

The world in brief, June 18th 2024



Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, dissolved the country's six-person **war cabinet**. The move, which was widely expected, came just over a week after Benny Gantz, a centrist, [resigned](#) from Mr Netanyahu's government. Itamar Ben-Gvir, a far-right security minister who wants Israel to escalate its [operations in Gaza](#) and against Hizbullah, a Shia militia in Lebanon, had long demanded to join the war cabinet. Mr Netanyahu will instead hold smaller informal consultations with advisers.

The **London Stock Exchange** once again became Europe's biggest equity market as [political turmoil](#) in France spooked investors in Paris. The total value of companies listed on Britain's main exchange reached almost \$3.2trn, according to Bloomberg. [The LSE](#)—long in decline—shrank below the Paris stock exchange in November 2022, following a disastrous economic shakeup under Liz Truss, the short-lived [Conservative prime minister](#).

China opened an anti-dumping probe into pork imports from the EU, less than a week after the bloc [hit China's carmakers](#) with hefty tariffs. China's commerce ministry said that an animal-

husbandry group formally requested the investigation on June 6th. Any retaliatory tariffs would affect Denmark, the Netherlands and particularly Spain, which accounts for about a fifth of China's pork imports.

[Reform UK](#), a hard-right party, proposed a staggering £88bn (\$112bn) in tax cuts as part of its manifesto ahead of **Britain's general election** on July 4th. The party also promised to leave the [European Convention on Human Rights](#) and freeze all "non-essential" immigration. Reform UK, which *The Economist's* [poll tracker](#) suggests is currently Britain's third most popular party, could erode the Conservative Party's already [narrow chances](#) of winning the election.

The **International Monetary Fund** warned that [artificial intelligence](#) could cause widening inequality and widespread unemployment unless governments do more to prepare. Whereas previous technologies have typically led to unemployment among lower-skilled workers, the IMF said that high-skilled professions could be among those worst affected. It suggested that governments should focus on improving unemployment insurance, as well as adapting their education systems.

Greece's coastguard was accused of causing the deaths of more than 40 [migrants in the Mediterranean](#) in recent years. An investigation by the BBC, which analysed 15 incidents and spoke to a number of witnesses, found that nine people died after being deliberately thrown into the sea. The Greek coastguard, which has long faced accusations of using aggressive tactics to stop migrants, denies the allegations.

Wes Moore, Maryland's Democratic governor, reversed more than 175,000 low-level **marijuana convictions**. Black Americans are more likely to be arrested for possessing weed than white people, even though they use it at similar rates. Low-level convictions arguably make less sense now that recreational marijuana is legal in

[24 American states](#). Joe Biden reversed thousands of federal cannabis convictions in 2022; dozens of states have followed suit.

Figure of the day: £1bn (\$1.3bn). The amount of money that Scotland's salmon-farming industry makes each 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.

Putin's bromance with Kim Jong Un



Kim Jong Un has a **new best friend**. It is Vladimir Putin, who likes Mr Kim largely because he supplies weapons for his war in Ukraine. On Tuesday Mr Putin will make his first trip since 2000 to Pyongyang, North Korea's capital. By showing support for Mr Kim, Russia aims to deter South Korea, a **big arms manufacturer** and American ally, from providing lethal weapons directly to Ukraine. North Korea also benefits: trade with Russia has helped stabilise its economy.

But the burgeoning friendship may not last beyond the war in Ukraine. Russia probably has more to gain from a better economic relationship with South Korea, Russia's fifth-largest export destination before the war. China may meddle: it may prefer to maintain North Korea as a stable buffer state between it and American-allied South Korea. Russia's stronger ties with the hermit kingdom may not lead to a neat authoritarian axis but to a messy love triangle.

The siege of el-Fasher



An estimated 2.8m people are trapped inside el-Fasher, the capital of [Sudan's](#) western Darfur region. The Rapid Support Forces, a paramilitary force which has been fighting the Sudanese Armed Forces, the official military, since April last year, has kept the city under siege for more than a month. A garrison in the centre is the last redoubt of the Sudanese armed forces. Should it fall, the RSF might soon enjoy almost unlimited control of Sudan's western frontier.

International opprobrium is growing. Last week the UN Security Council adopted a resolution ordering the rebels to lift the siege. The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor announced the launch of a war crimes investigation. On June 14th a top RSF commander was reportedly killed during a failed attempt to recapture the city. But for el-Fasher's residents, many of whom urgently lack food, water and medical supplies, it is already much too late.

Boeing needs to pull up fast



As he appears before a Senate committee on Tuesday, problems for Dave Calhoun, Boeing's boss, show [no signs of abating](#). Mr Calhoun has been summoned to explain how the American aerospace giant is dealing with weaknesses in the quality and safety of its planes.

After a fuselage panel of a 737 MAX jet blew out in mid-air in January the firm delayed production of the model to improve its manufacturing standards. A recent decision by America's Justice Department means that it faces a deferred prosecution over two fatal crashes of 737 MAX planes in 2018 and 2019. The company is also accused by a whistleblower of poor workmanship on 787 Dreamliners. Earlier this month Starliner, Boeing's new spacecraft, delayed its launch twice over engineering issues.

[Mr Calhoun is stepping down](#) at the end of the year. His successor will be the one to fulfil any promises he makes to Congress.

Thailand's democratic backsliding



Tuesday could be a bad day for Thai democracy. Move Forward, a progressive party, won the most seats in the general election of 2023, but was blocked from forming a government by the army-appointed senate. Now the Constitutional Court will hear a case about whether it should be disbanded.

The Court will also decide whether Srettha Thavisin, the prime minister, breached the constitution by appointing a convicted criminal to his cabinet. Mr Srettha denies wrongdoing, but could face dismissal if found guilty.

To round off a dark day, Thaksin Shinawatra, a [former prime minister](#), will be indicted for insulting the king during an interview in 2015. (He denies the charges.) Mr Thaksin returned to Thailand last year, having fled after a coup in 2006. Some speculate that he struck a deal with the establishment he once fought—if so, this truce appears to have frayed. Whatever the outcomes, Thailand's military establishment is making its influence felt.

A dance between old and new



The New York City Ballet, which just concluded its 75th season, dominates the city's classical dance scene. But it is not the only company in town. On Tuesday the American Ballet Theatre begins its summer season with "Onegin", a dance from 1965 by John Cranko, set to music by Tchaikovsky. Though founded nearly a decade earlier, the ABT is like the NYCB's little sibling. It has no permanent venue, performs less often and has a reputation more for meat-and-potatoes classical fare than the arty abstractions of the NYCB.

The ABT also lacks a resident genius akin to NYCB's founding choreographer, [George Balanchine](#), whose legacy still looms large. But that gives it freedom. The season includes staples like "Swan Lake" alongside the New York premiere of "Woolf Works", a ballet from 2015 by Wayne McGregor that adapts three of Virginia Woolf's novels. It may be classically oriented, but the ABT is not stuck in the past.

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 GMT on Friday to QuizEspresso@economist.com. We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Tuesday: The terms streaky, back and short cut are associated with what type of meat?

Monday: What was the family name of the late Diana, Princess of Wales?

£1bn (\$1.3bn)

The amount of money that Scotland's salmon-farming industry makes each year.

Read the full story.

**A man who has good in him does not mind
sometimes showing his worse nature.**

Maxim Gorky