

The world in brief, July 5th 2024



Sir Keir Starmer's **Labour Party** was on course for a landslide victory, with over 400 seats and a large three-figure majority, in **Britain's general election**. **Labour** made several gains at the expense of the governing Conservatives—who were beaten into third place in several places by the populist Reform UK party. The Liberal Democrats were on track for a good night, possibly heading for their most seats since 2005. In Scotland, the Scottish National Party was projected to suffer heavy losses. *The Economist* is publishing [live results](#) and forecasts through the night.

Several prominent **Conservatives** lost their seats, including Penny Mordaunt, formerly regarded as a possible party leader, Gillian Keegan, the education secretary, and Grant Shapps, the defence secretary. On his eighth attempt to become an MP, Nigel Farage, the leader of **Reform**, won in Clacton. [Jeremy Corbyn](#), a former Labour leader, retained his seat of Islington North, in London, as an independent.

In a radio interview **President Joe Biden** admitted that he “screwed up” a recent television debate against Donald Trump, but

said he would “get back up”. The 81-year-old’s dire performance led many [within the Democratic Party](#) (and beyond) to [question his re-election prospects](#). Two of the party’s congressmen have openly called on Mr Biden to step aside, though on Wednesday several Democratic governors declared their support for him.

[Jair Bolsonaro](#), a former president of **Brazil**, was indicted by federal police. Mr Bolsonaro is accused of money laundering and other crimes relating to diamonds he received from Saudi Arabia during his time in office, according to sources. Mr Bolsonaro and his lawyers deny any wrongdoing. Brazil’s [Supreme Court](#) has yet to receive the police’s indictment.

Binyamin Netanyahu, **Israel’s** prime minister, told Mr Biden that he would send negotiators to resume talks with Hamas over the release of Israeli hostages being held in Gaza. Previous talks, which ground to a halt, were mediated by Qatari and Egyptian officials. Meanwhile [Hizbullah](#), a Lebanese Shia militant group, said it had fired more than 200 rockets towards Israel.

Samsung Electronics, the world’s biggest maker of memory chips, reported bumper profits of 10.4trn won (\$7.5bn) in the second quarter of 2024. The preliminary figure represents a 15-fold increase over the same period last year. Sales were boosted by [the artificial-intelligence boom](#), which has increased demand for Samsung’s advanced memory chips.

Germany summoned Turkey’s ambassador after a member of [the country’s football team](#) made a far-right gesture during a match in Leipzig. Merih Demiral celebrated a goal with a hand signal associated with the Grey Wolves, a Turkish ultra-nationalist group. Turkey’s president, [Recep Tayyip Erdogan](#), is due to watch Turkey play the Netherlands in the quarter-finals of Euro 2024 in Germany on July 6th.

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.

2.4m, the number of Americans who cancelled their pay-TV in the latest quarter. [Read the full story.](#)

Biden meets the press



America's presidential campaign was already unprecedented: never before had a major-party candidate juggled electioneering and a [criminal trial](#), as Donald Trump has done. It has become stranger still. Joe Biden's terrible debate performance on June 27th [ignited calls](#) from Democratic donors, left-leaning media and a couple of brave Democratic lawmakers for the president to [step aside](#) for another candidate. (No presumptive nominee has bowed out since Lyndon Johnson did, in 1968.) Mr Biden's campaign tried [dismissing his critics](#). On Friday he will instead try to reassure them when he sits down for an interview with ABC News.

To do that, the 81-year-old will need to deliver clear answers, vigorously and fluently. Even then, the damage [from the debate](#)—in which he failed to complete sentences or challenge effectively Mr Trump's falsehoods—[may have been done](#). According to a *New York Times*/Siena College poll released on July 3rd, Mr Trump solidified his lead: he is up by six points among likely voters.

Amazon's 30th birthday



On Friday [Amazon turns 30](#). It has plenty to celebrate. On June 26th its market value surpassed \$2trn for the first time, something only four other companies have achieved. The e-commerce giant has 40% of the market by revenue. It is also the world's largest cloud-computing firm and its third-biggest advertising company.

One way Amazon is trying to grow even bigger is by entering new markets. Another strategy it is pursuing is stitching its existing businesses closer together—for example, by using data from its e-commerce arm to help sell advertising. Those ads increasingly appear on Prime Video, its video-streaming service. But that creates risks. Antitrust regulators say that some of Amazon's behaviour is already anti-competitive; further integration could lead to more such claims. And it has big-tech rivals, such as Google, in the ads and e-commerce markets. Amazon will have to work harder to avoid a mid-life crisis.

Iran's democratic deficit



Iranians used to yearn for elections. After the overthrow of the increasingly dictatorial Shah in 1979, 98% of voters turned out. Thirty years later, 84% were still at it. Recent levels, though, have slumped. In the first round of the presidential election on June 28th less than 40% turned out, the lowest on record. The two candidates in the [run-off on Friday](#), Masoud Pezeshkian and Saeed Jalili, have tried to get out the vote by offering rival visions of Iran. Mr Pezeshkian, a moderate, says he would let women choose their dress and try to re-engage with America. Mr Jalili, an ultra-conservative, says Iran should look East not West and enforce Islam's conservative codes.

Most Iranians dismiss the poll as a sham. But a flurry of speeches by the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, calling on Iranians to vote suggests that the regime would welcome broader popular support, especially because Iran's brinkmanship with Israel risks the outbreak of war.

America's weakening jobs market



For the past couple of years the American labour market has been remarkably strong. Lately, though, [cracks have appeared](#). Data for June, due out on Friday, may add to evidence of weakness.

Forecasters think that the economy added 200,000 jobs last month—a decent performance but about a fifth lower than the monthly average over the past half year. The unemployment rate is expected to remain at 4%, good by historical standards but up from a low of 3.4% last year.

Other figures in recent days have also been worsening. Continuing claims for unemployment benefits have risen for nine consecutive weeks, the longest such streak since 2018, a sign that people are finding it harder to get jobs. And the services sector, a major employer, appears to be contracting. Damage to the labour market has been mild so far. But if it worsens, the consequences will become more palpable.

Designing the world's most famous doll



More than a billion Barbie dolls have been sold since the toy debuted in 1959. The plastic princess started out as a fashion model in a black-and-white striped bathing suit. In 1977 she tiptoed into a hot-pink dress, and soon had pink accessories and a pink Corvette to match. The colour is today synonymous with the Barbie brand. The set of Greta Gerwig's film "[Barbie](#)" used so much pink paint that it noticeably contributed to a global shortage.

Mattel, the doll's maker, also wanted Barbie to colour the aspirations of its owners—to open “new dreams for girls”. A new exhibition at the Design Museum in London brings together more than 250 objects to explore the Barbie phenomenon through fashion, architecture and cars. In 1962, when it was difficult for single American women to get a mortgage, Barbie bought her first home. Barbie's first car, an Austin Healey sports car, signalled her independence. Barbie's world is not only pink but political.

Daily quiz

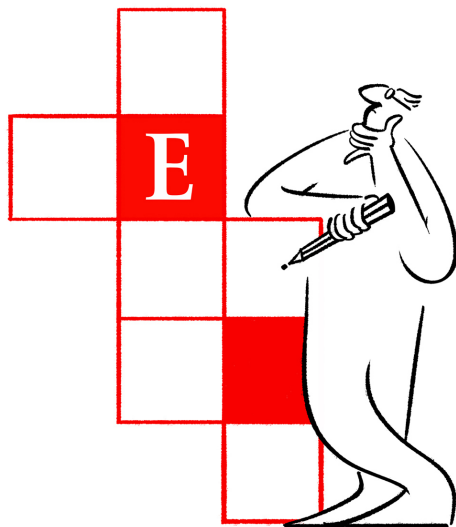


We will serve you a new question each day this week. On Friday your challenge is to give us all five answers and, as important, tell us the connecting theme. Email your responses (and include mention of your home city and country) by 1700 BST on **Friday** to QuizEspresso@economist.com. We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Friday: Which NFL franchise moved from Oakland to Las Vegas in 2020?

Thursday: During what event in 1204 did Latin soldiers sack Constantinople?

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:

Anuradha Prathap, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Greg Sanial, Grand Rapids, Michigan, United States

Amelia Cheng, Coquitlam, Canada

They all gave the correct answers of [Westminster](#), [weapon](#), [incel](#), and [Reddit](#). Check back tomorrow for this week's crossword.

2.4m

The number of Americans who cancelled their pay-TV in the latest quarter.

Read the full article.

The calendar? A mere convention.

Irina Ratushinskaya