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The US economy's delicate balancing act

Trump and Johnson put rule of law on trial GIDEON RACHMAN, PAGE 15

# JPMorgan settles Epstein lawsuit for up to \$290mn

- Sex offender was client for 15 years
- Further legal challenge outstanding

JOSHUA FRANKLIN — NEW YORK JOE MILLER — LONDON

JPMorgan Chase has agreed to pay up to \$290mn to settle one of two lawsuits over its 15-year relationship with Jeffrey Epstein, in which the bank was accused of profiting from human trafficking by ignoring multiple internal warnings about its former client's sex crimes.

The agreement came just hours after a federal judge ruled that the case, originally brought by an Epstein accuser under the pseudonym Jane Doe, would be widened to include dozens of women who claim to have been abused by the disgraced financier. The total size of the group who will share the payout exceeds 150 victims, a lawyer for Doe said.

JPMorgan has not admitted any liability. It declined to comment on the size of the payout, which was confirmed by Doe's lawyers. The settlement has yet to be approved by a federal court.

The settlement brings JPMorgan one

The settlement brings JPMorgan one step closer to drawing a line under the two perilous proceedings, which generated unflattering headlines for the biggest US bank and embarrassed some of its most senior executives.

It comes almost a month after Deutsche Bank, which took on Epstein as a client in 2013 after JPMorgan terminated its relationship with the late convicted sex offender, agreed to pay up to \$75mn to settle a similar lawsuit on behalf of dozens of alleged victims.

JPMorgan still faces allegations in a separate legal challenge from the US Virgin Islands, where Epstein had a home. The bank is also in the process of suing Jes Staley, one of its former senior executives, to make him liable for damages it may face over the Epstein claims.

"Taken together or individually, the historic recoveries from the banks who provided financial services to Jeffrey Epstein, speak for themselves," said David Boies, a lawyer for the accusers. "It has taken a long time, too long, but today is a great day for Jeffrey Epstein survivors."

JPMorgan said the settlement was "in the best interests of all parties, especially the survivors who were the victims of Epstein's terrible abuse".

It added that "any association with [Epstein] was a mistake and we regret it. We would never have continued to do business with him if we believed he was using our bank in any way to help commit heinous crimes."

The pre-trial process led to troves of internal communications at JPMorgan being made public, including an email in which a compliance official said there was "lots of smoke, lots of questions" about Epstein, and one in which the financier was referred to as a "Sugar Daddy!" for young women.

Court filings also revealed that employees at JPMorgan, where Epstein began banking in 1998, were aware by July 2006 that he had been arrested in Florida, and had discussed his 2008 guilty plea to a state charge of soliciting a minor, as well as the requirement that he register as a sey offender.

JPMorgan chief Jamie Dimon last month sat for seven hours of testimony about the bank's ties to Epstein. There was no record of Dimon interacting with Epstein, but one message by a JPMorgan employee contained a reference to a "Dimon review" into the bank's relationship with Epstein. The bank denied Dimon had knowledge of such a review.

# Seat of power Berlusconi dies at 86, leaving big questions for Meloni's rightwing coalition



Italian former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi has died aged 86, marking the end of a controversial career that ranged from billionaire media magnate to trailblazing populist.

As Italy's longest-serving postwar leader, he led the country for almost a decade in total, marked by criminal investigations into his business affairs and sex scandals.

Even towards the end of his life he

was active in Italian politics, playing a leading role in the crisis that brought down Mario Draghi's government last year, before helping to form Giorgia Meloni's ruling coalition.

Berlusconi's death, which comes months after it was revealed that he had leukaemia, raises questions about the division of power within Meloni's rightwing coalition, as well as the future of his Forza Italia party, given the lack of a clear successor. "The party cannot survive the end of Berlusconi," said political scientist Giovanni Orsina.

His longstanding friendship with Vladimir Putin proved to be a liability for Meloni's government. Russia's president yesterday said: "For me, Silvio was a dear and true friend. I was always sincerely in awe of his wisdom."

## Briefing

- Top Credit Suisse staff axed as UBS rescue sealed UBS has announced the exit of five key executives hours after the takeover closed. Departures include chief financial officer
- ► Sunak and Johnson clash Rishi Sunak and Boris Johnson have traded recriminations in the spat between the UK premier and the ex-leader. — PAGE 4; FT VIEW, PAGE 14; GIDEON RACHMAN, PAGE 15
- ► Lithuania warns Nato
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  Landsbergis has said the alliance
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  The channel has sent Tucker
  Carlson a "cease and desist" letter
  over videos the fired anchor has
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  plans to reboot his show. PAGE 5
- ► Carmakers in tariff alert European electric-vehicle makers have warned they stand to lose €4.3bn unless Brussels agrees to delay imposing levies between the EU and the UK.— PAGE 2
- ► Glencore eyes Teck's coal The Swiss miner and trader has said it wants to buy the business for cash, a new twist in one of the sector's biggest takeover battles in a decade.— PAGE 6; LEX, PAGE 16

## Datawatch

# **Staying on**UK graduate route visa issuance (000s)



The number of work visas granted to those in the UK on student visas who opted after graduating to extend their stay — the so-called graduate route — more than doubled in the past year. Chinese and Indians are particularly ket

### Overseas investors lose enthusiasm for China tech

Foreign investors are getting cold feet about the China tech scene. Ventrure capital giant Sequoia Capital last week became the latest group to shiver over rising Beijing-Washington tensions, unveiling a plan to split off its China arm. A weak economic recovery is not helping, with the result that even profitable big names like Tencent and Alibaba have lost their allure. 'China is getting cancelled and the economy is a dumpster fire,' says one analyst. China 'cancelled' > PAGE 7

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# Netherlands plans to screen students from China over national security risks

ANDY BOUNDS — BRUSSELS

The Dutch government plans to vet international students after universities barred some Chinese postgraduates from top technology degrees over fears they could be a risk to national security.

Education minister Robbert Dijkgraaf said he was investigating how many students were funded by the state-run Chinese Scholarship Council after several universities started excluding them.

Recipients of Chinese grants have to swear allegiance to the Communist party, return to China within two years of completing their studies and report to the Chinese embassy in the country where they study.

It is the latest sign of a stricter stance by EU countries concerned by security threats from Beijing after decades of

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openness. Dijkgraaf told the Financial Times he shared the fears of universities. "In general, the targeted use of grant programmes to obtain highquality knowledge and technology for the state is undesirable. I have set up a study to see how many CSC researchers there are in the Netherlands and in which fields they are active."

He said he would report to parliament this year and was preparing a Knowledge Security Screening law. "The risk areas – sensitive technologies – are currently being mapped out."

Dijkgraaf added that there was no specific policy "to exclude Chinese students... or to discourage co-operation with Chinese institutes or researchers in sensitive fields".

However, The Hague has come under pressure from Washington to restrict the transfer of advanced technology to

China. It has announced that the most advanced silicon chipmaking machines from manufacturer ASML would

require an export licence.
Liesje Schreinemacher, Dutch trade minister, said China might try to skirt controls by procuring the knowledge from Dutch universities instead. "If you want a certain technology, you first try to buy the technology. If that doesn't work, you try to invest. If that doesn't work, you send people to the technology institutions to get the technology or to get the knowledge of that technology."

Robert-Jan Smits, president of Eindhoven university of technology, said: "Gradually, all Dutch universities will reduce the number of students from China."

China's foreign ministry said it hoped that the situation would not be "politicised and stigmatised".

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Pair	Jun 12	Prev	Pair	Jun 12	Prev	Yield (%)	Jun 12	Prev	Chg
\$/€	1.075	1.076	€/\$	0.930	0.930	US 2 yr	4.61	4.60	0.01
\$/£	1.251	1.258	£/\$	0.799	0.795	US 10 yr	3.78	3.74	0.04
£/€	0.859	0.855	€/£	1.164	1.170	US 30 yr	3.92	3.89	0.04
¥/\$	139.625	139.375	¥/€	150.062	149.925	UK 2 yr	4.63	4.55	0.08
¥/£	174.671	175.341	£ index	81.544	81.218	UK 10 yr	4.44	4.34	0.10
SFr/€	0.977	0.970	SFr/£	1.138	1.135	UK 30 yr	4.53	4.44	0.10
CRYPTO						JPN 2 yr	-0.08	-0.07	-0.01
CRIPIO		Jun	12	Prev	%chg	JPN 10 yr	0.42	0.43	-0.01
Bitcoin (\$)						JPN 30 yr	1.26	1.26	0.00
Ethereum		25898.80 26050.05 1736.46 1767.07			-0.58	GER 2 yr	2.90	2.91	-0.01
Ethereum		1/30	.40	1/0/.0/	-1.73	GER 10 yr	2.39	2.37	0.01
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OHAVTI 6		67	02	70.17	2.10				

## INTERNATIONAL

**Russia threat** 

# Nato urged to reinforce Baltic defences

Lithuania asks for help as Moscow plans to deploy nuclear weapons nearby

RICHARD MILNE NORDIC AND BALTIC CORRESPONDENT

Nato needs to improve its defence plans for the Baltic countries, especially as Russia prepares to send nuclear weapons into neighbouring Belarus, Lithuania's foreign minister has said.

Gabrielius Landsbergis, whose country will host next month's Nato summit, said that while there was sufficient planning in place for crises, Nato needed to do more against Russia's continued threats against its neighbours on the alliance's eastern flank.

Russian president Vladimir Putin said at the weekend that nuclear weapons would be moved to Belarus in early July, and some officials in the Baltics believe they could be paraded there during

"The Baltic states have to be reinforced. Lithuania has to be reinforced. because we have a vulnerable territory," Landsbergis said.

Improving the defence of the three Baltic states, illegally annexed to the Soviet Union after the second world war, is one of the main topics of Nato's Viln ius summit on July 11-12.

Nato has positioned multinational battalions in each of the Baltic states and is discussing how to raise the number of troops and equipment in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and other frontline

countries such as Poland. The multinational battalion in Lithuania is led by more German troops by building extra barracks and infrastructure. However, Germany has until now tried to keep

'The question is what do you do in peacetime? What kind of message do you send to Putin?'

most of its troops based at home and earmarked for Lithuania if needed. The alliance has also developed new

plans, shared with the Baltic states, which Vilnius judged to be satisfactory for how they deal with a stepping up of

tensions up to a full-scale war. But Landsbergis said that while the plans were useful in case of a crisis, they did not account for situations such as now, when Russia was continuing to pose security threats to the Baltic nations

"The question is what do you do in peacetime? What kind of message do you send to Putin? Unfortunately, we don't have a message yet."

Lithuania believes it is vulnerable in

the so-called Suwalki Gap, the 100kmwide border between it and Poland that is squeezed between Russia's exclave of Kaliningrad and Belarus.

"The Suwalki Gap, if that's lost, it changes a lot. The Baltic countries can't be left as they are," said Landsbergis.

Lithuania's premier Ingrida Šimonytė, who local officials have touted as a potential next head of Nato, has said that the path of Russian tanks to Lithuania is shorter because of military integration between Russia and Belarus

Estonia's premier Kaja Kallas said last year that Nato's previous defence plans would have let Russia invade the Baltic states before liberating them within 180 days, adding that this would have meant the "complete destruction of countries and our culture" as Tallinn and other cities would be "wiped off the map".

Nato said it did not comment on 'operational details" but "strengthening deterrence and defence" was a priority.

Estonia's foreign minister Margus Tsahkna added that the new plans needed "to be backed with real capabilities" such as more troops and pre placed equipment.

Post-Brexit trade

# **EU** electric vehicle groups call for tariffs delay on exports to UK

ANDY BOUNDS — BRUSSELS

European carmakers have warned that they stand to lose €4.3bn and will have to cut production by almost 500,000 electric vehicles unless Brussels agrees to delay the imposition of tariffs between the EU and the UK.

The European Automobile Manufacturers Association (Acea), an industry group, said China would be the biggest beneficiary if the EU did not agree to a British request to push the changes back from 2024 until 2027.

From next January, electric vehicles shipped between the UK and EU face 10 per cent tariffs unless at least 45 per cent of their parts by value are sourced from within the two regions, under terms set out in the post-Brexit Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Acea argues that the industry needs more time to wean itself off batteries that are still imported from China, South Korea or Japan, despite a push to build factories in Europe.

"Money is being spent to support elec-trification and the building of a European supply chain is accelerating. But it needs time. We've all been too optimistic." Sigrid de Vries, director-general of Acea, said. "We're not asking to change the TCA . . . we need more time.

She said the group estimated that EUbased companies would pay €4.3bn in tariffs and lose sales between 2024 and 2027, resulting in about 500,000 fewer vehicles being made. "The UK is the number one export market for European carmakers. A quarter of EVs go to the UK," she said.

Maroš Šefčovič, EU commissioner for UK relations, said in May that the bloc would not budge as it wanted to encourage carmakers to invest in domestic battery-making capacity. But he has asked Acea to submit evidence of the likely damage to the industry.

The commission said it had "taken note of Acea's estimates" but defended the TCA rules as a means to "develop a strong and resilient battery value chain in the EU", adding: "Any issues regarding the TCA and its operation can be raised by either side in the bodies that were set up by the TCA."

De Vries pointed out that the US had also offered vast subsidies to vehicle producers to make batteries and electric models as part of President Joe Biden's \$370bn Inflation Reduction Act, making Europe a less attractive option.

Investment plans in Europe have also been hit by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which increased energy and raw material prices, and the lockdowns that disrupted supply chains.

Without a postponement, China would be the big winner, De Vries said. Models made there were paying tariffs but could already undercut EU rivals. which have a higher cost of production and less access to the critical raw materials used in batteries, she said. In the UK, Chinese-made vehicles accounted for a third of EV purchases in 2022, 15

times the proportion in 2020. "You are giving China sales by levying these tariffs. Lost market share is very hard to get back," De Vries said.

UK ministers have held talks with EU counterparts and stress privately that a postponement would benefit London and Brussels.

Islamic republic: Economic headwinds

# Sanctions put the brake on Iran's car industry

Shortages of parts and soaring prices hit supplies to country's biggest non-energy sector

NAJMEH BOZORGMEHR — TEHRAN

Iran's authorities were confident that the country's car industry would prove a bastion of economic resilience against the sweeping US sanctions imposed after Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers collapsed.

But hopes that imports from countries such as China would compensate for the impact of the US curbs have not been realised. The plunging rial and shrinking state revenues have created a widespread shortage of crucial materials and a sudden increase in prices, which have hit the industry hard and scuppered the hopes of would-be car

"I can't even think of it for the rest of my life," said Mohammad Reza, a construction worker who had been saving for years to buy a Pride, Iran's cheapest car. "Before it was difficult, now it's impossible."

Iran's car industry is the country's largest sector outside oil and gas, accounting for 4 per cent of gross domestic product and employing about 500,000. It was a major beneficiary of the optimism that followed the 2015 nuclear accord, as foreign companies, notably from France, began exploring the country's market.

But the sanctions that were imposed in 2018 when Donald Trump, the then US president, pulled his country from the nuclear deal, ended that by devastating Iran's economy, particularly its

motorindustry.

The French companies that had jumped into the market began to pull out. PSA cancelled production deals totalling €700mn, while Renault abandoned a plan to lift output to 350,000

vehicles a year.

The industry initially sought to fill the gap with domestic production and imports from China. Iran continued to produce some Peugeot models, with half the parts sourced from the Chinese market, according to one industry executive.

But carmakers still have been unable to meet demand at a reasonable cost Production reached 1.5mn units in 2017, one of the highest levels ever, but



Stalled: a Saipa vehicle factory in Tehran. Iran's car sector employs about 500,000 but has been hard hit by

sanctions - Bo

from there the number fell below 1mn

"As long as US sanctions continue, the gap between supply and demand will remain wide," said Siamak Ghassemi, managing director of Tehran-based consultancy Bamdad Institute.

The cheapest unused locally made Peugeot 206 model on sale in a Tehran showroom this month cost IR5.2bn (\$10,800), some 15 times higher in rial terms than in May 2018, when sanctions were imposed, and 5.5 times more than the average annual wage of labourers in

In an attempt to curb prices, Tehran has revised its own ban on car imports. It recently allowed in a limited number of new vehicles from China and is considering whether to permit the import of second-hand cars.

Iran's defence industry did step in to produce some components, such as airbags and electronic control units, boost ing production to 1.2mn vehicles in the most recent Iranian year that ended in March. Prices have also fallen slightly over the past two months as supply sub-

shortages that those with money to spend are limited to unused older models made by popular global vehicle brands, albeit offered at astronomical

One Tehran showroom was selling an unused 2017 Mercedes-Benz E 200 class for IR170bn, about six times the price of this year's model in western markets.

Even used foreign cars fetch premium prices. "Iran is perhaps the only country in the world where you buy a car, drive it for 100,000km for years and then sell it for double, triple or even quadruple the original price," said a western diplomat

Some Iranians see buying a car that can at least hold its value as a way to insulate their savings against inflation, which stands at 49 per cent, say analysts. The rial has lost more than a third its value over the past year.

Many have put their savings in special bank accounts set up by the government to support domestic industries, including the car sector. Savers register their intention to purchase a product and suc'How can an Iranian carmaker make profits and provide after-sale services when the country is fighting with other countries all

the time?'

cessful applicants are chosen at random in the style of a lottery. It is unclear how long customers generally wait before being able to buy a car from a local manufacturer such as Iran Khodro or Saipa. The companies declined to give details of their output or comment on any production problems. Analysts have suggested that the cri-

sis in key industries such as the car sec $tor\ could\ prompt\ the\ Islamic\ republic\ to$ seek at least a temporary new nuclear agreement with the US to ease the eco-Saeed Laylaz, an analyst specialising

in Iran's political economy, did not rule out such a deal but said the country's isolation would remain a problem for the car industry. "How can an Iranian carmaker make

profits and provide after-sale services when the country is fighting with other countries all the time?" he said.

"Politics have overshadowed the economy. The car industry can only thrive if it can increase production beyond Iran's market, and that needs a change of attitude in foreign policy."

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# Match-fixing scandal echoes around China's snooker halls

THOMAS HALE AND WANG XUEQIAO OLIVER BARNES — LONDON

At Star Billiards, a cue sports venue in the Workers Cultural Palace of Shang hai's Changning District, a scandal unfolding several thousand miles away feels uncomfortably close to home.

Snooker's top authority last week banned 10 UK-based Chinese players, including leading talents Liang Wenbo and Yan Bingtao, for their involvement in a match-fixing scandal. "Many of us here are fans of these players," said Ding, who runs Billiards and only gave his surname. "We are repulsed by this incident. We all feel this is a great pity."

With thousands of snooker halls, China now accounts for an estimated 50mn recreational players and a quarter of the world's top 100 players, compared with none a few decades ago.

The scandal raises questions for the industry and could threaten its popularity in China, which is responsible for 30 per cent of snooker's global revenues across events and broadcasting. The "video views [in China] are in the billions, not the millions", said Jason

Ferguson, chair of the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association, the governing body, and a former professional player.

Any fall in active Chinese players could have commercial implications. said Mark Thomas, an analyst at S2M Consulting, a Chinese sports consultancy, "That means there'll be less Chinese involvement, which will probably mean less media interest, which means if there's less media interest, there's less sponsorship, there's less advertising revenue," he said.

Snooker gained momentum in China in the early 2000s, propelled by stars such as Ding Junhui, who contested a memorable Masters final in 2007 against Ronnie O'Sullivan. The 2016 World Championship, in which he reached the final, attracted 300mn viewers globally, more than two-thirds of them in China.

The match-fixing scandal emerged after suspicious betting activity last year prompted authorities to investigate. The WPBSA, which oversaw a detailed report, noted that the Chinese players, a "close-knit group", were based in Sheffield to participate in international competitions and had been unable to return home during the pandemic. Some players did not earn money

unless they won matches, a system that is now under review. The players were isolated, under financial pressure from travel expenses, living costs and their own "ill-judged gambling and betting habits", the report said. The Chinese Billiards and Snooker

Association had already banned six players from domestic competitions in December for the incident, adding that it "firmly opposes match fixing, gambling and other acts that violate sports



Liang Wenbo: one of 10 UK-based Chinese players who are now banned

integrity and ethics". It promised to mete out further punishment following the WPBSA investigation. The scandal highlights the sport's

exposure to international gambling networks that have distorted competitions from tennis to basketball. Although the players in question received match-fixing fees of several

thousand pounds, they facilitated larger and ultimately unknowable flows of money behind the scenes "This is not a snooker problem, neither is it a Chinese problem — it is a global issue in all sports," said Ferguson.

"It's not going to go away, it's a fight that is ongoing. Probably no amount of education whatsoever would have stopped these players falling into that trap." At a recent tournament at Star Billiards, players vied for a prize pot of Rmb14,700 (\$2,060) in the kind of

grassroots event that could for many participants be the first step on a ladder to international glory. "I hope this will pass as soon as possi-

ble," said Ding, the Star Billiards boss. "From Ding Junhui to so many players nowadays, reaching that level of development is not easy.

Tuesday 13 June 2023 ★ FINANCIAL TIMES

## INTERNATIONAL

# Scottish 'home of golf' takes swing at sport's Saudi merger

People in St Andrews unimpressed by tie-up that hands Riyadh huge clout

LUKANYO MNYANDA — ST ANDREWS

As he prepared to tee off at the historic Old Course in St Andrews, the Scottish town known as the "home of golf", Dominic Clemons was still digesting the shock tie-up that has handed Saudi Arabia enormous sway over the future of the professional game.

"I feel sorry for the guys who were loyal," said the 20-year-old, referring to the players who resisted the hundreds of millions of dollars offered by LIV Golf, the oil-funded upstart launched in 2021 to shake up the ancient game, in favour of preserving its traditions.

The arrival of LIV Golf, backed by

The arrival of LIV Golf, backed by Saudi Arabia's \$650bn sovereign wealth fund, threw the elite level of the sport into unprecedented turmoil, as some of its biggest names signed up for the fortunes on offer.

Tiger Woods, one of golf's most bankable stars, reportedly turned down a huge sum to join, but other leading players, including Phil Mickelson, Dustin Johnson and Brooks Koepka, signed up. Recriminations and lawsuits followed as the US PGA Tour and its European counterpart banned the rebels from their competitions.

Then, out of the blue last week, a deal was announced to combine the commercial activities of the US and European tours with LIV Golf, with the new entity chaired by Saudi powerbroker Yasir al-Rumayyan and bankrolled by the kingdom's petrodollars.

The news left many complaining of a takeover by Saudi Arabia's Public

Investment Fund rather than a commercial merger, although the PGA Tour will hold a majority of the voting rights.

The audacious Saudi move underscored how professional golf has become a global sport, hugely popular in the US and much of Europe, growing fast in Asia and played by hundreds of millions with little or no connection to its origins in Scotland.

But it remains an important part of the Scottish identity, particularly in St Andrews, a quaint east coast town where golf was first played during the Middle Ages and which lays claim to having the oldest course in the world. The flagship Old Course — the town

The flagship Old Course — the town has six others — has hosted the Open, one of golf's four "majors", 30 times, more than any other, and legends such as Jack Nicklaus, Seve Ballesteros and Woods have all navigated its feared 17th "road hole" to lift the famous Claret Jug.

Few in St Andrews were willing to give the sport's new Saudi Arabian co-owner the benefit of the doubt. Gary Maxwell of Glasgow-based Ideal Executive Travel, who was showing clients round the town, struggled to reconcile the previous positions taken by the sport's US and European bosses, that LIV Golf was an existential threat, with their sudden embrace of the organisation.

He concluded the merger was "for money and money alone", adding: "I'm not overly keen on it. Golf should stay with



Rory McIlroy at the Open, St Andrews, last year. Below, Seve Ballesteros lifts the Claret Jug in 1984

The PIF does have ambitious plans, as it seeks to gain acceptance of LIV Golf's team-based format and marry it with the commercial appeal of the PGA Tour, which boasts blue-chip sponsorships and lucrative broadcast deals. The details will be thrashed out in the coming weeks, but the PIF could pump about \$3bn into the new entity, people

familiar with the matter admitted.

The Saudi golf drive comes less than two years after the PIF took a majority stake in English Premier League football club Newcastle United. That deal sparked accusations from human rights organisations that its vast sums were being used to soften the image of a country accused of human

rights abuses.

The "sportwashing" label has been revived since the golf merger by those who say Riyadh is again using its wealth to

buy up prestigious assets in an

time on an even bigger scale. Moraig Orton, 78, a St Andrews local who first picked up a golf club when she was a child, said recent events had reinforced her view the professional sport had abandoned its roots. "Golf . . . has lost the idea of being everyone's game."

Two other golfers, both members of an "80-plus ladies club", were more forthright in their disapproval. "It's a shame if the Saudis take it over," said one, who preferred not to be named. "Saudi Arabia's history with human rights is just not good. St Andrews is inclusive of all genders and ethnic groups."

Neil Coulson, chief executive of the St Andrews Links Trust, which runs the town's seven courses, declined to comment on the merger, other than to say he welcomed "initiatives which develop and promote participation and growth of the game".

But the shake-up was hailed by the organisation that runs courses owned

'Golf . . . has lost the idea of being everyone's game'

by former US president Donald Trump, including Trump Turnberry in Ayrshire, on Scotland's west coast. Sarah Malone, executive vice-president for Trump International Golf Scotland, called it "the best news to come out of the golf world for a long time".

Moraig Orton,

It was not a view shared by Rebecca Roberts, who was visiting the Old Course to support her son Matt, a top amateur golfer who was preparing to play in the St Andrews Links Trophy tournament.

She was left pondering how the LIV Golf merger would shape the future of the game, particularly the repercussions for young golfers who have witnessed large rewards going to those who had initially decided to jump ship.

"You make a decision to walk away for financial gain . . . and then you're the one sitting pretty," she said. "I'm not sure this portrays the right message to the younger generation."

Additional reporting by Samuel Agini



## INTERNATIONAL

**Peerage nominees** 

# Sunak rejects Johnson's version of honours list spat

UK premier 'didn't think it right' to overturn names blocked by House of Lords

JIM PICKARD, GEORGE PARKER AND LUCY FISHER

Rishi Sunak and Boris Johnson traded recriminations yesterday as the row between the UK prime minister and former prime minister over the latter's resignation honours list worsened.

Sunak claimed Johnson had asked him to interfere and wave a long list of his allies through to the UK's unelected second chamber, to which Johnson retorted angrily that Sunak was "talking rubbish".

Addressing the row head-on, Sunak said Johnson had asked him to reverse a decision by the House of Lords appointment committee to block some of the names Johnson proposed to put forward

When it comes to honours and Boris Johnson, Boris Johnson asked me to do omething that I wasn't prepared to do because I didn't think it was right, either to over-rule the Holac committee or

make promises to people," Sunak said. Holac has confirmed it rejected eight peerage nominees put forward in Johnson's resignation honours, which were announced on Friday. Johnson's sup-porters have claimed Sunak broke a omise to wave through the entire list, a charge denied by Downing Street.

'I wasn't prepared to do that because I didn't think that was right," Sunak said yesterday. "And if people don't like that, then tough. When I got this job I said I was going to do things differently because I was going to change politics." Johnson hit back: "Rishi Sunak is talk-

 $ing\, rubbish.\, To\, honour\, these\, peerages\, it$ was not necessary to over-rule Holac but simply to ask them to renew their vetting, which was a mere formality."

Responding to Johnson's comments, Downing Street said it was "not going to get into more detail".

Two former MPs who had expected to receive peerages from Johnson, Nadine Dorries and Nigel Adams, have quit parliament, prompting imminent by-elec-

Johnson quit as an MP on Friday night ahead of publication of a report by the cross-party House of Commons privileges committee that is expected to criticise him heavily for misleading parliaabout parties held in Number 10 during lockdowns.

The committee was meeting yesterday to finalise its report into whether Johnson lied to parliament over the partygate affair, amid heightened security rangement for its members.

Iohnson called the committee, which has a Tory majority, a "kangaroo court" and also claimed that he was the victim of "a witch hunt" in his resignation

The committee's report is expected to be released this week. Johnson's decision to step down will trigger a by-election in his west London constituency.

Labour is confident of winning in Uxbridge, where Johnson had a majority of 7,210 at the last election, but Adams's Selby seat in Yorkshire will be harder for Labour: the Tories won that eat with a 20,137 majority last time.

The Liberal Democrats, meanwhile, are pouring their efforts into Dorries's Mid Bedfordshire seat, where the Tories are defending a 24,664 majority.

# Obituary Media tycoon whose spells as Italy PM were marred by scandal

## Silvio Berlusconi

Politician and businessmar 1936-2023

Silvio Berlusconi, the former Italian prime minister who has died at the age of 86, was a billionaire business tycoon turned politician who exploited his personal wealth, reputation and influence over the media to acquire and wield power in a manner that defied the conventions of western democracy.

Like Donald Trump and others who came after him, he had millions of adoring supporters, and numerous critics outraged by what they considered his scandalous behaviour as a public figure and disregard for the law.

Berlusconi held the premiership for a total of nine years, making him the long-est-serving prime minister of postwar Italy. For this reason he bears an inescapable, though not exclusive, responsi-bility for the national economic decline and sometimes deplorable standards of public life that coincided with his two decades at the very top of politics.

He did not launch his political career until January 1994 when he was 57 and best known as a sharp-witted entrepreneur who had made a fortune out of property and television. A mere two months later, leading a party he had created and named Forza Italia ("Come on, Italy") after a football fans' chant, he profited from the collapse of a discredited party system and swept to victory in the general election of March 1994.

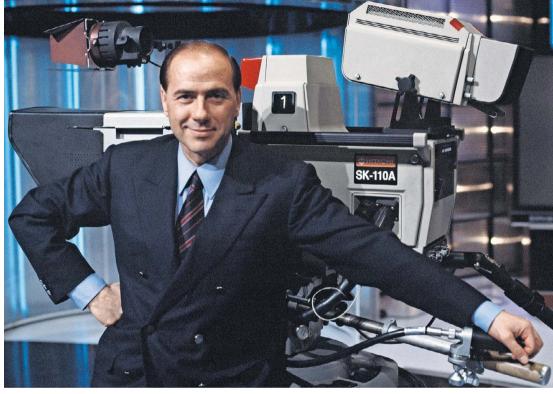
A chaotic seven-month spell as prime minister ended with his resignation amid a judicial inquiry into his business affairs. However, Berlusconi bounced back in 2001 with an election triumph,

followed by a five-year term as premier.

He won a third election victory in 2008 but fell from power in 2011, at the height of the eurozone's sovereign debt crisis, in a manoeuvre orchestrated by his domestic and European opponents. Like the financial markets, they were deeply troubled by his refusal, or inability, to implement economic reforms necessary to avoid contagion from other stricken eurozone states

Throughout these years, Italian prosecutors launched hundreds of investiga tions into his business affairs. They sought to convict him on charges ranging from tax fraud and false accounting to bribery of judges and illegal political party financing. Until 2013 Berlusconi, who denounced his pursuers as leftwing conspirators, was never found defini-tively guilty in all his many trials. In that year, however, Italy's highest court upheld his conviction for tax fraud, ch prompted his expulsion from the Senate, parliament's upper house.

In a separate case, Berlusconi was convicted in 2015 of bribing a senator to switch political parties, a criminal offence that had helped to bring down



Clockwise, from main: Silvio Berlusconi on the set of his commercial TV network Canale 5 in 1986; at football club AC Milan with his family in 1992; and in the Senate, Rome,

two years later

Romano Prodi's centre-left government seven years earlier. Despite his legal troubles and the decline of Forza Italia, Berlusconi remained active in politics. He was elected, at 82, to the European parliament in May 2019.

He backed the formation of a national unity government under former European Central Bank president Mario Draghi in February 2021, as the pandemic struck Italy. But he joined his conservative allies in pulling the plug on Draghi's government in July 2022, a step that forced Italy into snap elections.

The rightwing coalition that won the elections and formed the new government was dominated by Giorgia Meloni and her Brothers of Italy party. The junior role that fell to Berlusconi and Forza Italia wounded his pride, and frictions were evident with Meloni, the new prime minister and a figure whom many view as Berlusconi's political heir.

Berlusconi's occasional public out-bursts expressing enthusiasm for Russian president Vladimir Putin and disdain for Ukraine were an embarrass-ment for Meloni, who was at pains to keep Italy aligned with its western allies in support of Ukraine's war of self-

By this time Berlusconi's finances, like his political fortunes, were in decline, although Forbes magazine estimated shortly before his death that his net worth still amounted to about \$7bn.

politics foreshadowed the rise in democracies of other rich businessmen who combined a rightwing message with defiance of the legal system, such as Trump, the former US president, and former Czech premier Andrej Babiš.

Yet Berlusconi's record as prime minister was a disappointment, insofar as he failed to revive Italy's stagnant economy and spent too much time passing laws to protect his business interests and obstruct the efforts of magistrates to put him on trial. Moreover, he never appeared to understand why his two roles as Italy's most powerful commercial TV mogul and premier represented a glaring conflict of interests.

In foreign policy he won the gratitude George W Bush, US president, for defying domestic public opinion and sending Italian troops to Iraq after the US-led invasion of March 2003. But he was often on bad terms with France and Germany, Italy's closest allies in Europe. He caused astonishment in July 2003 when, in remarks to the European par-liament, he likened Martin Schulz, a German legislator, to a Nazi concentration camp guard.

Even his friends ted no recognisable mould as a public figure. "The truth is that Berlusconi is not a political animal." Fedele Confalonieri, chair of Mediaset, Berlusconi's media company, said in 1994. "He's a could have been an enlightened monarch. But as a democratic politician, he's decidedly anomalous."

The son of a bank employee, Berlusconi was born into a modest middleclass Milan family on September 29 1936. He was educated at a Roman Catholic boarding school where he displayed precocious entrepreneurial gifts by completing his classmates' homework for a fee. He graduated in law from Milan university and, after a spell as a singer on cruise ships, went into business in the 1960s with a series of real estate projects that flourished in line with Italy's then booming economy.

By the mid-1980s, Berlusconi had emerged as Italy's leading commercial TV operator, partly by exploiting his friendship with Bettino Craxi, a socialist prime minister who later fled to Tunisia fter being convicted of corruption.

Berlusconi's combination of quiz shows, Hollywood films and light programming for housewives, threaded with advertisements and in evening prime time with scantily clad hostesses, proved a winning formula. He might never have entered politics, had it not been for the scandals that erunted in 1992 and destroyed the Christian Democrat and Socialist parties by sparking judicial probes that revealed a political establishment riddled with corruption.

In a footballing metaphor typical of





'In another time he could have been an enlightened monarch. But as a democratic politician, decidedly anomalous'

Berlusconi, whose love for the sport caused him to buy AC Milan in 1986, he joked: "I heard that the game was getting dangerous, and that it was all being played in the two penalty areas, with the midfield being left desolately empty."

His answer was to fill the gap on the centre-right with Forza Italia. Berlusconi's 1994, 2001 and 2008 election victories demonstrated his flair for projecting himself as a rich, successful genius who, in office, would deliver a miracle. The reality was different, however.

Berlusconi's final premiership degenerated into squalid farce amid revela tions of "bunga bunga" sex parties and dalliances with women a quarter his age. He was convicted, but later exonerated, of charges that he had paid for sex with a teenage Moroccan-born bellydancer, known by her stage name as "Ruby the heart-stealer". Veronica Lario, his second wife, divorced him. She is the mother of three of Berlusconi's children. With his first wife, Carla Dall'Oglio, he had two children.

Critics saw Berlusconi as a dangerous man who had used his wealth to buy power and manipulate the political and judicial processes. He saw himself as a made man who had never lost the common touch, and as a freedom and free-market competition crusader who defined western civilisation.

Additional reporting by Amy Kazmin

Market reaction

# Nigeria's economic reform plan cheers investors

AANU ADEOYE — LAGOS
JONATHAN WHEATLEY — LONDON

Early moves by Nigeria's new president to put the country on a more orthodox economic trajectory sparked a positive response from investors and markets vesterday, with borrowing costs for Africa's most populous country falling.

Bola Tinubu late on Friday suspended Godwin Emefiele, central bank governor since 2014, citing an "investigation and the planned reforms in the financial sector". Emefiele, later detained by Nigeria's intelligence agency, pursued a policy at the central bank of spending large amounts of the country's foreign reserves to prop up the naira.

This followed the decision by Tinubu. who took office last month, to scrap the fuel subsidies that cost Nigeria more than \$10bn last year. The IMF and the World Bank had long urged Abuja to end the subsidies and instead channel the

money into health and education. Analysts said Tinubu's moves suggested a change of direction for the battered economy, which stagnated under his predecessor, Muhammadu Buhari,

The markets are getting everything they hoped for from the change of president in Nigeria," said Charlie Robertson, head of macro strategy at FIM Partners, an asset management firm.

Kevin Daly, investment director at EM specialist asset manager Abrdn, said talk of changes to Nigeria's foreign exchange system had been "another trigger for a big rally in Nigerian bonds".

Nigerian eurobonds maturing in 2051 were 3.8 per cent higher, at 73.8 cents in the dollar yesterday, the strongest level

"It's been a long time since we had

positive reform momentum in Nigeria

and we're seeing it now," Daly said. But, he added, investors still had to be convinced by Tinubu, who promised in his inauguration speech to keep interest rates low. "We've seen how that played out in Turkey," Daly added. "You can't start talking rates down until there's a meaningful decline in inflation." Annual inflation was 22.22 per cent in April.

There are concerns that Emefiele's removal threatens the central bank's independence.

Cheta Nwanze, a partner at the Lagosbased consultancy SBM Intelligence, said the manner of Emefiele's exit was "fraught with illegality".

"The central bank act doesn't quite give the president the powers he has just exercised," he said. "Another layer of instability has become entrenched in Nigeria's political economy."

Power sharing

# Romanian premier steps aside in coalition deal

MARTON DUNAI — BUDAPEST

Romania's centre-right prime minister Nicolae Ciucă stepped down yesterday, handing over his post to the Social Democrats, as part of a power-sharing deal agreed in late 2021.

His departure, which was delayed by several weeks because of a strike by teachers, is most likely to usher in Social Democrat party leader Marcel Ciolacu as premier once the parties agree on a roster of ministers.

"Our objective is to have a new government sworn in by Thursday so that we can continue . . . to handle the priorities," Ciucă said.

The two former rivals formed a grand coalition two years ago, which includes the ethnic Hungarian UDMR party, following a rapid succession of unstable governments that plunged the country

into a political crisis during the Covid-19

To stabilise the political landscape, the centre-right National Liberal party and the Social Democrats agreed to join forces and swap leadership midway through the term, with elections expected in the second half of 2024. Former army general Ciucă took the helm first.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year solidified the coalition, which held together despite decades of bad blood between centre-right and centre-left.

The changeover, originally due on May 25, was delayed as thousands of teachers went on strike to demand higher wages, a request to which the

government acceded yesterday. The new cabinet could face more unrest over public sector pay demands a difficult tightrope to walk as Buchaand enact economic reforms in order to meet Brussels' criteria for EU post-pandemic recovery funds Ciolacu has backed the coalition even

rest is struggling to keep spending down

after next year's election, as a guarantee of political stability, Romania has had 11 prime ministers since joining the EU in

UDMR threatened to leave the coalition yesterday unless it received leading ministries - particularly the one responsible for distributing billions in development funds, according to party chair Hunor Kelemen. But the liberals and social democrats have a comforta-

Romania's power-sharing agreement was replicated last month by neighbourformed a coalition to end a two-year

ble majority without the UDMR.

ing Bulgaria, where feuding parties political logjam that led to five elections.

# Companies&Markets

# Top leaders at **Credit Suisse** quit after UBS seals takeover

- CFO among five key exits announced
- Job cuts programme set to continue

UBS has announced the departure of five of the most senior Credit Suisse executives just hours after sealing the official takeover of its Swiss rival.

Among those leaving are Dixit Joshi, chief financial officer, Markus Diethelm, general counsel, Edwin Low, head of the Asia-Pacific region, David Miller, co-head of the investment bank, and Ken Pang, co-head of markets.

The exits were disclosed in an internal memo seen by the Financial Times and confirmed by UBS, which also revealed that Francesco De Ferrari, who had run Credit Suisse's wealth management

# 'We cannot cling to old rivalries or be distracted by the integration and external pressures'

arm, would become an adviser to UBS wealth head Iqbal Khan.

"The acquisition of Credit Suisse by UBS has now legally closed, marking a historic moment for both banks," wrote Ulrich Körner, who has stayed on as chief executive of Credit Suisse, which will be run as a subsidiary of UBS during the integration.

UBS's rescue of Credit Suisse, engi neered by Swiss authorities three months ago, was completed vesterday. The takeover is the most complicated  $bank\,merger\,since\,the\,financial\,crisis.$ 

Speaking to Swiss television, UBS chief executive Sergio Ermotti said that 10 per cent of Credit Suisse's workforce had left in recent months.

Further job cuts are expected in the coming weeks, with Credit Suisse's investment bank and its domestic business - should it be retained by UBS -

set to bear the brunt of redundancies To limit its risk from the transaction. UBS has set out almost two-dozen "red lines" for Credit Suisse staff to follow, which restrict certain activities such as bringing on new clients from high-risk

countries or offering complex financial

products. UBS executives fear they are taking on a bank that has traditionally been much more willing to accept risky clients and offer them high-stakes products.

"We are worried about 'cultural contamination'," UBS chair Colm Kelleher said last month. "We are going to have an incredibly high bar for who we bring

Among other Credit Suisse executives who have secured roles at UBS are Joanne Hannaford, former chief technology and operations officer, and former Credit Suisse chief risk officer David Wildermuth, who has been named chief risk officer for the Ameri-

Michael Ebert, who co-led Credit Suisse's investment bank with Miller, has been made sole head of the business as well as head of the Americas for UBS's investment bank.

Four Credit Suisse executives — head of HR Christine Graeff, Swiss bank head André Helfenstein, chief operating officer Francesca McDonagh, and chief compliance officer Nita Patel - have retained their roles.

"While the transaction has closed, the most crucial phase is just beginning," wrote Kelleher and Ermotti in a sepa rate email to staff yesterday. "We cannot cling to old rivalries, or be distracted by the integration and external pressures

In a further email to UBS's wealth management staff seen by the FT, Khan said Yves-Alain Sommerhalder would run Credit Suisse's wealth arm, while former Credit Suisse executive Jin Yee Young had returned, having joined Deutsche Bank at the start of the year, to be co-head of wealth management in Asia-Pacific.

# Gig is up EU agreement puts Deliveroo and Uber on notice over worker protection rules



Riding solo: a Deliveroo employee in Rennes, north-west France, negotiates traffic

IAN JOHNSTON AND JAVIER ESPINOZA
BRUSSELS

EU member states have reached a long-awaited agreement on rules that pave the way to give greater employment protection to the bloc's 28mn gig economy workers.

The agreement yesterday on industry rules could eventually allow workers, including Uber drivers and food delivery riders, to receive social security and other benefits. The deal unlocks drawn-out negotiations among the 27 member states.

"The gig economy has brought many benefits to our lives, but this must not come at the expense of workers' rights," said Paulina Brandberg, the Swedish minister for gender equality and working life who chaired

discussions in Luxembourg.
"The council's approach strikes a good balance between protecting workers and providing legal certainty for the platforms that employ them,"

Most of the workers at companies such as Deliveroo are registered as self-employed. Under the proposals agreed by the European Council, companies that control workers' hours, what they wear at work and restrict whether they can accept or turn down work will have to class them as employees and shoulder the costs.

The deal also includes the first EU rules on the use of artificial intelligence in the workplace, with companies obliged to guarantee human oversight of their automated monitoring and decision-making systems.

Member states will now engage in discussions on the proposals with the European parliament, with time running out to secure the package before the end of the EU's legislative cycle in summer 2024.

The European parliament has adopted a position that would classify

gig workers as employees under fewer conditions than the council position.

The "employee" definition has huge implications for companies such as Uber and Deliveroo. The more workers registered as employees rather than as self-employed, the more these companies will be liable to pay for employment benefits such as parental leave and social security.

As a result, the text has been one of the most heavily lobbied in Brussels in recent years, according to MEPs and diplomats. Chief executives, including Uber boss Dara Khosrow-shahi, and Markus Villig, head of ridehailing rival Bolt, this month warned in a letter to the Financial Times that employment conditions would take away couriers' independence.

"The text voted today does not provide the legal certainty needed to guarantee that the genuine self-employed will not be forced into employ ment," Uber said yesterday.

# Fox warns Carlson to halt videos on Twitter

ANNA NICOLAOU — NEW YORK

Fox has sent Tucker Carlson a 'cease and desist' letter over videos he is posting to Twitter, according to his lawyer, in an escalation of tensions between the rightwing media star and his

Carlson had been among the most popular anchors on Fox News, the conserva-tive news and commentary television channel, before he was abruptly fired in April. His exit came in the wake of the company's \$787.5mn settlement with voting company Dominion over its role in airing conspiracy theories about alleged fraud in the US presidential election. His exit has shaken up a US conservative media landscape long dominated by Fox.

He last month announced plans to relaunch his show on Twitter, a point of contention with Fox as the two sides battle over the details of his contract. According to Carlson's lawyers, any noncompete provision was no longer valid because Fox had previously breached his contract.

Harmeet Dhillon, a lawyer representing Carlson, said: "Doubling down on the most catastrophic programming decision in the history of the cable news industry, Fox is now demanding that Tucker Carlson be silent until after the 2024 election" in the US.

Fox News did not respond to a request

Carlson last week posted two "episodes" to Twitter, which were monologues each about 10 minutes long.

Last month he alluded to his exit from Fox, warning his followers on Twitter that journalists face limits at established media groups and that breaching them too often results in being sacked.

He said: "What's it like to work in a system like that? After more than 30 years in the middle of it we could tell you stories. The best you could hope for in the news business at this point is the freedom to tell the fullest truth that

"But there are always limits. And you know that if you bump up against those limits often enough, you will be fired for it." he added.

Fox fired Carlson partly because of private messages he had sent, which were made public in legal filings in recent months, according to people briefed on his exit. Some of the messages showed Carlson criticising Fox's management.

# Opioid victims fear pain of junior creditor status at Mallinckrodt

**INSIDE BUSINESS** Sujeet Indap



t is common for senior creditors of a distressed company to object when a cheque is about to be mailed out to parties ranking lower in the priority of payouts.

Those junior claims are likely soon to be worthless and it is argued that the cash out the door really should stay within the company, reserved for top creditors who eventually become the

owners in a restructuring.

But what happens when those junior creditors are not aggressive hedge funds but rather victims of the US opioid crisis? Last week pharma company Mallinckrodt wrote in a regulatory filing that its lenders and bondholders had asked the board to consider alternatives to making a mid-June, \$200mn payment to a trust that paid out to parties allegedly harmed by opioids manufactured and marketed by Mallinckrodt.

In total, the company is to pay \$1.725bn through to the end of 2028. The trust and schedule were created as part of a global settlement enacted last year after Mallinckrodt had filed for bankruptcy in 2020 in order to sort out its financial troubles and legal liabilities.

But since its reorganisation, the business has struggled under a pile of \$3.5bn of expensive debt. The separate trust payments are unsecured and ranked junior to Mallinckrodt's loans and bonds in the creditor structure. Some

holders of that debt do not want any "leakage" of cash prior to another company restructuring inside or outside bankruptcy court.

In a May letter written to the com-

pany board seen by the FT and first reported on by Bloomberg, lawyers for opioid victims warned the company about reneging on its obligations. "Does Mallinckrodt – do you – really want to ort-change its (and your) opioid human victims and deny them the relief promised and so desperately needed. If so, to what end? To save the business for your secured debt holders? If you embark down the path that has been publicly discussed, you will have blood

Companies facing so-called mass tort liabilities — usually from defective or dangerous product that harmed thousands of victims -

'Does Mallinckrodt

really want to short-

change its opioid human

victims and deny them

have increasingly turned to the US bankruptcy court. US law has there proved to be an efficient, if controversial, method for the relief promised?' resolving disputes,

allowing victims to get their economic redress while letting underlying businesses escape endless litigation.

The Mallinckrodt bankruptcy deal was consensually settled among thousands of parties - US states and municipalities, victims, as well the typical holders of leveraged loans and junk bonds.

Mallinckrodt's rapid unravelling can be attributed to both misfortune of underperforming business and misguided confidence that there could be enough money in the pot to minimise the pain on both financial creditors and victims of wrongdoing.

When Mallinckrodt was trying to clinch its restructuring in 2021, it wrote in court papers that its case was the "first ever reorganisation of a defendant in the nationwide opioid litigation that will not come to be owned by opioid claimant trusts".

The deal cut its debt load by only \$1.3bn — junior bondholders took new equity while senior creditors got new or reinstated debt in the NewCo. Mallinckrodt agreed to fund the opioid trust over eight years and also separately set up a schedule to pay the US Department of Justice and others \$260mn over several years related to a kickback and rebate scandal over the drug Acthar Gel.

In financial projections built in 2021 during the bankruptcy, the company expected it would reach operating cash flow of around \$830mn in both 2022 and 2023. In 2022. Mallinckrodt hit just \$675mn with the company forecasting

as little as \$510mn in 2023. Worse vet, interest expense because of spiking interest rates has further hurt cash flow. The consequence is that there is simply not enough money to satisfy the obligations to the opioid trust.

In a March research note, analysts at CreditSights said that the opioid settlement as an unsecured obligation would "arguably be dischargeable in a bankruptcy". But should senior creditors attempt such a gambit, it would not be so straightforward. "[Given] the highly politicised nature of the opioid epidemic and the unpredictability of bankruptcy, generally, Mallinckrodt may not be able to easily jettison this liability in a future bankruptcy.

Chapter 22 cases - where a company comes out of Chapter 11 but then its recovery plan fails - typically elicit feelings of embarrassment and ignominy. Anger and anguish will mark this one if opioid victims suffer further.

sujeet.indap@ft.com

# Contracts & Tenders



Piaggio Aero Industries S.p.A. in extraordinary receivership proceedings

CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST IN RELATION TO THE PURCHASE OF THE BUSINESS COMPLEXES EXTENSION OF THE DEADLINE

As a follow up to the call for expressions of interest to purchase Piaggio Aero Industries and Piaggio Aviation Business Complexes, published on Il Sole 24 Ore and the Financial Times on 10 May 2023, the Extraordinary Commissioners, Mr. Carmelo Cosentino, Mr. Vincenzo Nicastro and Mr. Gianpaolo Davide Rossetti, announce that the term for the submission of the expressions of interest is extended until 19 June 2023, 6.00 p.m. CEST.

Villanova d'Albenga, 13 June 2023

The Extraordinary Commissioners

Carmelo Cosentino, Vincenzo Nicastro, Gianpaolo Davide Rossetti

# Imagine your advert here

**Mining** 

# Glencore in cash swoop for Teck arm

Move would create coal mining business with few rivals in scale anywhere

HARRY DEMPSEY AND LESLIE HOOK LONDON

Swiss mining and trading group Glencore wants to purchase the coal business of Teck Resources for cash, the latest twist in one of the mining industry's biggest takeover battles in a decade.

Under the new proposal, Glencore will buy Teck's steelmaking coal business for an undisclosed valuation and then spin out a new company combining its own coal and Teck's coal assets one or two years later.

That would create a coal mining group with few rivals in scale anywhere producing just over 100mn tonnes of thermal coal and 30mn tonnes of steelmaking coal a year.

The proposal marks the first time that Glencore – the most profitable coal mining company - has publicly outlined how it would spin out its coal business even in the absence of a full acquisition of Teck Resources, which has so far rebuffed multiple takeover offers.

Glencore had previously offered to ay up to \$8.2bn in cash for Teck's coal business as part of its broader proposal to buy all of Teck Resources in a \$23bn cash-and-share deal.

Teck's coal business, which includes

four metallurgical coal mines in Canada's British Columbia, previously had an implied valuation of just over C\$11bn (US\$8.2bn) as part of an investment agreement struck earlier this year

The unit had an implied valuation of \$8.2bn as part of an investment deal this year with Nippon Steel

with Nippon Steel, which aims to take a 10 per cent stake in the business Glencore made an unsolicited offer in

April for the entirety of the Canadian group - including its copper and zinc mines across the Americas

Under that proposal, it planned to split the combined companies' assets after the merger, ultimately creating a metals mining and trading business and a separately listed coal business.

Teck said it was engaging with Glencore to discuss the potential coal deal but noted that Glencore's was just "one of a number" of proposals under consid-

The Canadian mining group has been working on finding a simpler way to separate its coal business from its metals business after shareholders balked at its complex original proposal to separate the two companies.

Canadian mining investor Pierre Lassonde said in May that he was assembling a consortium of investors to bid for Teck's coal business, without disclosing further details.

Glencore said it "remains willing to pursue" its original offer to buy the whole company, despite Teck twice rebuffing approaches.

Glencore's pursuit of Teck has been complicated by the Canadian group's dual-class share structure. Norman Keevil, a Canadian who in effect controls the company through supervoting class A shares, has staunchly opposed the deal.

Glencore chief executive Gary Nagle said in May that buying only Teck's coal business would be a "distant second" in terms of benefits that could be achieved by merging.

**Technology** 

# **Ex-Samsung** figure accused of attempting to build China copycat plant

CHRISTIAN DAVIES AND SONG JUNG-A

A former executive at Samsung Elecronics has been arrested and indicted in South Korea for allegedly stealing the leading chipmaker's technology to build a copycat plant in China.

The indictment of the 65-year-old Korean national, who had also served as a vice-president at rival Korean chipmaker SK Hynix, comes as South Korea tries to beef up its defences against a concerted push by Chinese groups to get

cutting-edge Korean technologies.

According to a statement released by Korean prosecutors yesterday, the former Samsung executive, who has not been named, illegally acquired information needed to build advanced chipmaking facilities.

His plan, said prosecutors, was to replicate a semiconductor factory just 1.5km away from Samsung's memory-chip plant in Xi'an in western China.

This is not a simple semiconductor tech leak but an attempt to copy a whole chip plant," the Suwon District Prosecutors' Office said in a statement.

The former executive hired about 200 workers from Samsung and SK Hynix for a company he set up in Chengdu in China's Sichuan province. They were allegedly tasked with acquiring trade secrets from their former employers, costing Samsung an estimated \$230mn, according to the indictment.

"Samsung strictly forbids outsiders from entering its chip plants because the factory design and its equipment layout are closely related to productivity and product quality," said Lee Donghwan, a former state investigator now working as a patent attorney at WeFocus, a Seoul-based law firm.

He added that there was no way for the company to prevent tech leaks if a senior executive with good access to information intentionally gave it to Chinese competitors.

Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix, two of the world's leading memory-chip makers, both have plants in China. Their technologies are regarded by industry experts as more advanced than those of their leading Chinese competi-

Last year, the US government gave the Korean companies a one-vear reprieve from export controls that were designed to reduce China's ability to develop high-end chips. The Financial Times reported last month that Washington had signalled it would extend permission for them to send US chipmaking tools to China for at least another year.

Among the trade secrets the former executive is alleged to have stolen was information relating to keeping impurities out of advanced chip plants, and the floor plans and dimensions necessary for several processes in advanced chipmaking technologies.

But his plan fell apart after he failed to secure a \$6.2bn investment allegedly promised by an unnamed Taiwanese group for a company he set up in Singa-pore. Instead, he raised just over \$350mn from Chinese investors to produce trial products from a plant in Chengdu. The Chengdu plant's construction was also based on technology

stolen from Samsung, prosecutors said. Six other people were also indicted yesterday as part of the same case, including the employee of a Samsung subcontractor and five employees of th executive's Chinese chipmaking com-

Interview. Meredith Whitney

# Wall Street 'oracle' projects wave of bank mergers

Head of advice boutique who called financial crisis cites

threats to regional lenders

STEPHEN GANDEL - NEW YORK

Meredith Whitney, once dubbed "The Oracle of Wall Street" for predicting the financial crisis, is relaunching her firm at a time when she projects that, once again, a large number of banks may disappear.

Whitney said a combination of headwinds, including the US housing market and new bank regulation, would make it harder for many regional banks to survive on their own. This would weigh on their stock prices and make them attractive acquisition targets.

"There are good reasons investors don't want to be in bank stocks right now," Whitney told the Financial Times. "There will be many fewer banks."

Whitney's eponymous research bou-tique specialises in covering bank stocks, but also writes thematic pieces about the economy.

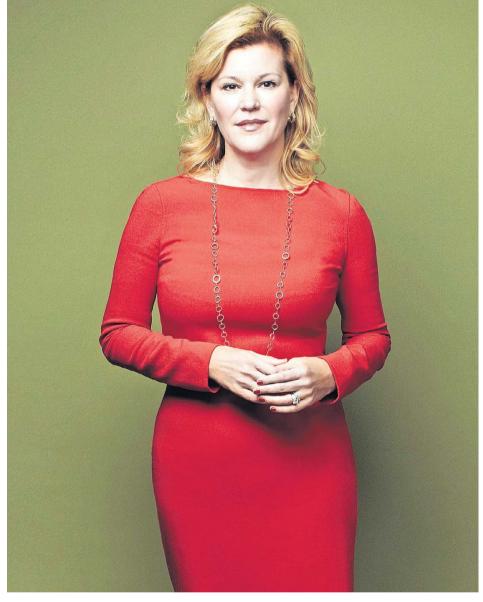
It began offering access to individual investors for \$257 a month earlier this month. Whitney said she would offer more bespoke research to a limited number of clients for higher fees.

She projects a wave of mergers that will cull the ranks of midsized lenders, especially in areas of the country such as Texas that are continuing to show economic growth. "There are a lot of headwinds facing the regional banks right now," said Whitney. "Just don't know the type of loan pressure they are going to be under and also the capital requirements they may face."

Whitney rose to fame following the financial crisis for her prescient call on the housing bubble and how it would cause significant problems for the nation's biggest banks.

She is best known for warning in the autumn of 2007, almost a year before the crisis, that Citigroup, then the largest bank in the US, was headed for bank ruptcy. Within months, Citi's then chief executive Chuck Prince was gone and the company was bailed out in 2008. Its shares plunged more than 95 per cent during the next two years. A decade and a half later, Citi's shares have still yet to

Few of Whitney's other public investment calls since have seemed as seerlike. In 2011, she projected highly indebted cities and other local ments, and rising pension obligations would cause a crash in the muni bond



Shortly after Meredith Whitney warned in 2007 that Citi was headed for bankruptcy, its boss was gone and it was bailed out - Wesley Ma

Whitney opened a hedge fund in 2013 that closed about two years later after

She thinks the large banks are generthey have the financial wherewithal to swallow the cost of new regulations. position," she said. "They have more than enough deposits so they don't face the same pressure as regional banks."

She thinks that if there is a recession. will be mild. Her biggest call since relaunching her firm has been on the US housing market, which she thinks will

Whitney said the US housing market benefited from having less leverage than it did in 2007, with the average US

enter a prolonged slump, but not a

"The foundation for consumer bank

ing is housing, and so I am not worried about the economy because homeown-

ers have a lot of wealth in their houses

right now," said Whitney. "Over the near

and medium term, things are great."

homeowner owning a mortgage that was just 30 per cent of the value of their house. That meant that few homebuyers would find themselves in a situation where they owed more than their house was worth, and either be forced to sell or go into foreclosure.

Whitney projects US housing prices will fall by about 2 per cent to 3 per cent at most during the next five years.

She is also sanguine about commercial real estate. Questioning the produc-tivity of remote work, she thinks

# 'Just don't know the type of loan pressure they are going to be under and the capital requirements they may face'

employers will increasingly require their staff to return to the office, reversing the recent drop in the value of office buildings and other properties in city

She thinks the regional banking crisis is over, even if the economics are still stacked against many smaller institu tions. "Silicon Valley Bank and the others that have failed - I look at those as unforced errors," said Whitney.

"The banks reported decent firstquarter earnings and the market is not telling you that other banks have made similar mistakes."

Since pausing her research firm nearly a decade ago, Whitney has taken a number of roles at start-ups, none of which have lasted long.

Most recently, she joined buzzy fertil-

ity care start-up Kindbody as chief financial officer in April 2021. She lasted just 11 months in the posi-

tion, but has remained an adviser to the company, which earlier this year landed another \$100mn in financing.

Whitney declined to say why she left the role after less than a year.

"I stopped writing about banks a decade ago because banks had become boring," said Whitney.

Jow I have more write about. The banks are interesting

# Illumina chief quits after Icahn proxy fight

Illumina chief executive Francis deSouza has resigned following a bruising proxy battle with activist Carl Icahn over the future of the biggest gene sequencing company.

Illumina said on Sunday that the company's board of directors had accepted deSouza's immediate resignation and begun a search for a replacement. DeSouza would stay on in an advisory capacity until July 31, said the company

Illumina said Charles Dadswell, a senior vice-president and general counsel at the company, has been named interim chief executive.

The resignation of deSouza, who was appointed chief executive in 2016, follows the departure last month of Illumina chair John Thompson, who was ousted in a shareholder vote following a proxy campaign by Icahn.

The 87-year-old activist investor led a shareholder campaign that focused on Illumina's "reckless decision" to close its \$8bn acquisition of cancer test developer Grail in 2021 against the wishes of EU and US antitrust regulators.

Icahn, who has a 1.4 per cent stake in Illumina, said it was "inexplicable and unforgivable" that the board led by Thompson went ahead with the deal without ascertaining whether it would get clearance from EU regulators

Icahn had called on Illumina's board to fire deSouza, saying he had masterminded a "Hail Mary" power grab by acquiring Grail and allowing the core business to deteriorate.

He also alleged most of Illumina's directors were handpicked by deSouza a claim the company denied.

DeSouza survived the leadership vote on May 25, receiving 71 per cent support from shareholders. But the proxy battle weakened his position, and he began negotiations with the company last week on his exit, according to sources with knowledge of the talks. Illumina said there was no severance payment associated with the resignation.

The Grail acquisition has plunged Illumina into years-long legal battles with antitrust regulators in Brussels and Washington at a time when its core business is under pressure from new entrants to gene sequencing.

In December, Brussels ordered Illumina to divest Grail and is planning to issue a fine of up to \$453mn for "gun jumping". The US Federal Trade Commission has also ordered Illumina to divest Grail. Illumina is appealing against both regulators' orders.

Illumina's market capitalisation has plunged from \$75bn in August 2021, when it bought Grail, to less than \$32bn as of Friday. In a letter to Illumina employees, deSouza said his decision to leave was "extremely difficult" but he felt a sense of "fulfilment and pride at where we have taken the company", including the acquisition of Grail.

**Financials** 

# Greensill faces Swiss criminal case after probe

Lex Greensill and four former Credit Suisse bankers have been identified as suspects in a Swiss criminal case that is due to be formally opened this month, according to people with knowledge of

The case being brought by the Zurich public prosecutor - which follows a two-year probe by Swiss police, including raids on homes, a hotel room and Credit Suisse offices - is related to the collapse of a \$10bn group of funds the bank offered clients that were linked to  $finance\,group\,Green sill\,Capital.$ 

The four former Credit Suisse managers have been asked to attend a hearing with the prosecutor at Zurich's Police and Justice Centre on June 26, where the case of suspected unfair competition, which includes allegations of mis-selling, will be formally opened.

Greensill, an Australian banker who was considered a billionaire before his

eponymous company collapsed in 2021. has not been invited to the hearing, though he has provided a 12-page statement in response to a list of questions.

The case is one of several criminal investigations related to the collapse of Greensill Capital, a specialist in socalled supply-chain finance that counted former prime minister David Cameron as an adviser.

Germany's watchdog filed a criminal complaint against the management of Greensill Capital's German banking subsidiary in March 2021, citing suspected balance sheet manipulation. Later that year, the UK's Serious Fraud Office announced an investigation into metals magnate Sanjeev Gupta's business empire, including "its financing arrangements with Greensill Capital".

A Swiss lawyer representing Greensill in the case said his client had been instructed to keep details of the investigation confidential and would not be commenting. "Even if Mr Greensill understands the public interest in the case, he feels committed to this instruction of the prosecutor," he said. The investigation began two years ago

following a complaint to Zurich police from one of the investors in the supplychain finance funds. Since then, several other investors and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs have added their own complaints. In September 2021, police raided the

homes of the four former Credit Suisse staff members and the bank's offices. They also raided the hotel room of another former Credit Suisse employee.

Police confiscated a range of personal devices — including laptops, iPhones, iPads, USB sticks and hard drives - as well as notepads and a green "pencil case clearly containing various documents", according to legal documents.

Credit Suisse declined to comment. Reporting by Owen Walker, Robert Smith and Cynthia O'Murchu in London. and Sam Iones in Zurich

# China is 'cancelled' for many foreign investors

Sharply deteriorating Sino-US relations and what one analyst calls an economic 'dumpster fire' take heavy toll on stocks

RYAN MCMORROW AND NIAN LIU HUDSON LOCKETT AND QIANER LIU

Chinese online entertainment platform Bilibili was worth \$54bn two years ago as Wall Street investors rushed to bet on the rising tech business

Today the Nasdaq-listed group's market capitalisation has fallen to about \$6.5bn, a collapse that has brought forward debt repayments that threaten to sap its remaining cash, leading to drastic cost-cutting.
Bilibili's travails are symptomatic of

broader problems across the Chinese tech scene. Overseas investors are selling shares even in profitable internet companies such as Tencent and Alibaba, while becoming reluctant to back the country's most promising start-ups.

Venture capital group Sequoia last week became the latest business to bow to rising tensions between Beijing and Washington, announcing a plan to split its China business into a separate entity.
Adding to the flight of foreign capital

is an unsteady economic recovery that has deflated Chinese tech stocks that had briefly jumped on hopes for the country's post-pandemic reopening. The downward trend has left employees and investors concerned that the depressed valuations for Chinese tech groups listed in New York and Hong Kong may be long-lasting.

China is getting cancelled and the economy is a dumpster fire," said a Hong Kong-based equity analyst. He said JPMorgan Chase's labelling of Chinese internet stocks "uninvestable" last year now looked better judged.

The trend is even hurting cash-rich groups such as Tencent and Alibaba, which have tightened their belts and funnelled savings into share buybacks. Employees said cycles of cost-cutting and sinking pay had hit morale.

Recent positive updates from the

internet businesses have done little to lift their stock prices, with Tencent shares down 19 per cent and Alibaba's down 29 per cent from January highs.

Since the pandemic's onset, China's 10 largest tech groups have collectively lost \$300bn in market value, while their biggest US peers have added almost \$5tn, according to S&P Capital IQ.

For many investors, spiralling US-China tensions are a constant reminder of the fate of those who backed Russian companies, with billions of dollars of value evaporating soon after Russian president Vladimir Putin ordered a fullscale invasion of Ukraine, leading to crippling western sanctions

Adding to the complexity are Wash ington's mulled restrictions on US investment in China, which would add to export controls designed to limit Beijing's access to vital technologies such as advanced semiconductors and chipmaking equipment.

Big foreign investors are backing off as a result, including western pension funds that have historically been lead ing backers of Chinese tech in both pri vate and public markets.

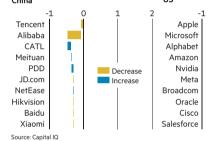
The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan. Canada's third-largest pension fund, had almost \$1bn invested in shares of Alibaba and Tencent two years ago. Neither company ranks among its top investments today and the group recently cut its Hong Kong-based team,

which led such deals. Warren Buffett has quietly sold down



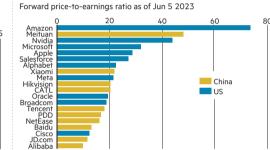
China Big Tech loses \$300bn in market value since pandemic onset while US peers add \$5tn

Market cap change since Jan 15 2020 (\$tn)



China

Large China tech businesses trade at lower multiples than most US peers



eral leading companies said such strategies were sensible with stock prices so low. He hoped it would help lift share prices so that his company could sell long-held positions.

The depressed valuations are most problematic for smaller, unprofitable groups such as Bilibili, where staff said management had cut bonuses and jobs while curtailing business lines as they fought to reach break-even.

The company's cratering share price has made the challenge more acute. Investors who lent the group \$2.9bn, betting its stock would continue climbing, have the option and impetus to recall their convertible notes early.

Bilibili will by mid-June have spent \$1.7bn repurchasing the convertible notes, shrinking its cash pile to about \$2bn. It faces another \$900mn of debt payments next year, potentially problematic when coupled with its large losses, which totalled almost \$900mn over the past 12 months after adjusting for certain non-cash charges. Bilibili declined to comment.

"There is not enough financing to support their cash burn," said a person close to the group, noting that management 'lacked imagination on how to grow".

Even China's biggest tech companies are taking drastic action. Alibaba has spent the equivalent of about half its free cash flow repurchasing shares over the past year and cut 24.000 positions. Employees widely expect that the group's continuing split into six entities will entail further job losses.

Staff said they were being hit doubly, by the declining value of stock compen sation, which for some made up half of their pay, and increasing workloads.

A developer at Tencent said the pay was no longer worth the pressure. "Everyone is doing three people's work," he said. "There's not a lot of cash now, so they want to lower costs and raise efficiency. The golden time for internet companies is gone.

Additional reporting by Andy Lin in Hong Kong

Little to smile about: Tencent is down 19% from January highs while entertainment venue Bilibili has dropped in two years

more than half his stake in Chinese electric car group BYD over the past year. Buffett bought and then promptly sold a large stake in TSMC, the Taiwan chipmaker, this year after re-evaluating "its location" at the centre of a potential US-China flashpoint.

Winnie Wu, China equity strategist at Bank of America, agreed that the future did not appear bright for Chinese internet groups in particular. "Stocks and sectors once well-owned by foreign investors are suffering higher cost of capital and more derating," she said.

There are 252 Chinese groups trading in the US or Hong Kong that meet the definition of a "net-net" - companies with current assets minus total liabilities greater than their market value, according to S&P Capital IQ. This group includes depressed stocks such as Tencent-backed DouYu, a profitable video game platform with \$880mn of net cash and a market cap of just \$323mn.

"Global long-only [investors] have been out for a long time," one trader at a Chinese brokerage group said of the country's internet stocks.

With the downturn unabating, tech groups have prioritised share repur-chases and slimming down. A big Chinese tech investor and director at sev-

Managers are short of 'imagination on how to grow' and 'there is not enough financing to support their cash

**Support services** 

# Clients put pressure on consultancy fees

STEPHEN FOLEY AND ANDREW EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON — NEW YORK

Uncertainty in the global economy threatens a year of upheaval in the US consulting industry, as firms deal with a wave of cancelled projects and clients push for lower fees.

Consultancies from Accenture to EY have already cut thousands of jobs to reflect new patterns of demand, and surveys point to a further slowdown in hiring as firms move to protect profits, even as revenues continue to grow overall

An annual report on the consulting market by Source Global Research. which includes contributions from big firms and is considered a benchmark for the industry, reveals a significant rethink of the use of consultants by US clients because of the economic outlook.

More than three-quarters of professional services buyers had cancelled at least some existing projects or scrapped new ones, a Source Global survey found, while two-thirds had paused all existing project work.

"Given the current uncertainty in the economic environment and the tightening of clients' budgets, projects are being

staggered into smaller pieces," Chiaki Nishino, North America president at the consulting firm Prophet, told Source Global. "I doubt we've seen the worst or the best of the market so far this year."

While the report, which was due to be published yesterday, forecasts 11 per cent revenue growth in 2023, roughly the same as 2022, pressure is building on consultants' fees after years of concern about whether businesses are getting value for money, Source Global chief executive Fiona Czerniawska told the Financial Times

Clients were five times more likely to be expecting fee rates to come down than they were before the coronavirus pandemic, she said. "Only about 50 per cent of clients think that firms add value above the fees they charge. This is a longstanding gap, and it comes back to haunt the industry every time there is even a sense of economic uncertainty."

Cybersecurity work and HR consulting were among those areas in the doldrums, Czerniawska said, along with M&A work for private equity firms and others. While spending on IT consulting remained high, it was being targeted at projects that immediately boosted the

The changes have left firms over-

staffed in many areas, after a hiring spree in the past two years. Accepture, McKinsey, KPMG, EY and Deloitte are among those to have cut underutilised staff or restructured their operations.

"What firms have done is take on a lot more staff than they needed to, and certainly paid them more," Czerniawska said. "Broadly speaking the problem here is not demand, it's about what clients are willing to pay for it."

Consulting budgets typically come under pressure when companies are looking for savings, Goldman Sachs said in February that it would cut the amount it spent on professional services this year, as well as cut its own headcount. Accenture blamed lower spending by Big Tech companies, which are cutting thousands of staff, for its own weaker than expected revenue growth.

A sharp decline in hiring that began in the Big Four accounting and consulting firms has spread to smaller players, according to the latest monthly survey by the investment bank William Blair.

Job postings by US speciality consultants were 57 per cent lower in June than the same month last year and are now lower than before the pandemic. At the Big Four, job postings were down 80 per cent, year on year.



Asset management. Allocations

# Clients rush for Asia investment products that exclude China



Rally for rest of region leaves its largest economy behind in early sign of structural shift

 $\begin{array}{l} {\bf HUDSON\ LOCKETT-HONG\ KONG} \\ {\bf LEO\ LEWIS-TOKYO} \end{array}$ 

Global fund managers say they are rushing to meet client demand for new Asian investment products that exclude China as investor appetite for the region's largest economy is hit by slowing growth and mounting geopolitical risk.

Fund managers said requests for "ex China" products included the possibility of "Asian allies" funds that would invest in US-friendly markets and provide insulation from Beijing $related\,geopolitical\,risk\,in\,the\,region.$ 

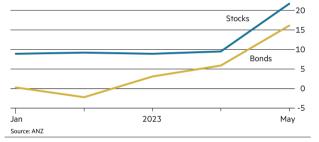
The widespread adoption of such investing would mark one of the biggest structural shifts for Asia-Pacific markets since the advent of "Asia ex Japan" portfolios roughly three decades ago, according to asset managers

They said demand had been stoked by worsening US-China tension and a rally for the rest of the region that had left its biggest market behind.

"Investors are concerned about geopolitics," said Minyue Liu, investment specialist at BNP Paribas Asset Management.

Liu said international clients had begun sending out RFPs - requests for proposals - to provide investment funds that would cover the Asia-Pacific region but exclude both China and

"That means there's a real opportunity, it's not just investors asking about this hypothetically," said Investors look outside China for higher returns in Asia Foreign purchases of emerging Asia ex China securities (\$bn, year to date)



Liu, who added that BNP Paribas AM was already in talks with clients about providing Asia ex China investment products. "It clearly shows there's interest in this kind of product."

Investor concerns over China xposure came to the fore after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which drove many to reassess the risk of a Chinese assault on Taiwan

But fund managers said demand for ex China investment products had own more concrete in recent months thanks to worsening relations between Washington and Beijing and China's lacklustre economic recovery.

The divergence is clear from the performance of the MSCI Emerging Markets Asia index, which has delivered net returns of just 1.3 per cent this year compared with returns of 8.6 per cent for the MSCI EM Asia ex China

Among the top performers in the region are markets in South Korea and Taiwan, up about 20 and 30 per cent, respectively.

Christopher Lees, senior fund manager at I O Hambro Capital Management, said he had heard about potential client demand for "emerging markets ex China and Asian allies prod ucts" as a way to tap into the region's growth while concentrating exposure in countries with strong ties to the US.

On geopolitics, there are a lot of different opinions among clients but I think that anyone who thought the US-China tension was going to go away is now very aware that it will not," Lees said. "At the same time, clients are seeing that they can get a lot of exposure to China through other markets like Australia, Japan and South Korea.

However, the main driver of the trend towards ex China investment was "economic, not geopolitical", he added, because many emerging markets investors viewed China's weighting in investment benchmarks from the likes of MSCI and FTSE as too large, tilting the balance away from markets such as Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia.

'This would be a clear echo of what we

Tokyo drift: the trend to exclude countries as locations for investment began with Japan three decades ago said fund

managers

had with Japan 30 years ago," said Lees. Back then, when both the size and volatility of the post-bubble Japanese market skewed Asian portfolios too much, demand rose for Asia ex Japan products that have remained the fundamental approach to investing in

asset manager Abrdn, said: "The ex Japan approach has been well ensconced for at least three decades and clients with whom we have direct mandates aren't asking us: 'can you sell all of our China exposure?' But there are certainly some large institutional investors out there who have gone ex

Foreign institutional investors are already taking steps to reduce exposure to China while boosting holdings

Goldman Sachs data based on customers' trading flows show hedge funds' allocation to Chinese equities has dropped from 13 per cent in January to 9

Total net inflows to China stocks this year have plateaued at about \$26bn following an initial jump in January as

trading Chinese debt through Hong Kong's Bond Connect scheme had dumped about \$31bn worth of government bonds in the first four

In contrast, figures from ANZ bank show foreign investors have snapped up nearly \$38bn worth of emerging Asia ex China stocks and bonds this year - with net purchases of \$22.4bn in May alone

 $\overset{-}{\text{Hugh}}$  Young, Asia-Pacific chair of UK

elsewhere in the region.

per cent at the end of May.

the country reopened.

The latest data showed investors

months of 2023

marking the largest monthly inflows since 2011.

# Nasdaq to buy Adenza for \$10.5bn in US exchange's biggest deal

**Equities** 

ANTOINE GARA AND JENNIFER HUGHES DONATO PAOLO MANCINI — LONDON

Nasdaq is acquiring financial risk software company Adenza for \$10.5bn in its largest-ever such deal as the world's big exchange operators expand beyond their core units into more stable revenue streams like data and risk management. The New York group said yesterday

that the cash-and-stock purchase from private equity group Thoma Bravo would "significantly" enhance Nasdaq's offerings in regulatory technology, compliance and risk management.

Shares in the exchange, best known as the listing home of names like Apple and Meta, were almost 13 per cent lower in midday trade and it was downgraded a notch by Standard & Poor's to triple B.

Adena Friedman, Nasdaq chief executive, said Nasdaq approached Thoma Bravo and that the deal would help banks cope with increasing demands on compliance and regulation. Adenza includes the brands AxiomSL

and Calypso Technology, two wellestablished names in the technology behind capital markets. "It's a great strategic and financial fit," she added. The deal comes as

competitors such as London Stock Exchange Group and Intercontinental Before the announcement,

# Nasdag stock had fallen almost 10 per cent over the past six months

Exchange have bought businesses focused on data and software.

Before yesterday's announcement, Nasdaq stock had fallen almost 10 per cent over the past six months, underperforming rival exchanges including ICE, CME Group and LSE, which have gained between 5 and 17 per cent.

Other large exchange groups have bought businesses from private equity firms in recent years as they seek to lower their exposure to volatile trading conditions and build products beyond offering companies access to capital.

In the first quarter, revenue from Nasdaq's solutions unit – in which Adenza will sit – grew 5 per cent and made up 71 per cent of its \$914mn net revenues, versus 3 per cent growth for its trading business, which will be less than 25 per cent of total revenue after

Thoma Bravo built Adenza by buying software firm Calypso in 2021 for \$3.7bn and combining it with AxiomSL, a compliance software company it had acquired in 2020 for a reported price of around \$2bn.

It is set to receive \$5.75bn in cash from Nasdaq and an equity stake of about 15 per cent in the company, worth nearly \$5bn at Friday's closing price.

Qatalyst Partners was the lead financial adviser to Thoma Bravo. Goldman Sachs was the lead financial adviser to Nasdaq.

**Financials** 

# Calpers plans multibillion-dollar push into venture capital after 'lost decade'

JOSEPHINE CUMBO

Calpers, the biggest public pension scheme in the US, is planning a multibillion-dollar push into international venture capital as the \$442bn fund tilts towards riskier asset classes in a hunt for higher returns after a "lost decade".

The California Public Employees' Retirement System set out plans to expand its venture capital allocation in a review of its \$52bn private equity

portfolio, published on Friday.

As part of the shake-up, the fund plans to expand its investments in Europe and Asia.

Calpers could put as much as \$5bn in new money into venture capital, scheme officials said.

That would make it one of the single largest US investors in the sector at a time when many funds are struggling to raise new money. Total venture funding fell 35 per cent last year to \$445bn. according to data company Crunchbase.

"If you look at the highest-performing private equity programmes, many of those have extremely high proportions of their private equity portfolio in

venture," Anton Orlich, Calpers' managing investment director for growth and innovation, told the Financial Times. So bearing that in mind, Calpers should be participating more in venture."

Currently 73 per cent of the private equity portfolio is allocated to "buyout" buying assets and selling them at a profit; followed by 20 per cent to assets that generate returns through capital growth or dividends. About 1 per cent of the portfolio is in venture capital.

The review document did not say by how much Orlich's team wants to build



Calpers is looking to expand investments in Europe and Asia

out the venture capital programme. But it could be ramped up over time from about \$800mn currently toabout \$5bn with the allocation to be eventually set by Calpers' board, according to scheme officials.

The proposal comes as Calpers seeks to make up for what Orlich described as a "lost decade" of returns stemming from a decision to put the pension plan's private equity programme on hold between 2009 and 2018.

Nicole Musicco, appointed Calpers' chief investment officer in 2022, estimates this cost up to \$18bn of returns.

Plans for the portfolio shake-up come two months after Calpers conceded that it had probably lost about \$77mn on its investments in Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank, both of which collapsed earlier this year.

Orlich stressed that the venture capital push was not just about returns but also diversification.

Venture capital is regarded as higher

risk because finance is provided to unproven start-ups and small businesses, so returns take longer to

# **Equities**

'Clients are

seeing that

get a lot of

exposure

through

Japan

Korea'

Australia,

and South

they can

# AI euphoria and electric vehicle bets drive rally in South Korean stocks

SONG JUNG-A AND CHRISTIAN DAVIES

South Korea's \$1.8tn stock market is approaching bull market territory as foreign investors pile into artificial intelligence stocks and local investors pick up electric vehicle battery-related

The tech-heavy Kospi has rallied 18 per cent this year, joining a surge by other indices in the region, including Japan's Topix and Taiwan's Taiex, that has been driven in large part by searing gains for chipmaker shares.

In contrast, Chinese stocks are falling over doubts about the country's economic recovery with Hong Kong's Hang Seng down 2 per cent this year and the CSI 300, China's key benchmark of onshore-listed groups, falling 1 per cent. Global funds bought a net Won12tn

(\$9.5bn) of Korean shares this year after a three-year hiatus, spending about Won10.5tn on Samsung Electronics

The rally has been driven by technology hardware exporters with foreign investors returning to emerging markets as concerns over the impact of

the US Fed's rate raising cycle ease. It follows a deep rout last year, triggered by rate rises, high inflation and South Korea's slowing economy.

Our global

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Samsung Electronics, which accounts for more than 20 per cent of the Kospi, is the biggest contributor, surging nearly 40 per cent from a September low

Fellow chipmaker SK Hynix provided the second-biggest boost as overseas

# 'They are flocking to sectors with secular, structural growth regardless of the economic cycle'

investors bet that the global AI race would fuel demand for chips following the launch of ChatGPT in November and Nvidia's recent rally.

"The AI-related euphoria served as a trigger for the chipmakers' rally on top of growing expectations for the industry's upturn in the second half," said Lee Chai-won, chair of Life Asset Management.

Local investors are buying shares of companies that are part of the EV supply chain. Korean battery producers and manufacturers are expected to benefit from the rapid expansion of the global EV market and the US Inflation Reduction Act, which is aimed at curbing China's control of the green energy sector.

LG Energy Solution, the world's second-largest battery maker, has shot up 38 per cent this year while steelmaker Posco Holdings, whose subsidiaries have made unstream investments in the global battery supply chain, has risen 42 per cent.

Shares of the country's four biggest K-pop agencies - Hybe, SM Entertainment, YG Entertainment and JYP Entertainment - have gone up by at least a third this year, double the Kospi's advance and outperforming global recording labels such as Universal Music Group and Warner Music Group.

"There are still some macroeconomic risks but investors seem to think that the worst is over," said James Lim, an analyst at US hedge fund Dalton Investments. "They are flocking to sectors with secular, structural growth regardless of the economic cycle, such as batteries, AI and entertainment.'

# The day in the markets

## What you need to know

 Wall Street rises ahead of key inflation data and Fed meeting
 Crude oil slips as Goldman Sachs cuts its price forecast for third time
 European and Asian equity indices edge higher

Wall Street stocks rose yesterday as investors prepared for a week of key central bank policy meetings while oil prices slipped amid concerns about weak demand in China.

The benchmark S&P 500 rose 0.4 per cent by midday in New York, consolidating its move last week into bull market territory, while the tech-heavy Nasdag Composite added 0.7 per cent.

But the rally eschewed oil companies after the S&P 500 energy sector dropped 0.8 per cent.

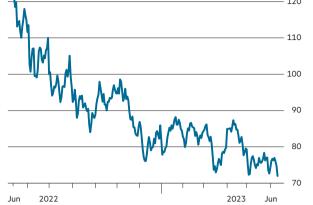
Oil prices have fallen despite Saudi Arabia announcing an additional 1mn barrel a day production cut in July at the meeting of Opec+ at the start of this month with traders focusing on strong supplies elsewhere and signs of relatively lacklustre demand growth in China.

Also yesterday, Goldman Sachs revised its end-of-year price estimate for Brent crude, the global benchmark, to \$86 from \$95 following two previous downward revisions in the past six months.

Brent fell 3.2 per cent to \$72.39 a barrel while US marker West Texas Intermediate slid 3.7 per cent to \$67.59 a barrel.

Equities were buoyed by bets that the US Federal Reserve would resist raising interest rates when it met today and tomorrow, marking the first pause in the central bank's 14-month campaign to tame inflation.





"With signs that the economy is shuffling off into a potential recession, the expectation is that [Fed policymakers] are likely to keep rates on hold," said Susannah Streeter, head of money and markets at Hargreaves Lansdown.

The latest US consumer price index report is published today and is expected to show that headline inflation slowed to 4.1 per cent year on year in May, according to economists surveyed by Reuters.

The reading would mark a significant improvement from the 4.9 per cent rate in

April and would give the Fed more room

"Any deviation from the forecast path is likely to cause a jolt of volatility on markets," added Streeter.

Across the Atlantic, the region-wide Stoxx Europe 600 edged 0.1 per cent higher while the CAC 40 in Paris added 0.5 per cent and Frankfurt's Xetra Dax advanced 0.9 per cent.

In Asia, China's CSI 300 index of Shanghai and Shenzhen stocks gained 0.2 per cent while Hong Kong's Hang Seng firmed 0.1 per cent and Tokyo's Topix rose 0.7 per cent. **Daria Mosolova** 

# Fed's framing of its call on rates is too narrow

# Mohamed El-Erian

# Markets Insight



Based on guidance from a top Fed official, market expectations are that the central bank will "skip", maintaining rates unchanged with an inclination to resuming rises at the following meeting in July (similar to what Australia and Canada have done).

This approach is seen as providing officials with more data to evaluate the effects of the most concentrated set of rate rises in decades. As such, the implied market probability of a June rise has fluctuated about 20-30 per cent in the past week, having peaked above 70 per cent before the last guidance.

There are two issues with this approach. First, an additional month of data is unlikely to significantly enhance the Fed's understanding of the effects of a policy tool that acts with variable lags. Second, recent data favours a rise for a central bank that has repeatedly insisted it is "data dependent".

No wonder some other Fed officials favour a rise this week. Their view points to the data surprises, including most recently higher job vacancies and robust monthly employment creation, as well as the lifting of immediate concerns regarding the US debt ceiling and banking instability.

But at least one Fed official believes that the May rate rise may have already erred on the side of being excessive, as some forward indicators of economic activity have been signalling weakness. In this view, a pause would be followed by a rate cut as the next change.

Much has been written about why the Fed finds itself in this uncomfortable situation. The most commonly cited reason is that it misjudged the inflation threat for most of 2021 and the first quarter of 2022 before being forced into 10 successive rate rises.

As a result, the Fed has experienced a significant erosion of its public standing and policy credibility. There has been a prolonged discrepancy between the

# The Fed is operating with an inflation target that is probably too low for durable economic wellbeing

Fed's communication on the path of rates for 2023 and what markets expect. Moreover, a public disagreement has arisen between the Fed chair and central bank staff on the likelihood of a recession.

The Fed's reputation has been further undermined by costly slips in bank supervision, lack of a suitable strategic policy framework, weak accountability, and susceptibility to groupthink.

and susceptibility to groupthink.
Given the multiple causes, the Fed is unlikely to resolve its predicaments any time soon. Moreover, unless the CPI inflation data due out today shows significant weakness, its proposed course of action — the "skip" — would end up as the muddled middle option, rendering

future decisions even more challenging. If the Fed is genuinely data dependent and truly committed to achieving its current inflation target of 2 per cent, it should raise rates by 0.25 percentage points and leave the door open for additional rises. Recent data surprises, combined with the balance of risks associated with Fed's policies, both suggest that this route is preferable to a "skip".

However, if the Fed believes, as I do, that it is operating with an outdated inflation target due to significant changes on the supply side of the economy, and that the modification of the target requires a lengthy and delicate process, then it should opt for a pause with an inclination to cut when appropriate.

This would allow the effects of the previous rate increases to permeate through the economy, and reduce the likelihood of both undue damage to economic growth and unsettling financial instability.

Recall that the Fed's policy mistakes over the past two years and its institutional weaknesses are not the only factors that have undermined its effectiveness. Changing patterns of globalisation, the restructuring of corporate supply chains, the energy transition, and labour market mismatches all indicate that the Fed is operating with an inflation target that is probably too low for durable economic wellbeing.

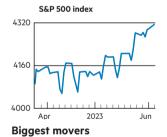
In this context, the current framing of the policy debate is overly narrow. It is more likely to confuse matters than to stimulate the type of deliberations that can rebuild the foundation for the Fed to contribute to high inclusive growth and financial stability.

Mohamed El-Erian is president of Queens' College, Cambridge, and an adviser to Allianz and Gramercy

## Markets update

		0			*0	
	US	Eurozone	Japan	UK	China	Brazil
Stocks	S&P 500	Eurofirst 300	Nikkei 225	FTSE100	Shanghai Comp	Bovespa
Level	4313.79	1821.50	32434.00	7570.69	3228.83	117263.22
% change on day	0.35	0.11	0.52	0.11	-0.08	0.21
Currency	\$ index (DXY)	\$ per €	Yen per \$	\$ per £	Rmb per \$	Real per \$
Level	103.464	1.075	139.625	1.251	7.142	4.885
% change on day	-0.090	-0.093	0.179	-0.556	0.251	0.140
Govt. bonds	10-year Treasury	10-year Bund	10-year JGB	10-year Gilt	10-year bond	10-year bond
Yield	3.779	2.387	0.424	4.439	2.709	10.876
Basis point change on day	3.500	1.300	-0.590	10.000	0.000	2.400
<b>World index, Commods</b>	FTSE All-World	Oil - Brent	Oil - WTI	Gold	Silver	Metals (LMEX)
Level	441.18	72.64	67.93	1960.30	24.32	3737.20
% change on day	0.24	-2.87	-3.19	-0.31	2.72	0.45
Yesterday's close apart from: Curr	encies = 16:00 GMT; S&P, Bove	spa, All World, Oil = 17:00 Gr	MT; Gold, Silver = London pm	fix. Bond data supplied by T	ullett Prebon.	

# Main equity markets







%	US						
	Carnival	13.87					
	Catalent	10.85					
Ups	Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd	8.10					
	Oracle	6.23					
	Advance Auto Parts	5.85					
	Nasdaq	-13.13					
15	Key	-6.98					
Downs	Citizens Fin	-6.35					
۵	Comerica	-4.54					



UK	
Ocado	3.62
Croda Int	3.19
Auto Trader	3.11
Experian	2.82
Airtel Africa	2.50
Fresnillo	-4.22
Vodafone	-2.71
Segro	-2.65
Bt	-2.28
Angle American	4.5

All data provided by Morningstar unless otherwise note

Wall Street

Biopharma group **Chinook Therapeutics** soared on news it was being bought by Swiss drugs company Novartis for \$40 a share upfront — 67 per cent above Friday's closing price.

Up to \$4 a share would also be paid "upon the achievement of certain regulatory milestones", said Novartis.

The deal with an initial value of \$3.5bn would give Novartis access to "two high-value, late-stage medicines in development for rare, severe chronic kidney diseases".

Contract drug manufacturer **Catalent** rallied after its delayed quarterly results revealed higher revenue than Wall Street had expected.

US-listed electric-car maker **Nio** rallied

following reports it was cutting the price of its vehicles by Rmb30,000 (\$4,199) on all models and ending its free battery swapping service to new buyers.

The Chinese group last week posted a loss of Rmb2.51 a share in the first quarter, missing the Refinitiv-compiled estimate by more than 8 per cent.

Sinking to the bottom of the S&P 500 index was exchange operator **Nasdaq**, which announced it was buying Adenza, a financial risk software group, from private

equity firm Thoma Bravo. It would be Nasdaq's largest acquisition if the \$10.5bn cash and stock deal went through. Ray Douglas

# Europe

A takeover offer sent Spain's **Opdenergy** soaring with private equity firm Antin bidding  $\in$ 5.85 per share for the renewable energy producer — 46 per cent above its most recent closing price.

The French group said investors representing around 70 per cent of the share capital had already agreed to accept the €866mn deal, which represented a 23 per cent premium over Opdenergy's listing price in July 2022.

Antin planned to delist Opdenergy if its takeover is completed.

Luxembourg-based satellite operator SES sank on news that chief executive Steve Collar would be stepping down at the end of June "to pursue other professional and personal endeavours".

The news came as SES begins rolling out its O3b mPower second-generation satellite system, a big project expected to ramp up later this year.

Polish games developer CD Projekt

rose sharply on announcing an expansion pack for its blockbuster title *Cyberpunk* 2077.

Jefferies said the September 26 launch was a "sweet spot . . . as it targets the back-to-school period and it's right before the discount season".

Initial reception was also "positive with 1mn views on YouTube within 13 hours of the trailer release", said the broker. Ray Douglas

# London

AO World jumped on announcing a "strategic partnership" with Frasers Group, which bought an 18.9 per cent stake in the electricals retailer through the purchase of 109.4 mn shares.

Shore Capital said it believed Frasers' intention was to simply be a shareholder with the deal "offering a gateway to partner on the fulfilment of two-man deliveries".

The high street group, for example, sold domestic appliances through its Studio Retail channel, noted the broker.

Pharmaceutical company Futura
Medical rallied after revealing that the US
Food and Drug Administration had
granted marketing authorisation for
MED3000, its treatment of erectile
dysfunction.

With this green light, the product could be purchased over the counter without the need for a prescription.

The update prompted Liberum to lift

Futura's target price by 17 per cent, citing MED3000's "potential to take a significant market share".

New business buoyed mining services group **Capital**, which was awarded an earth moving and crushing services contract with Ivindo Iron in Gabon, central Africa.

The five-year deal would generate about \$30mn of revenue annually "once fully operational", it said. Ray Douglas

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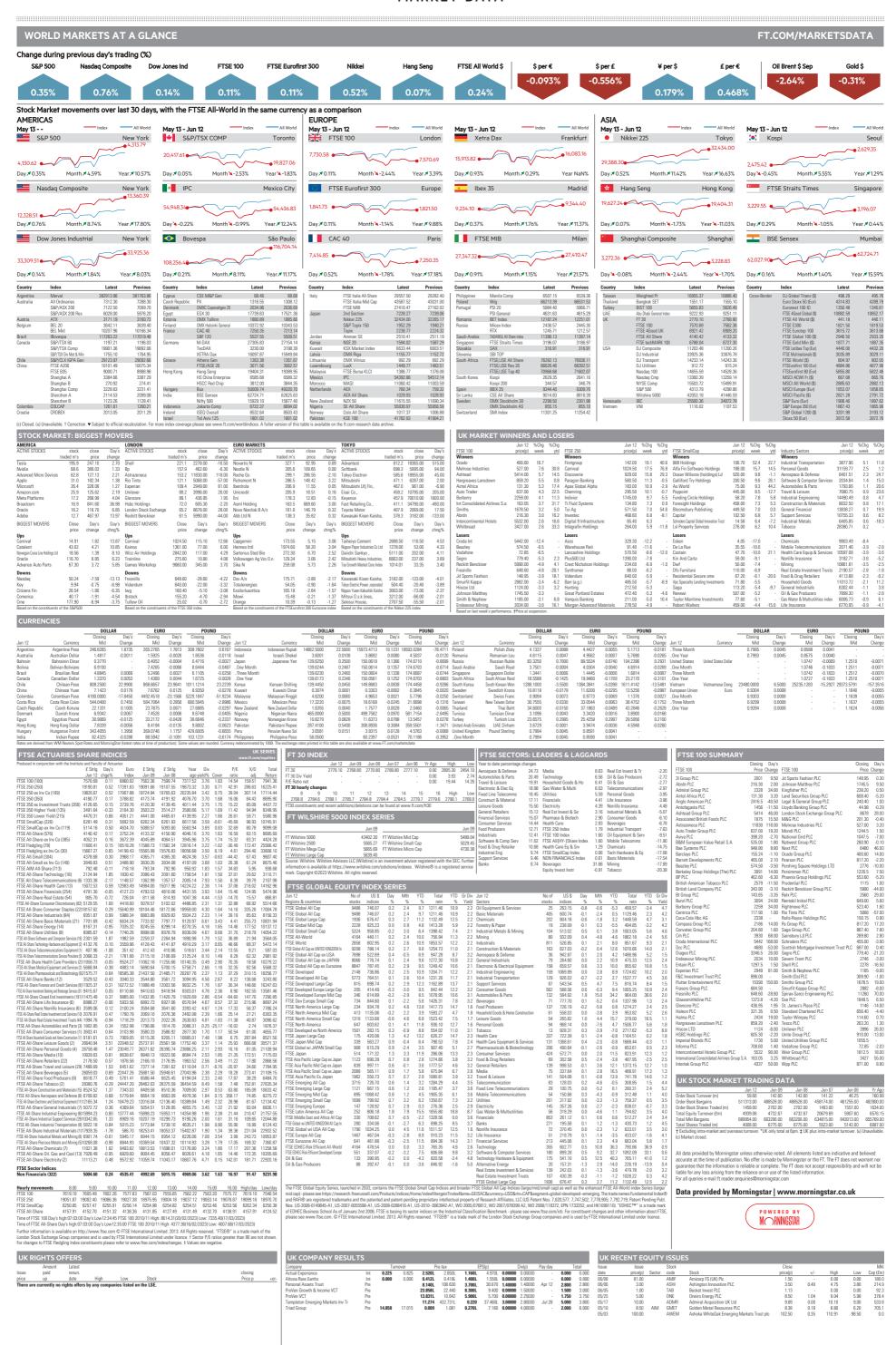
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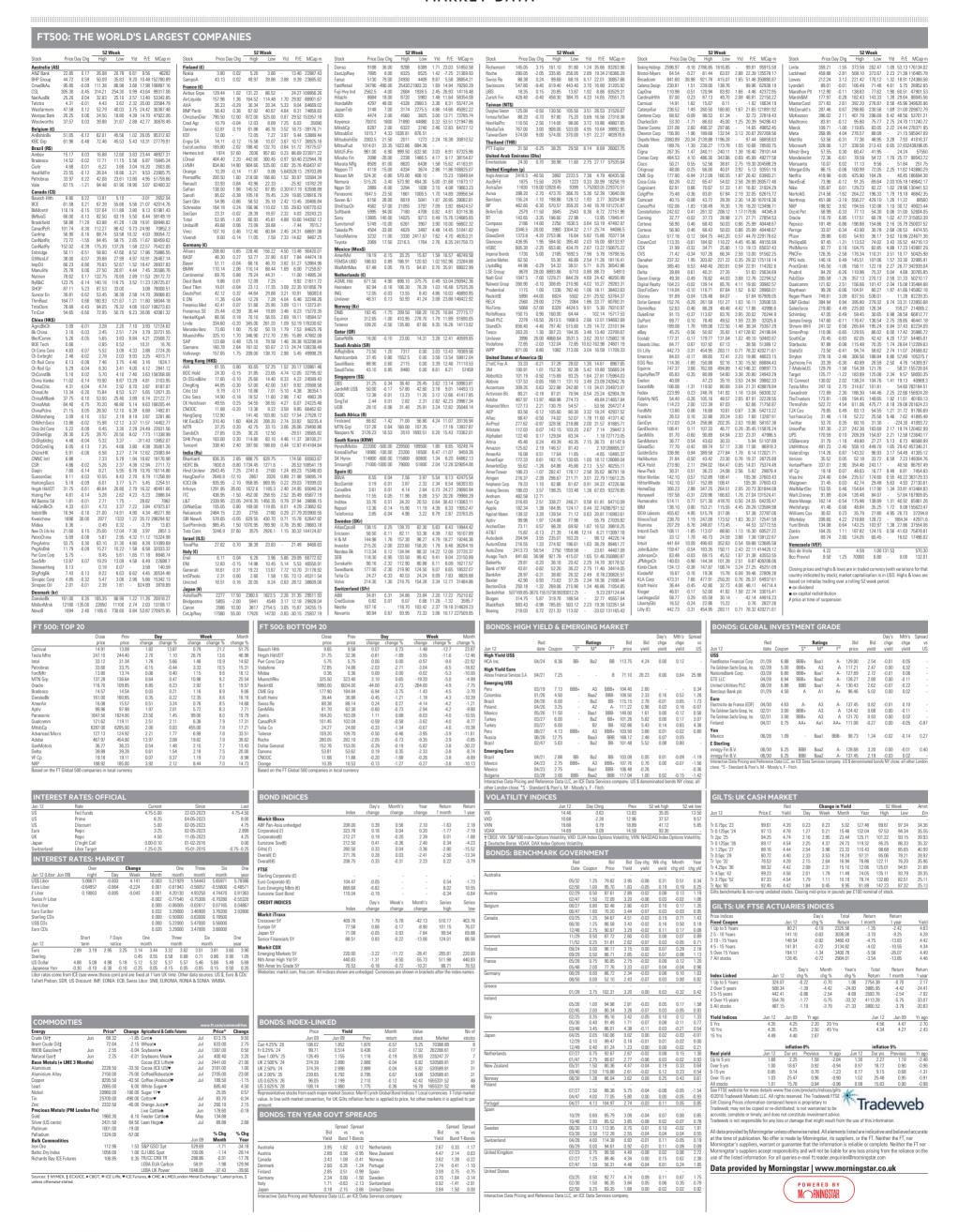
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## MARKET DATA



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## MARKET DATA



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## **ARTS**

# Irish giant walks tall in Suffolk

OPERA & CLASSICAL

Aldeburgh Festival

Richard Fairman

The celebration of music and place has always been at the heart of the Aldeburgh Festival. Since Benjamin Britten led the founding of the festival in 1948. the town itself may have changed, becoming an upmarket destination with many holiday lets, but the panoramic views of the Suffolk fens and village-like seafront remain unspoilt.

For the festival, the intervening 75 years have been a period of reinvention. From his international standing as a composer, Britten was able to bring in musician friends and colleagues at a similar level to perform. Once he and that generation had passed on, it was never going to be possible for the festival to continue as it had been, and it is prospering today as a showcase for the new and inventive in music.

This year's programme follows that trend. Featured musicians include a pair of composers who have much to say, Cassandra Miller from Canada and Anna Thorvaldsdottir from Iceland, and two performers who are keen to break the mould, pianist Pavel Kolesnikov and baritone Roderick Williams, basking in the regal glow of his appearance at the coronation.

An opera to start is de rigueur. It is a shame that these are no longer fulllength operas staged in the main Snape Maltings, but the smaller Britten Studio has hosted an almost unbroken series of successful chamber-sized operas, so maybe the venue is blessed.

No two have been remotely the same and Sarah Angliss's Giant proved to be another one-off. It tells the story of the 18th-century "Irish giant", Charles Byrne. His dying wish was that his body would not be put on public display, but an unscrupulous physician arranged to have it stolen before the funeral.



Giant' tells the story of 18th-century 'Irish giant' Charles Byrne, played by Karim Sulayman

THE LIFE OF A SONG

Toots and the Maytals' 'Pressure Drop' brought them worldwide acclaim — and was widely covered. Jude Rogers tells



The opera, 80 minutes straight through, includes roles for the physician and Byrne's manager, who exhibits him like a freak show, both written with a sharp ear by librettist Ross Sutherland. Their rapacious, down-to-earth attitudes contrast with the almost noble characterisation of Byrne, who was said to be a gentle soul, an easy target for exploitation.

A look at Angliss's spare musical score, with its tinkling percussion, ethereal string chords and distant prerecorded sounds, might suggest that it could never fit a story of such dark realism. Instead, the two complement each other. The otherworldly music adds an extra layer, questioning, uneasy, timeless, that elevates the issues involved to

Casting the giant cannot be easy, but Karim Sulayman, perched on six-inch heels, looked convincing and captured Byrne's sensitivity, Ionathan Gunthorpe and Gweneth Ann Rand created vivid characters out of the physician and manager, not only singing well but delivering spoken text with uncommon skill. Héloïse Werner, Melanie Pappenheim and Steven Beard completed a fine cast, very well directed by Sarah Fahie and played by a small ensemble, led by Ben Smith at the keyboard. \*\*\*\*

The start of the festival also included late-night and morning recitals by the Kreutzer Quartet. Their programmes featured mostly living British composers and included two premieres.

David Horne's Different Ghosts for clarinet quintet, with clarinettist Linda Merrick, creates a distinctive, spectral atmosphere of incorporeal sounds, though the different personalities of the seven ghosts were sometimes hard to discern. David Matthews's String Quartet No 17 showed how much life there still is in traditional structures and a musical language that verges on Romanticism.

Best of the rest were Priaulx Rainier's tautly argued String Quartet in C Minor of 1939 and a brief lament, entitled Remember, by Eleanor Alberga. All would have benefited from more secure playing from the Kreutzer Quartet, woeful in tuning even in their Haydn and Mozart, but it seems ungenerous to complain when this ensemble champions music that other string quartets rarely reach. ★★★☆☆

Festival continues to June 25,

# Joyous homecoming for Sheffield heroes

POP

Arctic Monkeys Hillsborough Park, Sheffield

Alastair Bailey

You don't wear a cravat in Sheffield. It's not the done thing. A tumbling shagpile haircut redolent of a Butlin's Elvis could land you in hot water too. But different rules apply if you're Alex Turner, lead singer of the Arctic Monkeys, gazing out over 40,000 people at the first of two sun-drenched shows, their first hometown appearances in five years. As he launched into "A Certain  $Romance", a \, misty-eyed \, love \, letter$ to the city from the band's 2006 debut album, all sartorial excesses were instantly forgiven.

The Arctic Monkeys are Sheffield's band. Few of their stature are as revered by the city that made them and so rooted in a sense of place. Yet that loyalty has been tested since the creative volte-face of 2018's Tranquility Base Hotel and Casino and last year's The Car. Heady conceptual lyrics and luscious string arrangements are far removed from the origins of the band, who, barely out of their teens, rose to fame with songs about lager-fuelled scraps and unscrupulous bouncers.

Friday evening's crowd was a patchwork of football terrace casuals, excited students and diehard older couples. "Sensational," bellowed Turner as the cavernous final note of "Sculptures of Anything Goes" rang out into the twilight; they roared their agreement.

Drummer Matt Helders tumbled into "Brianstorm", sparking pandemonium at the front as brilliant blue smoke announced the arrival of the evening's first flare the dominant colour of the band's beloved Sheffield Wednesday. Older songs such as the euphoric "505" were driven by Helders' signature propulsive style while newer, more measured cuts like Four Out of Five" came cushioned by a precise hi-hat here, a careful cymbal roll there

The open-air setting of Hillsborough Park and the beer-friendly weather hardly seemed conducive to their recent brand of spacey contemplation. But when last year's longing single "There'd Better Be a Mirrorball" arrived, accompanied by crystalline shards and warm orange hues sent out by a descending disco ball, it was met with the

ferocious applause it deserved. The visual flourishes continued. For "Body Paint", refracted fireworks splashed across a circular backdrop and, during an extended outro, Turner turned his Gretsch guitar vertically to the dying light like some trident-wielding Neptune, oozing confidence. "Arabella", an obvious touchstone for its crunching riffs and slinking verses, was followed by a brief detour into Black Sabbath's "War Pigs", a knowing embrace of the band's wider rock lineage.

But the loudest reception greeted the kitchen-sink realism "Mardy Bum" and the raucous "I Bet You Look Good on the Dancefloor", both now firmly established in Britain's cultural consciousness. They had even greater resonance tonight, the crowd screaming the lyrics wordfor-word into each other's faces, arms slung joyfully around necks.

An elongated "R U Mine?" prefigured the tide of people flowing steadily away from the park, into the night. Three huge concerts at London's Emirates Stadium and the band's third Glastonbury headline slot are still to come, but the homecoming had made its mark. Twenty years to the month after their first gig in the tiny upstairs room of Sheffield pub The Grapes, this was as much a celebration of a city united as the long-awaited return of its most talented sons

arcticmonkeys.com



Confidence: Arctic Monkeys' Alex Turner — Peter Parks/A

# Dating and sleuthing in the netherworld

GAMING

Mask of the Rose

Lewis Gordon

A homesick golem, a couple who may or may not be the devil incarnate and a doctor with an acute case of melancholia. These are just a few of the characters you meet in the dating-sim/ murder-mystery Mask of the Rose, all of whom you can converse with and, should the mood take you, seduce in the name of romance or something more Machiavellian.

The year is 1862, and London has just fallen into a vast cavern. Your immediate task is to conduct a census of those who survive in the so-called "Neath", and so you set out on to the city's newly subterranean streets to speak with its inhabitants. Each character you encounter draws you deeper into a dark, delightfully perverted fictional universe, one that developer Failbetter Games has explored since 2009's excel-lent text-based RPG, Fallen London. Like that game, and other entries in the series such as 2019's Sunless Skies, you can practically smell the breath of the spluttering characters and hear the tinkling of china cups, such is the strength of the game's character writing and world-building.

The story is told as a first-person vis-ual novel. Once you have created your character (I played as a friendly, wellmeaning tailor first; an assertive dockworking seductress second), vou're free to explore London and gab away with its residents in any order you please.

There's a wrinkle, though: unlike most other visual novels, this isn't a story of branching paths, but one that rearranges itself dynamically according to your actions. Such is the accommodating nature of the game, you can even pursue the romance and murder mystery to whatever degree you please. Prefer to gallivant about town in the name of sexual liberation? No problem. Hope to bring about a resolution that maintains a semblance of justice? That's your prerogative.

However, there is a punishing time limit imposed on your actions. You are given two conversations per day and only a handful of weeks in total, within which you must make both your advances and deductions. Mask of the Rose convinces more as a dating simulator than as a mystery, modelling relationships with considerable nuance, from sexual desire and romantic intimacy to platonic friendship and outright hostility. As a piece of crime fiction, however, it lacks the major beats that typically make the genre sing: the twists and turns, the revelations. If you don't crack the case (a murder victim that comes back from the dead just as auickly as they've been killed) in the allotted time (a near-certainty on your first playthrough), then the court case ends with disappointing abruptness.

Still, as a work of romance, Mask of the Rose is enjoyably subversive, alternating between beauty, horror, lust and gratification in ways that are never less than thoughtful or sensitive. I won't quickly forget my tailor's moonlit tryst with the golem, coupling as if it were just another night in London — and not one in which the city sat hundreds of metres below the ground.

Griz works for the Ministry of Accounting and Recounting. It seems to agree with her. She wears trousers to work and comes home at all hours.

Characters such as Griz draw players into the game's atmospheric universe



# FT BIG READ. US ECONOMY

Consensus is breaking down about the pace at which inflation will moderate and just how close the economy is to a cliff edge – putting the central bank in a tough spot about its next move on interest rates. By Colby Smith

n the 16 years that Mike Zaffaroni has run Liberty Landscape Supply in north-east Florida, no stretch proved quite as difficult as last year.

Soaring costs, supply chain bot tle-necks and an acute worker shortage mounted a challenge for the lawn and garden centre, which Zaffaroni said vas even worse than the early days of the Great Recession more than a decade ago and the mass shutdowns stemming from the pandemic in 2020.

But despite these hardships — made all the more potent by rapid interest rate increases from the Federal Reserve customers continued to flock to his outlets. Sales rose 16 per cent in 2022 compared to 2021 and just this month the company opened another location.

Florida's economy stands out as one of the country's strongest. The state has seen a huge influx of new residents in recent years – drawn, in part, by balmy weather and no income tax - and now leads the nation in terms of net income migration. Business applications have also boomed, making it one of the most popular places to open up shop. That has helped to keep the unemployment rate at 2.6 per cent, well below the national average of 3.7 per cent.
While Florida enjoys unique tail-

winds, the durability of its economy exemplifies a national trend that has flummoxed policymakers seeking to damp demand to stamp out elevated inflation. But with the collective weight of the US central bank's forceful mon etary tightening efforts to date and

'The cost of capital going up will cause us to grow slower for an unknown amount of time. That's just the reality'

the ongoing retreat by regional lenders across the country in the wake of a string of bank failures, there is growing apprehension that the US economy's resilience is finally beginning to crack.

As a small-business owner, Zaffaroni said he is "always worried" about the future and warned that the second half of 2023 could become tenuous. "We are not a sexy tech company from San Francisco that is living off of the fumes of private equity or venture capital. We are a real, tangible, boring business that relies on capital in order for us to continue to invest in infrastructure, equipment, inventory and people," says Zaffaroni.
"So the cost of capital going up will

cause us to grow slower for an undeter mined amount of time. That's just the reality of it."

Whether the economy buckles enough to tip into a recession is an issue that has tormented officials at the Fed since they began aggressively lifting interest rates in March 2022. In just over a year, the Fed has raised its benchmark rate over 5 percentage points to the highest level since 2007, changes that take time to affect the economy.

Now Jay Powell, the Fed chair, has to forge a consensus across a Federal Open Market Committee that holds diverse views about the speed at which inflation will moderate, the impact of the recent banking stress and just how close the economy is to a cliff edge.

"We're getting to the real hard part here of how we assess trade-offs," Loretta Mester, president of the Cleveland Fed, told the Financial Times earlier this month.

been slow, but the central bank is now considering a more patient approach. That is widely expected to mean forgoing additional tightening at its policy meeting this week while keeping the door open to fresh increases if warranted. Cuts are not being considered until 2024. Powell himself has said the Fed can "afford" to look at the data and make "careful assessments".

For Charles Evans, who retired from the Fed in January after serving 15 years as president of its Chicago bank, the upcoming debates boil down to one question: "What kind of policy mistake are you most comfortable making?

# Where cracks are forming

Nestled in northern Indiana sits the RV capital of the world. Almost nine out of every 10 recreational vehicles sold in the US and Canada are manufactured in or around the city of Elkhart, according to the RV Industry Association.

RV enthusiasts are not the only ones keeping close tabs on Elkhart, which boasts a Hall of Fame dedicated to the industry, Economists do too, That is because an RV, a discretionary purchase typically financed with borrowed money, is the "classic disposable income and interest rate sensitive item", says Michael Hicks, an economics professor at Indiana's Ball State University.

A cooldown in RV sales typically augurs a weaker economic backdrop,

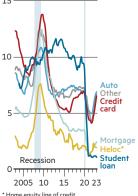


# The Fed's waiting game

The forceful monetary tightening efforts by the Fed and its chair Jay Powell – coupled with the retreat by regional lenders across the US - has led to a growing apprehension that the economy's resilience is finally beginning to crack

## More debtors are falling behind

Delinquency rates on various loan



\* Home equity line of credit Sources: RV Industry Association; Federal Reserve Bank of New York

with Hicks claiming RV sales are better recession predictors than economists.

Sales and shipments have both recently declined and Elkhart employment recorded the largest year-overyear drop among the biggest US counties as of the fourth quarter of 2022.

Distortions tied to Covid have muddied the signals slightly, however, RV sales exploded during the pandemic as people sought alternative ways to travel, so recent softening could simply represent a reversion to a more normal trend.

But Hicks expects the US economy to at best grow at an annualised rate of 0.5 per cent this year and warns it could even register a 0.5 per cent contraction.

What has kept the economy afloat and out of the grips of a recession so far is the labour market, which roared back from the depths of the pandemic and has shown surprising strength as worker shortages have fuelled intense competition among employers. Despite lay-offs in Silicon Valley and Wall Street, many companies are still hiring in droves, vacancies are rising again after a recent dip and the rate at which Americans are quitting remains elevated.

"People's confidence and their willingness to spend are most importantly determined by how they feel about their job situation, and right now people are says Kristin Forbes, a former Bank of England official now teaching at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology's Sloan School of Management.

Beneath the surface though, some of the labour market's momentum has faded. Over the past three months, job gains have averaged about 280,000 positions – a robust monthly pace but well below the roughly 400,000 increase registered the same time last year. And while still historically low, the unemployment rate edged up 0.3 percentage points in May to a seven-month high of 3.7 per cent.

Across the US, well over a dozen states are flashing warning signals, triggering the "Sahm rule" which links the start of a recession to when the three-month moving average of the unemployment rate rises at least half a percentage point above its low over the past 12 months.

The Sahm rule traditionally applies to national unemployment - not statelevel data, which can be distorted by small sample sizes — but the trend across the country suggests labour market conditions have softened. Still, the weakness is not yet broad-based and would need to intensify for the worst prognoses to be realised.

Wage gains have cooled in tandem, offering relief to policymakers concerned that rapidly rising pay is press-uring companies to raise prices. For the time being, however, consumers

continue to spend, buoyed by savings accrued early on in the pandemic as the federal government injected \$5tn to bolster household balance sheets. Americans have run down those nest eggs, but economists at the San Francisco Fed estimate there are still \$500bn of excess savings to support consumer spending at least until the end of 2023.

Some sectors initially battered by Fed rate rises have already begun to stabilise, including the housing market, while demand for service-related activities like travel or entertainment have seen little let-up. That has kept upward pressure on "core" inflation, which excludes volatile food and energy costs, frustrating the Fed's attempts to get this key metric back to its 2 per cent target.

In a sign that businesses are tentative about the future, however, orders placed with US factories for machinery and other "core capital goods", which exclude aircraft and military hardware, have dipped below shipments on a three-month moving average basis.

In preparation for a downturn, Matt Hirsch, president of Primus, which builds cold-storage facilities and just broke ground on a new warehouse in Jacksonville, says he is focused on lining up three years' worth of projects.

'We have a backlog larger than we've er had before and it's e and say, 'Let's just execute'," he says.

"I can't let that happen, I have to fill the bucket again because I do believe sales are going to soften."

Delinquencies are also rising as more people fall behind on payments. By the end of 2022, fewer Americans reported being able to cover an unexpected \$400 expense using cash, savings or a credit card that could be immediately paid off. As president of Feeding Northeast

Florida food bank, Susan King is already seeing this first-hand. Families living one pay cheque to another who once needed assistance on an emergency basis now need it "very consistently".

"It is always in the back of our mind that a recession is looming," she says.

# Banking woes

Officials at the Fed and its staff have long contended that there is a narrow path to get inflation down without causing a painful economic downturn. For staffers at the Fed, that changed following Silicon Valley Bank's collapse.

In March, they updated their forecast to a "mild" recession later this year. before the economy staged a recovery in 2024. Concerns stemmed from the immediate retreat expected by small and midsized banks, which account for  $40\,\mathrm{per}\,\mathrm{cent}$  of all outstanding loans and leases, as they confronted rapid deposit outflows, plunging share prices and the spectre of harsher regulatory scrutiny.

Lending standards have since tightened, extending a trend that was already under way as the Fed raised borrowing costs. Powell has warned that tighter credit conditions could dent economic activity, hiring and inflation. It could well mean the Fed does not need to raise interest rates as much as initially expected to reach its inflation goal, he has also said.

But there is considerable debate about just how much pain the banking turbulence will inflict.

Former Chicago Fed president Evans is sympathetic to the view that it could have little impact on the economy. "If I were a policymaker, I'd be nervous that the credit distress channel isn't nearly as powerful [as first predicted]," he says, especially given the strength of the labour market. "The banks seem to be making their way through it."

Torsten Slok, chief economist at Apollo Global Management, is among those to consider the banking crisis a "substantial event", warning that over the coming quarters it will have a "sig-nificant negative impact" on the economy. Small businesses are already finding it harder to get finance and he reck-ons the banking stress is akin to roughly 0.75 percentage points of Fed tightening.

# 'If I were a policymaker, I'd be nervous that the credit distress channel isn't nearly as powerful [as first predicted]'

Coupled with his concerns that inflation will prove more difficult for the Fed to tame and require the central bank to tighten more, Slok is now worried about a recession that is much deeper and more drawn out than expected. "We are waiting for Godot, and I do believe Godot will eventually arrive," he says.

# Fed fears

Against this backdrop, the policy decisions confronting the central bank are becoming far more fraught.

For the bulk of the monetary tightenng campaign, officials have hesitated little about the appropriate path forward for policy. Having been late to react to inflation, the Fed has moved with unanimity at nearly all of its meetings since last year, repeatedly relying on jumbo half-point and three-quarter point increases to catch up.

That cohesion now risks being eroded as different policymakers draw different conclusions about when the full effects of the Fed's actions so far will be felt and how much more to squeeze the economy - divisions that Alan Blinder,

a former Fed vice-chair, said are not only "natural" at this stage but also a "problem" for Powell.

"A chair likes to get as close to una-

nimity as he or she can," he says.

For at least the next gathering, top leadership at the Fed appear to have forged a compromise: omit an increase this week but keep in play the prospects of one later. Waiting would give officials more time to learn how economic activity and credit conditions are evolving. Christopher Waller, a governor, said in a May speech, as he laid out the options.

Waller adds that there needs to be clear evidence" that inflation is moving down to the desired level before he would be comfortable stopping rate rises. Individual projections from officials of the peak policy rate this year, due to be published this week, could indicate broad support for at least one more quarter-point rate rise. Economists polled in a recent FT survey reckon the Fed will eventually implement a minimum of two

Pausing rate rises prematurely and finding out in a couple of months' time that the Fed has not done enough would be "very disappointing", says Evans. You can just see the regret in that kind of commentary." But unnecessarily crushing demand and throwing an number of people out of comes with its own costs.

"The problem is when we get to the point where the interest rate does change behaviour, if the Fed has done too much too fast, it'll be too late," says Claudia Sahm, a former Fed economist and creator of the Sahm rule.

"People on the margins will be hit first, whether it's a minority-owned business or its Black or Hispanic workers, who typically have been on the sidelines but have jobs right now?

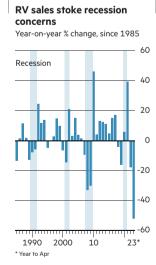
In terms of what the Fed could more easily correct, however, economists seem confident in the central bank redressing having overtightened.

"The biggest risk now is that inflation does not come down as quickly as expected," says Forbes. "If you hike too much today and growth slows too much, you can quickly lower rates. That's an easier problem to fix.

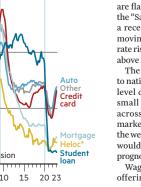
An even more pernicious problem would be a stagflation scenario taking hold, in which the economy is hobbled by both an extended period of slow growth as well as stubbornly high inflation. That is increasingly a concern for Nela Richardson, chief economist at ADP, a payroll processor, who warns that it would severely limit the Fed's latitude to respond in either direction.

"It definitely means they have to sleep with one eye open."

Additional reporting by Oliver Roeder in New York



types, Q1 2003 to Q1 2023 (%)



# The FT View



FINANCIAL TIMES

'Without fear and without favour'

ft.com/opinion

# There should be no second act for Boris Johnson

# Sunak must intervene if the former premier tries to run for parliament again

Boris Johnson's resignation from parliament is nothing other than a good day for British democracy. As prime minister, Johnson besmirched and subverted his own office, and other institutions he touched. He announced his departure in a petulant statement before a parliamentary report that is expected to deliver the most damning criticism of an ex-premier in living memory for misleading the Commons over what he knew about Downing Street parties during lockdown. By saying he was leaving "for now", Johnson hinted at a comeback like that of his hero, Winston Churchill. He should not be given the chance.

Johnson will remain, no doubt, one of the most consequential prime ministers in recent history. By steering Britain out of the EU he changed the nation's political trajectory and granted the wishes of the 52 per cent who backed Brexit in the 2016 referendum. Yet in his self-centredness, his casual disregard for truth and for the rules and conventions that bind others, his cronyist tendencies and his lack of managerial seriousness and competence, he damaged his office and the UK's global standing.

In part by promising to "get Brexit done", Johnson won the biggest Tory majority in three decades. But he lacked the abilities to make a success of the EU departure, or at least to deliver it in the least harmful way. His bare-bones exit deal prioritised illusory "sovereignty" but maximised the economic hit. Signing up to Northern Ireland trade rules he did not intend to stick to sullied the UK's reputation for respect for the law.

At home, Johnson sapped trust in Britain's government and institutions, and made many ministers, civil servants and aides complicit. Attempting to sideline parliament as he jousted with Brussels strained the UK's unwritten constitution. The shambolic handling of Covid-19 left Britain with the highest deaths per million in the G7. Allowing social gatherings in Downing Street that breached rules Johnson himself had written enraged millions.

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The Commons privileges committee is expected to deliver a damning verdict on whether Johnson lied to parliament in assertions over those parties. By calling the committee a "kangaroo court", some members suggest Johnson or his allies may have impugned its integrity and engaged in contempt of parliament. In an echo of polarised US politics, heightened security arrangements are in place for the committee after reports of threats from the public.

As US Republicans did with Donald

As US Republicans did with Donald Trump, too many Conservative MPs initially threw in their lot with Johnson because they saw him as a winner who could connect with a different voter base. Unlike the Republicans, the Conservative party has gone a good way

towards shaking him off, because enough MPs concluded in the end that he was damaging their prospects.

Johnson now has a vested interest in Conservative failure at the next general election. A defeat of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak would present him with the possibility of reclaiming the leadership, if he could secure a safe seat, in a vote among party members — or at least of being able to claim that he alone was sprinkled with electoral stardust. Johnson's acolyte Jacob Rees-Mogg has suggested barring the ex-premier from standing again as a Conservative would cause "civil war" in the party.

But a mooted broader mutiny after

Johnson's resignation on Friday fizzled, and there is no advantage for Sunak in trying to make peace with a man he can never trust. If Johnson attempts to run again as a Tory, Sunak should block him. The former premier had his chance and squandered it. A second act would not be in the interests of his party — or the country.

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# **Opinion** Politics

# Sturgeon's great success is becoming her great failure



Stephen Bush



icola Sturgeon's great political success was in making the abnormal seem normal. She made support for Scottish independence — a political project that takes the costs of Brexit and ramps them up — a natural home for grieving Remainer Scots and, not, say, the equivalent of responding to the loss of a hand by chopping off both legs and an arm.

The most effective politicians always manage to create a reality distortion field around them, and Sturgeon was no different. The halo even managed to outlive her time in office: her sudden resignation as first minister was depicted by many commentators as a refreshing change, rather than, as was obvious even then, the act of a politician whose project was run-

# Running the SNP as a narrow clique has proved the only way of making it an effective electoral force

ning out of road and whose party was increasingly ungovernable.

During the subsequent contest, Kate Forbes, her finance minister, was depicted as a rational choice. Forbes's pitch, to remind you, was that the money she had signed off as finance minister had been misspent, that the government's public policy record was dire, that its social policies were sinful, but that these were prices worth paying for the great prize of tearing Scotland out of the legal, political and social union it has been a part of for three centuries. In addition, Forbes's social attitudes placed her far from median opinion and her pool of support in the parliamentary party shrank to more of a damp patch. Only a media class still bamboozled by Sturgeon's charisma could have seen that candidacy as sensible, or a party membership that came perilously close to electing her as anything but reckless.

Sturgeon's distortion field also means that the Scottish National party — still! — manages to avoid awkward questions about whether the UK crisis that Liz Truss's disastrous budget precipitated might also suggest real constraints on the short-term ability of an independent Scotland to do even a quarter of the things it has promised to do.

The field applied not only to her own political project but the personal details of her leadership, as well.

Although political parties generally come off badly when compared to all but the most eccentric of businesses, even by such standards, the SNP's internal arrangements were unusual.

Her husband, Peter Murrell, the party's CEO since 1999, remained in charge throughout her leadership. Across the western world, more and more high-powered people have spouses who are high-powered in their own right but vanishingly few of them would be able to persuade a board of directors or their shareholders to accept such a close level of proximity outside a family firm, and rightly so.

Yet this close relationship was treated by the party as just another well-connected couple. This remained the case even when the organisation's treasurer resigned stating he had not "received the support or financial information" to do the role and was replaced by his predecessor. None of this is normal and all of it is so far from best practice that it would take a rocket ship to reach it. It is a measure of Sturgeon's political abilities that it took an arrest and a police tent in a garden for the situation to be widely questioned.

But this abnormal arrangement existed for a reason. Sturgeon was merely the inheritor of a party that had long been run as a narrow clique. Alex Salmond, her mentor turned rival and the de facto founder of the modern SNP, likewise ran the party out of a small circle (of which Sturgeon and Murrell were both members).

One reason is that running the SNP as a narrow clique has, historically, proved the only way of making it an effective electoral force, and no wonder. The SNP is a party committed to a very painful breach in Scotland's workings with a long timeframe, an uncertain pay-off, and a series of significant disagreements about what to do afterwards. It contains larger ideological and strategic divisions — over everything from defence to social policy to economics — than any of the UK's other major parties.

Concentrating power in this way helped to facilitate Sturgeon's great success. It allowed her to position the SNP as a normal, centre-left party, and Scottish independence as an escape from Westminster's chaos and cuts, as opposed to a vote to turbocharge both. But it also means that as questions swirl around the party, it is hard for her or her successors to escape the suspicion that they were at worst actively complicit or at best stunningly incurious about the party's inner workings. It means, too, that the internal divisions that Salmond and Sturgeon so successfully hid from public view may well become a prominent and scarring feature of Scottish politics for some time.

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# Letters

# Polar competition is inevitable, conflict is not

The exclusion of Russia from the Arctic Council's deliberations ("China and Russia tensions create Arctic chill", Report, June 9) may have triggered reactions that are unduly alarmist. State actors and corporate interests should rest assured — co-operative and risk management processes are alive and well in a region that is unique, but not singularly vulnerable to governance gaps.

The enormous economic potential of

the region, from increasingly ice-free shipping, to rare earths, to energy, are not subject to a "scramble for Africa" free-for-all contest of exploitation, but rather a norm- and rules-based set of processes for prudent development.

In many ways, the Arctic and its resources are akin to a "new space race": both the polar regions and space are "cold, dark, and dangerous" in character, and both spheres have already developed (and are continuing to develop) rules for both governmental and private scientific and economic activity. Both regions have (so far) resisted "weaponisation", if not "militarisation".

With prudent strategies and care, the Arctic can remain a peaceful stage for development and co-operation. Competition at the north pole is inevitable — but conflict is not.

Colin Alberts

Director, PolarConsult, Arlington, VA, US

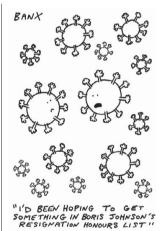
# Reform to use of umbrella companies is long overdue

Umbrella companies are a uniquely British problem; the consequence of piecemeal changes to tax laws over many years instead of the holistic overhaul of the system advocated by Matthew Taylor in his "Good Work: The Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices" report in 2017.

It is thus reassuring that the latest consultation (Report, June 7) is a joined-up effort between Treasury, HM Revenue & Customs and the Department for Business and Trade. This is an opportunity to finally set the flexible labour market on a clearer footing, providing a framework for both tax compliance and the fair treatment of contingent workers.

The challenge will be in creating clear definitions, while allowing for pragmatic innovations that benefit both workers and businesses.

In the US and other nations, for example, the "agent of record" and "employer of record" models see professional payroll and employment providers work in partnership with the labour supply chain to deliver both compliance and an improved service to the worker.



In the UK too, businesses are increasingly turning to the flexible workforce for agility. This long overdue regulation needs to balance financial protection for both workers and hirers, while continuing to enable this growing sector to flourish and evolve.

Matthew Fryer Managing Director, Brookson Group Warrington, Cheshire, UK

# I'm for digital tax returns, but not quarterly reporting

Regarding the National Audit Office report on making tax digital ("Watchdog hits at HMRC over making case for digital tax", Report, June 12), as a retired accountant I can see the case for more electronic reporting of information. But I have never seen the reason for the quarterly reporting of information for income tax purposes, given that income tax is essentially an annual tax.

HM Revenue & Customs should be making more effort to allow taxpayers to report information directly to it without the need for third-party software. Living largely in Ireland and as a member of partnerships in both countries, I can file tax returns electronically in Ireland whether resident or not without the need for third-party software. In the UK I have to file paper returns unless I pay for the software. One wonders whether HMRC has been captured by the accountancy profession or the software suppliers. Or is it downright incompetence on the part of HMRC?

PE Shirley

Carrickmacross, County Monaghan

## Investing in wellness apps carries responsibilities too I was delighted to see your Lex column

Email: letters.editor@ft.com

I was delighted to see your Lex column (June 5) propose that not only should the designers of generative artificial intelligence chatbots and other "wellness" apps avoid spurious health claims and provide evidence of their effectiveness in advance of deployment, but that investors also have "a corresponding duty of care".

The seeming lack of even basic due diligence of the negative social impacts of AI in general, and generative AI in particular, by venture capitalists, institutional investors and individual shareholders is at the core of the problems we face with AI and yet remains bizarrely unscrutinised.

Or am I being too generous in judging these investors merely incompetent when their behaviour is much more heinous? Perhaps they have done their due diligence, seen the potential for harms to individuals and society, but decided that the money to be made is just too tempting, so they will fund them anyway and just dump the stock when the problems become visible and the share prices fall? Either way, it is high time investors' responsibility for the negative impacts of their investments was subject to greater scrutiny by regulators, policymakers and society. I am delighted to see the FT taking a lead on this.

Hilary Sutcliffe Director, SocietyInside, London SE21, UK

# Can being president count as 'community service'!

Although as a Canadian lawyer there are things about American law I do not know, I wonder, if Trump is convicted and sentenced to community service, would serving as president count (FT View, June 12)?

Bruce Couchman Ottawa, ON, Canada

# OUTLOOK

SOUTH ASIA

India's new map ruffles regional feathers



by John Reed

ndia's new triangular parliament building — set alongside the old circular, colonnaded structure of British colonial rule — symbolises its efforts to build a country free from the trappings of past foreign domination.

But its inauguration has not been straightforward. Prime minister Narendra Modi carried a gold sceptre as he presided over the opening last month in the company of Hindu holy men. This gave fuel to his opponents, who repeated longstanding claims that he was fraving India's secular constitutional democracy and argued that president Droupadi Murmu, the head of state, should have been allowed to open the building. Opposition parties boycotted the ceremony and the Indian National Congress's Rahul Gandhi, Modi's chief nemesis, dismissed it as a "coronation".

Even after that controversy died down, a three-dimensional map on a mural inside the new building has caused a fresh stir. The mural features a backlit outline of the subcontinent without any of its present-day borders, stretching west to Pakistan and Afghanistan and east as far as Myanmar. The names are archaic and some of the cities labelled are in other countries, including Purushpur, the Sanskrit name for Peshawar, Pakistan.

Officials and opposition politicians in Pakistan, Nepal, and most recently Bangladesh have voiced concerns. India's foreign ministry insists the mural depicts the spread of the third

century BC empire ruled by Ashoka the Great, "and the idea of responsible and people-oriented governance [he] adopted and propagated". But some members of Modi's Bharatiya Janata party had claimed the map represented "Akhand Bharat" ("undivided India"), a maximalist conception of a greater India floated by some Hindu nationalists that incorporates swaths of neighbouring countries.

of neighbouring countries.
Pralhad Joshi, a government
minister, asserted "The resolve is clear
— Akhand Bharat" in a tweet with the
hashtag #MyParliamentMyPride on
the day of the opening, Manoj Kotak, a
BJP MP representing Mumbai, also
tweeted about "Akhand Bharat in new
parliament", adding: "It represents
our powerful & self-reliant India".
Pakistan's foreign ministry declared it
was "appalled" by the statements
made by some BJP politicians, and
said it was "a manifestation of a
revisionist and expansionist mindset
that seeks to subjugate the identity
and culture of not only India's
neighbouring countries but also its
own religious minorities".

Some of the outrage — not least from India's arch-enemy Pakistan — may reflect broader tensions, or have been manufactured for domestic political purposes. And India is not the only country where maps have caused problems with the neighbours. Hungarian leader Viktor Orbán last year riled Romania and Ukraine when he was seen wearing a football scarf featuring the outlines of a "Greater Hungary" in the country's pre-1920

borders. Chinese maps featuring the Nine Dash Line, its unrecognised claim on most of the South China Sea, routinely cause fury in neighbouring countries such as Vietnam.

However, India's map is literally embedded in stone in a building Modi called a "temple of democracy", in a country that styles itself as a regional leader. "As the largest nation and economy, India ought to reach out in a positive way to its neighbours," says Aakar Patel, an author and government critic. "The map is going in the opposite direction than we should be going."

None of the map's critics is claiming that India has active annexation plans. Some point out too that an imaginary "Greater India" incorporating Pakistan and Bangladesh would be home to a huge non-Hindu population, running at cross purposes with the BJP's project to create a Hindu rashtra (nation).

What's telling is the speed with which objections have started to ebb away in a region where India is the biggest economy and a growing foreign investor. Governing officials in Nepal and Bangladesh — which have good relations with the Modi administration—initially protested but are now happy to accept the explanation that the map was a historical one. Indians will have the chance to judge for themselves when the building opens to the public next month.

john.reed@ft.com Additional reporting by Jyotsna Singh

# Opinion

# Why 'harvested by hand' labels bother me



n my local supermarket, there are a whole range of items such as sugar snap peas from China and butternut squash from Guatemala whose labels boast in huge letters that they e "harvested by hand". Every time I walk down that aisle, the labels get under my skin.

I've been trying to work out why they bother me. I'm all for acknowledging the role of human labour, especially in the production processes for goods or services that people might assume have been fully automated by now. There are plenty of instances where the crucial role played by humans is hidden or overlooked, such as the low-paid workers who train artificial intelligence systems or moderate content on social media. And as AI begins to be used in places such as Hollywood and newsrooms, it's going to be more important than ever for customers to be given clear information about the respective roles in production played by humans and

But even at the best of times, harvesting fruit and vegetables by hand is physically tough and repetitive work. Gone are the days when students might do it casually for a summer, setting their own pace and enjoying the sun. When the UK appealed for Britons to work on farms in the pandemic year of 2020 to help bring in the harvest, few managed to stick it out. One supplier placed 450 people on farms, of whom only 4 per cent were still on assignment by the end of the season.

What's wrong with turning the work over to machines? One could argue that automation is exactly what the sector needs, especially in countries like the UK which domestic labour shortages have left reliant on imports or seasonal migrant workers brought in on temporary visas who can be vulnerable to exploitation by recruitment agents in their home countries

Last year, for example, the number of

Nepalese workers arriving in Britain through the government's seasonal worker visa scheme more than quadrupled to 2.472, but this year farmers stopped recruiting workers from there after warnings they were being charged excessive recruitment fees by agents in Nepal. "Given the circumstances we're in now, we desperately need more automation in horticultural production - it's

If you're making a point about using human labour, shouldn't you provide detail on pay and conditions?

got to be better than importing labour from halfway across the world with all of the issues that entails," says Martin Buttle, who leads on "better work" at CCLA Investment Management.

It could be a long wait, though. A recent government-initiated review into automation in UK horticulture found that a number of barriers dissuaded farmers from investing in technology, including tight margins and a lack of certainty about their future income. Some of the most labour-saving developments might also need government help to emerge from the "valley of death", the report said - the phase between academia and commercialisation when innovations can founder for lack of funding. The report predicted that "autonomous selective harvesting" won't be commercially available until at least 2030 if left to market forces.

The other thing that bothers me about those "harvested by hand" labels is that they don't give the customer enough information. If you are going to make a point about the use of human labour, shouldn't you also provide some detail of the pay and conditions under which those people worked?

I emailed the Co-op, the supermarket in question, some photos of Spanish courgettes, Guatemalan butternut squash and Chinese sugar snap peas labelled "harvested by hand" to ask for information about their respective suppliers. The Co-op didn't give me any supplier details, but it sent a statement which says: "Harvested by Hand is printed on a small number of fresh products to inform customers that the product has not been damaged when harvested. Looking after the people in our supply chain who harvest these vegetables is always a priority and we have a leading, active role in industry groups, established to strengthen due diligence and help protect worker safety, welfare and working conditions.

Co-op is also a member of the Ethical Trading Initiative, which told me the supermarket was "active" in initiatives to improve working conditions in supply chains and "compares well with others in terms of transparency".

That said, if the use of human labour

is to become a marketing plus point in an age of increased automation. I think there should be some new ground rules. No boasting about the work of human hands unless you give the customer some more information about them. If you make the hands visible, but the rest of the person stays invisible, it somehow feels more dehumanising than not men-

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# its future

Fergus Drake

ince the start of the spring thaw, Ukraine's backers have waited with bated breath for the much-heralded counteroffensive. But while Ukraine needs a decisive victory in battle, the war for its future also hinges on its ability to overhaul governance and stamp out corruption. Yes, progress has been made, but it must be kept up. Ukraine's coming reconstruction provides an opportunity to totally overhaul the pubc sector and transform the country for the better.

Ukraine's war

on corruption

is vital for

This month's Ukraine Recovery Conference provides an ideal opportunity to set Ukraine on a permanent path to transparency, probity and prosperity. As hosts, it is incumbent upon the UK to ensure the necessary reforms to Ukraine's public sector are built into the process. The UK can lead the charge by rallying donor governments, the development community and relevant private sector players to pursue three strategic actions.

First, donor governments must give credit where it is due. Ukraine's efforts to improve governance deserve endorsement. The transformation of the country's public health procurement system demonstrates how rooting out corruption can save money and lives.

By 2014, government auditors estimated that Ukraine was overpaying for medicines by 40 per cent. This money was in effect diverted from the taxpayer to a rent-seeking oligopoly. To break the cycle, Ukraine's health ministry engaged international partners including Unicef, the UN Development

# Allies need to communicate progress and reassure their publics that reconstruction funds will be well spent

Programme and Crown Agents (which I lead) – to help design and implement a new procurement system. The result has been a boon for Ukrainians and the state's finances. Reforming pharmaceuticals procurement alone has saved the state \$62mn over five years. These reforms have also given more Ukraini ans access to medicines they were previously not able to acquire — adding years to lives.

Second, governments need to recognise Ukraine's progress with more than just a pat on the back. One of the principal threats to both the war efforts and future reconstruction is apathy taking hold in western electorates, whose backing ultimately underwrites the funding Ukraine needs to defend itself and eventually rebuild. This means allied governments have work to do on the home front: communicating the progress Ukraine has made in combat-ing corruption and reassuring their publics that reconstruction funds will be

well spent.
Thankfully, the data since 2014 backs this up. In the long-running World Bank good governance indicators, Ukraine's overnment effectivenes climbed from the 20th percentile in 2011 to the 37th percentile in 2021. According to the Chandler good government index, Ukraine ranks higher in 2023 than in 2021 — showing remarkable progress despite fighting for survival. In short, there is plenty of credible data for allied governments to publicise Ukraine's hard-won improvement.

Finally, financial support for reconstruction must be paired with training, capability building and sharing the technical knowhow to keep Ukraine's reforms on track. At the URC, the focus is on private sector engagement and "unity, diversity and delivery". But we must also continue working through government, and with the scrutiny provided by a robust civil society, to help Ukraine build ever-improving governance structures.

If the UK — acting in concert with our allies – can bring about support and recognition for Ukraine's continuing reforms, then the upcoming conference could spark a cycle of greater transparency and public sector effectiveness. This would provide Ukraine with the weapons needed to win its war on corruption, deliver a successful reconstruction and further draw this brave nation into our community of free and demo-

The writer is CEO of Crown Agents, a non-profit development organisation

# Trump, Johnson and a trial for the rule of law



oth Britain and America flatter themselves that their political systems are admired all over the world. The UK is the home to the "mother of parliaments". The US is the "leader of the free world". The two countries see themselves as mature democracies: models that other nations can emulate.

But the last few years have shaken that Anglo-American complacency. Britain has suffered the agonies of Brexit and got through four prime ministers in as many years. The US saw Congress stormed on January 6 2021 in what was essentially an attempted coup by an

outgoing president.
The troubles of democracy have deep roots in both countries. But they are also closely associated with two individuals — Donald Trump and Boris Johnson.

Trump and Johnson have championed a similar style of politics. Both have built up cults of personality, convincing their most devoted followers that they are men of destiny. Both are nostalgic nationalists, who have promised to restore their country's greatness Both claim to be representatives of the people against a self-interested elite.

Because they regard themselves as

unique, indispensable figures, Johnson and Trump have felt free to break the laws and conventions that normally bind political leaders. When challenged or held to account, both have claimed to be the victims of a deep-state conspir-

This is a style of politics that is well known all over the world. The charismatic strongman leader - paranoid, power-hungry, unaccountable and surrounded by sycophants – is a sadly familiar figure. Just look at the ranting speeches of Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who claims to see conspiracies against him everywhere.

For Erdoğan, the law is a weapon to be used against his political opponents rather than something that he himself must obey. The same is true for Vladimir Putin in Russia. In Turkey and Russia alike, the president's political opponents frequently end up in prison, while the leaders themselves are never held to account, despite the accusations of corruption and abuse of power that swirl around them.

It is these questions of the rule of law and accountability that are central to the latest episodes of the Trump and Johnson soap operas.

The former US president has just been indicted for mishandling classified ocuments. The former UK prime minister has just resigned from the House of Commons after a committee accused him of lying to parliament about breaking the law during the Covid-19

The reactions of Trump and Johnson



to their current travails are strikingly similar. They have followed the same paranoid and self-interested narrative, claiming that they are the victims of a political conspiracy and that the system is rigged against them and their

Such assertions strike at the heart of the US and British images of themselves as mature democracies in which the rule of law is not a charade but a reality. The bleak suggestion is that governance in Washington and London is little different from Moscow or Ankara.

Both Trump and Johnson are fabulists for whom the truth is simply what is politically or personally convenient at the time. That style of politics is becoming more common and threatening. We live in a social media age in which "alter-

Any functioning democracy must be based on the idea that there is such a thing as truth

native facts" (in the words of a former Trump aide) can always be concocted, if the real facts prove inconvenient.

Any functioning, law-governed democracy must be based on the idea that there is such a thing as truth and that it can be established in a court or by a parliamentary committee. Crucially, that is very different from saying that Trump or Johnson must be found guilty. They have every right to protest their innocence. If either could prove it before a court of law or a parliamentary committee, that would be just as much a sign of democracy in action as a guilty

The courts, political parties and the voters all have a role to play in making sure that the rule of law and democracy function properly. Here, the outlook looks more promising in the UK than in

The parliamentary committee that found against Johnson contains a majority of members of his own party. By contrast, very few Republicans in Congress have turned against Trump, whatever their private misgivings. The judge who will rule on the latest Trump indictment in Florida was appointed by the former president. She, too, must be seen to behave impartially.

If the courts do their job in an obviously fair and professional manner, it is more likely that their verdicts will command the respect of voters. A majority of voters, like the courts, also have to be able to resist conspiracy theories and "alternative" facts. That seems far from a sure thing in the US, where Trump remains the favourite for the Republican nomination and is neck and neck with President Joe Biden in the polls for

The cases of Trump and Johnson will matter far beyond the shores of the US and the UK. If they are properly handled, it will send a vital message to peo-ple battling autocracies all over the world. America and Britain need to show that it really is possible to have a system in which political leaders are held to account — and where the rule of law is a reality not a myth.

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# Lessons from past crises could help stave off a commercial property crash

# Linda Yueh

he enduring lesson from centuries of boom and bust is that there will always be another financial crisis. Given the current slowburn US banking turmoil and commercial real estate wobbles, this is a good time to learn from history to prevent a bust becoming a financial meltdown.

The worst financial crashes are often banking crises. Worryingly, in the first few months of the year, the US had three bank failures that ranked among the largest in American history: Silicon Valley Bank, Signature Bank and First Republic Bank. The biggest bank failure was Washington Mutual in 2008, during the global financial crisis. In third place is Continental Illinois, then the seventh largest bank in the US, which failed in 1984, during the savings and loan disaster of that decade.

The S&L crisis was triggered by a real estate crash that toppled the already troubled savings and loans association. But with rising interest rates and greater competition. S&Ls ventured outside mortgages and into commercial real estate, to disastrous effect. The crisis rumbled on through the late 1980s until nearly a third of all S&Ls failed, at least one in every US state, and became the worst financial crash since 1929. The S&L crisis was also the most costly banking disaster until the US subprime crisis

Now commercial real estate is looming as a risk for banks once again. Rising interest rates have increased the cost of borrowing for property investors. Should those borrowers struggle with their debts, bank balance sheets could be affected. So some US banks are selling their property loans, even at a discount, in anticipation of defaults and falling asset values.

Past lessons could prevent a great crash leading to a recession and eco-nomic misery. All crashes share the same three phases: euphoria, a test of policymakers' credibility when prices start to correct and an aftermath that depends on the first two.

The first phase of any boom and bust cycle is marked by euphoria - the exuberant belief that asset prices will only rise. The problem is when this confidence is funded by debt: when prices inevitably fall, the debt repayment crisis can drag down the economy. Some

# Credible policies, deployed rapidly, are crucial to avoiding wider financial disaster

banks are currently concerned about the value of office real estate on their loan books. This is due to the rise of working from home post-pandemic, as well as a general increase in the cost of borrowing that can hit leveraged property developers.

Falling property values need not trigger a financial crisis in themselves – real estate decline and recovery cycles are not abnormal. If the bust drags down the banks, however, then it can be disastrous. Thus, a number of banks are willing to sell their commercial property books at a small loss.

They are wary of a potential property fire sale and its knock-on effects. This can hit the value of assets that banks hold as collateral against loans. That can spur lenders to ask for the loans to be repaid Borrowers often need to sell assets fast to repay their loans, sometimes regardless of the price. This in turn drives further price falls, and firms begin to fail as they can't borrow or postpone debt payments. So prices fall further, triggering more firm failures. Banks are also incurring losses and could fail too.

As we know from Silicon Valley Bank, midsized US banks are not as well capitalised as larger ones. The S&L crisis is thus a timely reminder that if enough mid-tier banks are affected, this could trigger a systemic crisis.

Lessons from the second phase of financial crashes — credible policies, deployed rapidly — are crucial. After just days in office, US president

Franklin D Roosevelt in 1933 gave a radio broadcast. Backed up by legislation that guaranteed bank deposits, his actions ended a month-long bank run and turned the corner on the

Depression. Unfortunately this was not the case in the Japanese real estate crash of the early 1990s. Unlike governments in Scandinavia and elsewhere, which were also experiencing property crises, Tokyo's slowness in addressing the issue contributed to its subsequent lost decades of growth. Instead of taking prompt action, Japan's leaders took years to resolve the banking crisis and suffered a damaging third phase  $-\ \mathrm{an}$ aftermath of slow deleveraging and economic stagnation.

The commercial real estate sector may deflate rather than be the next bust. But it is still worth looking to the past to know how to prevent future disaster. Only by acting decisively can crisis

The writer is the author of 'The Great Crashes: Lessons from Global Meltdowns and How to Prevent Them'



Twitter: @FTLex

## **Glencore/Teck:** a cry for Elk

The planet is safe in my hands — I am a Switzerland-based commodities trader. This would appear to be the message of Glencore boss Gary Nagle, His plan to expand the polluting coal division he has promised to divest merely adds to cognitive dissonance.

The Swiss mining and trading giant Glencore has for months been trying to nudge Canada's Teck Resources into agreeing to a takeover. Yesterday, it proposed an alternative: a cash acquisition of Elk Valley, Teck's coking coal unit. This would expand Glencore's coal ebitda by about half. It would be the second purchase of coal assets by the group in two years.

This news cannot sit well with all shareholders. Witness investor restlessness with Nagle over Glencore's climate-change goals. This year about 30 per cent of votes at the annual meeting were against this, 6 percentage points more than in 2022. That is a substantial negative minority report.

That may explain why Nagle is vowing to spin off all Glencore's coal assets within two years — earlier than expected. Coal still generates about half of Glencore's ebitda. Adding Teck's coal raises that dominance. The group's paraphrase of St Augustine is: "Make me good, Lord, but not until 2025."

Investors will enjoy the temporary surge in cash flow. But coal remains a drag on the valuation of diversified miners. Shareholders said no to Teck's independent restructuring plan because the black stuff would have funded copper and zinc divisions.

Glencore Coal's demerger would leave the core metals unit valued at about 6-7 times ebitda, says UBS, well above the estimated four times for the whole group. In February, Nippon Steel agreed to buy a tenth of Teck's coal unit, valuing it at \$8.2bn, Glencore had put the same value on it, while Teck's own fairness opinion valued EVR at up to \$9bn, about three times expected 2024 ebitda.

Teck's hard-nosed chair emeritus, Norman Keevil, can no doubt patiently await suitors. Mining investor Pierre Lassonde is among potential rival bidders. Keevil gave Glencore the brush off when it attempted to put public pressure on him earlier this year.

The alternative bid for Elk alone may

founder in the same way. What it does indicate is increasing desperation within Glencore to do a deal.

Investors and campaigners may now expect the group to ditch coal in two years, whatever the outcome at Teck.

## **Odey AM:** after the fall

Hedge funds do not have much of a competitive moat. They depend on the reputation of star fund managers, who can often leave at will. Odey Asset Management has its work cut out to survive the ousting of disgraced founder Crispin Odey

Fellow partners ejected Odey after allegations of repeated sexual misconduct were reported in the Financial Times. His voting rights in the firm ceased. His initial capital investment will be returned to him.

It is easy to see why former colleagues wanted a clean break. The fallout from the FT's reports has been rapid and severe. Some clients are pulling their investments, and Odey AM has considered gating some funds. Hedgies depend on prime brokers for loans and trading services, Odey AM's prime brokers are moving to cut ties with the firm.

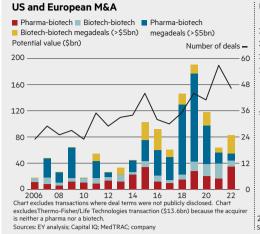
There might just be a business to salvage. Crispin Odey's punchy bets and volatile performance had already limited his role at Odey AM. Out of its \$4.4bn of AUM, he ran some \$1.2bn, more than half of it his own money. That leaves \$3.2bn of assets that might. conceivably, be retained in a rebooted business. The group's heir apparent, James Hanbury, has his own brand of funds at Brook Asset Management, and a good reputation in the market.

But much of Odev's alleged sexual misconduct was connected to Odey AM as a workplace. This means that some investors and banks may not wish to continue a relationship with the group, even though Odey has now gone. They may also fear that the scandal will distract fund managers. Odey himself, who owned 98 per cent of the partnership before the weekend, could conceivably seek financial redress.

Odey AM is a not a one-man band in the same way as Woodford Investment Management. This collapsed in 2019 after a series of bets by star stock picker Neil Woodford soured. But the

# Pharma: bitter medicine

Large drugmakers are habitual buyers of biotech businesses. More than half of the pharmaceuticals sector's mergers and acquisitions deals in 2022 were of this type. M&A is important for biotechs as many face financial challenges arising from a slump in shares in 2021 and the subsequent stalling of the IPO market.



US and European biotech flotations Capital raised in IPOs (\$bn) Number of deals -20 140 15 10 70 35 2007 09 11 13 15 17 19 21 22 Biotechs have underperformed Nasdaq Biotechnology inS&P 500 2018 21 22 20 ce: S&P Capital IQ

Medicines-price gouger Martin Shkreli was one of a kind.

But trustbusters have new reasons to feel cross with the pharma sector. The US Federal Trade Commission now frowns on its "rampant consolidation". One sign of a more interventionist approach is revived suspicion of vertical takeovers. These combine businesses throughout a single supply chain.

Illumina bought cancer-test group Grail for \$8bn in 2021, even though US and EU authorities complained that the US gene sequencer could deny crucial inputs to Grail's rivals.

Yesterday, Francis deSouza, Illumina's boss, quit after a proxy fight with activist Carl Icahn over Illumina's decision to proceed

Another sign of hardening attitudes was the FTC's attempt last month to block Amgen's \$28.3bn takeover of Horizon Therapeutics, despite the two businesses treating different diseases. Its - untested - argument is that Amgen could use rebates on its blockbusters to encourage insurers and pharmacy benefit managers to favour Horizon's drugs.

The FTC's intervention shocked the

industry, which relies on deals to replenish drug pipelines. Small firms originate two-thirds of new active substances. M&A activity, not R&D excellence, explains the persistence of top-ranking companies, according to Wharton professor Patricia Danzon.

Cash-rich pharma giants spent \$85bn on deals in the first five months of the

year. Looming patent expiries add urgency to the shopping spree. Yesterday's acquisition by Novartis of Seattle-based biotech firm Chinook Therapeutics for up to \$3.5bn is a case in point. Berenberg forecast zero sales growth from 2025, without new additions to the pipeline.

to focus on mid-to-large-size deals. That would come as a relief to small cash-strapped biotechs, particularly after stock prices plummeted in late 2021 and IPO markets largely closed.

make it harder for pharma giants to smooth their earnings and pay large dividends. The antitrust challenge may force big pharma groups to rethink "pure play" business models.

wake of this year's banking turmoil. Nasdaq wants to cash in on higher Many analysts expect trustbusters 1 per cent in the most recent quarter.
A solutions business, which provides

services and within which Adenza will sit, is far bigger, accounting for about But any barriers to M&A would 70 per cent of group revenues. Nasdaq is paying a lot to get into compliance. Its cash and stock offer values Adenza at 20 times trailing

revenue, or 31 times expected 2023 ebitda before cost savings. Nasdaq itself trades on a multiple of just 4.5 times, lagging behind some rival exchanges. Nasdaq is paying for Adenza with \$5.75bn in cash and 85.6mn in new shares to Thoma Bravo, giving the

Nasdaq/Adenza:

Perhaps there are some businesses that

even a fancy takeover cannot save from

boringness. Compliance, for example. Shares in Nasdaq fell 13 per cent in

morning trading in New York after the

The implementation of Dodd-Frank in 2010 has doubled the number of

regulations applied to US banks, says a

Institute for Public Policy. Keeping up

consuming. Spending on compliance

Regulatory burdens will grow in the

exchange operator, but it has steadily

reduced its dependence on revenues

from trading services. These rose just

back-office and trade-surveillance

by the financial services sector has risen more than \$50bn since 2009.

tech-focused exchange operator

announced its \$10.5bn purchase of

compliance-software firm Adenza.

study by Rice University's Baker

with red tape is costly and time-

demand. It is best known as an

rule tool

private equity group a near 15 per cent stake. The \$5.9bn of debt Nasdaq will take on will increase its leverage ratio to 4.7 times. Nasdag does not expect the deal to be earnings accretive until two years after the close. Some \$80mn in cost cuts, taxed and capitalised, would be worth only \$465mn.

The takeover might be partly justified by Adenza's fast growth and high margins. But there is too much competition in this sector. Dull and crowded sounds like a party that no one should pay top dollar to attend.



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more toxic nature of the Crispin Odey scandal means the business he set up will struggle to avoid the same fate.

## Venture capital: dry powder slalom

US venture capitalists hope a rising tide will save them from admitting some investments are stuck in the mud.

The valuations of public tech stocks are jumping amid excitement about generative artificial intelligence. But private markets are yet to recover. Start-ups are eking out cash to avoid down rounds. That leaves billions of dollars of potential investment sitting

The past decade has been prosperous

for VCs. Low rates drove more money into risky, early-stage investments. Last year set a new record for VC funds. They raised close to \$163bn, according to PitchBook data. Tiger Global, for example, closed a \$12.7bn fund. Global venture firms had nearly \$586bn of unallocated capital, so-called "dry powder", by October last year.

The tech downturn and collapse of Silicon Valley Bank have made it harder for fund managers to invest or secure capital. Distributions to external investors, known as "limited partners", are down. Exits are scarcer.

PitchBook data shows US VC firms raised less than \$12bn across 99 funds in the first quarter of this year. That is down nearly three-quarters on the previous year. In the aftermath of the dotcom bust, a handful of VC firms

took the unusual step of reducing fund sizes. Groups such as Accel Partners released investors from some capital commitments. Limited partners should not expect a

repeat performance. Management fees give VC funds too big an incentive to put money to work. One option is to redirect funds away from out-of-favour crypto start-ups towards the AI boom.

Paradigm has expanded its fund's focus. Peter Thiel's Founders Fund is reported to have cut its flagship fund's size; it plans to roll money pledged into a future fund, not release its claim.

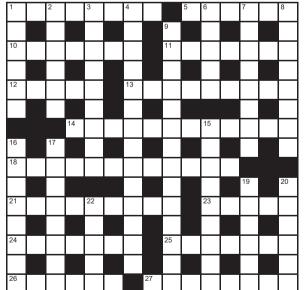
The pain of crypto start-ups may eventually become a gain for AI specialists. It does not quite amount to a bait and switch by VCs.

"Bait, wait and reorientate" might be a fairer description.

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# **CROSSWORD**

No 17,441 Set by GOZO



# **JOTTER PAD**

Solution 17.440



You can now solve our crosswords in the new FT crossword app at

# ACROSS

- Bird takes tiny step back (8) 5 Initially Tony Blair distorted such
- family links (6)
- **10** Near the looo! (5,2) 11 It's not so easy housing old compulsive collector (7)
- 12 River in pass (5)
- 13 Crazy fellow having explosive
- projectiles and cases (9) 14 Could Inca material be excavated here? (5,7)
- 18 Film stars changing some in detail
- 21 Incomplete check involves key singer
- 23 I complain about girl (5)
- 24 Like laciest pants? (7)
- 25 Confirm by signing eleven Latin characters (7)
- Ford car range (6)
- 27 Introduces you and me to the girl's vice (6,2)

# DOWN

- 1 Evil, like a candle? (6)
- 2 Girl I'm awfully gone on (6) 3 Closely watches carriages — with this
- result? (3.6) 4 Book a week in it - local resort
- (1,4,4,5)
- 6 Arrive in Eritrea, cheerfully (5) 7 Shrub from husband leaving spiritual leader holding garland (8)
- 8 Twenty-four hours at the MCC HQ on the Sabbath (5,3)
- 9 Antelopes and hinds mingled with small horses (8.6)
- 15 For instance, worker in business producing plant (9)
- 16 Parents punishing their children with kisses! (8) 17 Bygone era of individual in phase of
- development (5,3) 19 Talking points where film buffs go (6)
- 20 Oil spilt during wine fiddle (6)
- 22 It turns round and round and round! (5)



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