

The world in brief, June 25th 2024



Julian Assange was released from prison in Britain after he reached a plea deal with **American** prosecutors. The co-founder of Wikileaks, a whistleblower site, has spent the past five years in jail [fighting extradition](#) to America. He was charged on several counts of espionage after releasing a huge tranche of secret documents related to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which America's government said endangered lives. Under the deal, he will plead guilty to one charge of conspiring to obtain and disclose classified national-defence documents, but spend no time in custody in America.

Israel's Supreme Court ruled that [national service](#) must be extended to young men from the Jewish ultra-Orthodox—or *Haredi*—community. For decades they have been exempt from compulsory military service. The decision is a blow to the government: the parties representing *Haredi* leaders in Israel's parliament are a key element in the coalition led by Binyamin Netanyahu, the prime minister.

Police in **Kenya** reportedly killed several protesters, and injured scores more outside the country's parliament. Part of the building has been set on fire. Earlier parliament passed a controversial finance bill, which aims to raise more than \$2bn from taxes, including 16% value-added tax on bread and an excise duty of 25% on vegetable oil.

The **International Criminal Court** issued arrest warrants for two senior Russian officials. The court said that Valery Gerasimov, Russia's top general, and Sergei Shoigu, a former defence minister, were responsible for missile strikes against Ukrainian electric infrastructure, causing "civilian harm". In 2023 the ICC issued an arrest for [President Vladimir Putin](#) for illegally deporting children from occupied areas of Ukraine.

The **European Commission** charged [Microsoft](#) with breaching its antitrust laws. The commission said that the American tech giant had gained an "undue advantage" over its rival when it tied Teams, its video-conference service, with other productivity applications, like Office 365. Microsoft could be fined up to 10% of its annual global revenue, or be forced to comply with "remedies" imposed by the commission.

Rishi Sunak, Britain's prime minister, withdrew support from two Conservative party candidates linked to a betting scandal. The Gambling Commission is investigating Craig Williams and Laura Saunders for placing bets on the date of the [general election](#). The furore could further harm Mr Sunak's already meagre chances of securing a parliamentary majority on July 4th.

China's Chang'e-6 lunar module returned to Earth with the first-ever samples from the far side of the **Moon**. Analysis of the dust and rocks could shed light on the evolution of the Moon and the solar system. The [mission](#), which China's space agency called a "complete success", is an important milestone for the country's

space ambitions, which include plans to send astronauts to the Moon by 2030.

Figure of the day: 70bn, the number of solar cells that are expected to be made this year—the vast majority of them in China. [Read the full story.](#)

Correction: In an earlier edition, we mistakenly wrote that America's Supreme Court upheld a challenge to a federal law prohibiting people subject to domestic-violence restraining orders from owning guns. In fact it dismissed the challenge (and upheld the law). Sorry.

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 winding road to EU membership



Ukraine and Moldova will hold their first formal accession talks with the European Union on Tuesday, part of a negotiation that will take several years. Officials from both applicant countries will each meet their EU counterparts in Luxembourg. Their discussions are a continuation of informal talks that began when both countries applied to join after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The war gave fresh impetus to [enlargement](#), which had ceased to be a priority for the EU (the last new member was Croatia in 2013). Six countries in the western Balkans plus Georgia also want to join the bloc. If all the aspirants succeed, the EU's membership will rise from 27 to 36 countries. But [none is certain to join](#). Becoming a member requires adopting all the union's rules, which even countries not at war struggle to do. And every step of the negotiation process needs to be approved by all existing EU members.

The Democrats do battle in New York



The Democratic primary for New York's 16th congressional district takes place on Tuesday. It has been the most expensive House primary race in American history, according to AdImpact, a research firm. [Jamaal Bowman](#) (pictured), a progressive who is running for his third term, has been outspent by George Latimer, a seasoned local politician. Mr Latimer has the support of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, whose super PAC has spent more than \$14m on the race. He also has the backing of Democratic moderates like Hillary Clinton.

The contest highlights [divisions within the Democratic Party](#) over Israel's war with Hamas. Mr Bowman has called Israel's military actions in Gaza "genocide." Mr Latimer has said that he entered the race partly because of Mr Bowman's rhetoric. A recent poll showed that Democratic primary voters agree more with Mr Latimer on the war. It also showed him leading by 48% to 31%, though one in five voters is undecided.

Canada's rate-cut hopes dimmed



On June 5th [Canada's](#) central bank became the first in the G7 to cut interest rates. It lowered its main policy rate from 5% to 4.75%. That ended a tightening cycle that began in March 2022, during which rates climbed 4.75 percentage points. Analysts were awaiting May's inflation figure, released on Tuesday, to try and ascertain how far and fast interest rates might come down.

The figure may have dampened hopes of rapid cuts. The annual inflation rate rose to 2.9% last month, up from 2.7% in April. That was higher than the 2.6% expected by economists, though it did mean that May was the fifth consecutive month that annual inflation remained within the Bank of Canada's target range of 1-3%. In response to the news, investors reduced their bets that the bank will cut rates again when it makes its next decision on July 24th.

FedEx bets on restructuring



FedEx reports its fiscal-year earnings on Tuesday. The [Memphis-based firm](#), one of the world's biggest package-delivery companies, has set expectations low. Demand for its services has softened owing to slower global economic growth: the firm has suggested that revenues will be down slightly compared with the previous year, when they were \$90.2bn.

The company hopes that a restructuring it began 14 months ago will raise profits. The reorganisation aims to increase efficiency by bringing together the firm's main international business, FedEx Express, with its other companies such as FedEx Ground, a [delivery service](#) that operates in North America. FedEx recently said that it would cut 2,000 of its 50,000 jobs in Europe. The aim is to save \$6bn by 2027. The company's biggest competitors, DHL and UPS, will be watching the integration closely in hopes of stealing customers should FedEx mess it up.

Diane von Furstenberg's pioneering design



Coco Chanel is famous for designing tweed suits and quilted handbags. Calvin Klein brings to mind jeans and tight boxer shorts. Diane von Furstenberg is synonymous with the wrap dress. When the item appeared in American stores in 1974 it became a sensation. Working women appreciated the feminine silhouette and striking patterns as well as the comfortable jersey fabric. Ms von Furstenberg was soon selling 25,000 dresses a week.

On Tuesday a documentary about the Belgian designer—“Diane von Furstenberg: Woman in Charge”—is released on Hulu in America and Disney+ elsewhere. The film chronicles Ms von Furstenberg’s personal history: her relationship with her late mother, a Holocaust survivor, her marriage to a German prince and her love affairs. It also tells the story of how her famous dress came into being—it was partly inspired by the tops worn by ballet dancers in practice.

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

Tuesday: Which 1900 rebellion was an attempt by a Chinese secret society to drive foreigners out of the country?

Monday: The Stayman and Blackwood conventions are part of which four-person card game?

70bn

The number of solar cells that are expected to be made this year—the vast majority of them in China. [Read the full story.](#)
[Read the full story.](#)

**No sooner does man discover intelligence
than he tries to involve it in his own
stupidity.**

Jacques Cousteau