

Catch up: Hizbullah declares “battle of reckoning”; Marxist MP wins in Sri Lanka



Hizbullah’s deputy secretary-general, Naim Qassem, declared an “open-ended battle of reckoning” against Israel during a funeral for a Hizbullah commander killed by [Israeli air strikes](#) on Friday. The militant group fired more than one hundred missiles deep into northern **Israel**, with some landing near the city of Haifa. Tensions between Hizbullah and Israel have been escalating since the electronic devices of thousands of members of the militia blew up simultaneously on September 17th.

Anura Kumara Dissanayake, a Marxist MP, won [Sri Lanka’s](#) presidential election after a second round of counting. He defeated Sajith Premadasa, the opposition leader, and Ranil Wickremesinghe, the incumbent. It was the first election to be held in the country since 2022, when mass protests pushed Gotabaya Rajapaksa out of office.

Exit polls from state elections in Brandenburg, in eastern **Germany**, put the centre-left Social Democrats top, with the hard-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) close behind. Polls prior to the

vote had suggested the AFD might win, as they [did in Thuringia](#) earlier this month. Even had they won, there is little chance of them taking power, as no other party will work with them.

Israel raided the offices of **Al Jazeera**, a Qatar-based news outlet, in the West Bank, and ordered it to close down for an initial period of 45 days. In May Israel raided Al Jazeera's offices in Nazareth and East Jerusalem, saying that the organisation was a threat to national security. Walid al-Omari, Al Jazeera's West Bank bureau chief, accused Israel of trying to "erase the truth".

Michel Barnier, France's prime minister, unveiled his new **government**. Mr Barnier, who was appointed by Emmanuel Macron, the president, on September 5th, picked several of Mr Macron's allies for ministerial roles. Bruno Retailleau, a conservative senator, will serve as interior minister. [Mr Barnier](#) will be running a minority government, which is vulnerable to a motion of no-confidence that the opposition can table.

At least 31 people died and 20 were injured by a gas explosion in a coal mine in **Iran**, according to state media. The blast in the country's [South Khorasan Province](#) was reportedly caused by a methane gas leak. Masoud Pezeshkian, Iran's president, sent condolences to the victims' families.

The **International Chess Federation**, [the game's](#) governing body, voted to uphold a ban on the national teams of Russia and Belarus in competitions. The two countries were punished in 2022 following the invasion of Ukraine. Dmitry Peskov, a Kremlin spokesman, and Sergei Shoigu, until recently Russia's defence minister, are both on the board of trustees for Russia's national chess federation.

Figure of the day: 14, the number of laws passed in American states in the past year that aim to curb diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in academia. [Read the full story.](#)

Europe's recovery remains elusive



The [European economy's](#) prospects are not exactly bright. The European Central Bank recently downgraded its forecasts for growth, to 0.8% in 2024 and 1.3% in 2025. This suggests that a recovery—if any—will be slow. Monday's release of the widely watched purchasing managers' index for the euro zone will reveal how the economy has been doing in September, as well as business sentiment.

Although services will probably continue to grow, manufacturing will decline. In August new orders dropped for the third month in a row because of falling demand for industrial goods, from both Europe and the rest of world. The labour market is stagnating, partly because of a falling workforce in manufacturing and a diminishing backlog of orders in firms. In August sentiment dropped to the lowest level in 2024. Should the outlook darken, the ECB may have to reduce its forecast further—and cut interest rates again in October.

A new face for Japan's opposition



Much of the media spotlight in Japan is on the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's leadership race, which will decide the next prime minister after [Kishida Fumio](#) said in August he would stand down. But another big election is happening. On Monday the Constitutional Democratic Party, the main centre-left opposition, will elect a leader. The CDP has been unable to challenge the LDP's dominance since it last held power in 2012. It will try to rebuild momentum ahead of potential general elections later this year.

Four contenders will vie for the top position. They include the sprightly, 50-year-old incumbent [Izumi Kenta](#). But polls suggest that Noda Yoshihiko, a former prime minister, may make a comeback. Mr Noda is a veteran politician, which distinguishes him in a party seen by voters as naive and lacking experience. But he led the party in 2012, when the conservatives, led by Abe Shinzo, defeated the CDP in a landslide.

France finally gets a new government



After more than two months of caretaker rule, France finally has a new government. It will meet for its first cabinet meeting on Monday. Michel Barnier, the conservative prime minister and former Brexit negotiator, unveiled his new team on September 21st. It is a minority coalition between centrists loyal to President Emmanuel Macron and conservatives from the Republican party and its allies.

The new government marks a distinct shift to the right, even though the left came top (but failed to win a majority) at [parliamentary elections in July](#). Despite best efforts, Mr Barnier only recruited one figure from the left (Didier Migaud, at justice). Diplomacy and security remain in the hands of Macron loyalists. France's public finances are now controlled by an untested 33-year-old centrist finance minister, Antoine Armand. France needs urgently to finalise a budget to solve its stretched public finances. But the new government will be under close scrutiny from both the left and hard right in whose hands its survival now lies.

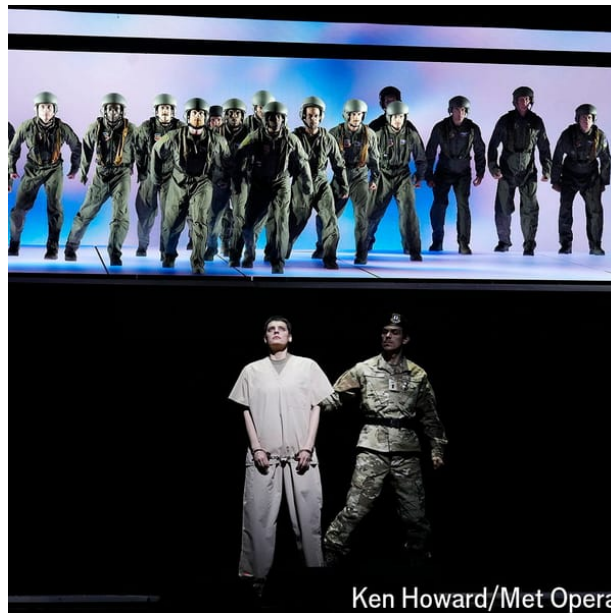
Trump and Harris battle for Pennsylvania



Donald Trump will host a rally in Indiana, [Pennsylvania](#) on Monday, about an hour's drive from Pittsburgh. He will probably hit the same message his ads there do, and paint Ms Harris as an out-of-touch leftist responsible for inflation and migrant crime. Ms Harris' radio spots and YouTube ads, meanwhile, strike a more uplifting tone. Some warn about Mr Trump's effect on the economy, reproductive rights and democracy.

Both campaigns see Pennsylvania as a fulcrum of the election. *The Economist's* prediction [model](#) suggests that the state is the tipping-point in 27% of the model's updated simulations, meaning it decides the election more often than any other. As a result, no state has drawn more money. Of the \$840m that the Harris campaign and allied organisations already have spent or committed to advertising, \$164m has gone to Pennsylvania. The Trump operation has directed \$136m of \$459m. But for all the dollars pouring in, polls suggest the state remains a virtual tie.

A drone drama in New York



Classical music may not always seem relevant or relatable, especially to the young. But the Metropolitan Opera, America's leading company, is trying to reach new audiences with a repertoire exploring contemporary themes. That appears to be working. Last season's attendances approached pre-pandemic levels.

The season opens on Monday with "Grounded", a new opera which is timely, but perhaps not quite relatable. The work by Jeanine Tesori, a Broadway composer, is based on a play by George Brant, another American, which was first performed in 2013. It follows a female fighter pilot who unexpectedly gets pregnant while on leave. She is demoted from flying an F-16 in Iraq to drone duty in Las Vegas. Massive LED screens illuminate the stage as she pilots a Reaper drone and sings of her woes. Previous showings have not been without controversy: the premiere last year in Washington, DC was sponsored by a defence contractor.

Daily Quiz



The Economist

We will serve you a new question each day this week. On Friday your challenge is to give us all five answers and, as important, tell us the connecting theme. Email your responses (and include mention of your home city and country) by 1700 BST on Friday to QuizEspresso@economist.com. We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Monday: Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst were members of which group, which fought for women's right to vote in Britain?

The number of laws passed in American states in the past year that aim to curb diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in academia. Read the full story.

Where all think alike, no one thinks very much.

Walter Lippmann