

The world in brief, June 1st 2024



Israel continued its assault on Rafah, a city in southern **Gaza**, despite [international condemnation](#). Earlier President Joe Biden said that an Israeli proposal for a ceasefire had been sent to Hamas by Qatar. The terms include a six-week pause in fighting, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from populated areas of Gaza and the release of women and elderly Israeli hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners. Mr Biden claimed that Hamas is “no longer capable” of carrying out an attack like October 7th, adding that “it’s time for this war to end”. Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel’s prime minister, vowed to keep fighting until Hamas is eradicated.

Almost two dozen **Indian** officials died of suspected heat stroke as voting began in the seventh and final phase of the country’s [general election](#). Some 57 of the 543 parliamentary seats are being contested amid a scorching heatwave. If the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party wins as expected, Narendra Modi will become only the second prime minister in the country’s history to retain power for a third term. Votes will be counted on June 4th.

Donald Trump vowed to keep fighting following his [criminal conviction](#) and called the judge presiding over his case “crooked” and a “devil”. His campaign said it had raised \$52.8m in donations in the hours after the verdict—and that nearly 30% of online donors were new. Mr Trump was found guilty on all 34 counts of falsifying business records to hide hush-money payments to a former porn star before the election in 2016. He said he will lodge an appeal.

Volodymyr Zelensky, **Ukraine’s** president, is expected to address delegates at the Shangri-La Dialogue, a security conference, in Singapore on Sunday. Earlier Germany joined other NATO countries, including America, in approving Ukraine’s use of its [weapons](#) to hit targets in Russia. Ukraine and Russia also swapped 75 [prisoners of war](#), the first such exchange in nearly four months, in a deal brokered by the United Arab Emirates.

The ruling **African National Congress** is [poised to lose](#) its parliamentary majority, according to early results in **South Africa’s** election. The ANC’s share of the vote stands at about 41% with counting complete at over 90% of polling stations. The result would make Cyril Ramaphosa the first ANC leader of the country without a parliamentary majority. Final [results](#) are expected by Sunday.

The **British** ambassador to **Mexico**, Jon Benjamin, was fired after apparently pointing an assault rifle at a local employee of his embassy. A video of the incident circulated on social media, captioned “in a context of daily killings in Mexico by [drug dealers](#), he dares to joke”. Mexico has long suffered from drug-related violence; around 30,000 people are murdered in the country each year.

Marian Robinson, the mother of [Michelle Obama](#), a former First Lady, died aged 86. Dubbed the “first grandma”, Robinson moved into the White House to care for her granddaughters when her son-

in-law, Barack Obama, won the presidency. A family statement said she preferred spending time with “the ushers and butlers, the folks who make the White House a home”, rather than political elites.

Word of the week: *Magicicada*, the Latin word for periodical cicadas. Two broods are emerging simultaneously in America for the first time since 1803. [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.

Nayib Bukele's second term



On Saturday [Nayib Bukele](#) will be sworn in for a legally dubious second consecutive term as El Salvador's president. Mr Bukele won elections in February by a landslide, after appointing new judges to reinterpret the constitution and allow him to run again. In his first term, he oversaw a harsh crackdown [on gangs](#); the murder rate has plummeted, and extortion is no longer commonplace. But new challenges will make the next five years hard.

Salvadoreans now view the economy as the country's biggest problem. Poverty has risen. Debt is high. El Salvador is growing more slowly and attracting less foreign investment than its neighbours. Mr Bukele wants to attract tech investment and secure a loan with the IMF. But the IMF is no fan of his decision to adopt bitcoin as legal tender, and investors are worried by the erosion of the rule of law. Mr Bukele may find it tricky to square his authoritarian tendencies with economic growth.

Winning streaks at the Champions League final



Saturday's [Champions League final](#) will pit Real Madrid, European football champions a record 14 times, against Borussia Dortmund, winners just once before. Carlo Ancelotti, Real's manager, belongs to an exclusive club. Of the seven men who have lifted the cup as both a player and a manager, just two have done at least twice in each role. One is Spain's Miguel Muñoz, who won three in a row for Real as a midfielder in the 1950s before taking two more titles as the club's manager in the 1960s. The other is Mr Ancelotti, the only six-time winner.

Mr Ancelotti hopes to add to the titles he won for Real during previous stints as manager in 2014 and 2022. Some multiple winners are strict tacticians. But Mr Ancelotti is different. He believes his teams are full of high-quality players who can figure out what needs to be done. His job is to keep them happy and focused. Perhaps that is the secret to success.

Boeing's Starliner is set to take off at last



America's newest spacecraft is due to take to the skies on Saturday. If all goes to plan the inaugural crew on Boeing's CST-100 Starliner will arrive at the International Space Station a bit less than two days later. It is a short trip for the astronauts. But it has been a long and troublesome journey for Boeing.

Ten years ago NASA awarded Boeing and SpaceX contracts worth \$4.2bn and \$2.6bn respectively to develop spacecraft that would take crews to the ISS. SpaceX [started operating its Crew Dragon in 2020](#), which has since provided NASA with eight flights and has been used for private missions, too. Meanwhile misbehaving clocks, corroded valves and unacceptably combustible material have left Boeing's offering years behind schedule and \$1.5bn in the red, adding to [Boeing's many woes](#). This latest launch attempt, originally scheduled for early May, has been delayed because of a further valve problem and concerns about a helium leak.

A new album from Crowded House



Crowded House are the opposite of a cult band: commercially successful, inspiring more affection than obsession. The Antipodean group has sold millions of records, making music for four decades through three line-ups. Yet their output has been far from prolific. Their new album, “Gravity Stairs”, is only their eighth.

But as their marketing copy once insisted, “you know more Crowded House songs than you think you do”. Their hits may be few but they boast memorable melodies. As soon as tunes such as “Don’t Dream It’s Over” and “Weather With You”—penned by Neil Finn, the band’s frontman—enter the listener’s consciousness, they often refuse to leave. The band’s latest set draws on a range of styles: folk pop (evoking Simon and Garfunkel); 1970s adult-oriented rock (reflecting Mr Finn’s recent spell in [Fleetwood Mac](#)); and New Wave and alternative rock with softened edges. It works as a satisfying primer of melodic pop and rock over the decades.

Keir Starmer, Britain's likely next prime minister



If the polls prove right at the [British general election](#) on July 4th, [Sir Keir Starmer](#) will have a strong claim to be one of Britain's more accidental prime ministers.

The Labour leader came to politics late, entering parliament in 2015 at the age of 52. At the time his ambition appeared limited. A successful career in law, which culminated with Sir Keir becoming the director of public prosecution in England and Wales, stood him in good stead to become attorney-general, the government's top legal adviser.

This plan went awry when Labour lost the general election in 2019. But the party's misfortune was Sir Keir's opportunity. While other MPs had blanched at serving under Jeremy Corbyn, the party's left-wing leader, Sir Keir did so with reluctant loyalty. When Mr Corbyn stepped down, Sir Keir was perfectly placed to succeed him. In barely five years Sir Keir went from newbie MP to opposition leader, to take on the task of making the party electable after four consecutive election defeats.

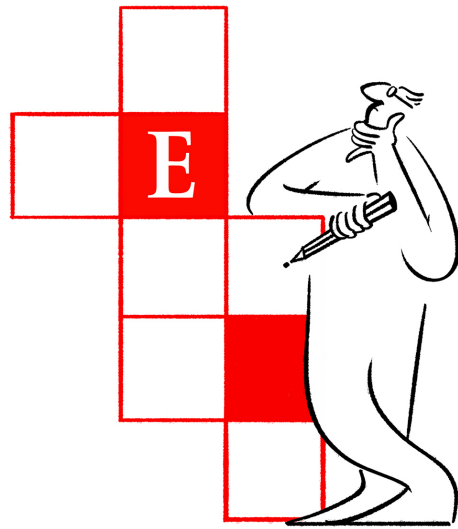
Sir Keir's [tenure](#) has been marked by a mix of cynicism and brutality. He won the leadership promising left-wing policies and competence. Once in power, he ditched his pledges and overhauled the party machinery, removing left-wingers and replacing them with people loyal to him and his team.

The party Sir Keir leads is [a different beast](#) to the one he inherited. In 2020 he suspended Mr Corbyn for playing down allegations of antisemitism in the party. Several left-wing candidates have been banned from standing in the election.

Sir Keir reached the brink of power far quicker than anyone expected. Labour's cautious programme of moderate tax increases—on private schools, for example—coupled with flag-hugging to burnish the party's patriotic credentials has reassured voters, if not inspired them.

Still, it is [the Conservative Party's collapse](#) that will probably land Sir Keir in Downing Street. The tragicomic incompetence of [Boris Johnson](#), a former prime minister, coupled with a debt crisis brought about by the policies of his successor, [Liz Truss](#), sealed the Tories' electoral fate. Cynicism and brutality are nothing without a large dose of luck.

Weekly crossword



Our crossword is designed for experienced cruciverbalists and newcomers alike. Both sets of clues give the same answers, all of which feature in articles in this week's edition of *The Economist*:

Email all four answers by 9am BST on Monday to crossword@economist.com, along with your home city and country. We will pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners in next week's edition.

Cryptic clues

1 down Generation destroyed Bombay sober (4-7)

1 across Animal, without right, is bust (6)

2 across State's mineral deposit not entirely gone (6)

3 across Some use a songbook to add salt and pepper (6)

Factual clues

1 down Who, as a group, are loaded yet stingy (4-7)

1 across What the World Health Organisation preaches is “best” (6)

2 across An American state with rent- control laws for existing tenants (6)

3 across What is about to start in America for hurricanes (6)

The winners of this week's quiz



The winners of this week's quiz

Thank you to everyone who took part in this week's quiz. The winners, chosen at random, were:

Maureen Evans, Vernon, Canada

Thomas Bergt, Munich, Germany

Sonia Lacombe, Singapore

They all gave the correct answers of the Venerable Bede, Daniel, John Stuart Mill, Felix Baumgartner and Chris Evans. The theme was the author George Eliot, who wrote the novels Adam Bede, Daniel Deronda, The Mill on the Floss and Felix Holt, the Radical and whose real name was Mary Ann Evans

The questions were:

Monday: Which saint wrote the “Ecclesiastical History of the English People”, one of the earliest histories of the nation?

Tuesday: Which Old Testament book features Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?

Wednesday: Which 19th century philosopher wrote “On Liberty”?

Thursday: Who set the then world record for the highest skydive in 2012, becoming the first person to break the sound barrier without vehicular power?

Friday: Which actor has played both the Human Torch and Captain America on film?

Magiccicada

the Latin word for periodical cicadas. Two broods are emerging simultaneously in America for the first time since 1803.

Read the full story.

Time and memory are true artists; they remould reality nearer to the heart's desire.

John Dewey