

## The world in brief, June 17th 2024



A two-day [summit](#) on **Ukraine** ended in a joint declaration, signed by 80 countries, that stated that Ukraine's "territorial integrity" must be the basis for any peace. Earlier the leaders of Germany and Italy criticised a ceasefire proposal made by Vladimir Putin, Russia's president, on Friday that called for a Ukrainian withdrawal from the four territories Russia has seized during the war. Olaf Scholz called the suggestion a "dictatorial peace".

Binyamin Netanyahu called an 11-hour daily pause of military activity announced by the **Israel Defence Forces** "unacceptable", according to an official. The IDF said on Sunday that they would stop operations on the road leading out from the border crossing with Egypt to allow humanitarian aid through to Gazans. It subsequently clarified that operations in Rafah, a city in the south, would continue.

Some 250,000 people attended protests against the far-right in France on Saturday, according to the interior ministry. National Rally, a right-wing party, [performed surprisingly well](#) in European elections earlier this month, leading to Emmanuel Macron, the

president, calling a snap legislative election. Mr Macron insists that France needs a “moment of clarification” after the result, but his gamble may cause [collateral damage across the continent](#).

With the mercury soaring above 40C, 19 people have died while on the *hajj* in Saudi Arabia. Temperatures in the Arabian Peninsula are rising faster than the global average due to [climate change](#), making Islam’s most important pilgrimage increasingly dangerous. The Jordanian government confirmed that 14 of its citizens died from heatstroke, while the Iranian Red Cross confirmed the death of five Iranians.

**CNN** set out the rules for this American presidential campaign’s first **televised debate** between Joe Biden and Donald Trump on June 27th. Following a farcical event in 2020, in which Mr Trump continually talked over his opponent, the network will mute the microphone of the man not talking. No props or pre-written notes will be allowed. The debate is Joe Biden’s [best chance](#) to claw back some ground in the presidential race.

**New Caledonia** will shorten a nighttime curfew imposed during the chaos that engulfed the archipelago last month and reopen its capital’s international airport. [Violence broke out](#) on May 13th in response to a proposed law, now suspended, that would expand the electoral franchise to include French citizens who recently moved to the French territory. Nine people died, including two police officers.

**Li Qiang** visited Adelaide zoo, where he offered two pandas to **Australia** as a gesture of goodwill. China’s premier is on a four-day visit designed to show that relations between the two countries are improving after several years of hostility and trade spats. The latest practitioners of China’s “panda diplomacy” will replace Wang Wang and Fu Ni, the ursine emissaries currently posted to the zoo.

**Figure of the day:** 5%, the proportion of biomedical therapies tested on animals that ended up being approved by America's Food and Drug Administration. [Read the full story.](#)

*In the run-up to America's presidential election, we've launched The US in brief—a daily update to help you keep on top of the political stories that matter. Sign up here to receive it as a newsletter, each weekday, in your inbox.*

# China's mixed economic messages



Monday's release of new Chinese economic data, including monthly statistics for industrial production, retail sales and property investment among other things, is unusually significant. It may be the last hard data available to the country's leaders before they gather next month in Beijing for a twice-a-decade meeting on economic reform, known as the "Third Plenum". The gathering in 1978 is legendary in economic circles for kicking off China's gradual retreat from central planning.

Last month's data show that foreign demand is still robust, with exports growing by 7.6% in May compared with a year earlier. But domestic demand remains weak—consumer prices rose by only 0.3%. This mixed message suggests China's leaders have not done enough to rescue the economy from a [slump in confidence](#). But the data may not be bad enough to galvanise them to do more.

# The EU's leaders sup together



The European Union's 27 national leaders will meet in Brussels for an informal dinner on Monday. There they are expected to give Ursula von der Leyen the nod for a second term as head of the European Commission, the bloc's powerful executive. The German incumbent's centre-right political group, the European People's Party, came top in [European elections earlier this month](#), and her centrist liberal and socialist allies did well enough to provide her a majority in the European Parliament, which must approve whomever the EU leaders chose.

Other top jobs to be decided include the president of the European Council, who chairs meetings of national leaders. António Costa, Portugal's socialist former prime minister, is heavily favoured. To provide balance, the EU's leaders would like a liberal politician from the EU's eastern fringe as its top diplomat. Kaja Kallas, Estonia's prime minister, fits the bill. But some worry about her unrelentingly hawkish stance towards neighbouring Russia.



## A desolate Eid in Gaza



The Eid al-Adha holiday, which began at sunset on Saturday, is a time when wealthy families slaughter an animal and share it with the poor. But there is [little cause for celebration](#) in Gaza this year. When families gathered for communal prayers on Sunday morning, it was often amid the rubble of heavily bombed neighbourhoods. Festive meals are a forgotten luxury. In Gaza's distorted wartime economy, a single sheep costs up to \$3,000.

The Israeli offensive in and around the city of Rafah, in southern Gaza, has disrupted the flow of humanitarian aid. On Sunday the armed forces announced a “tactical pause” for 11 hours each day along a route from Kerem Shalom, the main commercial crossing in southern Gaza. That could help aid agencies pick up and deliver supplies. But that is small comfort to Gazans marking yet another holiday bereft of basic necessities, much the less traditional feasts.

# Inflation all'italiana



Italy's final inflation figures for May, issued on Monday, should provide further evidence of a soft landing after a post-pandemic surge. A provisional estimate predicted that inflation would hold steady at 0.8% compared with May the year before, among the slowest rates in the EU. Yet unemployment is at its lowest level since 2008. And the European Commission increased its forecast for Italy's GDP growth in 2024 from 0.7% to 0.9%.

But investors fret over Italy's borrowing, which was equivalent to 137% of the country's GDP by the end of 2023. Slow growth could push that ratio higher unless Giorgia Meloni's ministers can keep an iron grip on spending. Uncertainty over Europe's future after the far right's performance in [European elections](#) this month increases investors' worries. The yield gap between German and Italian bonds, a measure of investor confidence, increased over the past month from under 1.3% to more than 1.5%.

## “Outstanding” comedy



When Hannah Gadsby’s stand-up special, “Nanette”, came out in 2018, it captivated audiences and set tongues wagging. Tales of bigotry—Gadsby is a lesbian and uses “they” pronouns—were played for laughs before being re-examined for their awfulness, transmuting traumatic experiences into comic relief and back. The show offered a moving reflection on identity and a masterful analysis of comedy as an art form.

Gadsby is among the comedians featured in “Outstanding”, a new documentary on Netflix which explores the role of LGBT+ performers in the history of comedy. It tells the stories of performers such as Robin Tyler whose careers suffered after coming out. Other contributors include Eddie Izzard, Mae Martin, Wanda Sykes and Lily Tomlin, giving Netflix a chance to cheekily plug their other offerings. “Outstanding” also looks at how jokes about sexual identity went from being *verboden* to edgy to commonplace. As Gadsby says in “Nanette”, quips cannot “solve” homophobia. But they can ridicule it.



## 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 [QuizEspresso@economist.com](mailto:QuizEspresso@economist.com). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

**Monday:** What was the family name of the late Diana, Princess of Wales?

**5%**

*The proportion of biomedical therapies tested on animals that ended up being approved by America's Food and Drug Administration.*

*Read the full story.*

**Out-of-date theories are not in principle  
unscientific because they have been  
discarded.**

*Thomas Kuhn*