

## The world in brief, May 27th 2024



An **Israeli** air strike on a tent camp for displaced Palestinians in **Rafah** killed at least 35 people, according to Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry. Israel's army said it was reviewing the incident but insisted the [attack targeted](#) a Hamas compound and was carried out with "precise ammunition and on the basis of precise intelligence". Earlier Hamas launched eight rockets from Rafah towards Tel Aviv, Israel's largest city. Most of the barrage was intercepted and no injuries or fatalities were reported.

Gitanas Nausėda, **Lithuania's** president, secured a landslide re-election. With 90% of the ballots counted, Mr Nausėda had won 76% of the vote. Russia's war in Ukraine [dominated campaigning](#) in the country, which is a NATO member and staunch supporter of Ukraine. Mr Nausėda said Lithuania's independence is a "fragile vessel that we must cherish".

Profits at big **industrial** firms in **China** increased by 4% year on year in April, following a 3.5% decline in March. The data cover companies with an annual revenue of at least 20m yuan (\$2.8m). Chinese officials hope that their output will offset weak domestic

demand. The country's industrial output is also a growing source of [trade friction with the West](#).

The death toll from a **landslide in Papua New Guinea** on Friday rose sharply. A government agency estimated that more than 2,000 people were buried alive; the UN had previously put the figure at 670. On Sunday the ground was still unstable from running groundwater and rescuers struggled to reach the densely populated but remote northern region by a blocked highway.

Li Qiang, **China's** prime minister, hailed a “restart” in relations with **Japan** and **South Korea**. Mr Li was speaking at a trilateral summit in South Korea—the first between the three countries in four years. Japan's and South Korea's ties with America have strained relations with China. The three countries are hoping to resume talks over a trilateral free-trade agreement, which have stalled since 2019.

Criticism mounted of Rishi Sunak's election pledge to reintroduce **national service in Britain**—a week after a defence minister in his government ruled out conscription to preserve military “morale”. Several former senior military officers accused the prime minister of opportunism ahead of July's election, in which his Conservatives [could be trounced](#). Mr Sunak says conscription will give young Britons a “shared sense of purpose”.

A **Qatar Airways** flight from Doha to Dublin experienced severe **turbulence**, injuring 12 people on board. The plane landed safely and on schedule in Ireland's capital. The incident comes days after a British man died when a flight from London to Singapore hit similarly bumpy air. Such incidents remain rare, but climate change is making them more severe.

**Figure of the day:** 52%, the proportion of America's net worth owned by baby boomers, who make up only 20% of the population. [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.*

# The small but mighty island states

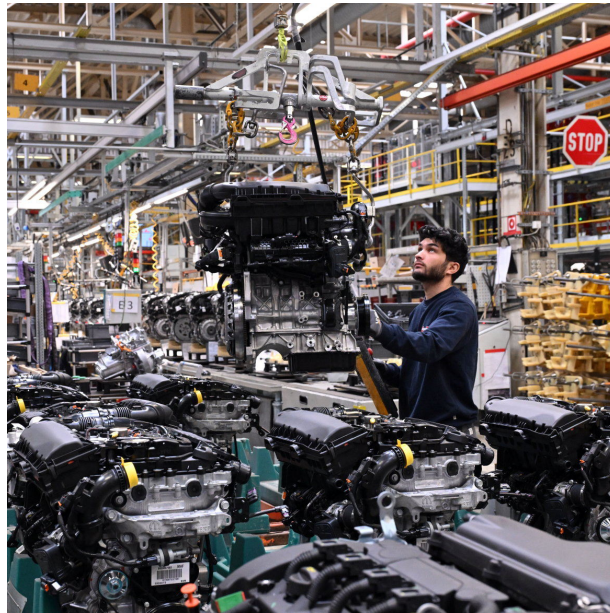


Starting on Monday, amid Antigua and Barbuda's candy-bright buildings and sandy beaches, representatives from the Small Island Developing States will spend three days mulling less idyllic matters—mostly the threats posed by climate change. It is the fourth gathering of the 39-member club since 1994.

Despite generating just 0.2% of the world's carbon emissions, SIDS are especially exposed to rising sea levels and extreme weather, and so are affected by global warming earlier and more severely than other countries. And their economies often rely on at-risk sectors like tourism and fishing. Managing the dangers they face while developing their economies is the theme of this year's summit.

As canaries in the climate-change coal mine, SIDS play an [outsized role](#) in setting the agenda at international climate negotiations. Expect their discussions and decisions—especially demands for rich countries to cough up more cash—to reverberate at COP29, the UN climate conference, in Azerbaijan in November.

# Germany's industrial spirit



On Monday the Ifo Institute, a German economic think-tank, published its business-climate index. The monthly gauge of corporate optimism fell to 89.3 in May, down from 89.4 in April (100 equals the average for 2015). German businesses have been under a cloud recently. The country's growth **has lagged** behind the rest of Europe's for several years. Heavy dependence on Russian gas left Germany exposed when flows were cut off after the invasion of Ukraine. Meanwhile the manufacturing sector, famed for producing high-quality cars, faces competition from Chinese electric vehicles. And automakers worry they may be excluded from the lucrative Chinese market as Europe attempts to "decouple".

But confidence could be returning. Energy prices have fallen and the economy is picking up. The Ifo's expectations index, which captures firms' projections for the next six months, rose to 90.4 in May, up from 89.7 in April.



## Georgia forces through an illiberal law



On Monday the demonstrators who have filled the streets of Tbilisi, Georgia's capital, for weeks had renewed cause to protest. The government began overturning a presidential veto of a bill, originally passed on May 14th, that would force many foreign-funded organisations to register as "bearing the interests of a foreign power". [Critics fear](#) that the law will be used to silence critical voices and undermine the country's [efforts to join the EU](#). America is already moving towards imposing travel bans on the bill's champions. The EU may follow.

If Georgia's liberals return to power after parliamentary elections in October they will probably scrap the law. But the main opposition party, the United National Movement, is distrusted by other liberal parties because of some very nasty scandals the last time it was in power, between 2004 and 2012. Salome Zourabichvili, the president, has urged Georgia's liberals to unite. They will struggle to heed her call.

# The African Development Bank annual meeting



When shareholders of the African Development Bank meet in Nairobi, Kenya on Monday there will be little time for small talk. Africa's most important development institution, which turns 60 this year, mainly invests in roads, ports and other infrastructure with the aim of reducing poverty in a region that is home to 70% of the world's extremely poor people. The bank estimates that around \$130bn-170bn is needed a year for infrastructure development on the continent.

This year African countries are facing an acute funding squeeze. Capital flows are at their lowest levels since the global financial crisis of 2007-09, according to the International Monetary Fund. [The AfDB](#) hopes to use these meetings to convince other development institutions, such as the World Bank and the IMF, to direct more resources to the continent and to back bigger projects over longer periods of time. Don't bank on them having much luck.

## Caravaggio's lost masterpiece



The picture's name fits the occasion. On May 27th “Ecce Homo”—Latin for “behold the man”—will be shown in public for the first time since Michelangelo Merisi, better known as Caravaggio, painted it four centuries ago. The painting, of Christ being paraded before his crucifixion, spent all those years in private hands, and was eventually mis-attributed to an obscure artist rather than to the Italian Baroque master.

Only in 2021, when an auction house in Madrid put the scuffed and weathered work under the hammer with a starting bid of just €1,500 (\$1,627), did the city's Prado National Museum call in experts to check its provenance. They were unanimous: this was a lost work by Caravaggio, whose paintings are prized for their rarity—barely 60 have survived—as much as for their quality. A Brit snapped “Ecce Homo” up for €36m and has loaned the now-restored painting to the Prado until October.



## 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](mailto:QuizEspresso@economist.com). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

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

**52%**

*The proportion of America's net worth owned by baby boomers, who make up only 20% of the population.*

*Read the full story.*

**Art is the triumph over chaos.**

*John Cheever*