

The world in brief, June 25th 2024



Josep Borrell, the EU's chief diplomat, warned that “no help is entering into Gaza” as much of the aid arriving at the border is “not used”. Philippe Lazzarini, the head of [UNRWA](#), the UN's refugee agency for Palestinians, said that the breakdown in civil order in the enclave has made aid delivery more difficult. Earlier **Israel's** tanks pushed further into **Rafah** as Israeli forces continued their offensive in southern Gaza. To the north, an Israeli strike on Gaza City killed a senior Palestinian health official, according to the enclave's health ministry, which is run by Hamas.

An explosion in a [lithium battery](#) factory in **South Korea** killed at least 22 people, according to local officials. One other is still missing. The cause of the explosion is unclear; the factory in Hwaseong city, an industrial centre south-west of Seoul, the country's capital, reportedly held about 35,000 battery cells.

Gunmen in Dagestan, a Muslim-majority republic in Russia, killed at least 20 people in a series of “terrorist attacks”, according to Russia's counter-terrorism agency. Street fights erupted after the attacks on churches and a police checkpoint in Makhachkala, the

region's largest city. A synagogue in Derbent, a coastal city, was set aflame. The victims included police officers and a priest; at least five attackers were reportedly shot dead.

The **European Union** adopted a 14th package of [sanctions](#) against Russia. The new restrictions are the first by the bloc that attempt to limit Russia's revenues from liquefied natural gas. The EU will ban its ports from reselling Russian LNG, and will prohibit new investment in some Russian-linked LNG projects. Russia accused the EU of "political, economic and military escalation".

Novo Nordisk, the [Danish pharmaceutical company](#) behind weight-loss drugs Wegovy and **Ozempic**, said it would invest \$4.1bn in a new facility in North Carolina. The firm said that the site, slated to open between 2027 and 2029, would help the company meet high demand. Eli Lilly, which produces rival GLP-1 drugs, has similarly invested billions in manufacturing plants this year.

America's Supreme Court will decide whether states can limit medical treatments for transgender minors, including puberty blockers. President Joe Biden's administration asked the court to consider the case, arguing that similar treatments can be used for other conditions, such as [precocious puberty](#). Roughly 25 states have passed laws restricting such treatments for transgender minors.

Top American music labels—including **Sony, Universal and Warner**—sued Suno and Udio, two **AI** companies, for [copyright infringement](#). The firms are accused of copying masses of recordings without permission to [train AI models](#) to create tracks with "indisputable similarities" to real artists, according to one of the lawsuits. The labels say such output will "saturate the market with machine-generated content" and "drown out" genuine recordings.

Figure of the day: 70bn, the number of solar cells that are expected to be made this year—the vast majority of them in China. [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 winding road to EU membership



Ukraine and Moldova will hold their first formal accession talks with the European Union on Tuesday, part of a negotiation that will take several years. Officials from both applicant countries will each meet their EU counterparts in Luxembourg. Their discussions are a continuation of informal talks that began when both countries applied to join after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The war gave fresh impetus to [enlargement](#), which had ceased to be a priority for the EU (the last new member was Croatia in 2013). Six countries in the western Balkans plus Georgia also want to join the bloc. If all the aspirants succeed, the EU's membership will rise from 27 to 36 countries. But [none is certain to join](#). Becoming a member requires adopting all the union's rules, which even countries not at war struggle to do. And every step of the negotiation process needs to be approved by all existing EU members.

The Democrats do battle in New York



The Democratic primary for New York's 16th congressional district takes place on Tuesday. It has been the most expensive House primary race in American history, according to AdImpact, a research firm. [Jamaal Bowman](#) (pictured), a progressive who is running for his third term, has been outspent by George Latimer, a seasoned local politician. Mr Latimer has the support of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, whose super PAC has spent more than \$14m on the race. He also has the backing of Democratic moderates like Hillary Clinton.

The contest highlights [divisions within the Democratic Party](#) over Israel's war with Hamas. Mr Bowman has called Israel's military actions in Gaza "genocide." Mr Latimer has said that he entered the race partly because of Mr Bowman's rhetoric. A recent poll showed that Democratic primary voters agree more with Mr Latimer on the war. It also showed him leading by 48% to 31%, though one in five voters is undecided.

Canada turns a corner on inflation



On June 5th [Canada's](#) central bank became the first in the G7 to cut interest rates. It lowered its main policy rate from 5% to 4.75%. That ended a tightening cycle that began in March 2022, during which rates climbed 4.75 percentage points. How far and fast they might come down should become clearer after inflation figures for May are released on Tuesday.

Projections suggest that the annual inflation rate eased to 2.6% last month, from 2.7% in April. That would be the fifth consecutive month that it remained within the Bank of Canada's target range of 1-3%. The prices of some goods and services have even fallen: the cost of fresh fruit and mobile-phone services, for instance, dropped over the past year. The Bank of Canada may be tempted to cut rates again when it makes its next decision on July 24th.

FedEx bets on restructuring



FedEx reports its fiscal-year earnings on Tuesday. The [Memphis-based firm](#), one of the world's biggest package-delivery companies, has set expectations low. Demand for its services has softened owing to slower global economic growth: the firm has suggested that revenues will be down slightly compared with the previous year, when they were \$90.2bn.

The company hopes that a restructuring it began 14 months ago will raise profits. The reorganisation aims to increase efficiency by bringing together the firm's main international business, FedEx Express, with its other companies such as FedEx Ground, a [delivery service](#) that operates in North America. FedEx recently said that it would cut 2,000 of its 50,000 jobs in Europe. The aim is to save \$6bn by 2027. The company's biggest competitors, DHL and UPS, will be watching the integration closely in hopes of stealing customers should FedEx mess it up.

Diane von Furstenberg's pioneering design



Coco Chanel is famous for designing tweed suits and [quilted handbags](#). Calvin Klein brings to mind jeans and tight boxer shorts. Diane von Furstenberg is synonymous with the wrap dress. When the item appeared in American stores in 1974 it became a sensation. Working women appreciated the feminine silhouette and striking patterns as well as the comfortable jersey fabric. Ms von Furstenberg was soon selling 25,000 dresses a week.

On Tuesday a documentary about the Belgian designer—“Diane von Furstenberg: Woman in Charge”—is released on Hulu in America and Disney+ elsewhere. It tells the story of how the wrap dress came into being. The film also chronicles Ms von Furstenberg’s personal history: her relationship with her late mother, a Holocaust survivor, her marriage to a German prince and her love affairs. The series shows that Ms von Furstenberg shares the ethos of her best-known design: “freedom and confidence”.

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: Which 1900 rebellion was an attempt by a Chinese secret society to drive foreigners out of the country?

Monday: The Stayman and Blackwood conventions are part of which four-person card game?

70bn

The number of solar cells that are expected to be made this year—the vast majority of them in China. [Read the full story.](#)
[Read the full story.](#)

**No sooner does man discover intelligence
than he tries to involve it in his own
stupidity.**

Jacques Cousteau