

The world in brief, June 4th 2024



Narendra Modi, **India's** prime minister, declared victory in the country's election. With more than half the vote counted, the governing Bharatiya Janata Party [looks set to lose its parliamentary majority](#). Mr Modi will probably have to rely on other parties to form a government. Share prices of Indian companies, especially those linked to allies of Mr Modi, have plunged. *The Economist* is tracking the [results](#) as they are announced.

Joe Biden signed an [executive order](#) that would prevent [migrants](#) who cross America's southern border with Mexico illegally from applying for asylum. The rule comes into effect when average daily encounters at the border exceed 2,500 over a seven-day period. This threshold has reportedly already been met, meaning that the border could soon temporarily close.

A senior [Hammas](#) official lashed out at **America** for suggesting that Hamas is the obstacle to acceptance of a ceasefire proposal put forward by President Joe Biden. In fact, claimed Sami Abu Zuhri, it is Israel that refuses to make peace. America said that Israel supports the proposal. Meanwhile *Time*, an American magazine,

published an interview from May in which Mr Biden suggested that Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, could be prolonging the war for political reasons.

Georgia's government proposed legislation that would restrict the rights of gay couples. The laws, if passed, would block same-sex couples from registering their marriages and stop them from adopting children; they would also ban schools from using teaching material that "promotes" gay relationships. The move follows parliament's adoption of a [draconian law](#) that targets Western-funded NGOs and civil-society groups.

Unemployment in **Germany** remained at a seasonally adjusted rate of 5.9% in May, though the number of people registering as unemployed increased. Jobless claims rose by 25,000 last month; most economists had forecast a smaller rise of around 10,000. The head of [Germany's](#) labour agency said that the figures show that the "spring recovery hasn't really taken off".

Maersk, a shipping titan, said that disruption to trade routes caused by [Houthi attacks](#) on the Red Sea has been worse than previously expected. Traffic has dropped by 80% since the militant group began attacking ships last year. Prolonged disruption could prove an unexpected boon for Maersk, which raised its profit forecasts, since it reduces spare capacity and allows freighters to charge higher rates.

Australia's army said that it will begin recruiting some foreign nationals in an effort to boost numbers. New Zealanders, Americans, Britons and Canadians will all become eligible to enlist in the coming months. Australia has been trying to [bolster its military strength](#) in order to counter China's increasing assertiveness, but has struggled to increase the size of its army owing to low unemployment rates.

Figure of the day: 9m, the number of barrels of oil produced each day by Saudi Aramco, nearly a tenth of the world's total. [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.

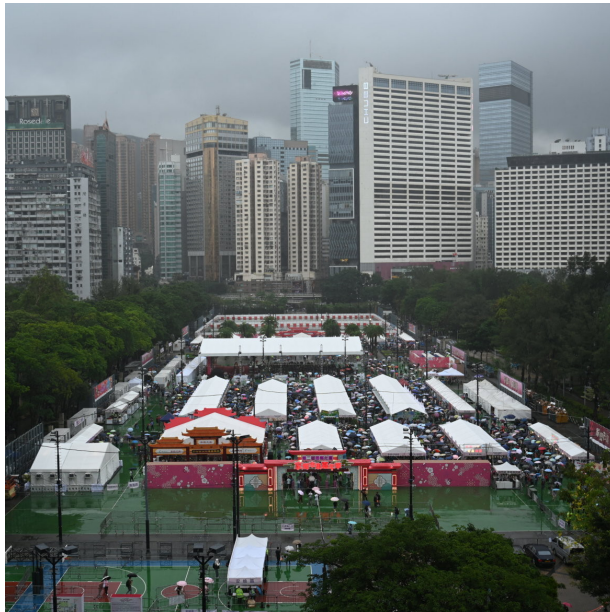
India's unexpected election results



India's mammoth, weeks-long election is finally over. It was the world's biggest-ever exercise in democracy, featuring 8,360 candidates representing 744 parties. When exit polls were released on Saturday, the only uncertainty appeared to be the extent of the victory for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, and Narendra Modi, the incumbent prime minister. Most pollsters predicted a comfortable win for the BJP, prompting much chest-thumping from the party's supporters. But when vote-counting began on Tuesday they fell silent.

Early [results](#) suggest that the BJP is on track to win just 243 seats, well below both the 272 it needs to form a government on its own and its previous showing in 2019 (when it won 303 seats). Mr Modi, however, will still probably return to power thanks to his party's allies. Taken together the alliance is expected to win 294 seats. But for a group that bragged about winning 400 seats before the election, that victory will feel like a loss.

Hong Kong tries to forget Tiananmen Square



Victoria Park in Hong Kong used to glow with candlelight every June 4th, as tens of thousands gathered to commemorate the [Tiananmen Square massacre](#) of 1989—a rare place on Chinese soil that allowed such remembrance. In 2020 officials, blaming covid, banned the vigil—20,000 people gathered anyway. The central government in Beijing then imposed sweeping new security legislation, and the event has in effect been banned since. This year—after Hong Kong introduced another national-security law—Victoria Park will be filled with food trucks instead of candles. Pro-Beijing groups have organised a carnival in the vigil’s stead.

The commemoration’s organisers have been jailed. Mementos, including a dedicated museum and a huge artwork called the “Pillar of Shame”, have been dismantled. On Monday police arrested an eighth suspect in the past two weeks, apparently because of social-media posts about the anniversary. Even wearing black on June 4th risks flouting the law. City officials are working hard to snuff out memories of Tiananmen.

The first TV debate ahead of Britain's election



On Tuesday Rishi Sunak, the prime minister, will face Sir Keir Starmer, the leader of Labour, the main opposition party. The first debate of Britain's general election campaign will be hosted on ITV, a commercial network; a further series of parlays will air on the BBC, the publicly funded broadcaster, from Friday.

Head-to-head TV debates arrived in Britain only in 2010, but are now a fixture of elections. The public debate over their format and line-up attracts almost as much attention as the actual debates themselves. Tuesday's one, featuring a moderator and questions from a studio audience, is sure to be spirited. Our [poll tracker](#) shows that Labour has an average lead of 22 points: to stave off a heavy defeat on [July 4th](#), Mr Sunak needs voters to reassess him. Sir Keir, meanwhile, has run a buttoned-up campaign, mostly of formal speeches. Going toe-to-toe with his rival introduces a new element of risk.

A horribly hot summer in prospect



On Tuesday, as the world awaits India's election results, many Indians will do so whilst sweltering. Much of the country has been broiling for a week or more; India's Meteorological Agency has issued further heatwave warnings for the north. More than 70 people have died, including at least 33 poll workers on a single day in Uttar Pradesh. In Delhi, the capital—which hit 49.9°C last week, breaking its temperature record—water shortages have compelled people to queue for hours by government-provided tankers.

India is not the only place afflicted. Intense temperatures in Mexico have killed more than 60 people and caused scores of dead monkeys to fall from the trees. That heatwave is now headed for large swathes of America. Worse is probably yet to come. The hottest weeks in the northern hemisphere, where over 80% of the world's population lives, tend to fall around August. And this summer follows almost a year in which every month consecutively (even during winter) has set a new [global monthly temperature record](#). Unbearable heat is no longer extraordinary.

A new opera about a puzzling painter



Hilma af Klint knew she was ahead of her time. The pioneering Swedish artist made her first-ever abstract painting in 1906, after being inspired to “proclaim a new philosophy of life”. When she died, in 1944, she left more than a thousand artworks, which she ordered to remain private for twenty years at least.

They were largely forgotten. But in 2018, a [major retrospective](#) was mounted in New York. It became the most-visited show in the Guggenheim Museum’s history. Klint had finally arrived, representing a welcome female addition to the male-dominated canon of modern art.

Now she is being brought back to life in “Hilma”, which opens on Tuesday at the Wilma Theater in Philadelphia. The opera explores Klint’s interest in mysticism, her creative process, and her legacy, as well as her possibly-romantic relationship with her closest friend, Anna Cassel, who may have had a hand in some of her paintings.

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.

Tuesday: Who was the first chief justice of the United States?

Monday: Cain and Abel were the first two sons of Adam and Eve in Genesis. But what was the name of the third?

9m

The number of barrels of oil produced each day by Saudi Aramco, nearly a tenth of the world's total.

Read the full story.

**But for the silly chaps, we would still be
living in the Stone Age.**

Christopher Cockerell