

## The world in brief, June 14th 2024



**Israel** continued its offensive on Rafah, as the leader of the World Health Organisation said that much of **Gaza** faced “famine-like conditions”. Meanwhile, **Jake Sullivan**, America’s national security adviser, said that there was no clear timetable for a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas. He said that some of the changes that Hamas has demanded on the [American-sponsored plan](#) for a ceasefire were “not consistent” with what America had laid out.

America’s **Supreme Court** unanimously rejected a bid to restrict [mifepristone](#), preserving widespread access to the common **abortion drug**. The justices ruled that the challengers—anti-abortion doctors and medical organisations who “do not prescribe or use mifepristone”—lacked legal standing to sue the Food and Drug Administration, which approved the pill and has gradually made it easier to obtain.

**Joe Biden** and **Volodymyr Zelensky** signed a bilateral security agreement committing America to providing military support to Ukraine for the next decade. The announcement came during this

year's meeting of the **G7**, a club of rich democracies. Earlier, the club said it would loan Ukraine \$50bn—repaid with interest earned on frozen Russian assets—to [its fight](#) against **Russia** and to help it rebuild.

**Argentina's** Senate [approved two economic reform bills](#) in a victory for [Javier Milei](#), the president. The law, which was narrowly passed after a heated debate, seeks to privatise state entities, lower taxes and water down labour rights. Protesters clashed with police outside the Congress building.

Britain's **Labour Party** launched its [election manifesto](#), promising to raise £8.5bn (\$10.9bn) in taxes. **Sir Keir Starmer**, the party leader, said he would introduce VAT on private-school fees, and a windfall tax on oil and gas firms to fund a publicly owned power company. *The Economist's* [election forecast](#) suggests that Sir Keir is extremely likely to become prime minister.

**South Korea** extended a short-selling ban until next March, while the government develops a system to detect illicit [short-selling](#). The Financial Services Commission, a regulator, also said it would strengthen fines on such trading. South Korea's attitude towards **short-selling** is one of the reasons why MSCI, a company that creates market benchmarks, has been [reluctant](#) to grant it developed-market status.

Football players sued **FIFA**, the governing body of the sport, over its plans to [raise the number of matches](#) per season, particularly via the expansion of the Club World Cup from 2025. Players' unions in England and France filed the claim in a court in Brussels, Belgium's capital. They argue that the extra matches will put players at risk of injury and fatigue.

**Figure of the day:** 58%, the share of Chinese students in the AI field who stayed in the country for graduate school or work in 2022, up from 34% in 2019. [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.*

# Conservatives gather in Michigan



Donald Trump heads to the battleground state of Michigan this weekend to shore up support from social conservatives. It will be the presidential candidate's first visit to the state since his [“hush money” conviction](#) on May 30th. The former president will be the headline speaker at the People's Convention 2024, which begins in Detroit on Friday and is sponsored by Turning Point Action, a conservative grassroots organisation.

Charlie Kirk, the founder of TPA, has said the summit is a chance for Mr Trump to address important audiences: “rural voters, union workers, and urban working-class Americans”. The city is more than three-quarters black, and [polling](#) suggests Mr Trump may perform better with the group than other Republicans have in the past. He will also take part in a roundtable conversation at a church in Detroit. Mr Trump remains a favourite with social conservatives, though some have expressed reservations about his recent ambivalence on abortion.

# China plays a game of bluff at sea



Friday is the final day before the Chinese coastguard assumes unilateral authority to arrest foreigners and seize foreign vessels it considers trespassers in waters China claims. It will have the power to detain them for up to 60 days. Some of those waters are also claimed by Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam and other countries. Any arrests in contested parts of the South China Sea or East China Sea will probably exacerbate the friction between China and its neighbours, many of which oppose Chinese maritime expansion into the western Pacific.

The [Philippines](#)—an ally of America—is one such neighbour. Philippine forces say they will prevent any arrests of Filipinos and their vessels in contested waters. The Philippines is betting that the Chinese will dare not risk using the armed force required, for fear of provoking intervention by its allies. In this game of bluff, a fragile peace is at stake.

## A new era in South Africa



The meeting of [South Africa's](#) National Assembly on Friday will be one of the most important in 30 years of multi-racial democracy. At the general election on May 29th the African National Congress [lost its parliamentary majority](#) for the first time. Its leader, Cyril Ramaphosa, is expecting to be re-elected as president—but this time as the head of a “government of national unity”.

After negotiations within and among the main parties, the ANC appears set to form a coalition that includes the second-largest party, the liberal Democratic Alliance, and the Inkatha Freedom Party, a Zulu nationalist outfit. This is a much better scenario than if Mr Ramaphosa had allied himself with extremist offshoots of the ANC—the Economic Freedom Fighters or uMkhonto weSizwe, led by his predecessor, Jacob Zuma.

The coalition still faces huge challenges, such as rampant crime and mass unemployment. But for now, South Africans should celebrate how their democracy has proved principled, pragmatic and resilient.



# Steady as she goes: Russia's economy



Last year Russia's economy faced an inflationary surge. The government is pumping money into the defence industry to prosecute Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine. All this extra demand is running up against constrained supply, in particular labour shortages: many people have left the country, or been sent to the front line. The surge in wages threatened to send inflation spiralling.

Yet figures due on Friday are expected to show that [Russia's central bank](#) now has inflation under control, at an annual rate of around 7.5%. Higher borrowing costs have encouraged Russians to keep money in bank accounts rather than spend it. The value of the rouble has recently edged up, cutting the cost of imports. And there is little sign that higher interest rates are crushing economic activity: other data on Friday are expected to show that in the first quarter GDP grew by 5.4% year on year. Russia's economy is doing surprisingly, and troublingly, well.

# Disney explores teenage emotion



In 2015 Disney Pixar released “[Inside Out](#)”, an animation which followed Riley, a young girl struggling to adapt to her family’s move from Minnesota to San Francisco. She grapples with five personified emotions: Joy, Sadness, Fear, Disgust and Anger. They inhabit the “headquarters” situated in the intricate maze of Riley’s changing mind—and, led by Joy, they track her thinking through an ever-changing control panel. The film was a commercial success, and won an Oscar for Best Animated Feature.

On Friday the sequel, “Inside Out 2”, will hit screens. This time Riley is 13, on the threshold of puberty. New emotions appear in headquarters: Anxiety (voiced by Maya Hawke), Envy (Ayo Edebiri), Ennui (Adèle Exarchopoulos) and Embarrassment (Paul Walter Hauser). Anxiety quickly takes control, pushing the original five emotions away. Kelsey Mann’s directorial debut looks likely to be as much of a tearjerker as Pete Docter’s original.



## Daily quiz

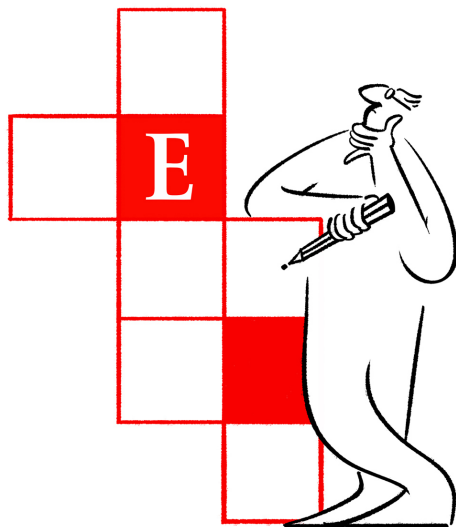


We will serve you a new question each day this week. On Friday your challenge is to give us all five answers and, as important, tell us the connecting theme. Email your responses (and include mention of your home city and country) by 1700 BST on Friday to [QuizEspresso@economist.com](mailto:QuizEspresso@economist.com). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

**Friday:** What is the name of Nintendo's games console?

**Thursday:** What type of material was historically sold in measures such as a quire, ream or bundle?

## The winners of last 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:

**Brenda Eaton**, Victoria, Canada

**Abby Dyson**, Welwyn Garden City, Britain

**Carlos Sangil**, Madrid, Spain

They all gave the correct answers of [Saudi Aramco](#), [snooze](#), [album](#), and [Open AI](#). Check back tomorrow for this week's crossword.

**58%**

*the share of Chinese students in the AI field who stayed in the country for graduate school or work in 2022, up from 34% in 2019. [Read the full story.](#)*

**Poetry is the revelation of a feeling that the poet believes to be interior and personal but which the reader recognizes as his own.**

*Salvatore Quasimodo*