

The world in brief, June 22nd 2024



António Guterres, the UN's secretary-general, expressed concern over [growing tensions](#) between **Israel** and **Lebanon**, warning that “one rash move” might “trigger a catastrophe that goes far beyond the border”. Israel and Hizbullah, the Lebanese Shia militia, have been exchanging rocket fire since October, though the attacks have recently [escalated](#). This week the Israel Defence Forces said that they had approved “operational plans for an offensive in Lebanon”. Earlier, Palestinian officials said that Israeli strikes in southern Gaza had killed at least 45 people. Meanwhile, **Armenia** became the fifth European country this year to recognise [Palestine as a state](#).

America's **Supreme Court** dismissed a challenge to a federal law that bars people subject to domestic-violence restraining orders from owning guns. [Such restrictions](#) against people posing a “credible threat” to others' safety, the majority of justices ruled, are “consistent with the Second Amendment”. The ruling was a departure for the court, which has [expanded gun-ownership rights](#) in recent years.

Apple said it would not release its new artificial-intelligence features on iPhones in **Europe** later this year, when they are set to be launched in other regions. The tech giant blamed “uncertainties” brought by the EU’s [Digital Markets Act](#), which requires big online platforms to share more data with regulators and auditing firms. The legislation has already forced Apple to make changes to its [App Store](#).

Germany arrested three men suspected of spying on a Ukrainian in Frankfurt. The authorities did not disclose which intelligence agency the three men—who were citizens of Armenia, Russia and Ukraine—are believed to have been working for. The men are the latest among a number of individuals who have been arrested in Germany on suspicion of [espionage](#) since the beginning of the year.

Andrej Babis, a former Czech prime minister, said that his party would leave Renew Europe, the [European Parliament’s](#) liberal bloc. The departure of Mr Babis’s party is a blow to the group, whose members support centrist politicians like [Emmanuel Macron](#), France’s president. Mr Babis said his party’s MEPs would break from the bloc over its support for liberal immigration and climate policies.

Opinion polls do not bode well for President **Emmanuel Macron’s** party ahead of **France’s** snap [parliamentary vote](#). *The Economist’s* [poll tracker](#) puts Marine Le Pen’s hard-right National Rally in the lead, followed by a left-wing coalition. Mr Macron’s [centrist alliance](#) trails them in third place. Parliamentary candidates are campaigning this weekend ahead of the first round of voting on June 30th.

Barcelona’s mayor announced plans to ban the renting of apartments to tourists by 2028. Jaume Collboni says a boom in short-term rentals and an ensuing surge in rental prices means many locals cannot afford flats. Mr Collboni believes he is tackling the Spanish city’s “largest problem”. Other European cities are also

trying to curb overtourism. [Venice](#) recently introduced an admission fee.

Word of the week: *Cohabitation*, a French word that describes a political situation in the country where the president represents a different party to that which commands a majority in parliament. [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.

Putin's defence overhaul



In Russia Saturday is the “Day of Remembrance and Sorrow”, which commemorates the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. Discussion of the second world war is important for Vladimir Putin’s regime: the president spuriously casts his invasion of Ukraine as an attempt to “denazify” the country. The mood of the day is solemn. Officials lower flags to half-mast and leave flowers at memorials.

Amid all the reflection on past wars, the Kremlin’s modern aggression continues. Mr Putin has overhauled his defence ministry, promoting loyal officials to prepare for a long fight. Last month he replaced his long-standing defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, with [Andrei Belousov](#), an economist. On Monday he dismissed four deputy defence ministers. Their replacements include a “close relative” of the president and the son of a former prime minister. Mr Putin claims to be defending Russia against foreign evil. In truth, he seeks only power for himself and for his cronies.

China's controversial festival



As some people attend China's notorious "Lychee and Dog Meat" festival this weekend, which began in the southern city of Yulin on Friday, others might wonder where the supply of meat has come from. Activists reckon thousands of dogs will be slaughtered during the ten-day festival. Some will have once been pets, stolen by dog-meat traffickers.

But the festival's days may be numbered. As [Asia cracks down on the dog-meat trade](#), China has gradually tightened the leash. In 2020 two southern cities, Shenzhen and Zhuhai, banned sales of dog meat. The central government has opined that dogs are no longer livestock but "companion animals". Polls suggest few Chinese oppose bans.

Yulin's attempt to ban dog in 2017 was torpedoed by backlash from dog-meat farmers. But the experience of neighbouring countries shows that younger Asians increasingly see dog meat as an anachronism. Even without an outright ban, China may simply lose its appetite.

France's quickfire election campaign



Parliamentary candidates head out this weekend to hand out flyers and chat to voters across France. They have just one week left before the first round of voting in legislative elections on June 30th. A run-off takes place on July 7th. [Emmanuel Macron's](#) decision to call a snap election has made the campaign short, intense and improvised.

[Voting intentions](#) have shifted little since the campaign officially began on Monday. On Thursday Harris, a polling agency, put [Marine Le Pen's](#) hard-right National Rally on top with 33%, with the left-wing alliance, New Popular Front, second with 26% and Mr Macron's centrist Ensemble alliance trailing in third with 21%. Another poll, by Ifop, showed the same order but gave Ensemble 22%, a four-point jump from its previous poll. This has lifted spirits among some of the president's deputies. But it will nonetheless be extremely difficult for Mr Macron's party to shift the mood in the remaining week.

Naomi Campbell brings glamour to the gallery



Riding on the coat-tails of last year's blockbuster Chanel exhibition, London's V&A is back with another fashion show. This time it is putting a supermodel in the spotlight. "Naomi: In Fashion" opens on Saturday to celebrate the life of Naomi Campbell, a British trailblazer, who made history as the first black woman to grace the covers of Paris Vogue, Russian Vogue and TIME magazine.

The show highlights pioneering moments in Ms Campbell's career with over 100 outfits from her wardrobe and the museum's collections. But it does not shy away from less glamorous aspects: her infamous catwalk stumble in 1993 is invoked with the guilty pair of Vivienne Westwood platforms; the Dolce & Gabbana gown she wore during her community service for an assault conviction is on display. What isn't mentioned is the controversial shutdown of Ms Campbell's fashion charity in March after allegations of financial mismanagement. Nevertheless, as the first of its kind, the exhibition certainly gives the V&A trendsetter status.

Weekend profile: Kaja Kallas, the European Union's next top diplomat



Kaja Kallas may be the world's most disarming iron lady. Estonia's prime minister owes her reputation to her steely resolve towards Russia. She raised the alarm over Vladimir Putin's invasion plans at a time when others dismissed the possibility, and her tiny country is proportionally one of the most generous contributors to [Ukraine's](#) defence. In February Russia issued a warrant for her arrest over her government's removal of Soviet war memorials. Yet in person she is guileless and self-effacing, confessing to imposter syndrome.

Ms Kallas is now the favoured candidate to become the head of the European External Action Service, the EU's diplomatic arm, one of the bloc's four top jobs. Some leaders worry that Ms Kallas will focus too much on the conflict with Russia, to the detriment of Europe's relations with the rest of the world.

Fear of Russia runs deep for Ms Kallas. Her mother and grandmother were among thousands of Estonians deported to Siberia when the Soviet Union conquered the country in 1940. But

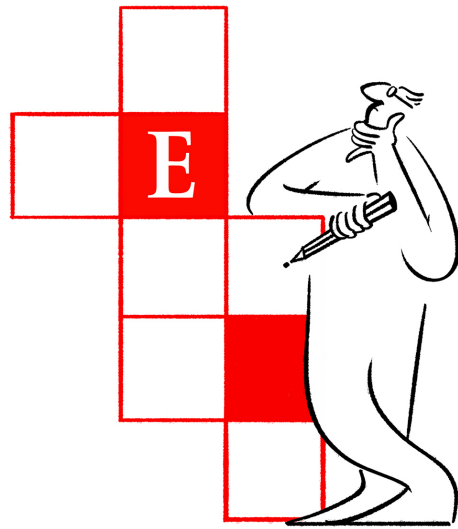
like many members of the intelligentsia, the Kallases adapted to communism. Her father, Siim Kallas, became a member of the Soviet Union's legislature. After independence he helped found the liberal Reform Party and served as prime minister in 2002-03.

At first, Ms Kallas wanted nothing to do with her family's political dynasty. But after a decade practising law, she joined the Reform Party, rising to its leader in 2018. After becoming prime minister in 2021, she came into her own. In domestic policy she managed as a technocrat and helped shape Estonia's reputation as a [pioneer of digital government](#). When Russia invaded Ukraine, her stature rose further.

In an election [last year](#), Ms Kallas trounced the populist opposition, winning 31% of the vote. Since then she has pressed ahead with her liberal agenda, passing legislation to allow gay marriage, which is unpopular in socially-conservative Estonia. But a scandal involving her husband, who held shares in a company that continued to do business (legally) in Russia, has dented her reputation. Many in the Reform Party see it as a good moment for her to move on.

Ms Kallas would probably adjust easily to being back in Brussels. But the job of EEAS chief is a frustrating one. Divisions between EU members means that there is often no European consensus to represent.

Weekly crossword



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:

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am BST 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.

Cryptic clues

1 down Drunk person, alas, is without large source of energy (5,6)

1 across Son receives endless donations of fish (6)

2 across Autocrat's portion of output I nicked (5)

3 across Legislative body consumed by old Japanese money (6)

Factual clues

1 down What will provide about 6% of the world's electricity this year (5,6)

1 across Britain's biggest food export in 2023 (6)

2 across Who is engaged in a bromance with Kim Jong Un (5)

3 across What Republicans are favoured to win (6)

The winners of last week's quiz



Thank you to everyone who took part in this week's quiz. The winners, chosen at random, were:

Peter Pendergest, Burbank, Canada

Carlos Sangil, Madrid, Spain

Joy Pinsky, Walnut Creek, California, America

They all gave the correct answers of Spencer, bacon, El Salvador, the Jackson 5 (also the Jacksons) and Pablo Escobar. The theme is 20th century artists: Stanley Spencer, Francis Bacon, Salvador Dali, Jackson Pollock and Pablo Picasso.

The questions were:

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

Tuesday: The terms streaky, back and short cut are associated with what type of meat?

Wednesday: Which central American country was the first in the world to adopt bitcoin as legal tender?

Thursday: Jackie, Tito, Jermaine, Marlon and Michael were the members of which musical group?

Friday: Which drug baron was the founder of the Medellín cartel?

Cohabitation

A French word that describes a political situation in the country where the president represents a different party to that which commands a majority in parliament.

Read the full story.

Do it big, do it right, and do it with style.

Fred Astaire