. President Javier Milei has slashed government spending, which hurt growth in the short-term. But consistent fiscal and trade surpluses, and slowing inflation, may be reversing the trend.

Still, Mr Milei faces problems. He will have to push a deal with the IMF through Congress by decree, a tactic he recently used to appoint two unpopular nominees to the Supreme Court. A Congressional investigation into the president, for promoting a [scam cryptocurrency](#), will probably begin soon. And last week police violently repressed a pensioners' protest against his spending cuts. A video of an 87-year-old woman collapsing after being hit with a baton went viral; the public took note.

## Russia woos India



Russia appeared keen to please the hosts of the Raisina Dialogue, India's premier geopolitics conference, which ends on Wednesday. Ahead of the event, the Kremlin paid for billboards across Delhi emblazoned with images of Narendra Modi, India's prime minister, and Russia's president, Vladimir Putin. The pair are "side by side" in "driving global change", they proclaimed.

There's no denying that the countries are [getting closer](#). In December India and Russia signed their biggest-ever energy agreement, worth \$13bn a year. India views Russia as helpful to its prosperity and security—and as a linchpin of its "multi-aligned" foreign policy. The West once viewed that approach to geopolitics with suspicion. But Donald Trump's overtures to Mr Putin could yet embolden India and Russia to strengthen their ties even more.

# A murder mystery in the White House



Paul William Davies was stumped. Shonda Rhimes, a powerhouse television producer, had given the writer a copy of “The Residence” to consider for adaptation. He found the book about the White House’s staff “fascinating”, but was not sure how to turn it into a show. Then, watching TV one day, he saw the chief usher testifying before a Senate committee and referring to a floor plan. Mr Davies remembers thinking: “Oh, it’s a ‘Clue’ board.” The idea of a murder mystery set in 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue took hold.

“The Residence”, a mini-series, is released on Netflix this week. The murder in question takes place during a state dinner for Australia’s prime minister. Cordelia Cupp (Uzo Aduba), a wry detective, is brought in to investigate. The show is either brilliantly, or terribly, timed. Some will run a mile from anything even remotely connected to American politics. Others will enjoy a bit of mayhem in the world’s most famous building.



## 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:** Olivia Colman won an Oscar for playing Queen Anne in which 2018 film?

**Tuesday:** How is Haydn's 45th symphony generally known?

**The great secret of power is never to will  
to do more than you can accomplish.**

*Henrik Ibsen*