

UK Headlines — 22 Sep 2026

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Tuesday. Britain sends an RAF tanker to refuel Saudi jets against the Houthis, Burnham flies to the UN with a G20 prize for Manchester — and UK air traffic control fails for the second time in a fortnight.

? Top Story: Britain to refuel Saudi jets — Burnham commits RAF Voyager to the Houthi fight

Andy Burnham has said the UK will provide "defensive air-to-air refuelling" support for Saudi Arabia, in response to drone and ballistic missile attacks the kingdom has faced from the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen.

- **One aircraft, "time limited"**. It is understood the operation will likely begin in the coming days and involve **a single British Voyager tanker based at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus**. Officials say the offer is "time limited" and likely, in the first instance, to last "for weeks". The Voyager is part of a core fleet of nine on the RAF's books (eight military registered, one civilian), with five more available for military recall.
- **Why now**. The Houthis have carried out attacks on **Riyadh** and on energy sites along Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast, and recently seized the strategic port city of **Mokha and Perim Island** — a gateway to the Red Sea shipping route. Burnham linked the decision to cost of living: "*We need to keep those pathways open, and hence our agreement to the request.*"
- **Who signed it off**. Burnham agreed to the Saudi request on the advice of **Defence Secretary Wes Streeting** and **Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband**. Defensive support is described as activity which could include aiding Saudi air force jets shooting down incoming Houthi missiles and drones.
- **Scepticism**. BBC security correspondent Frank Gardner writes that as "military support" goes, this is **at the lighter end of the spectrum** — "some may even see this as a

performative gesture to an ally in trouble". He warns the risk to Britain is limited, "but wars have a habit of drawing nations in with a steadily increasing involvement. That may well suit the Saudis but it is unlikely to please most people in Britain."

- **Nato signal.** Secretary-General **Mark Rutte** hinted last week that European support for Saudi Arabia was likely, saying: "*I would not be surprised if some phone calls were taking place between European allies, 'hey, how are we going to deal with this?'*"
 - **Precedent.** In January 2024 the UK joined the US in air strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen, with then-PM Rishi Sunak saying Britain "acted in self-defence". Further joint strikes followed.
 - **The papers:** The Telegraph leads "Burnham sends RAF to help Saudis"; the Metro goes with "Air traffic out of control" (see below).
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?? UK Politics

Burnham at the UN — and the G20 comes to Manchester

- **First Trump meeting:** Burnham, travelling to New York for his first UN General Assembly as PM, says he expects to find "**common ground**" with President Trump in their first in-person meeting. He will also deliver a **speech to the UNGA expected to be focused on AI**.
- **G20 2027 — Manchester:** The UK confirmed Burnham's former fiefdom will host the **G20 leaders' summit on 27-28 November 2027** at the Manchester Central Convention Centre. Burnham, mayor of Greater Manchester for almost a decade, said he was "really pleased" to be welcoming the US president to the city.

Air traffic control: second failure in a fortnight

- **What happened:** A "connectivity issue" at Nats' **Prestwick** centre disrupted flights across **Scotland, Northern Ireland and northern England** on Monday. Nats said it had "nothing to do with" a separate software defect at **Swanwick** earlier this month.
- **The numbers:** More than **150 flights cancelled** at UK airports on Monday — 140 departures and 137 arrivals, per Cirium. **EasyJet** was worst hit (48 of 670 departures cancelled) and British Airways lost 13 of 513. **Ryanair** says 140 of its flights and **25,000 passengers** were affected.
- **The fallout:** EasyJet said the incident "once again calls into question the resilience" of the service; Wizz Air's UK MD Yvonne Moynihan declared a "**national confidence crisis**" in Nats and called for "urgent reform", questioning its leadership. Ryanair and Wizz want Nats chief **Martin Rolfe** to resign; Jet2's Steve Heapy demanded "urgent and accountable" action. **Airlines UK** said passengers and airlines "deserve better" after "yet

another Nats failure".

- **Compensation:** The CAA said affected passengers are "**unlikely**" to be entitled to **compensation**, as the technical issue is likely to be considered "extraordinary circumstances". An independent CAA review into the resilience of UK air traffic control will report **within six months**.
- **Burnham's line:** Further issues "cause even greater concern". Asked whether he would fire the head of Nats, he said: "these are clearly serious issues and they need to be fully investigated".

Economy

- **Borrowing jumps:** Government borrowing **rose by a fifth to £18bn in August** — higher than expected — piling pressure on Chancellor **John Healey** as he tries to calm jittery bond markets before next month's Budget. Guardian analysis puts the figure at **£18.3bn**.
- **Pensions triple lock:** Guardian columnist **Gaby Hinsliff** argues Britain "needs cash and everyone knows we should break the pensions triple lock. Where is the courage?"
- **Vet fees:** **Vet prescription fees are to be capped** under new rule changes.
- **Airbus jobs:** Airbus will create **480 new jobs** in a boost to the UK aerospace industry.

Justice & home affairs

- **First UK genocide charges:** **Dr Vincent Brown, formerly Dr Vincent Bajinya, 65**, has become the first person charged in the UK with offences relating to the **1994 Rwanda genocide**. The CPS said he faces **one offence of conduct ancillary to genocide and six offences of conduct ancillary to murder as a crime against humanity**, over alleged offences committed in Rwanda in **April 1994**. He had been living in north London.
- **Rape courts rollout:** Specialist courts prioritising rape and serious sexual offences are to be **rolled out across England and Wales** (see Wales section).
- **Martha's Rule:** Rolled out to **every A&E department in England**.
- **Bereavement leave:** A **new right to bereavement leave** will cover step-relatives and half-relatives.
- **Teesside raids:** **Seventeen arrested** in organised crime raids.
- **Grooming gangs:** Survivors told BBC Panorama they believe "hundreds" of perpetrators are still free.

Westminster & parties

- **Reform Wales gets a new leader:** **Helen Jenner** was unveiled by **Nigel Farage** on the steps of the Senedd as the newly-elected leader of Reform in Wales, replacing **Dan Thomas** after his arrest on suspicion of assault and controlling or coercive behaviour. Jenner — a mum of two and former English teacher from Anglesey, previously deputy — said the party should be "more exciting". The Guardian's John Crace: "*Another day*,

another Reform Wales leader. Grumpy Nige seems to miss the old one."

- **Lib Dems conference, Brighton: Ed Davey** rejected claims the party is "sleepwalking to irrelevance", saying he has "no ceiling" on Lib Dem ambitions. The party voted to **reject the EHRC's "discriminatory and unworkable" guidance on transgender people**, called for **one-to-one midwife care during childbirth**, and Davey said he would push for a **non-proliferation treaty to halt super-intelligent AI**.
 - **Tories: Kemi Badenoch's** party pledged to **restore tax-free shopping for tourists** — the BBC story carried 511 comments.
 - **Schools & AI:** A report warns schools are not ready for AI and are "**crying out**" for government guidance.
 - **Health:** Scientists have discovered **why the Kent meningitis outbreak was so severe**. A separate report urges cutting NHS red tape to prevent **20,000 early deaths a year** in England.
 - **Young people's mental health:** The head of an official review says young people aren't "snowflakes" — mental distress really is rising.
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? World

Yemen & the Red Sea

- **G7 warning: Iran must stop arming the Houthis in Yemen**, the G7 said ahead of the UN General Assembly.
- **Refugees:** Yemenis are **fleeing across the Red Sea** as Houthi and Saudi-backed forces escalate the war — the BBC reports from a Djibouti refugee camp housing thousands.
- **Background:** The Houthis are locked in civil war with Yemen's internationally recognised government, backed by Saudi Arabia. Yemen has been at war, on and off, since 2014.

Iran & the Middle East

- Iran remains in an on-off war with the US, with UNGA as the week's diplomatic flashpoint (see Top Story).

Europe & Russia

- **Lithuania:** PM **Mindaugas Sinkevičius** told BBC Newsnight Lithuania is ready to "**fight back**" but has **evacuation plans** in the face of Russian threats, saying Lithuanians feel "constantly threatened" by Moscow.
- **Germany: Friedrich Merz** vowed to keep his coalition together for Germany's "democratic future", following the CDU's disastrous state election results. Analysis: "Merz's political crisis threatens Germany's obsession with stability" (Ukraine's allies

watching closely).

- **Russia:** Results in the tightly controlled parliamentary election held few surprises — "but how the Kremlin uses the results will be crucial".

Asia-Pacific

- **Japan: Four dead** after powerful **Typhoon Dujuan** lashed Japan, with flooding and landslide warnings.
- **India:** Outrage over a viral video of a teenager molested and her friend beaten.
- **Sri Lanka:** Workers unearthed a **mass grave of 572 people** after coming across human remains.
- **China:** A six-year-old girl set a new Rubik's Cube world record.

US & Canada

- **Press freedom lawsuit:** **CNN, MS NOW and Politico** filed a **lawsuit** against Trump's White House press ban. New York mayor **Mamdani** said press would be allowed at an event with Trump regardless of the ban.
 - **ICE shooting:** A Texas ICE shooting left a Venezuelan DoorDash driver **with a bullet in his back**, his lawyer says.
 - **Vermont:** A man was found **guilty of attempted murder** for shooting three men of Palestinian descent.
 - **Canada:** The province of British Columbia **sued OpenAI** over the Tumbler Ridge school shooting. **Carney condemned a Yom Kippur shooting** outside a synagogue in Belleville, Ontario.
 - **Media:** **Paramount settled a lawsuit with US states**, clearing the way for its **\$110bn merger with Warner Bros.**
 - **Obituary:** The death of **Presley Gerber**, son of Cindy Crawford, is being investigated as a suspected **overdose**.
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??????? Wales

- **Politics:** Helen Jenner unveiled as Reform's new Welsh leader (see Westminster). **Welsh Lib Dem leader** said the party should be "more exciting". A **drunk council leader** accused of drinking a bottle of gin and vowing to "wipe out" Plaid Cymru **has quit**.
- **Data centre fight:** Campaigners warn **"terrifying" 101-acre data centre plans** (Canolfan Ddata Menai) would be "heartbreaking" — one says human extinction fears make her want to flee AI and live on an island.
- **Justice:** A **driver has been jailed** after killing a "devoted" mum, Lydia La Polla, while fleeing police. Another **20-year-old driver was jailed** after a dashcam filmed a "horrific" head-on crash which left the victim with PTSD. A man was **jailed over the death of a woman** in a police pursuit. A **gang stole Land Rover Defenders worth £600k**. Police

seized illegal off-road vehicles on the spot, warning of a "long walk home". Door handles are being used to make weapons at a youth prison.

- **Rape courts:** Specialist courts for rape cases are being rolled out in **England and Wales**.
- **Economy: Tourism tax plans were delayed** after thousands responded to consultation. Tens of thousands of fridge freezers were left at docks as household collections were suspended.
- **Sport & culture: Ryan Reynolds and Rob Mac bought a historic Wrexham football pub. Matthew Rhys'** sister said she is "so proud" after his historic Emmy wins; Gavin and Stacey co-stars backed Melanie Walters' Strictly debut. First look at The Other Bennet Sister Christmas special.

?? Weather & Seasons

- **Autumn arrives:** The **autumn equinox occurs at 01:06 BST on Wednesday 23 September** (Royal Museums Greenwich), marking the start of astronomical autumn — though it does not necessarily mean a sudden change in the weather.
- **September outlook:** Much of **England and Wales should escape the worst of the rain**, with showers more frequent towards the south-west and the best sunshine expected across East Anglia, London and the south-east.
- **Abroad:** Japan is being lashed by Typhoon Dujuan (see World); slow-moving storms recently caused severe flooding in **Barcelona and Valencia**.

? Quick Summary

Story	Where	Key detail
🇬🇧🇬🇧🇬🇧 UK to refuel Saudi jets	Middle East / UK	Single RAF Voyager from Akrotiri; "defensive", "time limited", weeks; signed off by Streiting & Miliband
🇬🇧🇬🇧 Burnham at UNGA	New York	First meeting with Trump; AI-focused UNGA speech; expects "common ground"
🇬🇧 G20 2027 → Manchester	UK	27–28 Nov 2027, Manchester Central; Burnham's former patch
➔ ATC failure #2	UK	Prestwick "connectivity issue"; 150+ flights cancelled; Ryanair 25k passengers; calls for Nats chief to quit
🇬🇧 Borrowing £18bn	UK	Up a fifth in August; pressure on Healey before Budget; bond markets jittery

Story	Where	Key detail
🇬🇧 First UK genocide charges	UK	Dr Vincent Brown (ex-Bajinya), 65 — 1 genocide + 6 murder-as-crime-against-humanity offences
🇨🇪 Reform Wales leader	Wales	Helen Jenner replaces Dan Thomas after his arrest
🇶🇦 Yemen / Houthis	Red Sea	G7 tells Iran to stop arming Houthis; refugees flee across Red Sea
🇩🇪 Merz under pressure	Germany	Vows to hold coalition together after CDU election rout
🇯🇵 Typhoon Dujuan	Japan	Four dead; flood and landslide warnings
🇬🇧 Martha's Rule	England	Rolled out to every A&E department
🇬🇧 Autumn equinox	UK	01:06 BST, Wednesday 23 September

Compiled 22 September 2026, 08:00 BST.

Sources: BBC News (UK, Politics, World, Wales, Business, Health, Weather), The Guardian (UK news, Business, Politics), BBC/Guardian/CPS/Reuters reporting on the Rwanda charges, Cirium aviation data, Royal Museums Greenwich. Social media reaction sections omitted — Nitter, Reddit and Phice steps are offline in this pipeline.

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