

## The world in brief, July 10th 2024



**Joe Biden** promised more military aid, including new air-defence systems, for **Ukraine** to help “stop Putin”. In an address to [NATO leaders at a summit](#) in Washington, America’s president said the military alliance “is stronger than it’s ever been”. Mr Biden’s remarks were delivered forcefully and with clarity—unlike his performance in a presidential debate against Donald Trump, which has [triggered doubts](#) about his ability to lead. Several senior European officials reportedly met Mr Trump’s advisers on the summit’s sidelines to better understand the former president’s foreign-policy plans should he defeat Mr Biden.

**Nancy Pelosi**, the former speaker of America’s House of Representatives, said that it was up to **Joe Biden** to “make a decision” on whether he will run for [re-election](#). Mr Biden has repeatedly said that he wants to stay in the presidential race. At least nine senior Democrats have now called for Mr Biden to step aside.

An **Israeli strike** killed dozens of people in front of a school near Khan Younis, a city in southern Gaza. It was the fourth strike on a

school in as many days. [Palestinian](#) officials said that the victims were mostly women and children. The Israeli Defence Forces said they were investigating reports of civilian casualties. Hamas said Israel's latest offensive jeopardises ongoing ceasefire negotiations.

**China** announced a probe into the **EU's** trade barriers, after new [tariffs](#) on Chinese manufacturers, including carmakers, took effect on Friday. The EU says that China's subsidies allow it to export EVs and other goods at lower prices, which threaten local manufacturers. China says that the new EU measures constitute a barrier to free trade.

Consumer prices in **China** rose year on year by 0.2% in June, down from 0.3% in May. Economists had expected a rise of 0.4%. Meanwhile, the producer price index—which measures the cost of goods at factory gates—fell by 0.8% in June, having dropped by 1.4% in May. The world's second-largest economy is beset by an extended property slump and a [weak job market](#).

A union representing nearly a quarter of **Samsung Electronics's** workforce declared a full-blown, indefinite [strike](#) over pay and holiday allowance. The announcement came after around a sixth of the union's 30,000 members walked out on Monday. The group said management at the South Korean chipmaking giant had shown no intention to hold talks. It claimed production has already been disrupted, which Samsung denied.

A cactus in Florida reportedly became America's first local species to go extinct because of **rising sea levels**. The population of Key Largo tree-cactus stems fell from 150 to just six by 2021; researchers blamed saltwater intrusion and soil depletion from hurricanes. The cactus still grows in a few places elsewhere. Globally, [sea levels](#) have risen by anywhere between 21cm and 24cm since 1880.

**Figure of the day:** 350, the approximate number of condors flying free in parts of America in 2023. [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.*

## All eyes on Biden, and his alternates



Joe Biden's dire performance in a presidential debate against Donald Trump on June 27th prompted serious questions about his fitness to run again. So far, nine Democratic congressmen have either publicly or reportedly suggested that he should step aside in favour of a younger candidate, as have several [big donors](#). The president has [stood his ground](#). But scrutiny will only increase as he hosts NATO leaders this week. Pundits will be watching to see if Mr Biden can manage the intensity of a high-level international meeting.

They will also be looking at Kamala Harris, the vice-president, whom some consider the most obvious replacement for Mr Biden. On Wednesday she will address a sorority convention in Texas. The event will receive more coverage than it would normally warrant. Ms Harris is an uneven speaker: her sometimes bizarre cultural references are perfect fodder for memes. But the 59-year-old's interviews following her boss's disastrous debate earned her good reviews.

# Taxing China's shopping basket



Cigars, fireworks, golf balls and disposable wooden chopsticks: these are on the list of goods that incur a consumption tax in China. (The tax also falls on petrol, bling, booze, cars and motorbikes.) The list could lengthen as part of a fiscal reform under consideration by China's leaders, according to state-owned media. The changes could broaden the tax's scope and share some of its revenues with local governments, which can no longer rely on land sales to balance their books.

But any increase in the tax's rate or range would be badly timed. Consumer confidence is low and the growth of retail sales is below its pre-pandemic trend. One consequence is weak inflation. Figures released on Wednesday showed that consumer prices rose year on year by only 0.2% in June, even less than expected. To escape subpar growth, [China's economy](#) will need more consumer spending on golf balls and much else besides.

# A hot summer in oil markets



On Wednesday the [Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries](#) published its monthly report on global oil markets. The cartel's optimism about the second half of 2024 showed no sign of fading. In June it predicted that oil demand would rise by 2.25m barrels per day by the end of the year, the same as it forecast in May. Its latest report left that reading unchanged.

OPEC believes that tourism and other kinds of travel—which are rebounding from their pandemic-era slump—will help to drive up demand. [Oil prices](#) rallied to a two-month high earlier this month, partly on the expectation that record numbers of Americans would hit the road for the July 4th holiday. And global demand for flights is expected to grow by 10% this year compared with last, according to the International Air Transport Association, which represents airlines. OPEC hopes that increased demand, combined with its own production cuts, will push up oil prices (currently around \$86 per barrel). The cartel may yet get its wish.



## Senegal's new era



Wednesday marks 100 days since Bassirou Diomaye Faye became Senegal's president. His [surprise election triumph](#) largely dispelled doubts about the country's democracy that were sparked when his predecessor, Mackey Sall, tried to delay the vote. As a candidate Mr Faye promised a new era of clean government, economic nationalism and [“anti-imperial” pan-Africanism](#).

The government's domestic policy has so far included introducing subsidies to lower the cost of some types of rice and bread. On the international stage, meanwhile, Mr Faye is trying to repair relations in a divided region. He has tried to reconcile the Economic Community of West African States, the fractious regional bloc, with military leaders in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. The bloc hopes to preserve economic ties and co-operation in combating terrorism. But Mr Faye's efforts have so far failed: last week the three juntas announced the creation of a rival confederation.

# Painting Tokyo's futuristic architecture



When it opened in 1958 Tokyo Tower was widely seen as a symbol of Japan's post-war recovery. Minoru Nomata, a Japanese artist who has been inspired by Tokyo's architecture, sees the building's vast steel lattice as a sign of how the city's character was changing at the time. [Modern buildings](#) multiplied in the 1960s as Japan's capital became a metropolis.

“Continuum”, an exhibition of Mr Nomata's paintings, opens on Wednesday at White Cube Mason's Yard, a gallery in London. The show brings together more than 20 examples of the artist's “towering edifices” and “spherical forms”. Many of the paintings are surreal: some depict colossal structures made of ice, water or clouds. Others are more realistic. Foliage creeps up the side of his steel towers, bringing to mind the rooftop gardens that thrive above Tokyo's polluted streets. The greenery contrasts with today's cityscape, just as those first towers did in the 1960s.



## 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.

**Wednesday:** Which Chinese-American dish which consists of meat, eggs and mixed vegetables may owe its name to a term for “miscellaneous leftovers”?

**Tuesday:** Which term in ice hockey was used as the title of a film from 1977 about the sport, starring Paul Newman?

**350**

*The approximate number of condors flying free in parts of America in 2023.*

*Read the full story.*

**Life's been tough but I've been tougher.**

*Zohra Sehgal*