

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

Tesla's shares rose 5% in pre-market trading on Friday, after losing \$150bn in value on Thursday. The rebound followed news that White House aides had scheduled a call to defuse tensions between Donald Trump and [Elon Musk](#). Their relationship imploded this week: Mr Trump threatened to cut federal contracts to Mr Musk's companies, prompting the Tesla boss, who recently left the administration, to call for the president's impeachment.

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](#).

Russia's central bank cut its key interest rate by a full percentage point, to 20%. It introduced a tight monetary policy to deal with high inflation caused by the war. The bank said that it would continue to keep "monetary conditions as tight as necessary" in order to meet its inflation target of 4% year on year by 2026.

The **Gaza Humanitarian Foundation**, an American- and Israeli-backed aid group, halted food distribution on Friday, days after reopening some sites following deadly shootings near crowds. It urged residents to avoid distribution centres for their safety. The group has said it aims to prevent **Hamas** from seizing aid. Meanwhile Israeli shelling **killed** ten Palestinians in northern **Gaza**, according to local health officials.

India's central bank cut two of its key interest rates on Friday, lowering its main policy rate by half a percentage point to 5.5% and easing banks' reserve requirements. The cut was larger than expected. With inflation at a six-year low, policymakers are shifting gear to **reviving** credit and investment. China, South Korea and Indonesia have also cut rates in recent weeks.

Britain's **Labour** Party won a surprise by-election for the Scottish parliament in Hamilton, beating the ruling **SNP** and pushing **Nigel Farage's** hard-right Reform **UK** into third place. **Reform** had been expected to come second after the **SNP**, but its campaign was derailed by a controversy over racism and the resignation of its Muslim chair. The result gives Labour a welcome lift ahead of Scotland's 2026 parliamentary elections.

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.](#)

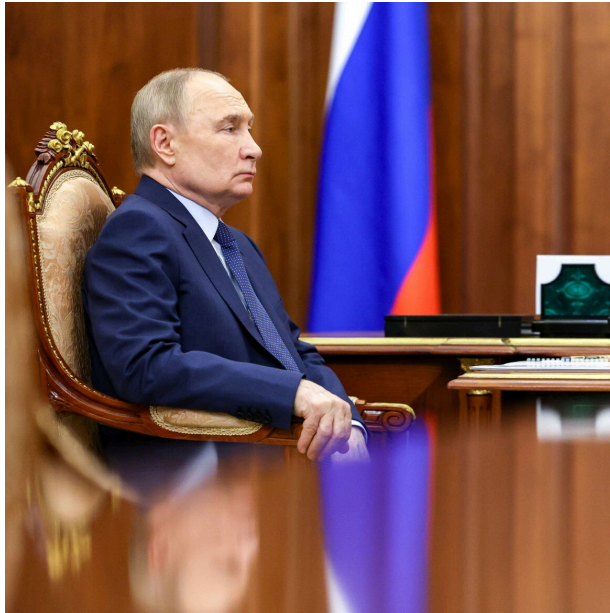


Photograph: AP

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 cut its key interest rate from 21% to 20%. 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". Contrary to *The Economist's* predictions the bank has bowed to pressure and cut rates by a percentage point.

The cut may please Vladimir Putin, who tends to leave decisions about the economy in the hands of experts. That makes a change from his usual style of authoritarian rule: Mr Putin launches wars when he wants; he crushes dissent; he will rule forever if he can.

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