

## The world in brief, July 2nd 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 concentrate 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, a congressman from Texas, became the first **Democratic** lawmaker to publicly urge **President Joe Biden** to [step down](#) as the party's nominee following his debate performance

last week. Also on Tuesday **Nancy Pelosi**, the former House speaker, seemed to cast doubt on the president's abilities, and **Jim Clyburn**, a staunch ally of Mr Biden, said he would—hypothetically—back Kamala Harris, the vice-president.

**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 country would “take steps to build a bridge to NATO membership for Ukraine” as he met his Ukrainian counterpart in Washington.

Prosecutors in **Manhattan** will not oppose **Donald Trump's** bid to delay his sentencing hearing. Mr Trump, who was convicted in May of [34 felony counts](#), is due to be sentenced next week. But hours after America's top court [ruled that Mr Trump was entitled](#) to “presumptive immunity” for official presidential acts, his lawyers began an effort to overturn the New York verdict.

**Tesla's** sales fell by 4.8% year-on-year during the second quarter, the second consecutive quarterly fall. The drop was less than analysts were expecting. The [carmaker](#) is having a turbulent year: it announced mass layoffs in April, and its share price has fallen by almost 10% since January. The **electric vehicles** industry is suffering from Chinese competition and high interest rates.

**Israel** ordered **Palestinians** to leave Khan Younis, a city in southern Gaza, after rockets were reportedly fired into Israel from the city. According to AFP, a news agency, Israeli strikes killed several people in the city. António Guterres, the UN's secretary-general, said that “no place is safe in Gaza”. In April displaced Palestinians returned to [Khan Younis](#) after Israel withdrew its soldiers.

**Figure of the day:** 94%, Ukraine's expected debt-to-GDP ratio by the end of the year. [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.*

# Thailand's new senators



The senate in Thailand is not a ceremonial upper house of parliament. It can make or break the government. In 2023 the chamber blocked [Pita Limjaroenrat](#) from forming a government, after his progressive Move Forward Party won the most seats in the lower house in a general election. Now some changes are afoot. The army appointed the previous batch of senators in 2019. But the senate recently held its first election in a decade, in which about 3,000 candidates—representing various professional groups—voted among themselves to select 200 members. The new senators are due to be formally announced on Tuesday.

The revamped senate will no longer be able to help elect the prime minister. But it will retain other crucial roles, including the ability to make judicial appointments. The military conservative establishment will hope that its allies have won many seats—and continue to protect its interests. Provisional results suggest that former generals will be among Tuesday's winners.

## A new phase in Israel's war in Gaza



The news from Gaza can seem painfully repetitive. On Monday Israeli troops were fighting again in the north-eastern neighbourhood of Shujaiya, at least their third offensive in the area since December. On the same day [Islamic Jihad](#), a militant group, fired about 20 rockets at towns in southern Israel. If harmless, the barrage was a reminder that nine months into the war the group still has a stocked arsenal.

In the coming days, the Israeli army will probably announce an end to its campaign in Rafah in the south, which began on May 6th, and with it, an end to its big offensives in Gaza. But the Israeli cabinet has yet to make any decisions about the enclave's long-term fate: who will secure and govern it, and how it will be rebuilt. Talks with Hamas over a hostage deal and ceasefire remain stalled. The new phase in the war may end up looking depressingly like the one that came before.



# The Netherlands gets a new government



On Tuesday Mark Rutte, the longest-serving Dutch prime minister, left office after 14 years. (He will become secretary-general of NATO in October.) The right-wing coalition government that will replace him is complicated even by Dutch standards.

The biggest party, the hard-right Party for Freedom (PVV) led by Geert Wilders, a nativist rabble-rouser, is deeply mistrusted by two of its partners, the centre-right New Social Contract and the Liberals (VVD). And so the parties picked a non-partisan civil servant, [Dick Schoof](#), as prime minister. The NSC and the Liberals (Mr Rutte's old outfit) gained control of crucial ministries such as finance, foreign affairs, defence and climate, and have put in experienced ministers who can guarantee some continuity. The PVV took the immigration, infrastructure and health ministries; a small populist farmers' party won agriculture. They have both made promises that are unaffordable or conflict with EU rules. That will trouble Mr Schoof when he heads to Brussels—and when he presents his budget in September.

# Falling inflation in the euro zone



After markets have digested the first round of the [French elections](#), they will turn to inflation again. The European Central Bank—which is convening its annual conference in Portugal from Monday to Wednesday—will also be absorbing the latest euro-zone inflation data that were released on Tuesday. The bank has to decide whether to cut interest rates for a second consecutive month on July 18th.

The new numbers show that annual inflation is expected to be 2.5% in June, down from 2.6% in May. Some countries have already reported similar trends. Germany's annual inflation rate fell to 2.5% in June, from 2.8% in May. Still, the ECB may choose to be cautious on rates. Prices for services are still rising stubbornly. In Germany, they rose by 3.9% in June, compared with a year earlier. And across the euro zone services inflation was 4.1% in June. The ECB knows that the last mile to bring down inflation could be bumpy.

## A rowdy Italian horse race



What separates a Caterpillar from a Goose? On Tuesday about 50,000 people will cram into the scallop-shaped Piazza del Campo, a public space in the ancient Italian city of Siena, to find out. Caterpillar and Goose are two of the names of the city's ten *contrade*, or city districts, whose jockeys will contest this year's first Palio, a breakneck horse race around the main piazza. A second Palio is held in August. The first horse to complete three circuits of the course wins—even if it no longer has a mount.

The race is a heated contest: horses often fall on the dangerous course and die. It follows five days of fevered preparation, filled with pageantry and fuelled by the strong attachment of the Sienese to their respective *contrade*. Complicating everything is a web of alliances and rivalries between the *contrade*, often engendered by events long ago. The oldest enmity, between the Turtle and the Snail, began with an almighty brawl in 1686.



## 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.

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

**Monday:** What gift is associated with the 15th wedding anniversary?

**94%**

*Ukraine's expected debt-to-GDP ratio by the end of the year.*

*Read the full story.*

**Courage is grace under pressure.**

*Ernest Hemingway*