

## Catch up: Biden greets prisoner-swap returnees; Intel cuts jobs



A plane carrying American citizens freed from **Russian** jails as part of a [prisoner swap](#) landed at an airbase in Maryland. President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris greeted the returnees as they stepped off the aircraft. Among those freed was [Evan Gershkovich](#), an American journalist who was [sentenced](#) to 16 years in Russian prison on bogus spying charges, and Paul Whelan, a former marine. Germany is also receiving former detainees, including some Russian dissidents. In return Western governments released a number of Russian citizens, including Vadim Krasikov, a former intelligence officer and assassin.

**Intel**, an American chipmaker, said it would cut 17,500 jobs, around 15% of its workforce, in an attempt to turn around its fortunes. It will also scrap its dividend and slash capital spending. [Intel](#), once America's most valuable chip company, now lags behind rivals such as Nvidia in producing AI chips. Intel's shares fell by 20% in extended trading on Thursday.

**Stockmarkets** across **Asia** fell sharply on Friday morning. Both of Japan's main stock indexes, the Nikkei 225 and the Topix, lost more than 4% of their value. Markets in Australia, Hong Kong, and South Korea also registered steep declines. Tech stocks fared particularly badly. The sell-off seems to have been triggered by concerns about [America's economy](#).

**America** said it would recognise Edmundo González as the winner of **Venezuela's** presidential election. **Antony Blinken**, America's top diplomat, said it was clear that Mr González, a conservative opposition candidate, had defeated Nicolás Maduro, the strongman incumbent, on July 28th. Mr Maduro has claimed victory. Venezuela's [recent elections](#) have been shams, but the scale of fraud in the latest one was even bigger.

**Britain's** Serious Fraud Office charged a former oil-trading boss at **Glencore** with [corruption](#). Along with four former colleagues, Alex Beard was accused of conspiring to bribe government officials in west Africa while working for the commodity-trading giant. The charges follow a five-year investigation by the SFO into Glencore's oil-trading operations. The men will appear in court on September 10th.

**M23**, a [Rwanda-backed rebel force](#), said it would observe a ceasefire agreement signed on July 30th by Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It warned, however, that it would not be "bound" by the deal. (It accused Congolese forces of using previous truces to regroup.) M23 claims to be defending the rights of ethnic Tutsis in [eastern Congo](#).

**Turkey** cut off access to [Instagram](#), an American social-media platform. The country's communications regulator did not give a reason for its decision to block the app, but the move came soon after a government spokesman accused Instagram of censoring condolences for Ismail Haniyeh, a Hamas leader who was

assassinated on Wednesday. Turkey has been [fiercely critical](#) of Israel's war in Gaza.

**Correction:** *On July 28th we wrote that efforts to boost sales at McDonald's by offering discounted burgers had not worked. That did not reflect the company's report that day that the \$5 meal deals had been selling "above expectations". Sorry.*

**Figure of the day:** 20m, the number of people who visited London last 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.*

# Big oil's big battles



When ExxonMobil and Chevron announce their quarterly results on Friday, the figures will probably be disappointing. Last year the [oil giants](#) posted strong annual net profits of \$36bn and \$21bn, respectively. That came on the heels of a year in which big oil posted its biggest profits in history. But weak refining margins and low natural-gas prices have squeezed profits this quarter.

There is more trouble on the way. The two supermajors locked horns over a lucrative [oil concession in Guyana](#). The legal dispute will prove costly, regardless of the outcome. The American oil industry had rallied strongly behind Donald Trump when he looked likely to win America's election in November. The Republican candidate had promised [fossil-friendly policies](#) in return for \$1bn in campaign contributions. But the electoral tide may be turning. A surging Kamala Harris, the Democratic front-runner who has been winning endorsements from green groups, will be less sympathetic to the woes of big oil.

# The backlash against tourism



On Friday Spain, the world's second-biggest tourist destination (after France), reported that it reached 9.3m international visitors in June. In the first half of 2024, visitor numbers were up by 13.3% compared with last year as tourists returned after covid. That is [causing a backlash](#). Residents in Barcelona, for instance, have taken part in anti-tourist protests. Athenian activists have put on funerals for their dead neighbourhoods. Authorities in Japan have put up a fence to spoil a popular view of Mount Fuji and prevent tourists gathering.

In places like Barcelona residents complain about crowds, dirty streets and higher prices. In response, some cities are seeking to limit tourist numbers; new policies include entry fees, limits on cruise-ship berths and crackdowns on short-term lets. Balancing the interests of visitors and locals is a challenge for policymakers. Receipts from tourism can be invested in infrastructure and higher-value-added sectors, as has happened in Italy and, more recently, Mexico.



# Inflation in South Korea



Though it did not reach the levels seen in America or Europe, inflation has been a persistent worry for South Koreans, and thus for politicians. Since peaking at an annual rate of 6.3% in July 2022, consumer-price inflation has been falling. In June prices of goods and services rose by just 2.4% year on year, below analysts' expectations. But data released on Friday show that annual inflation reached 2.6% in July, in part because of higher prices for oil and agricultural products.

The Bank of Korea wants inflation to approach its target rate of 2%, before it even considers cutting interest rates. It has [held the baseline rate](#) at 3.5% since January 2023. Low GDP growth, caused by weak consumer spending, has made monetary easing more likely. Yet the bank's chief, Rhee Chang-young, has dampened hopes of an imminent cut. On July 11th he hinted that the bank might eventually “shift direction”—but only at the “appropriate time”.

# The IPCC is under pressure to do more, faster



The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—the UN’s climate-science body—concludes a week-long meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria’s capital, on Friday. Its goal is to agree on a timeline for its work until 2030.

That is proving difficult. Roughly every seven years the body publishes a vast report on new scientific research on climate change. These assessments inform international climate negotiations. Pressure is mounting on the IPCC to publish the next report by 2028—two years earlier than normal—in time for a five-yearly stocktake of countries’ progress towards goals set out by the Paris Agreement. But China, India and Saudi Arabia, which fear that the new science will be used to harangue them to take more climate action, are against the idea.

The IPCC is also being asked to do more. It will produce three additional reports in this cycle: on cities; on “short-lived climate forcers” like methane and aerosols; and on [carbon-dioxide removal, capture and storage](#).

# Celebrating James Baldwin



[James Baldwin](#), an American writer best known for his acerbic essays and intimate, searing novels, was born in Harlem 100 years ago on Friday. Festivals will mark the occasion and books on Baldwin's legacy will be released on both sides of the Atlantic. A publisher has issued new editions of his books.

No writer before him, and few since, have depicted African-American and gay life so honestly. "[If Beale Street Could Talk](#)" is a moving love story and "Giovanni's Room" is a pioneering evocation of mid-century gay life. When the Black Lives Matter movement was gathering steam in the mid-2010s, his epigrammatic essays found favour with a younger audience: no African-American writer was cited more on social media. "Not everything that is faced can be changed," Baldwin wrote, as America's civil-rights movement was in full swing. "But nothing can be changed until it is faced."



## Daily quiz



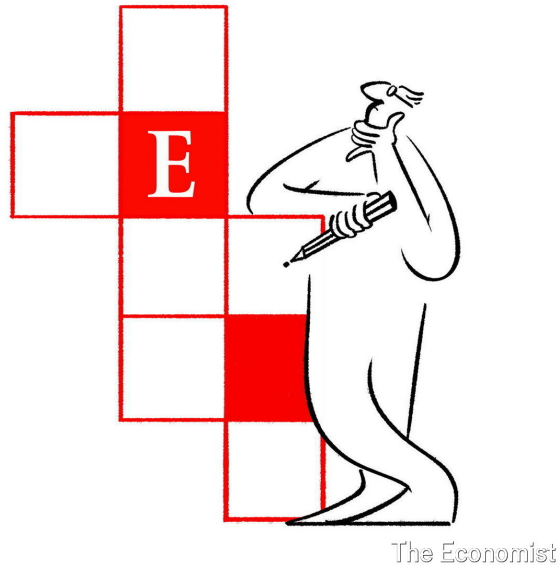
*The Economist*

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 GMT 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.

**Friday:** What is the name for a chamber used for raising and lowering boats, often found on canals?

**Thursday:** “An Angel at my Table”, a 1990 film directed by Jane Campion, is based on the autobiographies of which New Zealand author?

# The winners of last week's crossword



The Economist

Thank you to everyone who took part in our weekly crossword, published in the weekend edition of Espresso. The winners, chosen at random, were:

**Doug Benson**, Tampa, Florida, America

**Jane Harvey**, Barcelona, Spain

**Osamu Senoo**, Izumo, Japan

They all gave the correct answers of [Kamala Harris](#), [Kenyan](#), [Attal](#), and [stream](#). Check back tomorrow for this week's crossword.

**20m**

*The number of people who visited London last year.  
Read the full story.*

**The secret of life is to have no fear.**

*Fela Kuti*