

Catch up: America strikes Mexican drug cartel; arsonists target Paris Olympics



American authorities arrested two leaders of [the Sinaloa cartel](#), a **Mexican drug-trafficking** group formerly run by Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán, in Texas. One of the detainees is Ismael “El Mayo” Zambada, who co-founded the group with El Chapo; the other is El Chapo’s son. They face multiple charges. The cartel trafficks fentanyl, an opioid that kills around 70,000 Americans each year, among other drugs.

France’s high-speed rail network was hit by “malicious acts” hours before the opening of [the Paris Olympics](#). Vandals lit fires on lines to the west, north and east of the capital. Disruption is expected to last all weekend and perhaps longer. More than 300,000 spectators are expected to [gather in Paris](#) on Friday to watch the games’ opening ceremony.

Following a meeting with **Binyamin Netanyahu**, Israel’s prime minister, **Kamala Harris** said that while she had an “unwavering commitment” to Israel, she would “not be silent” about the “scale of human suffering in Gaza”. The vice-president also denounced

“hate-fuelled” anti-Israel protests in Washington. [Mr Netanyahu](#) earlier met Joe Biden, America’s president.

A group of **North Korean hackers** conducted a global cyber-espionage scheme to try to steal military secrets, America, Britain and South Korea said in a joint statement. The attempt was allegedly backed by the hermit kingdom’s intelligence agency. The group breached systems at a range of engineering and defence firms worldwide. American officials claim it is funded by ransomware attacks on American hospitals and health-care companies.

California’s top court upheld a ruling that allows **Uber** and **Lyft** to classify their [drivers](#) as contractors instead of employees. A labour union had argued the rule was unconstitutional because it does not give workers fair benefits. The companies argued that overturning the rule would reshape the state’s gig economy; Uber said the decision gives drivers “freedom to work when and how they want”.

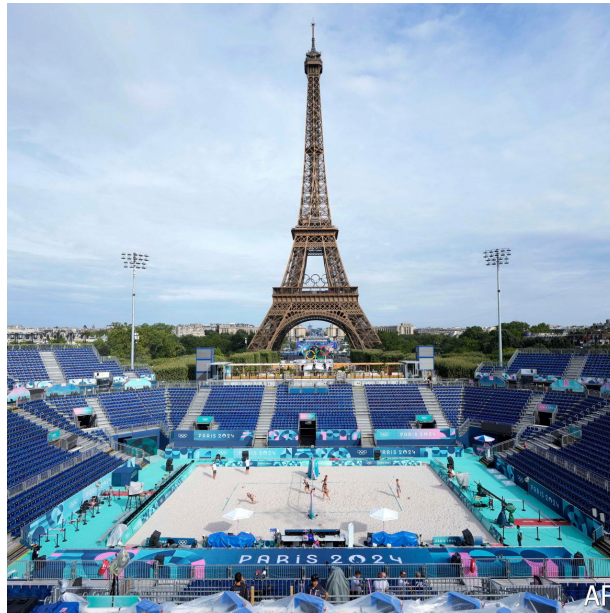
Typhoon Gaemi hit Fujian, a province in southeastern China, after causing destruction in Taiwan and the Philippines. More than 240,000 of Fujian’s residents were evacuated. It is the third typhoon to hit China’s eastern coast this year, and the most powerful. It killed at least 21 people in the Philippines and three in Taiwan.

Thousands of **video-game** performers belonging to SAG-AFTRA, a union for Hollywood actors, voted to begin striking on Friday. The union had been negotiating for two years with some of the world’s top [gaming companies](#), including Activision, Disney and Epic Games, to win protections against the “abuse” of AI. Actors want assurance that the technology will not be used to replicate their work without their consent or adequate compensation.

Figure of the day: 11%, the share of Olympic medals won by American athletes between 2000 and 2021. [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 Olympics begin in Paris



The City of Light will dazzle on Friday, when the Paris Olympic Games commence. If all goes to plan, the opening ceremony will take place along the River Seine, with a flotilla of boats carrying national teams past bridges and river banks packed with spectators. The event has been designed to show off the diversity and energy of modern France, not just its past grandeur.

The games will run until August 11th. Some of the events will take place against iconic Paris backdrops: skateboarding in the Place de la Concorde; beach volleyball by the Eiffel Tower. But the organisers also plan to leave behind a [legacy of better transport](#) and sports facilities for the city's peripheral suburbs, or *banlieues*. The idea is to help bridge the divide between the capital and the more neglected neighbourhoods in a way that outlasts the staging of the games themselves.

America's Fed gets another nudge



Central bankers and Wall Street types will be paying close attention to inflation data that will be released on Friday. The price index for core personal consumption expenditures is the Federal Reserve's preferred gauge. By that measure annual inflation has fallen 0.3 percentage points this year to 2.6% in June. Analysts expect it to fall to 2.4% on Friday, bringing it closer to the Fed's 2% target.

The bank is under growing pressure to [ease interest rates](#) when it meets next Wednesday. Earlier this week a former president of the New York Fed called on the central bankers to loosen up, citing a softening labour market and [weaker consumer spending](#) among low-income households. The bank has stalled because it fears [stoking inflation](#). A high figure on Friday would confirm these anxieties. But if the price index falls, that will reinforce a growing view that inflation is no longer the biggest risk to America's economy.

Russia's central bank prepares to lift rates



Russia's economy has given Vladimir Putin much to be happy about of late. Despite Western sanctions on everything from oil to [diamonds](#), the economy grew by 5.4% in the first quarter of 2024, compared with the previous year. But Russia's economy is running hot. State handouts, especially for arms makers, have pushed unemployment to a record low and sent wages spiralling. Last month prices were up by 8.6% year on year. Inflation is running at double its target.

As a result, the Central Bank of Russia on Friday is all but certain to lift its benchmark interest rate for the first time since December, from 16% to 18%. That may not be enough to get prices under control. The Kremlin shows no sign of winding down its war machine, though it did recently end a costly [mortgage-subsidy scheme](#) that drew complaints from the CBR. That may give the spirits of Russia's central bankers a gentle lift.

Trump re-casts his attack lines



Donald Trump had built his campaign around criticising a “weak” Joe Biden. Less than a week after America’s president dropped his bid for re-election, Mr Trump’s [attack lines](#) against Kamala Harris, the presumptive Democratic nominee, are beginning to take shape. The Republican former president will continue to hone them on Friday when he appears as a special guest at a summit hosted by Turning Point Action, a right-wing group.

Rather than pushing his opponent’s frailty, as he did with Mr Biden, (Ms Harris is 59 years old), he is characterising her as a “radical left lunatic”. Not only is she part of Mr Biden’s administration, his argument goes, she is responsible for some of the worst parts of it. Ms Harris ran to the left of Mr Biden during her ill-fated presidential campaign in 2020, and Republicans have emphasised her more unpopular positions, such as her opposition to fracking. But as America’s first female, non-white vice-president, she has also faced heaps of sexism and racism. So far Mr Trump has attacked Ms Harris’s record more than her identity. Whether Mr Trump will use these same tired tropes remains an open question.

The buried history of a Japanese mine



For decades, residents of Sado island, off the northern coast of Japan's mainland, have advocated for a historic gold mine there to gain global recognition. On Friday, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee will start discussing the mine's potential inscription on its [coveted register](#).

But the Sado mine has prompted a diplomatic spat. [South Korea's](#) government has opposed it becoming a World Heritage Site because of the mine's wartime history: between 1940 and 1945, the Japanese empire forced at least 1,500 Koreans to work at the site. But Japan wants to omit that part of the story. It focuses instead on things such as the unique mining techniques that were developed there during the Edo period (1603-1868), when Japan closed off its border. In 2022, when Japan's nationalist government made its first submission, UNESCO asked it to revise its narrative. Whether the committee will approve Japan's request this time is unclear.

Daily quiz



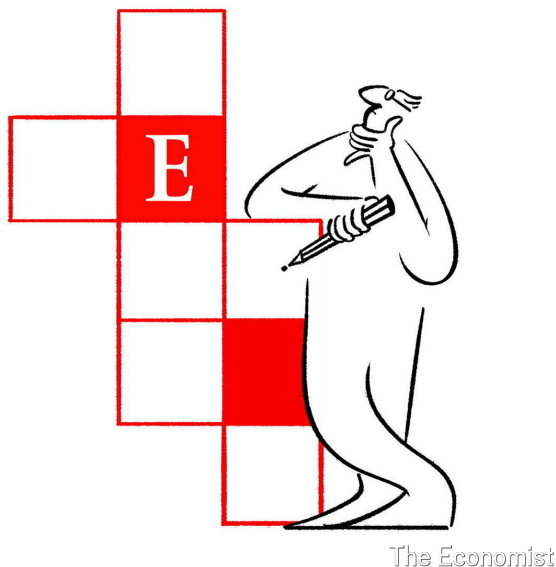
The Economist

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. We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Friday: T-bone and ribeye are cuts of what kind of meat?

Thursday: Naan, chapati and roti are Indian versions of what food?

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:

Terry McColl, North Vancouver, Canada

Jorge Ferrando, La Parva, Chile

Sonsoles Ruiedas, Madrid, Spain

They all gave the correct answers of [architecture](#), [Ambani](#), [Texas](#), and [exodus](#). Check back tomorrow for this week's crossword.

\$170bn

The amount that mobile-phone services directly contribute to Africa's GDP.

Read the full story.

**Who looks outside, dreams; who looks
inside, awakes.**

Carl Jung