

The world in brief, May 30th 2024



Israel's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, said he expects his country's offensive in **Gaza** to last for at least another seven months. Israeli tanks continued to roll deeper into Rafah. Earlier, **America** said only a "major" operation into the city would prompt it to withdraw military aid. The Biden administration confirmed that it would not change its policy towards Israel after its air strike on a tent camp on Sunday **killed** at least 45 people and provoked an international outcry.

Jurors were excused for the day without reaching a verdict, after deliberations began in the first criminal trial of an American president. **Donald Trump** is accused of **falsifying business records** to hide hush-money payments to Stormy Daniels, a former porn star, before the election in 2016. It is up to twelve New Yorkers to decide whether or not Mr Trump is guilty. A unanimous decision must be reached; if that does not happen, the defence could argue for a mistrial.

Polls closed in **South Africa's** general election, the country's most **closely contested in three decades**. Final results are expected by

Sunday. *The Economist's* [poll tracker](#) suggests that the ruling [African National Congress](#) could win its lowest share of the vote ever. The ANC may then need to form a coalition with one of the larger opposition parties.

Samsung Electronics' largest union, which represents a fifth of its workers, called its first strike since it was founded in 1969. The union wants the South Korean technology firm to increase wages by 6.5% but negotiations with [management](#) have stalled. Many of the union's 28,000 members will thus take paid leave on June 7th to protest against "the company's neglect of labourers".

The Atlantic, an American magazine, announced a "strategic" partnership with **OpenAI** to present its articles to users of [ChatGPT](#) and other services. Separately, **Vox Media**, another publisher, made a deal to use [OpenAI's](#) technology. OpenAI will be able to use both publishers' archives to train its models. Such partnerships have emerged since the *New York Times* [sued OpenAI](#) and Microsoft for copyright infringement in December.

Colombia's parliament voted overwhelmingly to ban [bullfighting](#). The president, Gustavo Petro, welcomed the bill, saying death would "no longer be a show". The colonial-era sport still draws thousands of spectators in Colombia and will be phased out over three years. Many Latin American countries have already outlawed it; only seven countries in the world have not.

The **orange market** is in a squeeze: orange-juice futures have reached an all-time high this week. [Prices soared](#) after groves in Brazil, the world's largest producer of the fruit, were battered by bad weather and disease. Expectations of a poor harvest follow two years of reduced yields in America, another big grower. As orange stocks run low, juice-makers are looking to more resilient mandarins.

Figure of the day: 40%. The share of breast procedures in all plastic-surgery operations in America in 2021. [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.

Hong Kong's biggest national-security trial



Verdicts in Hong Kong's [biggest national-security case](#) are expected on Thursday. Forty-seven activists and former lawmakers were arrested in 2021 for staging an unofficial primary vote ahead of elections scheduled for September 2020 (which were ultimately postponed because of covid-19). Their aim: to pick candidates capable of winning a majority in the legislature, despite a system rigged against them. Under a national-security law imposed by Beijing mere days before the primary, that became tantamount to subversion. Most of the defendants have pleaded guilty and have been in prison for more than three years.

It is a tumultuous time for Hong Kong. On Tuesday the first arrests were made under a second draconian national-security law imposed in March. Six suspects were detained for advocating “hatred” of Hong Kong’s and China’s governments, seemingly in relation to social-media posts about next week’s anniversary of the [Tiananmen Square massacre](#) in 1989. Officials claim that only wrongdoers have cause for concern. Hong Kongers fear otherwise.

SCOTUS's busy season begins



A frenetic month lies ahead for America's Supreme Court. Some three dozen cases—many of them highly significant—await rulings before July. Some judgments are due on Thursday. These could be for any of the unresolved cases, which include state and federal attempts to shape [social-media companies' moderation policies](#); judicial deference to federal agencies; and whether cities can punish homeless people for sleeping outdoors.

Other important conflicts involve access to [mifepristone](#), a widely used abortion medication, and emergency abortion bans that could endanger women's health. Two gun cases are also pending: one concerns a federal ban on “bump stocks”, the device used in the Las Vegas shooting in 2017; the other asks if domestic abusers slapped with restraining orders have a right to own a gun. And there is the matter of whether former presidents should be [immune from criminal prosecution](#) for acts they undertook while in office—a ruling that could thwart the case against Donald Trump for conspiring to steal the election in 2020.

Britain's Parliament dissolves



Following months of speculation, last week Rishi Sunak, Britain's prime minister, called a general election for July 4th. On Thursday Parliament will be dissolved. At that point all seats in the House of Commons become vacant. MPs cease to be MPs. Many are retiring; others will fight on the campaign trail to keep their jobs. It will be up to the next parliament to decide whether to pick up any unfinished business, such as Mr Sunak's plan to phase out the sale of tobacco.

The first week of the campaign has been marked by cautious speeches from Labour, which has a 22-point lead in the polls, and bold policy announcements from the Tories. That pattern will probably continue. The intensity will ratchet up with television debates and manifesto launches. *The Economist's* [prediction model](#) has Labour heading for a landslide. Much can still happen in a six-week campaign, but a turnaround is unlikely.

Costco mixes clicks with bricks



The world's third-largest retailer reports its latest quarterly results on Thursday. Analysts expect [Costco](#) to say its revenues grew by a high single-digit percentage, compared with the same quarter last year, driven by increased foot traffic and robust income from membership fees. Costco has over 130m members and its membership-renewal rate exceeds 92% in America and Canada. The company, which operates over 870 stores or “warehouses” globally, also has 31 new stores planned for 2024.

The big-box retailer is also investing in its online business to defend its market share from competitors like Walmart, Kroger and Amazon. Costco has recently improved its mobile shopping platform and added grocery deliveries. This month it announced a partnership with Uber Eats, a food-delivery service, that allows users to order Costco's products through Uber Eats' app. The retailer is betting that its unique offerings—such as gold bars and silver coins along with its own-brand products—will give its digital storefront an edge over the competition.

A new novel remembers Nigeria's civil war



Collective memory of the worst moments of human brutality fades all too quickly, lost between the pained silence of people who experienced them and the blissful ignorance of those who were not born when they happened. The Biafran war, a separatist conflict in Nigeria that killed almost a million people between 1967 and 1970, is one such horror. As the survivors die decades later, so too does memory of the conflict.

Into that gap steps [Chigozie Obioma](#), whose novel “The Road to the Country” is released on Thursday. It seeks to realise the Igbo proverb that “the story of a war can only be fully told by both the living and the dead”. Mr Obioma’s prose, stained with the blood and viscera of battle, rages against the possibility of forgetting or ignoring a conflict that devastated his native Nigeria, leaving wounds that still fester. “The Road to the Country” offers a stark warning of how nation-building can fail—and of the dire consequences when it does.

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.

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?

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

40%

The share of breast procedures in all plastic-surgery operations in America in 2021.

Read the full story.

Do not destroy what you cannot create.

Leo Szilard