

Catch up: LDP's disastrous Japanese election; Volkswagen's cost-cutting push



Japan's ruling **Liberal Democratic Party** fared terribly in a [snap election](#) called by Ishiba Shigeru, the new prime minister. Its coalition fell short of a majority in parliament for the first time since 2009, when it was ousted from power. Voters' anger was largely triggered by a financial scandal within the party. Mr Ishiba said he would attempt to negotiate a new coalition. Opposition leaders didn't seem keen.

Volkswagen will close three car factories in Germany and cut tens of thousands of jobs in its homeland, according to an employee representative. Europe's largest car manufacturer is [in a perilous state](#): on September 27th it lowered its expected operating profit margin for the second time in three months. Cutting labour costs may not be enough to save the firm, which has spent heavily to transform itself into an EV powerhouse.

Philadelphia's district attorney sued **Elon Musk** and his pro-Trump America PAC, arguing that his [\\$1m giveaway to voters](#) is an "illegal lottery". Pennsylvania requires lotteries to be regulated by

the state. The lawsuit also alleged that winners were not randomly selected, claiming that “multiple” had “shown up at Trump rallies in Pennsylvania”. Mr Musk is yet to comment.

Mark Rutte, NATO’s secretary-general, said that **North Korea** has [sent troops](#) to Russia’s Kursk region, where Ukraine launched a surprise incursion in August. He called the deployment “a significant escalation” of North Korea’s involvement in the war. South Korea estimates that the North plans to send at least 11,000 troops to Russia.

Salome Zourabichvili, **Georgia’s** president, called for people to protest over the results of the country’s parliamentary election. Ms Zourabichvili, who supports the opposition, described the vote as a “total rigging”. If the official count is to be believed, the ruling, Russia-appeasing [Georgian Dream](#) party won 53% of votes. Election-monitoring groups reported wide-scale violations of electoral law.

Shares in **Philips** fell by more than 15% after the Dutch technology firm reduced its sales forecast for 2024. It said that “a significant deterioration” in demand from [China](#) was dampening sales. To encourage consumers to spend more, Chinese officials began to introduce economic stimulus in September. But the country’s economy is still flailing.

Russia has been withholding climate change data about the **Arctic** since it invaded Ukraine in 2022, a NATO official told the *Financial Times*. That makes climate modelling in the warming region less effective. Of the 95 bases that cover statistics in the Arctic, 21 are “on pause”.

Figure of the day: 19,700, the number of cases of *Cochliomyia hominivorax*, a parasite, recorded in Panama this year so far. [Read the full story.](#)

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Harris and Trump near the finish line



America's presidential campaign is entering its final stretch ahead of election day on November 5th. A clear frontrunner has yet to emerge. *The Economist's* [election forecast model](#) reckons Donald Trump has a 54% chance of defeating Kamala Harris. That in effect makes the race a toss-up. During the campaign both candidates have made stops in noncompetitive states like Texas and New York to help down-ballot candidates. But in the closing days they will focus their energies on the seven swing states that will decide the vote.

Some 33m Americans have already cast their ballots in early voting, a sign that turnout and enthusiasm remain high. Each candidate is employing increasingly strong rhetoric: Ms Harris has called her opponent a "[fascist](#)"; Mr Trump has claimed that a Harris victory would herald "the end of our country". Meanwhile the campaigns have spent well over \$2bn on advertising between them. The finishing sprint will be frenetic. But the polls probably won't shift significantly.

Sudan's horror



On Monday the United Nations Security Council discussed Sudan's [catastrophic civil war](#), as pressure mounts for it to do more to stop the fighting and alleviate the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Last month a UN fact-finding mission said that both sides of the conflict, the national army and the Rapid Support Forces, have probably committed war crimes. In addition the RSF has probably committed crimes against humanity. The mission called for deployment of an independent peacekeeping force to protect civilians.

Any such force would need to move quickly. With the rainy season over, fighting is [escalating sharply](#). The army recently launched major operations to reclaim ground in Khartoum, the capital, and the agricultural heartlands in the east. The RSF is battling for control of Darfur, a vast region in the west. Civilians, meanwhile, are starving. With no ceasefire in prospect, some predict that hunger and related diseases will have killed more than 2m people in Sudan by the end of the year.

Ford changes gear



Ford, one of America's big-three carmakers, releases third-quarter results on Monday. Overall, vehicle sales did not grow year on year, but sales of electric vehicles rose by 12%. Still, [Ford has a big EV problem](#). It loses \$54,000 for every EV that it sells, but makes a profit of \$2,000 apiece on its petrol cars. Indeed, Ford's EV division is expected to lose \$5.5bn this year due to tough competition from American and Chinese rivals. Bloomberg Intelligence, a research firm, projects that Ford's EVs won't be profitable until 2027.

So Ford is changing course. Last year it delayed \$12bn in planned EV investments; in August it cancelled development of an electric SUV in favour of a hybrid version. But even going back to basics may not solve Ford's profitability problem. Demand appears to be softening because cautious consumers are holding off on making big purchases.

A hearing for the Philippines' ex-president



On Monday a committee of the Philippines' Senate began hearings about the war on drugs waged by Rodrigo Duterte, the country's president from 2016 to 2022. During his time in office law enforcers killed more than 6,000 suspects. Mr Duterte attended the hearings to argue that the killings were lawful. The International Criminal Court in The Hague is also investigating whether Mr Duterte is culpable. But his successor, Ferdinand Marcos, has so far shielded Mr Duterte from international prosecutors.

Mr Duterte's daughter, Sara Duterte, was Mr Marcos's running-mate in 2022 and is now vice-president. But they are [openly feuding](#). That might make Mr Marcos less inclined to protect Mr Duterte. The president appears to be making an implicit threat: if the Duterte family does not temper its hostility towards him Mr Duterte may find himself at a hearing in The Hague.

Messi and Ronaldo bow out of the Ballon d'Or



The announcement on Monday of the Ballon d'Or, a prize for the best male football player of the previous season, will probably signal the end of an era. Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi have won 13 of the last 15 titles. But for the first time since 2003 neither player made the shortlist. Both are in the twilight of their careers.

A fresh pair of legs will end the duopoly. Pundits and bookmakers have identified Vinícius Júnior, a Brazilian player, as the clear favourite. He helped his team, Real Madrid, win [La Liga](#), Spain's top league, and scored a goal to help Real win the Champions League final. Prior to the past two decades no player had won on more than three occasions. Past runners-up and a new generation of young stars will hope for at least a portion of the glory that Messrs Messi and Ronaldo achieved.

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. We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Monday: What was the name of the character played by Alan Alda in the long-running TV series "MASH"?

19,700

The number of cases of Cochliomyia hominivorax, a parasite, recorded in Panama this year so far.

Read the full story.

**We do not wish, nor are we able, to break
the link between ourselves and our
forefathers.**

Taha Hussein