

## [Transcript] Global News Podcast / California prepares for Storm Hilary's arrival

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I'm Janet Jalil and in the early hours of Monday 21st August, these are our main stories.

A huge tropical storm has caused flooding in parts of Mexico as it heads towards the southwest of the United States. The people of Ecuador have voted in elections that have been overshadowed by political assassinations and soaring violence. The West African grouping, ECOWAS, has rejected an announcement by the coup leader in Niger that it will be three years before civilian rule is restored.

Also in this podcast,

Injir, the cat, is a natural antidepressant. He's positive, cuddly and nice and he's helping people find hope and light inside themselves. The power of cats and dogs to help Ukrainians deal with the impact of Russia's invasion. As we record this podcast, the US state of California is bracing itself for tropical storm Hilary, which has already brought fierce winds and flooding to Mexico's Pacific coast. One man died in the Mexican state of Baja, California after his vehicle was swept away in rising waters. Hilary is expected to be the first tropical storm to hit southern California in more than 80 years amid warnings that it could bring a year's worth of rain in places that are normally very dry. The Los Angeles police department chief Michael Moore warned conditions could be life-threatening. What we need from our public is their cooperation. We need their help and assistance and avoiding travel wherever possible. If, by nature, their assignment or job or position, they find themselves as needing to travel, that they're mindful of the weather conditions around them. Vehicles can become immobilized and people's lives can be endangered

by simply driving through a pool of water with unknown depth or content.

For more on this unusual storm, I spoke to our correspondent in Los Angeles, Peter Bose.

This is very, very unusual. Normally we go through a summer in the Los Angeles area without any rain

at all. So to be getting this quantity of rain in late August is extremely unusual.

And it's already started raining. I'm in Los Angeles right now. It's been raining for several hours and clearly the hurricane itself, which is now downgraded to a tropical storm, is still far away, still several hours away. In fact, it hasn't even crossed the border yet from Mexico to California, but we're still getting this rain. So that is potentially a sign of things to come a little bit later in the day when the eye of the storm travels over the Los Angeles area.

And the forecasters at this stage are not even certain which direction it's going to go once it's crossed the border. It'll first of all hit the city of San Diego. It could then travel inland, which would see it heading off towards Las Vegas, or it could move further towards the coast and the

resorts, Santa Monica, Ventura, maybe even as far as Malibu. But at this stage it's still in Mexico and everyone is just holding their breath here.

We heard there a warning from the police. What are the main concerns?

The main concern is the sheer quantity of rain, the quantity of water that will be dumped on extremely dry terrain, dry landscape in Los Angeles and surrounding areas, very typical for this time of year, potentially in some of those areas that have been burned by the wildfires, either earlier this year or indeed in previous years. It makes those hillsides extremely unstable

when they're hit with large quantities of rain. So in the last few hours people have been trying to shore up those hillsides that are known to be vulnerable. People have been getting the free sunbugs from their local fire station. People have been heading out to stores and stocking up on emergency things like water and batteries as a warning of power cuts potentially over the next few hours, just preparing for this catastrophic emergency as it's been described by the authorities that could unfold in the next 12 hours. Peter Bowes in Los Angeles. Ecuadorians cast their votes on Sunday in elections that have been overshadowed by political assassinations and high levels of violence driven by foreign drug mafias. The presidential and legislative elections were triggered by President Guillermo Lasso to avoid being impeached on embezzlement charges. One presidential candidate was gunned down early this month as he left a campaign event. Speaking in the city of Guayaquil after casting his vote, Mr Lasso said he hoped for a peaceful atmosphere so the government could concentrate on helping its citizens.

I hope that the people's decision will be known today. It should be respected in an atmosphere of peace and tranquility in order to address the most pressing problems of the Ecuadorian

people. I got more on how the day went from our South America correspondent, Katie Watson, who's in Quito. There was a lot of fear heading up to the vote, you know, people who felt that they were a bit nervous about going out to vote. It's a obligatory to vote, so that certainly makes people get out and vote. But speaking to people here in the census, you know, everybody feels that it's really important to be able to choose the direction of politics, especially given what's happened, you know, not just in the campaign, but over the last few years, the growing violence,

growing organized crime in this country. But certainly the one unifying issue is security and peace and just a safer environment for families to grow here. And who are the main candidates? So the leading candidate is Luisa Gonzalez. She's a former protege of Rafael Correa, who was a president who has got a mixed legacy. He, you know, was very big on social programs. He was in charge of Ecuador during Commodities Boom, but he was also mired in corruption scandals and he now is in exile in Belgium. And she was leading the polls. Everybody talks about the fact that for none of us since his death has upended those, you know, and who knows what's going to happen now. But certainly she looks like she's still in the lead. Jaco Perez is another interesting candidate, an environmentalist and an indigenous leader. So there is lots of different people, but all wanting the same, which is peace and security here. Katie Watson in Ecuador. Russia's first moon mission in nearly 50 years has ended in failure. The country's space agency Roscosmos said its lunar 25 spacecraft, which was unmanned, spun out of control and crashed into the surface of the moon. It was Russia's first launch into outer space since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Paul Moss has the details.

It started well enough. Just over a week ago, a Soyuz rocket blasted off from Russia's Vostoshny Cosmodrome in the country's Far East. On board, a landing craft that was supposed to prove that Russia was well and truly back in the space race.

Lunar 25 had an important scientific mission. Landing at the moon's south pole, it would investigate whether the surface had ice underneath. But lunar 25 was launched with Russia under sanctions, so its space agency couldn't get hold of some technical equipment it wanted. Had the mission succeeded, President Putin would have been able to say it proved the country's resilience in the face of western hostility. Instead, he'll be trying to find out why

lunar 25 crashed. And there could be more humiliation. India's Chandryan-3 spacecraft is due to attempt to south pole landing on Wednesday. This relative newcomer to the space race potentially succeeding where Russia failed.

Paul Moss, what exactly went wrong then and where does this leave Russia's space ambitions?

Dr Stephen Hall is assistant professor of Russian politics at the University of Bath in southern England. We don't quite know what went wrong. I've seen some reports that said that it went on a different trajectory. I've seen some reports that said that the stabilization system that's supposed to speed it up and break it down, you know, failed as well. So when they were trying to push it into its trajectory towards the moon, the braking system failed and it hit the moon at 1.5 times more velocity than it should have done or it spiraled out of control. We simply don't know yet, but it's certainly a disaster for Roscosmos, the Russian space agency.

Very much a dent in Russia's space ambitions, you would say.

Oh, absolutely. I mean, for a regime like Putin's, the spires to not re-creating the USSR, but being the legacy of the Soviet Union and space was a big part of that legacy, it certainly is a failure. It's the first time that Russia has tried to send a probe or even some sort of lunar object to the moon. So this naturally is a huge dent in Roscosmos' image and in the Russian governments as well. But more immediately, this was a lost race against India, was it not?

Well, yes, it certainly was. I mean, here was Russia, as I said, the legacy of the Soviet Union being accused. It still needed to show that it was a great power in terms of the space race, if you want to call it that. It's now behind China, but it could still plausibly have beaten India. And interestingly, we saw Sergey Markov, a Kremlin propagandist on his Telegram channel, saying, well, it's unfortunate, but good luck to the Indians. So I think they've accepted that India is going to land its probe on the moon and Russia is going to be relegated to the fourth, if not the fifth or sixth space country, as it were.

Russia has already announced that a special commission will be set up to look into why the commission failed. So can we expect heads to roll?

Putin appointed the recent Roscosmos leader. So it's very unlikely that he would allow him to be removed. Putin does not like to have to remove people close to him, and he certainly doesn't like to have to remove people who are appointed by him. So I don't think that there will certainly be that major heads will roll. I think it will be that they will find a scapegoat, or they will blame failed technology, and that will be how it will end.

Is it possible, though, that Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine has had an effect in some way or other on its space program?

Absolutely, in terms of the fact that 2023 it was announced that Roscosmos is 60 billion rubles in debt, which is about just under £501 million. It is also the fact that there were lots of international agreement, well, some international agreements, that Roscosmos was working with other space agencies in Europe, with NASA as well. And these have obviously gone by the wayside. And certainly Russia's technology, at least domestic technology, does not have the same capacity as Western as American technology. Russia was very reliant on that. And with the war in Ukraine, that has also gone.

That was Dr Stephen Hall speaking to Julian Marshall.

Descendants of the 19th century British Prime Minister William Gladstone have said their ancestors' ownership of slaves amounted to a crime against humanity. The Prime Minister was the son of John Gladstone, one of the largest slave owners in the British West Indies. His

great-great-great-grandson Charlie Gladstone and other family members will travel to South America

to apologise and pay reparations, as Harry Farley reports.

Charlie Gladstone said he felt absolutely sick when he found out about his family's slave-owning past. His ancestor, John Gladstone, was a merchant who owned hundreds of enslaved workers toiling on sugar plantations in the Demerara region of Guyana. After slavery was abolished in 1833, he received the modern equivalent of around £10 million in compensation.

John Gladstone's son, the Liberal Prime Minister William Gladstone, began his career defending his father, before later describing slavery as the foulest crime that taints the history of mankind. Six members of the Gladstone family will travel to Guyana this week for the 200th anniversary of an uprising in 1823 that was brutally suppressed by their ancestor. They will pay reparations towards further research into the impact of slavery and apologise for John Gladstone's actions.

In a statement to the BBC, the Gladstone family said,

we know that we can't change the past, but we believe that we can make a better future.

Harry Farley. Vienna's central cemetery, the second largest in Europe, is where the composers Beethoven, Schubert and Johann Strauss are buried. But rather incongruously, people are also now growing vegetables there. Bethany Bell has been there to find out why. If you wander through these tree-lined avenues in Vienna's central cemetery with their rows of imposing tombs, I've just passed one which has got a great stone statue of a weeping angel on it, you come across this large vegetable garden, just a short walk from Beethoven's grave.

And here watering the plants is Rita from the urban gardening group Akehelden.

So we have an organic vegetable garden here. We grow several different vegetables from onions, zucchini, we have aubergines, we have pumpkins, tomatoes, paprika, we have several different salads, herbs and flowers here as well. And how do they taste? They taste wonderful, especially because the soil is really, really good. They taste fresh, they taste, they're full of taste.

I just love those vegetables. I don't want to eat any vegetables from supermarkets anymore because I know where they're coming from. I know that we have no chemicals used to grow them and

yes, when we harvest them they're ripe. How does it work? How do you get a plot in one of these cemeteries to grow vegetables? All of our gardeners here, they have family members that are buried in one of the cemeteries. I think it's really peaceful to work in the garden and in my opinion it can help with the process of grief. Julia Sterring is the spokesperson for Vienna cemeteries.

She says the allotments are proving popular. There's an area full of grass not being used for burial sites or graves in the last couple of years at least. So what we decided is,

as we're not using it as a grave site, why not try and garden right here so people can

see whether they like it or not. They do, as we know now. Has anyone come up to you and said they feel a bit weird about eating vegetables from a graveyard? Surprisingly, there were very little noises that were telling us, well not really sure whether that's a good idea or not. So the people who came here knew, well there weren't any people buried before. We used the free area.

So no one has actually been buried in this area where the vegetables are?

No one has been buried here. It's interesting to think that this huge cemetery, which is the final resting place for people like Beethoven, for Schubert, is now also a place where you can get a carrot or two. I wonder, I wonder what Beethoven would have thought about that? I'm sure he would have loved it. Look over there, there's a deer right next to us. Beautiful deer and I understand now why

this garden plot has a fence around it to keep the deer from eating the cabbages. Exactly, isn't it beautiful? That report was by Bethany Bell. Still to come? The frame is badly rusted. There are no wheels, no instruments, no seats, but it does have a gearbox.

Why a burnt-out shell of a car sold for nearly \$2 million at auction.

Welcome back to the Global News Podcast. Unexceptional. The response of the West African regional group Echo Us to Niger's Kooleaders after they said returning to democracy would take three years. Echo Us has repeatedly threatened to send troops into Niger if last month's coup isn't reversed. For speaking to the BBC, Echo Us's Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Abdel Fattah Musa, suggested the statement by the Nigerian military was, in fact, a negotiating tactic. Of course, that is not acceptable to Echo Us and I think that is probably their first offer. They are floating a kite and Echo Us is not going to accept that. We've asked them for the shortest possible time for the restoration of constitutional order in the country and we stand by it. The Kooleaders offer comes after they finally agreed to meet a delegation from Echo Us. On Sunday, there were demonstrations once again in the capital, Niame, in support of the coup.

Some of the placards displayed messages hostile to France, the former colonial power, and to Echo Us. I asked our reporter, Beverly Ochieng, where Echo Us goes from here. It does feel like uncharted territory, especially in light of some of Echo Us's previous responses to other military coups in the region. With Niger, it wants to adopt a much tougher stance, but every time there's a tough line of rhetoric, we find that the army comes out and it threatens or it defies that rhetoric. So we saw that just before that deadline to reinstate Bazoum had come in, the Hunter administration closed the airspace of Niger. And then as Echo Us was meeting to discuss a possible military intervention, the Hunter decided to appoint a fully fledged cabinet. And then as there was the flurry of meetings with some emissaries from neighboring Nigeria, called by Echo Us to intervene, there was still heightened activity by the Hunter. And now they've announced a three-year transition. It is part of negotiation tactic. The Hunter does seem to be keen to stay in power, but it is in a fragile position given that Niger is already quite volatile. This intervention, given the readiness of about 10 Echo Us members, is quite serious. And the escalation, both of rhetoric as well as the steps by the Hunter, is quite concerning on whether there will be any sort of pacification between the two sides.

And meanwhile, people in Niger are suffering because of the economic sanctions. We've seen protest yet again on the streets of the capital, Niame, lots of people turning out, waving Russian flags. Is this genuine support for the coup, or is this being staged by the military in order to try to show that there is support for it? Well, it feels like a mixture of both, because yes, certainly the economic situation is worse than these been reports of the price of basic commodities such as rice, sugar going up. The fact that electricity has been unreliable, neighboring Nigeria provides a significant amount of electricity to Niger, and there have been power cuts for some time. But at the same time, the momentum from protests since the military coup

has pretty much not stopped. In some instances, you'll find that there's nationwide reports on state TV about pro-Hunter protests. Some of it seems very opportunistic. There are definitely groups of people who have been feeling despondent because of insecurity and the feeling that the army being in charge might be able to be an adequate response to security. But if you're looking at examples such as neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso, the army hasn't been an adequate

solution to insecurity, and insecurity also feeds into the economy declining over time.

But there is a sense of solidarity for the Hunter, even though at this point, those alliances and even the groups emerging are still quite fragile.

Anti-government protests over living conditions are reported to be continuing in Syria's southern province of Suwaita. Unverified videos show hundreds of people gathered in the province's capital shouting slogans calling on President Bashar al-Assad to step down. A general strike has been announced there and shops have been told to close. Such open dissent in government-controlled

areas of the country is rare. With the help of allies Russia and Iran, President Assad has almost managed to win his country's long drawn out civil war. But his sanctions hit economy remains in deep

trouble. Could protests over economic hardship like the ones in Suwaita lead to a new threat to his rule? Here's our Middle East regional editor, Mike Thompson.

Anger and declining living conditions and the perception of being

neglected by the government in Damascus has been simmering for some time in Suwaita.

In these protests, late last year, crowds of people took to the streets, tearing down and burning pictures of President Bashar al-Assad and calling for him to go. The latest unrest, marked by blocked roads and burning tires in the streets, was sparked by government subsidy cuts that have greatly increased fuel and many other prices. Although this is a druid's majority area of the country that has remained largely neutral throughout Syria's long civil war, people here are no fans of the President, who many blame for their growing economic plight.

So far, he's unlikely to be threatened by this latest eruption,

but that could soon change if such discontent spreads.

Mike Thompson. A Ferrari racing car from 1954 has sold at auction in California for nearly two million dollars. Doesn't sound too unusual, does it? There is one problem, though. Instead of a gleaming, powerful machine, it's just a burnt out, rusty twisted shell, which only looks fit for the scrap heap. So why has someone paid so much for a car wreck? This report from Harry Bly. A weathered chassis of what was once a celebrated racing car was sold as one of 20 vintage Ferraris that were left entirely untouched in a barn in Florida for decades. And this one, a 1954 Ferrari 500 Mondial Spider Series 1, despite having had an estimate selling price of between 1.2 and 1.6 million dollars, looks like it's just been pulled out of a scrapyard. There are no wheels, no instruments, no seats, but it does have a gearbox and its original 3.0-litre inline-four engine. Of course, those don't work. The frame is badly rusted, but it has been cleaned up and is described as preserved in its race-damaged condition. Only 13 of these cars were made, and they were designed for the racetrack. This model won the World Championships twice in the 1950s, giving its name Mondial. This particular car was shipped to the United States in 1958, and not long after, it was involved in a serious crash. The wreckage was salvaged and bought by a Ferrari collector named Walter Medlin in 1978, where it went into storage.

And that brings us to the present day, where it and 19 other vintage Ferraris

were being sold in what was called the Lost and Found Collection by the auction house RM Sotheby's. The car exceeded its estimate, selling for 1.8 million dollars, which might seem a lot, but working models of this rare racing car have in the past gone for as much as 5 million dollars. Harry Bly. Cats and dogs, real and cartoon ones have been helping Ukrainians deal with the devastating impact of Russia's invasion. They've not only offered emotional support,

but also featured in social media accounts raising funds for charity and providing practical advice. Vitaly Shevchenko reports. Patron is a real dog, and he works for Ukraine's state emergency service. There's a postage stamp with Patron, and President Vladimir Zelensky awarded him a medal for dedicated service. He has met numerous dignitaries and celebrities visiting Kiev. His owner and handler at the emergency service, Mikhail Ilyev, tells me that by meeting foreign dignitaries, the diminutive Jack Russell Terrier has helped secure donations of vital mind clearing equipment. Patron, our little brother, our hero, has helped deliver a lot of information to people from abroad. They have helped us with all sorts of equipment, and we've been able to check more land, and we can react faster. Despite his celebrity status, Patron, his name means cartridge, still does his day job of detecting minds.

These sirens are from the Instagram account of Stepan the cat. He hails from Saltyvka, a district in Ukraine's second largest city, Kharkiv, that was heavily damaged by Russian shelling. Before the war, Stepan was just another incredibly cute cat from the internet, but now his account has more political commentary. It has switched from Russian to Ukrainian too. Last year, Stepan helped raised almost \$16,000 to help animals affected by war. His owner, Anna, told me more in the written message. Stepan the cat's main mission is to help other animals. For example, after the Kachovka dam was destroyed, Stepan was involved in raising funds for the evacuation of animals from flooded areas. And of course, Stepan is trying to help people, particularly children, forget the horror of war, at least for a little while.

So why are cats and dogs so helpful for raising funds and spreading advice? Here's Ukrainian author Olena Pavlova. Pictures and memes featuring cats can help deliver a lot of important ideas. They're easier to absorb. Cat pictures help us cope.

Olena created a cartoon character called Inzhir the cat. His name means fig in Ukrainian. Inzhir the cat is a natural antidepressant. I created him to make myself and also my readers feel better. He's positive, cuddly and nice, and he's helping people find hope and light inside themselves. Inzhir the cat's accounts and social media offer advice on issues ranging from fundraising to burnout. One post says everyone should be like a cat, because cats waste no effort, but are determined in achieving their goals. That report by Vitaly Shifchenko. And that's all from us for now, but there will be a new edition of the Global News podcast later. If you want to comment on this podcast or the topics covered, you can send us an email. The address is [globalpodcastatbbc.co.uk](mailto:globalpodcastatbbc.co.uk). This edition was mixed by Caroline Driscoll, a producer was Alison Davies, the editor is Karen Martin. I'm Janet Jalil. Until next time, goodbye.