

## Catch up: Israel strikes Hizbullah headquarters; American inflation eases



The **Israel Defence Forces** said that it had launched an air strike on Hizbullah's "central headquarters" in Beirut, Lebanon's capital, killing at least two people. In an earlier speech before the United Nations General Assembly in New York **Binyamin Netanyahu**, Israel's prime minister, claimed that his country was "winning" against [Iran and its proxies](#) in the Middle East. He also vowed to [continue fighting](#) Hizbullah's "terror army" in Lebanon. Mr Netanyahu's office said that he would cut short his stay in the city to return to Israel on Friday evening. More than 700 people have been killed in Lebanon this week, according to the country's health ministry, after Israel launched a campaign of air strikes against Hizbullah. Iran's embassy in Lebanon said that the latest strike "changes the rules of the game" and that "its perpetrator will be punished".

The **Federal Reserve's** [preferred measure of annual inflation](#) fell by more than expected in August. The year-on-year increase in the personal consumption-expenditures price index was 2.2%, compared with 2.5% in July. The Fed, which recently [cut interest](#)

[rates](#) for the first time since 2020, sets a target of 2% for PCE inflation. America's central bank announces its next interest-rate decision on November 7th.

America's Justice Department indicted three **Iranian** nationals for allegedly hacking into **Donald Trump's** campaign. Prosecutors say they stole campaign documents and emails and leaked them to the press in order to undermine Mr Trump's presidential bid, "stoke discord and erode confidence" in America's elections. Iran has long been seeking retaliation for the Trump-ordered [assassination of Qassem Suleimani](#), an Iranian commander, in 2020.

**Mr Trump** met **Volodymyr Zelensky** in New York City. Although the Republican nominee said the pair shared "a common view" that the [war in Ukraine](#) must end, the meeting was overshadowed by criticism of Mr Zelensky by senior figures in Mr Trump's party. Some accused Ukraine's president of "election interference" after he visited a munitions factory in Pennsylvania alongside Democratic politicians.

At least 35 people were killed in America by **Hurricane Helene** as it swept through Florida, Georgia and North and South Carolina. The category 4 hurricane made landfall in Big Bend, Florida, as one of the strongest on record. On Friday more than 4m homes and businesses lost power across several states; millions of people were placed under [flood warnings](#).

Inflation in **France** and **Spain**, two of the euro zone's big economies, was lower than expected in September. Consumer prices in France rose by 1.2% year on year, compared with 1.8% in August. In Spain the annual inflation rate was 1.5%, down from 2.3% in August. The data may encourage the [European Central Bank](#) to continue lowering interest rates when it meets in October.

**Dame Maggie Smith** died aged 89. The prolific British actress had a seven-decade career in film and on stage, winning an Academy

Award for Best Actress in 1970 for [her performance](#) in “The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie”. She later played Minerva McGonagall in the film adaptations of the “Harry Potter” books and appeared in “Downton Abbey”, a TV series, as Violet, Dowager Countess of Grantham.

**Word of the week:** R-star, economists’ nickname for the “neutral real rate” of interest, which applies when the economy is growing at its exact potential. [Read the full story.](#)

# Venezuela's opposition rallies supporters



Two months have passed since Venezuela's presidential election, in which Nicolás Maduro claimed victory, despite clear evidence that he was routed. On Saturday Venezuelans around the world are being asked to mark the day. [The opposition](#), which has published receipts from voting machines confirming its victory, is calling on supporters to read out the results as an act of defiance.

Inside Venezuela, turnout at demonstrations will probably be modest. [Mr Maduro's regime](#) has arrested thousands since protests broke out following the vote. It is not clear if María Corina Machado, the opposition leader, who is in hiding, will risk an appearance. The actual president-elect, Edmundo González, fled the country this month for Spain. While authoritarian allies such as China and Russia have congratulated Mr Maduro, democracies, such as neighbours Brazil and Colombia, have said that they will not recognise his presidency without evidence of his supposed victory. The chances of seeing it before Mr Maduro's inauguration in January are slim.

# Remembering Hong Kong's civil society



In March 2021 Vincent Lam learned that he could be arrested. He had helped to run the Civil Human Rights Front, a group of NGOs that had organised Hong Kong's largest pro-democracy rallies and was being investigated by the police. He fled to Britain.

Denied suffrage by Britain and then China, Hong Kongers had long expressed dissent by marching. Unions and political parties held demonstrations for labour rights or social causes, as well as for democracy. Participation was legal. But [violent protests in 2019](#) against China's tightening grip exhausted the Chinese government's patience. In 2020 a national-security law [banned all dissent](#). Dozens of Mr Lam's peers are now [in prison](#).

This weekend Mr Lam is exhibiting protest memorabilia in west London at a show titled "Behind the Struggle: Hong Kong Civil Society". He hopes to remind exiled Hong Kongers, including [activists](#) like him who might never return home, of their proud tradition of resistance—and educate others.

## SNL turns 50



Not many television shows stay on the airwaves for 50 years; those that do tend to be game shows, news bulletins or soap operas. But “Saturday Night Live” is almost there. The [sketch-comedy](#) show kicks off its 50th season on (when else?) Saturday. The 969th episode will be hosted by Jean Smart, who recently collected the Emmy for Best Comedy Actress for her acerbic turn on “Hacks”. JellyRoll, a hip-hop star, will provide the musical performances.

Befitting the show’s status as a cultural institution, a film has been released this week to coincide with the milestone. “Saturday Night” dramatises the run-up to the first broadcast in October 1975. A crop of young performers portrays the cast and crew, including Gabriel LaBelle as Lorne Michaels, who produces the show to this day. Rumours abound that he will use the anniversary to announce he is handing over the baton. Finding the right steward for this mainstay of American entertainment will be a serious business.



# The world's greatest rugby team



New Zealand and [South Africa](#) are the dominant forces in men's rugby. Between them they have won the past five World Cups, with South Africa's Springboks taking their second consecutive title in 2023. Meanwhile the [All Blacks](#) have won the past three Rugby Championships, an annual tournament that includes South Africa, as well as Australia and Argentina.

The duopoly will probably continue when this year's championship comes to an end on Saturday. The Springboks will lift the trophy if they beat Argentina in Mbombela, in South Africa. Yet *Los Pumas* have proven themselves obstinate opponents. They won the reverse fixture last week, holding off South Africa by a single point. That gives the Argentines a slim chance of claiming the overall title should they beat the Springboks by a wide margin this time around. Such a victory could signal the rise of a new rugby superpower.

## Weekend profile: Hassan Nasrallah, Hizbullah's charismatic leader



In the beginning he was never alone. Living with eight siblings in East Beirut, it was hard to find silence. Yet he always searched for solace, travelling to neighbouring areas to find religious books to read. In them he found God and the teachings of Shia Islamists. And Israeli attacks on Lebanon were common. All this would shape Hassan Nasrallah, for more than 30 years the leader of [Hizbullah](#).

Born in 1960, Mr Nasrallah claims to have been an observant Muslim from the age of nine; he admired the teachings of Musa al-Sadr, the founder of Amal, a Shia political party. When civil war broke out in 1975, Mr Nasrallah joined Amal and at just 15 was given responsibility for organising members in his village. A year later he left for a seminary in Najaf, in Iraq, where he met Abbas Musawi, a cleric.

They returned to Lebanon in 1978. Mr Nasrallah helped run “awareness-raising” seminars and lectures for Amal. But when Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982—which left thousands dead—he



left the movement, which he felt was “no longer up to the task” of resisting Israel.

He joined the paramilitary group, co-founded by Musawi, that would become Hizbullah. In 1983 its bombs killed hundreds of American and French soldiers, and it soon became a coherent organisation determined to fight Israel and Western powers in Lebanon. After Musawi was killed by an Israeli strike in 1992, Mr Nasrallah succeeded him as its leader. He blamed Israel for the “blood-soaked carnage” and its “protector” America.

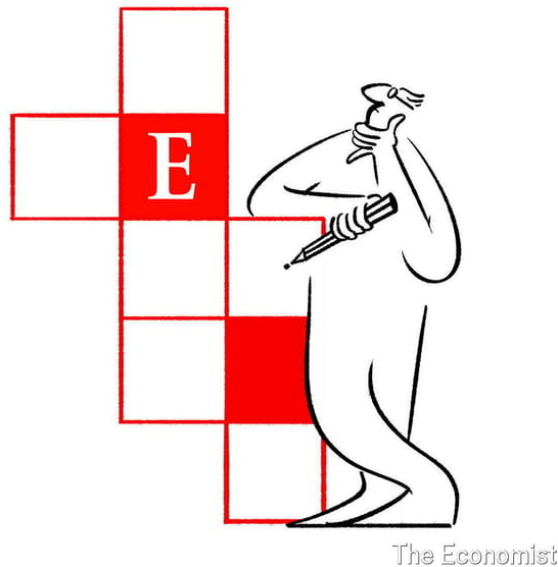
Mr Nasrallah presided over the party when it won eight seats in parliamentary elections in 1992 for the first time—and over its political growth since. Today the pro-Hizbullah bloc has 62 of the 128 seats in Lebanon’s parliament. He has also ruled over the expansion of its military arsenal, with continued help from its sponsor, Iran.

In 2006 Hizbullah went to war with Israel in support of Hamas. After pushing the Israeli army to a standstill, Mr Nasrallah claimed a “[strategic, historic victory](#)”. His speech was lapped up across the Middle East. After the assassination in 2020 of Qassem Suleimani, an Iranian general co-ordinating foreign militias, Mr Nasrallah increasingly appeared as his own man.

Since Hamas’s attack on Israel on October 7th, Mr Nasrallah has tried to avoid [all-out war](#) with Israel. But things may be sliding out of his control. On September 17th the pagers of thousands of Hizbullah’s members [exploded](#); the next day walkie-talkies blew up. At least 37 people were killed. Mr Nasrallah vowed “a reckoning”. Hizbullah fired more than 100 projectiles towards Israel; subsequent Israeli strikes on Lebanon killed more than 700. On September 26th Israel said it was preparing to put boots on the ground in Lebanon.

And on September 27th Israeli missiles struck residential buildings in Beirut; Israel insisted that Hizbullah's headquarters were beneath the buildings. Israeli media reported that Mr Nasrallah was the target, although sources close to Hizbullah told other media outlets that he survived. His fate remains unclear.

# Weekly crossword



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

## Cryptic clues

- 1 down* Infection? Pin, pad, ice, it's cured! (12)
- 1 across* Sadly, Kamala loses centreground here (6)
- 2 across* Name a big central city (5)
- 3 across* Instrument on unknown state (6)

## Factual clues

- 1 down* Painful inflammation in the abdomen (12)
- 1 across* Russia and China have flown patrols near this state (6)
- 2 across* Home of the world's tallest building (5)
- 3 across* German region that held state elections this month (6)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am GMT on Monday to [crossword@economist.com](mailto:crossword@economist.com). We will pick

randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners in next week's edition.

## The winners of this week's quiz



The Economist

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

**Catherine Mullin**, Boston, Massachusetts, America

**Nigel Watson**, Edinburgh, Britain

**Klaus Hereth**, Munich, Germany

They all gave the correct answers of: suffragettes, Mars, Rebel Wilson, The Ashes and bone china. The theme is David Bowie songs: Suffragette City, Life on Mars?, Rebel Rebel, Ashes to Ashes and China Girl.

The questions were:

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

**Tuesday:** Which food group, named after its founding family, produces brands such as "Milky Way" and "Bounty"?

**Wednesday:** Which Australian comedy star has appeared in films such as "Pitch Perfect" and "JoJo Rabbit"?



**Thursday:** Which cricket trophy is the subject of a regular battle between England and Australia?

**Friday:** Bone ash, feldspar and kaolin play are used to make what upmarket household product?

## R-star

*The term that economists use to describe the neutral real rate of interest, which applies when the economy is growing at its exact potential.*

*Read the full story.*

**It is better to fail in originality than to  
succeed in imitation.**

*Herman Melville*