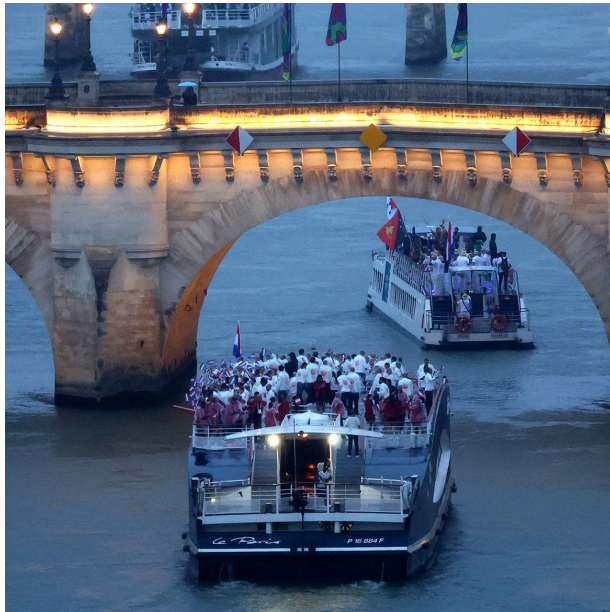


Catch up: Paris Olympics begin; Trump meets Netanyahu



Competition for the first gold medals of the **Paris Olympics** got under way, after a star-studded, eclectic and rain-soaked opening ceremony along [the Seine](#) on Friday evening. Hours before the ceremony, France's high-speed rail network was hit by [a series of apparent arson attacks](#). Trains were suspended across most of the country after fires were lit on lines to the west, north and east of the capital. Who was behind the attacks remains unclear. Gabriel Attal, the prime minister, said the government had begun an investigation.

Donald Trump hosted **Binyamin Netanyahu**, [Israel's prime minister](#), at his Mar-a-Lago home. It was their first meeting since 2020 and comes a day after Ms Harris vowed "not to be silent" about the suffering in Gaza following a meeting of her own with Mr Netanyahu. Mr Trump, who has said Israeli security failures enabled Hamas's attack on October 7th, accused Ms Harris of being "disrespectful".

On Truth Social, his social-media platform, **Mr Trump** said he would return to Butler, Pennsylvania—the town where he narrowly survived an [assassination attempt](#)—for a “BIG AND BEAUTIFUL RALLY”. He did not give further details. Earlier Barack Obama endorsed **Kamala Harris** as the Democratic [presidential nominee](#). In a joint statement with his wife, Michelle Obama, the former president lauded the vice president’s “vision”, “character” and “strength”.

Anthony Blinken, America’s secretary of state, criticised **China’s** “escalating” and “unlawful actions” in the [South China Sea](#), shortly after arriving in Laos, where he is set to meet Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister. America’s top diplomat will also travel to Vietnam, Japan and the Philippines. America wants to strengthen ties with Asian countries in the face of an increasingly assertive China.

Finance ministers and central-bank governors from the **G20** vowed to work together to [tax billionaires](#) at their meeting in **Brazil**. It was the group’s first-ever joint declaration on international taxation. However, progress is unlikely. America is reluctant to endorse the idea. Janet Yellen, America’s treasury secretary, said that the OECD would be a better forum to hold talks.

[Howard Schultz](#), a former boss of **Starbucks**, is opposing a potential deal between it and Elliot Management, an American activist hedge fund, reported the *Financial Times*. Mr Schultz remains the sixth-largest shareholder of the coffee giant, whose share price has dropped by around 20% this year. Companies under pressure from activists often negotiate settlements rather than get into public spats.

Warner Bros Discovery, a media company, sued the **National Basketball Association** for allegedly breaching their media-rights contract. The lawsuit argues that the sports league—which on Wednesday announced [a new deal](#) worth \$77bn with ESPN, NBC

and Amazon—had violated their contract by refusing to honour Warner Bros’ matching proposal. The NBA insists that the counter-offer fell short of the competitors’ bid.

Word of the week: Brat, the title of Charli XCX’s new album, which has spawned countless memes of Kamala Harris. [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.

For Harris time is money



[Kamala Harris](#) is losing no time. On Saturday she will be raising campaign funds at a mass event in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, in the picturesque Berkshire mountains, to a musical backdrop featuring James Taylor, a singer, and Yo-Yo Ma, a cellist. Ms Harris's husband, Doug Emhoff, is also reportedly heading to posh destinations this summer to woo big donors.

Ms Harris's initial fundraising results were staggering: her campaign raked in \$100m in the 36 hours after Joe Biden withdrew from the race, and a super PAC (which draws higher-dollar donations) booked \$150m in new commitments. Billionaire Democrats including Reid Hoffman, a venture capitalist, backed Ms Harris immediately after Mr Biden dropped out. Others, such as Mike Bloomberg, New York's former mayor, and Reed Hastings, who co-founded Netflix, were more cautious. But as the party coalesced around its new candidate, even dissenting donors have softened—Mr Hastings has reportedly donated \$7m to a pro-Harris super PAC.

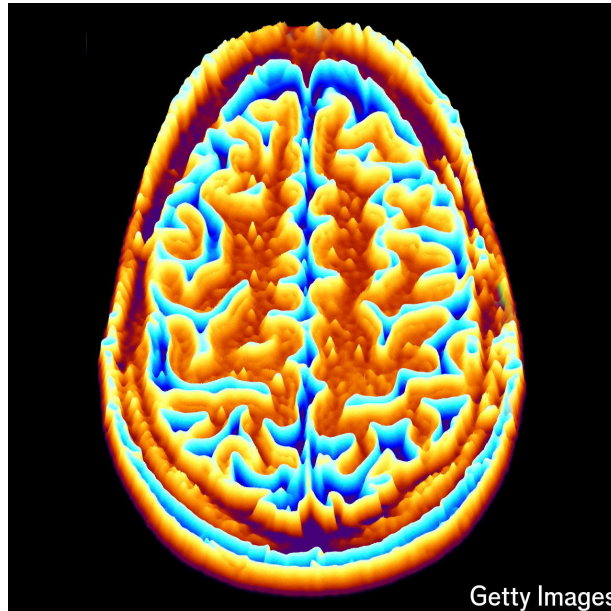
A celebration in the hermit kingdom



The star guest of last year's Victory Day, celebrated in North Korea every July 27th, can be seen as a statement of intent. Sergei Shoigu, Russia's defence minister, attended a military parade commemorating the 70th anniversary of the armistice that paused the Korean war. Since then, Kim Jong Un has [visited Russia](#) and Vladimir Putin has [gone to North Korea](#). North Korea has been sending munitions to Russia for its war in Ukraine. What it is getting in return remains unknown. But on that second trip the two autocrats signed a pledge to provide "mutual aid" if either was attacked.

This year's celebration is unlikely to augur similar announcements. But the military parade is a reminder that the hermit kingdom is still at war with its southern neighbour. So too are the [rubbish-carrying balloons](#) it has been floating south, and the propaganda and K-pop the South has been blaring out of loudspeakers towards the North.

A meeting of minds



Cognitive science, the study of the mind, is increasingly preoccupied with a subject neither human nor animal. Consider who is sponsoring the Cognitive Science Society's annual conference, which concludes on Saturday in Rotterdam: Google DeepMind. The artificial-intelligence company (co-founded by Mustafa Suleyman, a member of *The Economist's* board) is the creator of Gemini, a [large language model](#) similar to ChatGPT. LLMs have been the focus of numerous talks and workshops at the conference.

The appeal is obvious: AI is based on neural networks inspired by the brain. Scientists studying human cognition are interested in how AIs recognise images and process speech because it might shed light on the same mechanisms in humans. Others focus on the models' ability to "think" and whether they can learn in different ways—more like a child, for example. With a new group of "minds" to consider, it is no wonder that the conference is the busiest it has been in years.

A British rapper's long-awaited debut



Rap has been one of British pop music's 21st-century success stories. Like rock 'n' roll before it, it laboured in the shadow of its American inspirations before forging its own identity. Even within the distinctive ranks of British rappers, Birmingham-born Stefflon Don stands out. "Island 54", Ms Don's 20-track debut album, features sounds from across the world, blending grime, Afrobeats, R&B and dancehall. Raised in Holland by Jamaican parents, she attributes the mix of genres to her heritage: "I don't stick to just one thing because I'm not one thing".

"Island 54", whose CD version is issued this weekend, comes nearly a decade into Ms Don's wide-ranging career—placing her in the curious position of a respected veteran making her LP debut. The long game has paid off. It's highly enjoyable and a clear statement of ambition from an artist with her eye on international recognition.

Weekend profile: Shabana Mahmood, Britain's new Lord Chancellor



“There was once a little girl in Small Heath, one of the poorest areas of Birmingham, who worked behind the till in her parents’ corner shop.” So said Shabana Mahmood of her own rise to the position of Britain’s Lord Chancellor during her swearing-in speech on July 16th. Looking back to identify a previous Lord Chancellor with whom she could draw personal parallels, she joked it was tough: no “Brummie” had yet done it in the post’s 317-year history. No Muslim had either.

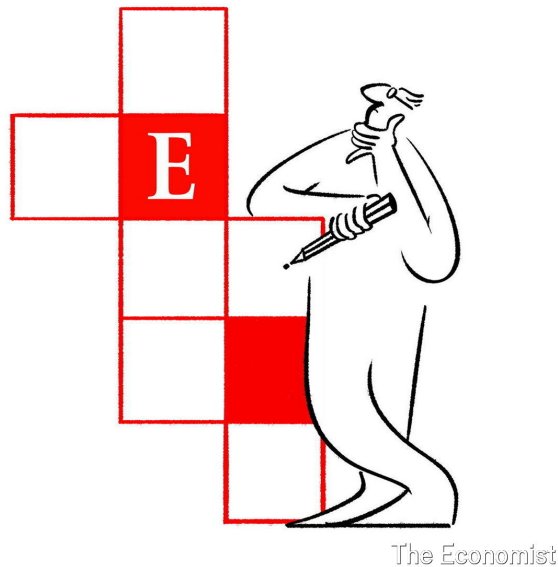
The daughter of Kashmiris, Ms Mahmood has described her Pakistani parents as “stereotypical” Asian immigrants who cherished education and professional jobs. In her education, she stands out less from her predecessors. Ms Mahmood attended a selective school, then went to Oxford, where she read law and became president of the junior common room at Lincoln College (Rishi Sunak, Britain’s former Conservative prime minister and a fellow student, reportedly voted for her).

After working as a barrister, in 2010 Ms Mahmood was elected as the Labour MP for Birmingham Ladywood, an inner-city constituency in Britain's second city. That was the first year any female Asian MPs were elected to Parliament. More recently, her trajectory has been bumpy. For decades Ladywood was one of Labour's safest seats. But this year Akhmed Yakoob, a pro-Palestine independent, cut Ms Mahmood's majority. Once an outspoken defender of the Palestinian cause, Ms Mahmood this year abstained from a vote on a ceasefire in Gaza.

As justice secretary Ms Mahmood has the task of trying to fix Britain's badly broken criminal-justice system. Ms Mahmood's religion would inform this work, she said in her speech: the Koran "places justice above all else". She has hit the ground running at the justice department, announcing, days into the job, that some prisoners would be released early to ease an overcrowding crisis.

Some admirers of Ms Mahmood have pointed out that the first woman to be justice secretary, Liz Truss, ended up (very briefly) as prime minister. Regardless of what lies ahead, Ms Mahmood hopes that her appointment will inspire others: "Even the oldest offices in the land are within reach of us all."

Weekly crossword



Our crossword has two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers, all of which feature in articles in this week's edition of *The Economist*:

Cryptic clues

1 down Feverish with malaria, shark becomes Trump's foe (6,6)

1 across Barbie's friend cuddles any perverted African (6)

2 across What talent has a young prime minister? (5)

3 across Flowing water washes master away (6)

Factual clues

1 down Democratic brat? (6,6)

1 across Nationality whose numbers employed by Britain's National Health Service have tripled since the covid-19 pandemic

(6)

2 across The Olympics' political caretaker? (5)

3 across Increasingly the way to watch sport (6)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am GMT on Monday to crossword@economist.com. We will pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners in next week's edition.

The winners of this week's quiz



The Economist

Thank you to everyone who took part in this week's quiz. The winners, chosen at random, were:

Hassan Alaoui Abdallaoui, Rabat, Morocco

Louise Coe, Nottingham, Britain

Fred Egler, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, America

They all gave the correct answers of Fish, butter, David Bowie, bread, steak. The theme is knives: fish knife, butter knife, Bowie knife, bread knife and steak knife.

The questions were:

Monday: Who was the lead singer of the 1980s pop group Marillion?

Tuesday: Land O' Lakes, Kerrygold and Lurpak are all brands of which grocery item?

Wednesday: Which rock singer adopted the alter ego Ziggy Stardust?

Thursday: Naan, chapati and roti are Indian versions of what food?

Friday: T-bone and ribeye are cuts of what kind of meat?

Brat

*The title of Charli XCX's new album, which has spawned countless memes of Kamala Harris.
Read the full story.*

**A writer should write with his eyes and a
painter paint with his ears**

Gertrude Stein