

UK Headlines — 21 Sep 2026

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Monday. Burnham heads to New York for his first UN General Assembly as PM, the Greenland deal gets a No 10 welcome, and Trump threatens to "blow the entire nation up" over Iran.

? Top Story: Burnham takes the world stage — Greenland deal, Trump meeting, Iran fallout

The prime minister flies to New York today for the UN General Assembly, where he is expected to hold his first in-person meeting with President Donald Trump.

- **Greenland deal:** Burnham and Danish PM Mette Frederiksen "welcomed the US's commitment to the region" in a Sunday call, Downing Street said, with Burnham congratulating Frederiksen and saying he would pass on his congratulations to Trump. Nato said the agreement would help stabilise the Arctic; Trump claimed on Truth Social that Denmark would grant the US "permanent control over security, and all other needs" in Greenland, with a rule that no US adversary could keep a military presence or "make sensitive investments" there without US written approval.
- **No text released.** Frederiksen said the deal "strengthens our common security in the Arctic" while recognising "the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Kingdom" — the deal is expected to be signed at UNGA next week. Danish media read it as a quiet diplomatic triumph; one Politiken correspondent wrote: "*Trump didn't get Greenland, but he was allowed to take a victory lap on social media.*"
- **Lib Dem scepticism:** Ed Davey, at his party's Brighton conference, said Trump had "almost a carbon copy of the agreement that's persisted since the 1950s".
- **Iran overshadows the trip.** Cabinet minister Bridget Phillipson said next month's Budget "will be made more difficult by Donald Trump's war with Iran", but insisted Burnham's past criticism of the president was not an issue. No 10 said Burnham would use UNGA to "drive forward work on issues that matter to people at home", including the cost

?? UK Politics

Lib Dems conference — Brighton

- **Big tech levy:** The party says it would tax big tech to fund a new **£250m online crime agency**.
- **Fuel duty:** Ed Davey called for an **immediate 10p cut to fuel duty**; the party vowed to end the "computer says no" economy.
- **"Firewall against Farage":** Davey framed his party as the bulwark against Reform as conference opened — while a fellow Lib Dem council leader accused the party of "sleepwalking to irrelevance under Davey".
- **Tory defectors:** Self-described moderates who feel "forced out" by Kemi Badenoch were welcomed into the fold.
- Party president **Josh Babarinde** told conference to "flip the table and rise up", targeting big tech and crypto billionaires.

Budget and economy

- **Tax raid speculation:** Several papers lead on expectations Burnham and Chancellor **John Healey** are eyeing a Budget tax raid — the Telegraph reports proposals to raise **Capital Gains Tax to 45%** in exchange for a higher personal allowance. The Conservatives urged Burnham to rule out tax rises; **Burnham rejected "tax and spend socialist" comments**.
- **Iran war hits the Budget:** Phillipson confirmed the conflict is complicating the October fiscal event. Interest rates were **held**, but the Bank signalled a rise if energy prices stay high.
- **Apprenticeships flop:** Exclusive — Labour's flagship scheme enrolled only **160 young people in eight months** against a target of 30,000 starts by the end of parliament. Unions and thinktanks separately urged ministers to boost the financial firepower of the **national wealth fund**.
- **Rail nationalisation: Chiltern Railways** entered public ownership — the sixth operator nationalised since 2025.
- **Made in Europe:** Healey will ask EU finance ministers to let the UK into the scheme.

Justice and home affairs

- **Rape courts rollout:** Specialist courtrooms prioritising rape and serious sexual offence cases are to be introduced across **England and Wales**, costing about **£23m**. Survivors

get remote viewing, video-link evidence, private entrances and waiting rooms, a single point of contact, and — from next month — **fixed trial dates** instead of floating lists. The changes follow Labour MP **Charlotte Nichols** waiving her anonymity to describe waiting more than 1,000 days for court.

- **Oxford grooming gangs:** Survivors told BBC Panorama they believe "**hundreds**" of **perpetrators are still free** — a view backed by the ex-detective who led the original Oxford investigation. One survivor said she was abused and plied with heroin from the age of 11; she still sees her abusers locally.
- **Spycops inquiry row:** Victims accused the Home Office of seeking a "cover-up" after **Shabana Mahmood** raised concerns about the inquiry's length and **£144m** cost.
- **Meta vs Ofcom:** Meta launched a fresh legal challenge over the Online Safety Act, amid accusations that social media firms are using the courts to slow regulation.
- **Thirlwall inquiry:** The Letby inquiry has "left the biggest questions unanswered".

Westminster miscellany

- **Badenoch** accused Burnham of "fiddling while Europe is at risk of burning", repeated her call to cut welfare spending to fund defence, pledged to **restore tax-free shopping for tourists**, and said she is instructing lawyers to challenge the government over a Tory-run council's **94% tax hike**.
 - **Tom Watson**, former Labour deputy leader, has joined **Palantir**.
 - The **UK Youth Parliament** looks set to be axed.
 - Man United's billionaire owner "loses the moral high ground after tax exile", says the Labour chair.
 - **Ofsted:** A school leaders' union called for a halt to graded inspections over health concerns, saying the new regime is worse than the one it replaced.
 - An MP called for **Yorkshire to get its own parliament**; MPs will examine the UK's "dismal" Eurovision song choices.
 - **Earl Spencer's** Diana book lands, with Metro reporting he denies siding with the Duke of Sussex against the Prince of Wales — Charles's rebuttal offered a "rare glimpse into palace thinking".
 - **Victoria Starmer** modelled clothes at a London fashion week show, one of her first public appearances since Keir Starmer stepped down.
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? World

Iran war — the week's flashpoint

- **Trump threatens annihilation:** The president told Fox News that the options were "wiping Iran out", letting its economy "rot", or making a deal — saying the "question" was "if and when" it would be required to "blow the entire nation up". He said he is open to

meeting Iranian President **Masoud Pezeshkian** at UNGA, but is in "deciding mode".

- **Iran warns of "painful" retaliation** across the Middle East if the US or its allies strike, saying regional backers would be treated as parties to the conflict.
- **Riyadh hit:** Iran-backed Houthis claimed missile and drone attacks on the Saudi capital — the **first air-raid alert in Riyadh since fighting escalated in July**. Explosions were heard and flames seen above King Khalid international airport; Saudi air defences said they destroyed a ballistic missile.
- **Fallout:** The US State Department issued a Middle East security alert warning of possible flight cancellations and airspace closures. **South Korea said it will not send troops** to support the US war, defying Trump. Analysts at Eurasia Group forecast Brent at **\$90-110 a barrel** through the rest of the year.

Ukraine and Russia

- **Largest attack on Moscow:** Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said **450 drones** were shot down in "the most massive" attack on the capital — the region's governor reported at least two dead and 20 injured. A 44-year-old woman was killed in Sofyino when a drone hit a residential block; five more, including two children, were injured.
- **Zelensky** confirmed strikes on a "key" Russian **oil refinery** supplying over a third of the Moscow region's fuel, plus a logistics site.
- Both capital airports halted flights overnight. The attack coincided with the **third day of Russia's tightly controlled parliamentary election** — Sobyanin called it an attempt to "disrupt" the vote.
- A mother and her two young children were killed in a Russian strike on **Fastiv** on Saturday.

Germany

- **Merz calls it a "disaster":** In **Mecklenburg-Vorpommern**, the CDU fell below the 5% threshold to enter parliament — likely its worst result in any state since WWII — while the far-right **AfD** was on track to win the most votes. In **Berlin**, broadcasters put the CDU on 19%, behind **Die Linke** on nearly 26%, which has never topped a capital poll before.
- Merz vowed to stay on, saying the reforms he needs "require backbone, steadfastness and patience", and called them "the antidote to the authoritarian poison" spreading through society. It follows the CDU's halved vote in Saxony-Anhalt a fortnight ago.

Elsewhere

- **Greenland:** Nato welcomed the US-Denmark-Greenland agreement (see Top Story).
- **Nato warning:** European spy chiefs told the Guardian Moscow is planning more decisive action against Nato; Poland's PM **Donald Tusk** said intelligence suggests a move to test whether Article 5 is "more theoretical than practical". The FT leads on "flames of war" over Moscow.

- **Japan** raised interest rates to a **31-year high** (1% → 1.25%) to curb inflation, following the Fed and ECB.
 - **Extreme weather:** A typhoon is approaching eastern Japan with flood and landslide warnings, while slow-moving thunderstorms caused severe flooding in **Barcelona and Valencia**, killing at least one person.
 - **Michelle Bachelet** withdrew from the UN secretary general race after her support collapsed in a Security Council straw poll, leaving seven candidates.
 - **Macron and Carney** announced closer France–Canada ties amid Trump tensions.
 - A **British woman kidnapped in Malawi**, Nusrat Osman, was rescued by police after a shootout in which four of her alleged abductors were killed.
 - **Nigeria:** Survivors described panic and struggling to breathe in a prison cell in Minna where **37 suspected illegal goldminers, many of them children, died** in custody.
 - **Trump's deportations:** A Guardian investigation details "shadowy deals" with dozens of countries; lawyers say men deported to Equatorial Guinea were bound, beaten and hooded at a detention hotel.
 - **Haiti:** Eighteen people arrested over the 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse.
 - A **new wild cat species** was identified in Bolivia's Yungas forest — the first new feline species found in more than a century.
 - A **82-year-old man died** after a brawl with a 76-year-old over a sunlounger on a Greek beach.
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??????? Wales

- **Wild Animal Welfare consultation opens today:** The Welsh Government's White Paper consultation on proposals covering **seals and hare coursing** goes live on 21 September and closes at midnight on 19 October.
- **Reform Wales in turmoil:** Party leader in Wales **Dan Thomas** has resigned after being arrested on suspicion of assault and controlling/coercive behaviour. Gwent Police detained a 45-year-old man from the Aberbargoed area on Sunday 13 September; he was released on bail without charge. **Helen Jenner** — a Farage ally since UKIP days and deputy leader since April — is the favourite to take over.
- **Defection:** Reform MS for Pen-y-bont Bro Morgannwg **Sarah Cooper-Lesadd** defected to **Plaid Cymru** just four months after May's Senedd election, prompting fresh questions about Wales's party-list voting system. The Electoral Reform Society's Jess Blair said there is now an "accountability gap" and called for the built-in review to happen.
- **Tourism tax delayed:** Gwynedd Council says it cannot proceed with its visitor levy decision as planned after "clear legal advice" — the consultation drew a "significant" response versus Anglesey's 2,000 and Conwy's 1,300. Proposed rates: 75p + VAT for hostels, shared rooms and tent pitches; £1.30 + VAT for most other accommodation.
- **Off-road crackdown:** Illegal off-road vehicles can now be seized on the spot, with police warning offenders of a "long walk home".
- **Waste disruption:** Tens of thousands of fridge freezers are stranded at docks as household collections are suspended.

- **RNLI backlash:** An RNLI video received "pure hatred" after anti-migrant protests.
- **Michael Sheen** held a "constructive" meeting with the First Minister over toxic dumping claims.
- **Emmy history-maker: Matthew Rhys** won historic Emmy awards; his sister said she is "so proud".
- **Zeta-Jones** says "nepo baby" is a horrific term.
- **Councils:** "Inappropriate" campervan parking is causing problems, a councillor says; new Welsh constituency names could be changed again.
- **Sport:** Wales clocked up a half-century of points in their WXV opener against South Africa; Backstedt won world time-trial silver; Smith beat Price to win the World Series of Darts Finals; Swansea are aiming to maintain a good feeling; Tiatia is in talks over a new Dragons deal.

?? Weather

- **Today (UK):** A largely dry day with sunny spells and variable cloud, mainly light westerly winds. London reaching about **22°C** with sunny conditions and light winds; UV moderate. A quiet, "nothing weather" Monday for most.
- **Week ahead:** Changeable — Atlantic weather systems bring spells of rain, showers and occasional strong winds, with the wettest and windiest conditions most likely across the **north and west**.
- **Abroad:** Thunderstorms and severe flooding hit eastern Spain (Barcelona, Valencia), killing at least one; a typhoon is bearing down on eastern Japan.

? Quick Summary

Story	Where	Status
Burnham flies to UNGA for first Trump meeting	UK/US	🔄 Developing
Greenland deal welcomed by No 10, Nato; no text released	Arctic/US/Denmark	🔄 Developing
Trump threatens to "blow the entire nation up" over Iran	US/Iran	🔄 Live
Houthi strike on Riyadh triggers first air-raid alert since July	Saudi/Yemen	🔄 Live
Ukraine fires 450 drones at Moscow — largest attack to date	Russia/Ukraine	🔄 Developing
Merz calls German state elections a "disaster"; AfD surges	Germany	⚠️ Ongoing

Story	Where	Status
Lib Dems conference: big tech levy, 10p fuel duty cut	UK	🔄 Ongoing
Budget tax raid speculation — CGT to 45% floated	UK	🔄 Ongoing
Specialist rape courtrooms rollout across England and Wales	UK/Wales	🔄 Announced
Oxford grooming gang survivors: "hundreds" still free	UK	⚠️ Ongoing
Apprenticeship scheme: only 160 starts in eight months	UK	⚠️ Ongoing
Chiltern Railways nationalised (6th since 2025)	UK	🔄 Confirmed
Reform Wales leader Dan Thomas resigns after arrest	Wales	🔄 Developing
Wild Animal Welfare consultation opens today	Wales	🔄 Starts today
Gwynedd tourism tax delayed over legal advice	Wales	⚠️ Delayed
Japan raises rates to 31-year high	Japan	🔄 Confirmed

Sources: BBC News (UK, World, Politics, Wales), The Guardian (UK, Politics, World), Sky News, The Independent, CNBC, GOV.WALES, BBC Weather/Met Office, Opinion polling trackers (YouGov, Opinium).

Note: Social media reaction (Reddit, Nitter/X, Phice) and FlareSolvrr were unavailable this run and have been skipped.

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