

The world in brief, July 3rd 2024



Marine Le Pen, the leader of France's hard-right **National Rally**, said that she would seek support from candidates of other parties to form a government if her party failed to win an outright majority after the second round of the [parliamentary election](#) this Sunday. Polls suggest that RN, which won 33.2% of the vote in the first round, will miss the threshold of 289 seats. Left-wing and centrist parties have been forming strategic alliances to consolidate the vote against the far-right. According to *Le Monde*, a newspaper, more than 210 of their candidates have dropped out.

More than 100 people were killed in a stampede at a Hindu gathering in Hathras, a city in northern **India**, according to local officials. Many women and children were among the casualties. Fatal incidents are frequent at Indian [religious festivals](#), where large crowds often squeeze into small spaces. Some 115 pilgrims died in a stampede in Madhya Pradesh in 2013.

Lloyd Doggett, from Texas, became the first **Democratic** congressman to publicly urge **President Joe Biden** to [step down](#) as the party's nominee following his performance in last week's

debate. Also on Tuesday **Nancy Pelosi**, the former House speaker, said it was “legitimate” to ask questions about the president’s abilities, and **Jim Clyburn**, a staunch ally of Mr Biden, said he would—hypothetically—back Kamala Harris, the vice-president, as a replacement candidate.

America’s defence secretary, Lloyd Austin, announced \$2.3bn in aid for **Ukraine** to boost its stock of critical weapons. The war-torn country [urgently needs](#) air-defence interceptors. Mr Austin said his government would “take steps to build a bridge to NATO membership for Ukraine” as he met his Ukrainian counterpart in Washington.

The judge who oversaw **Donald Trump’s** [hush-money trial](#) delayed the former president’s **sentencing hearing** from next week until September while he considers whether the Supreme Court’s [immunity ruling](#) applies to the case. Mr Trump’s lawyers began an effort to overturn the New York verdict—guilty on 34 counts—shortly after America’s top court ruled that presidents had at least “presumptive immunity” for official acts.

America’s drug regulator approved [donanemab](#), an **Alzheimer’s** treatment developed by Eli Lilly, a drugmaker. The medicine slows the progression of Alzheimer’s—the most common cause of [dementia](#), the seventh leading cause of death worldwide—by targeting proteins that form plaques in the brains of people with the disease. It is only the third such drug to be approved since 2021, amid concerns over its side-effects and success rates.

At least six people have been killed by **Hurricane Beryl**, which made landfall on the island of Carriacou in Grenada on Monday—and later broke records as the Atlantic Ocean’s earliest category-five hurricane. The World Meteorological Organisation said that the storm set an “alarming precedent” for “what is expected to be a very active” [hurricane](#) season. It is due to reach Jamaica on Wednesday.

Figure of the day: 42%, Amazon's share of American e-commerce, far larger than the 6% captured by Walmart, its nearest online competitor. [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.

Xi and Putin meet in Central Asia



On Wednesday the leaders of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation hold a summit in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan. China, Russia and several Central Asian countries founded the SCO in 2001 to discuss security and economic matters, with a focus on fighting terrorism. But it has since expanded. Its members, made up of non- or anti-Western powers, now account for over 40% of the world's population and a quarter of its GDP. India joined in 2017. Iran did so last year, and Belarus is about to.

SCO summits rarely see substantial decisions. But Xi Jinping, China's leader, and Vladimir Putin, his Russian counterpart, can use the meetings to showcase their [counter-offer](#) to a Western-led world order. Mr Putin will probably blame America and its allies for the war in Ukraine. And Mr Xi will no doubt talk up the [Belt and Road](#) Initiative, his global infrastructure program. Astana's own light rail system is being built by Chinese engineers with Chinese equipment.

Indian mobile operators eye greater revenues



This year India's [Jio](#) became the world's biggest mobile operator in terms of data use. The firm's 108m customers consumed 40.9 exabytes (roughly 44bn gigabytes) between January and March. The gorging was driven by cheap tariffs, which have helped Jio become India's market leader. The policy has also forced others to slash rates, making Indian data prices among the lowest in the world. The average cost of 1GB of data in India is just \$0.16, compared with \$0.38 in China or \$6 in America.

But the era of dirt-cheap data may soon be ending. On Wednesday Jio will increase tariffs by around 20%, as will [Airtel](#), its biggest competitor. Indian operators are hoping to boost revenues after collectively splurging more than \$20bn over the past year or so to expand their 5G networks. Investors are pleased. The announcements caused shares in Reliance Industries, Jio's parent company, and Airtel to jump.

Cambodia's loot returned



“The biggest art theft in history” happened in Cambodia, claims Brad Gordon, a lawyer helping the country reclaim stolen statues. Looters hacked stone gods from temples as civil wars raged between the 1970s and 1990s. But now [several artworks](#) are being handed back. The latest delivery of 14 artefacts arrives from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York on Wednesday.

The Met says this completes the removal of all of its Angkorian sculptures known to be associated with Douglas Latchford, a British art dealer who was indicted in America in 2019 for trafficking Cambodian relics. Even so, Cambodia alleges the Met has more of its alleged loot.

Many countries want to repatriate their stolen antiquities, but Cambodia stands out among its bigger neighbours for its success. An energetic, media-savvy local restitution team helps. So do several different American [agencies](#), such as the FBI, which help to track down stolen statues. Cambodia says it has brought home 800 artefacts in the past two decades.

Politics with a twist in Northern Ireland



On Wednesday, on the eve of Britain's general election, political attention in Northern Ireland will turn elsewhere, if just for a day. [Sir Jeffrey Donaldson](#) (pictured, left) will appear in court on 18 sex charges, including rape, to decide if the case should go to a higher court. Until five weeks ago he was an MP; until three months ago, he was leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, Northern Ireland's main pro-British party.

Sir Jeffrey's trial will not help the DUP, already down by almost a third in the polls since the last general election in 2019. Sinn Féin, which wants a united Ireland (and whose MPs don't take their Westminster seats), could become the biggest party after Thursday's vote. But that will depend on the fortunes of the Alliance Party, which does not align itself as being either pro-British or for a united Ireland. Polls suggest it could win three seats for the first time in its 54-year history, including unseating Sir Jeffrey's successor as DUP leader, Gavin Robinson.

The Minions' dominion: “Despicable Me 4”



“Despicable Me”, released in 2010, is an animated movie about a supervillain (voiced by Steve Carell) who becomes a devoted adoptive father with the help of his yellow, pill-shaped, gobbledygook-spouting henchmen, the Minions. It isn’t as ingenious or as expensive as the average Disney or Pixar production, but the “Despicable Me” series is now the highest grossing animated film franchise in history. So far it has boasted two spin-off Minions prequels and three sequels.

The latest instalment, “Despicable Me 4”, released on Wednesday in America, does not have a plot so much as a collection of wacky vignettes. It certainly won’t win an Oscar—only one film in the franchise, “Despicable Me 2”, has even been nominated. But maybe the anarchic silliness is the secret of the series’ appeal. Most of Disney and Pixar’s cartoons are so earnest that the Minions’ endless flatulence jokes can seem like a breath of fresh air.

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.

Wednesday: What ancient time-telling device only worked in the daytime?

Tuesday: Which comic book character is the archenemy of the Fantastic Four?

42%

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[Read the full article.](#)*

Music inflames temperament

Jim Morrison