

The world in brief, June 6th 2024



Israel bombed a school in **Gaza** on Thursday, claiming it contained a Hamas compound. The [UN Relief and Works Agency](#) said that 6,000 displaced people were sheltering in the school at the time of the strike and that at least 35 were killed. Israel has pledged to continue its offensive even as talks are underway over the three-stage peace plan espoused by President Joe Biden. The prospect of a truce was dealt a further blow on Wednesday when Hamas's leader demanded a permanent ceasefire and Israeli withdrawal. Israel says it will only consider temporary pauses until Hamas is defeated.

The **European Central Bank** lowered its benchmark deposit rate by a quarter of a percentage point, from 4% to 3.75%. It was the bank's first such cut since it began a tightening cycle nearly two years ago. The Bank of Canada also lowered rates on Wednesday. But America's Federal Reserve will probably [hold rates steady](#) at its monetary-policy meeting on June 12th.

SpaceX held an impressive test flight for its vast [Starship](#) rocket. The mission achieved both its main aims: the ship's Super Heavy

booster splashed down in the Gulf of Mexico, while the upper Starship stage achieved a “soft” landing in the Indian Ocean. During three [previous test flights](#), the rocket exploded. SpaceX’s boss, Elon Musk, called the mission an “epic achievement”.

Narendra Modi said that he was looking forward to “closer ties” with **Taiwan**. India’s prime minister was responding to a social-media message from Taiwan’s president, Lai Ching-te, congratulating him on his [election victory](#). India is courting Taiwanese investment, while Taiwan wants Indian workers. Their friendliness will irritate China, which claims the self-governing island as its own.

A senior adviser to **Ukraine’s** president, Volodymyr Zelensky, met Chinese officials in Beijing. The meeting was arranged after China, Russia’s [most important ally](#), said it would not attend a peace summit for Ukraine scheduled for June 15th-16th in Switzerland. Mr Zelensky has accused China of helping Russia to sabotage the summit. Chinese and Ukrainian officials discussed ways to extend high-level talks and economic co-operation.

A man in **Mexico** died after contracting the **H5N2 bird-flu virus**, the first time the strain has been documented in a human. The World Health Organisation said the source of the infection was unknown and that the man had underlying health problems. It said the current risk to the general population is low. The virus is different to the H5N1 virus that is currently [causing alarm in America](#).

Fiji’s 75-year-old prime minister, [Sitiveni Rabuka](#), won a bronze medal for shot put at the Oceania Athletics Championships. Mr Rabuka is a former athlete and army chief, who competed at the Commonwealth Games in 1974 and instigated a military coup in 1987 (more recently, he was democratically elected in 2022). He described his third place in the over-65s category as a “morale booster”.

Figure of the day: 37,000, the number of homes damaged after the destruction of the Kakhovka dam in Ukraine in June 2023. [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.

The EU goes to the polls



After South Africa, Mexico and India, it is now the European Union's turn to [head to the ballot box](#). From Thursday through to Sunday over 350m Europeans from Finland to Portugal are eligible to vote for 720 members of the European Parliament. The hard right is expected to make gains, but the centrist parties that currently dominate should still eke out a majority. The ballot will impact national politics in each of the 27 member states: in France, a weak showing for Emmanuel Macron's liberal party—which is expected to be trounced by the National Rally party, led by Marine Le Pen—will further dent the president's standing.

The result of the elections will help EU leaders appoint the next head of the European Commission, the bloc's powerful executive arm. [Ursula von der Leyen](#), who is both the incumbent and the lead candidate for the centre-right European People's Party, is favourite to win another five-year term.

A fraught friendship between China and Pakistan



Shehbaz Sharif, the prime minister of Pakistan, is on his first visit to China since winning re-election in March. He wants to revive the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a \$65bn network of road, rail and energy projects. His hosts want the \$1.8bn that Pakistan owes to power plants which China built and operates in the country. Yet cash-strapped Pakistan—which is currently negotiating a fresh bailout from the [International Monetary Fund](#), its 25th in 76 years—urgently needs more Chinese money. China rolled over a \$2bn loan to Pakistan in February, and Mr Sharif is seeking new loans.

Meanwhile security is a big worry: at least 17 Chinese nationals have been killed in Pakistan since 2021. In March an Islamist suicide-bomber killed five Chinese engineers at a Pakistani dam site and separatists attacked a Chinese-run port in [Balochistan](#), a volatile province bordering Iran. Mr Sharif has called Pakistan and China's friendship “unshakeable”. That sounds like wishful thinking.

The ECB's big moment on interest rates



On Thursday, as markets overwhelmingly expected, the European Central Bank cut interest rates. The ECB's governing council agreed to reduce the benchmark deposit rate by a quarter of a percentage point, to 3.75%. It is the bank's first such cut since it began raising rates in July 2022 to tame the post-pandemic surge in inflation. The rate of price growth in the euro zone has now slowed from 10.6% year on year in October 2022 to 2.6% year on year this May, in part because of lower natural-gas prices.

Markets were also watching closely for hints about the pace of future cuts. Though relatively close to the ECB's 2% target, May's inflation figure was a slight increase from 2.4% [in April](#). The general expectation is that the ECB will cut rates three times in total this year. But Christine Lagarde, the president, made sure to emphasise that the bank was "not pre-committing to a particular rate path".

Remembering D-Day, 80 years later



Over 200 veterans gathered on Omaha Beach in Normandy on Thursday to commemorate the [80th anniversary of D-Day](#), the allied invasion of Nazi-occupied Europe. They were joined by America's president, Joe Biden, France's president, Emmanuel Macron, and other Western leaders for a ceremony of thanksgiving. Separate American, British, and Canadian events will also be held.

The occasion is all the more poignant for the attendance of Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's president. His presence offers a particularly sharp reminder of European gratitude for transatlantic support, and of worries that it can no longer be taken for granted. In a televised interview on Thursday evening Mr Macron may raise the controversial idea of a European military training coalition for Ukraine, which would operate inside its borders. He holds talks on Friday in Paris with Mr Zelensky, who is also scheduled to give a speech to the French National Assembly.

Passing the baton in New York



Gustav Mahler's second symphony is known as "Resurrection" after the name of a hymn, sung by the chorus in the sublime finale, which the composer heard at a funeral in 1894. The orchestra and the singers pass through every stage of human life as they scale this 90-minute musical mountain before they are, in Mahler's words, "raised on angel's wings to the highest heights".

This week, Jaap van Zweden conducts the Resurrection Symphony in his farewell concerts as music director of the New York Philharmonic. Leonard Bernstein, a former music director of the orchestra, was known for performing the piece, as shown in "Maestro", last year's biopic.

The symphony's themes of culmination and transition sound an appropriate note for Mr van Zweden to conclude six eventful years in charge of one of America's top orchestras. He passes the baton to the flamboyant and populist [Gustavo Dudamel](#). A Venezuelan, he will be the first Latin American in the post.

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 BST on Friday to QuizEspresso@economist.com. We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Thursday: Who, as finance minister of Louis XIV in France, proclaimed that “the art of taxation consists of so plucking the goose as to obtain the largest number of feathers with the smallest possible amount of hissing”?

Wednesday: What is the capital of Nevada?

37,000

The number of homes damaged after the destruction of the Kakhovka dam in Ukraine in June 2023.

Read the full story.

**A great truth is a truth whose opposite is
also a truth.**

Thomas Mann