

## Catch up: Hizbullah names new leader; a deadly strike on Gaza



**Hizbullah** named **Naim Qassem**, a cleric and politician, as its new leader. Mr Qassem has been the Lebanon-based militant group's deputy chief since 1991. He will take over from [Hassan Nasrallah](#), who was killed by an Israeli air strike on September 27th. Mr Nasrallah's presumed successor, Hashem Safieddine, was also killed this month, throwing the militia into deeper disarray.

An **Israeli** strike on northern **Gaza** killed at least 90 people and wounded dozens more. Several countries condemned Israel's decision to ban UNWRA, the UN's aid [agency for Palestinians](#), from operating inside the country. America and Britain said they were "concerned" by the move; Spain cancelled a contract to buy ammunition from an Israeli firm.

**President Vladimir Putin** said that Russia's military began nuclear weapons drills. Andrei Belousov, the country's defence minister, said that the exercise was designed to model a "response to a nuclear strike by the enemy". Russia is trying to deter Western

support for [Ukraine](#). Mr Putin recently warned NATO allies against allowing Ukraine to use long-range missiles to strike Russia.

**Donald Trump** told *ABC* he did not know Tony Hinchcliffe, the comedian who called Puerto Rico an “island of garbage” at his [recent rally](#) in New York. The comments sparked controversy days before America’s presidential election. Mr Trump said the rally was a “love fest”. Later he will campaign in the Hispanic-majority city of Allentown in Pennsylvania, a [critical swing state](#).

Axel Rudakubana, a British teenager accused of murdering three girls in **Southport** [in July](#), will face two additional charges of producing ricin, a biological toxin, as well as possessing an “al-Qaeda training manual”, British police said. After the attack false claims that the suspect was an illegal immigrant provoked [riots](#) across Britain.

**Georgia’s** election commission said it will start a partial recount after opposition parties said the [parliamentary election](#) was rigged. On Monday tens of thousands of Georgians protested against the results. Salome Zourabichvili, Georgia’s president, had asked people to contest the “total rigging” of the vote.

A student discovered an ancient **Mexican** city by accident. Luke Auld-Thomas was looking at data collected from a Lidar survey, which uses laser pulses fired from drones and helicopters to map objects below, when he discovered the [Mayan site](#). Researchers reckon the city contained about 6,764 structures and was home to up to 50,000 people between 750 and 850AD.

**Figure of the day:** 3%, the proportion of people in Michigan, a swing state, who claim Middle Eastern or North African origins. [Read the full story](#).

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# America's pre-election economic bounce



An oft-cited quip about American elections is that “it’s the economy, stupid”. If that were so, Kamala Harris would be in a strong position. Figures due on Wednesday are expected to show that the economy grew at an annual pace of about 3.2% in the third quarter. That is above America’s long-term trend and **far better** than most analysts had thought likely at this point. A short while ago many were predicting a recession.

Even better, inflation has continued to recede. The Federal Reserve’s preferred gauge of inflation is forecast to have slowed to 2.1%, basically at its target, in data due on Thursday. Unfortunately for Ms Harris, however, economic news does not directly translate into political outcomes. Many Americans are still smarting from hefty price increases in 2022 and 2023. Moreover, political polarisation means that roughly half the country is primed to think the worst of her policies, whatever their actual impact.

# Labour's budget faces economic reality



Rachel Reeves, Britain's finance minister, will unveil her first budget on Wednesday. After winning the election in July on a manifesto proposing only minimal economic changes, the Labour Party has since been signalling the need for more dramatic measures to fill a “black hole” in the [public finances](#).

Ms Reeves will probably rewrite Britain's fiscal rules, relaxing the limits on borrowing for investment by around £50bn (\$65bn, or 1.8% of GDP). Before the election, the party pledged not to increase any of Britain's main taxes: national insurance, income tax or VAT. But now Ms Reeves is planning tens of billions of pounds in [tax rises](#); her biggest revenue-raiser will likely be an increase in employers' national insurance contributions. The government insists its pre-election promise only covered NICs directly paid by employees. Nonetheless, over time workers will be hit through lower pay. Expect lots of brouhaha from the Conservative opposition about stealth taxes and Labour's broken promises.

# Tight elections in Botswana



Botswana has long been a diamond in the rough. Unlike many African countries it has never had a coup or military rule; Wednesday's elections will be the 12th since independence in 1966. The southern African country has managed its natural resources relatively well: the world's largest diamond producer by value has re-invested the dividends in schools and other sensible things. Its GDP per person, adjusted for inflation, is the highest on the sub-Saharan mainland.

Yet many Botswanans feel that the country is in a slump—and that its [gem-dependent model](#) needs refreshing. Unemployment, the most important issue for voters, and inequality are almost as high as in South Africa. So although the Botswana Democratic Party, which has governed since independence, is the favourite to win the most seats, the party of President Mokgweetsi Masisi could still be in for a tight race.

Voters are souring on many incumbents across Africa, so Botswana may not be so exceptional, after all.



# Georgia in deadlock



On Wednesday the European Union will publish its annual update on negotiations with would-be members. Many eyes will be on Georgia; it is the first year that it features as a candidate country. But its westward aspirations were shaken by a [rancorous election](#) on Saturday, in which the Russia-friendly ruling party, Georgian Dream, claimed victory. The opposition disputes the result, alleging intimidation and vote-buying by the government. On Monday tens of thousands of people protested in Tbilisi, the capital, and on Tuesday the country's electoral commission announced it would undertake a partial recount.

The EU will thus choose its words carefully. It will stress that the ruling party's growing authoritarianism is incompatible with the country's ambitions to join the bloc. But it will also try to avoid snuffing out the hopes of the country's opposition, which is passionately pro-EU. After years spent longing to join the bloc, many Georgians would feel that to be an especially bitter result.

# Murder at the Ballet



Ballet is dense with death. Dancers have long acted out the moving demise of lovers Siegfried and Odette in Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake", and the mutual suicides of Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet". But murder is rare.

The American Ballet Theatre's new production of "Crime and Punishment", adapted from Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel by its choreographer, Helen Pickett, and set to a score by Isobel Waller-Bridge, is set in motion by a killing. The dance opens on Wednesday, and is the company's first full-length ballet choreographed, or scored, by a woman. It focuses on Raskolnikov, a desperately poor and morally confused student who kills a pawnbroker and his sister. The act is shown in flashback, via video, to keep the focus on Raskolnikov's inner turmoil, which eventually pushes him to confess his crimes. The costumes and sets are minimalist, and Raskolnikov is played by dancers of different genders, to emphasise the universality of his predicament.



## 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 GMT on Friday to [QuizEspresso@economist.com](mailto:QuizEspresso@economist.com). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

**Wednesday:** Which member of the Beatles was the youngest?

**Tuesday:** Steven Tallarico is the real name of which American rock singer, the lead vocalist of Aerosmith?

**3%**

*The proportion of people in Michigan, a swing state, who claim Middle Eastern or North African origins.*

*Read the full story.*

**At the worst, a house unkept cannot be so distressing as a life unlived.**

*Rose Macauley*