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I'm Alex Ritzen and at 14 hours GMT on Friday the 17th of March these are our main stories. China's president announces a visit to Russia next week for talks with President Putin.

Slovakia follows Poland in sending fighter jets to Kiev and the luck of the Irish government ministers on a St Patrick's Day trip to 44 countries.

Also in this podcast three hospital workers and seven police officers in Virginia have been charged over a black man's death and according to some accounts torture. The weight of seven individuals on his body face down handcuffed with leg irons and you say my god why?

Let's start this podcast with the situation in Ukraine and a key question just how influential is China in deciding the outcome of the war? Next week the Chinese president Xi Jinping will travel to Russia for a three-day visit. China has insisted that it's a neutral player in the conflict but the West will see the trip as Beijing providing support for Moscow.

Ukraine's foreign minister who will hear from later in this podcast told the BBC that he doesn't think China is ready to arm Russia but neither does he believe Mr Xi's visit will result in peace. Wang Wenbin a foreign ministry spokesman in Beijing said that it would result in stronger ties. At present the situation in Ukraine unseen in a century is evolving at a faster pace and the world has entered a new period of instability and transformation. China and Russia are permanent members of the Security Council and major countries

and the significance of our relationship goes far beyond the bilateral scope. President Xi's visit will be a trip for friendship. It will further the trust and understanding between China and Russia. Before we go to our correspondent in Beijing let's hear this report from our Russia editor Steve Rosenberg who is in Moscow. This will be President Xi's first visit to Russia since Russian troops invaded Ukraine. The fact that the Chinese leader is coming signals Beijing's strong support for Moscow. There's no surprise about that. Putin and Xi share a similar worldview both embrace the idea of a multipolar world. Last year the two men declared their partnership has no limits but that's not strictly true. Up till now China has not supplied Russia with lethal aid to help it win the war in Ukraine, though the United States claims that China is considering doing so. As for the declared partnership between Moscow and Beijing, Russia with an economy one tenth the size of China's finds itself increasingly in the role of junior partner. The two leaders are expected to discuss the Chinese initiative to end the war in Ukraine but there is no official peace plan and there is deep skepticism in the West about whether China could broker peace in Ukraine.

Here's the view though of our Beijing correspondent Stephen MacDonald. China has really lifted expectations on what might be achieved in terms of this visit for three reasons. One it says it's impartial when it comes to the Ukraine war. Two is that it has sway Beijing has swayed with Moscow so you would think if they really wanted to they could unconvince Russia to for example step back a bit and number three because they've brokered this recent diplomatic agreement between Saudi Arabia

and Iran whereby they would resume diplomatic relations and so China's on a bit of a role in terms of being a sort of global peacemaker I suppose if you could put it that way or at least many would see them as that the problem is when you really drill down into it Beijing isn't actually

impartial it isn't neutral when it comes to the Ukraine war and all you have to do is watch the TV news every night the state-run TV news just not neutral because it runs the Kremlin's line it doesn't give any air time basically at all to what the Ukraine government thinks of that war in fact it doesn't even refer to a war it talks about the conflict certainly TV news it would never speak about an invasion and so as you can see it's not really a neutral player that said it's not going to stop the expectation that Xi Jinping being in Moscow could achieve some sort of a breakthrough well what sort of a breakthrough could it achieve given that background where certainly Western powers will not see it in any way as impartial really at the end of the day when Xi Jinping leaves Moscow will Vladimir Putin have a sense that China wants him to back off in Ukraine or will he have a sense that really I should just keep charging ahead because the most pessimistic analysis of this is that actually Russia is doing China's dirty work it's getting stuck into the west eating up all this ammunition and resources from the west this is something that China strategically would see as to its own advantage and so what's in it for China to stop the war to tell the truth I mean if we if we if we're to think of it in in the most sense or I think many hard heads wouldn't have great expectations or will he have a sense that president Xi is going to supply the Kremlin with weapons well this is what the the US government has been accusing China of doing of preparing to send weapons according to some analysts in the US China is already supplying this kind of dual use technology so for example you send parts for a plane but which can also be used to repair a jet fighter or you use some other sort of equipment actually can be used for a sort of military tracking device so in that sense it's already kind of supplying Russia if those reports are true. Stephen Macdonald in Beijing. Let's hear more now

about those comments made by Ukraine's foreign minister Dmitry Kuleba on those who back his nation in their defence against Russia and others who he said may have mistreated Ukraine and will be held to account he says when the war ends he told our correspondent James Landel in Kiev that delay by western allies in the delivery of weapons will cost the lives of Ukrainian soldiers. If one delivery is postponed for one day it means that someone is going to die on the front line it means that someone who could have been still alive will be lost. I will say enough has been done when we win the war and it applies to everyone evenly from the United States to the United Kingdom and other countries of the world. When we win then all the words of gratitude will be said and all the conclusions about those who misbehaved in the course of this war and mistreated Ukraine will be made to. You know war allows you to be honest even if you are a foreign minister. Of course if anyone in the world thinks that the way this or that country behaved itself or treated Ukraine at the darkest moment of its history and that will not be taken into account in building future relations these people just don't know how diplomacy works. Ukraine's foreign minister

Dmitry Kuleba but Russia seems just as committed to the fight as we heard from the Russian political

scientist and former advisor to President Vladimir Putin Sergey Markov. From our point of view independent Ukraine does not exist now because it's puppet regime of the United States of America and its proxy war of United States of America against Russia. Bakhmut is old Russian city. Donbass had been artificially joined to Ukraine. I think the biggest Putin mistake was not sent Russian troops in 2014 and 2015 when he must do it but he promised that time to the western leaders Minsk agreement should be respected. This war had been prepared by the United

States

from a Russian point of view. This war regarded as very bad but inevitable. For us it's a civil war or rather Russian people. Sergey Markov. Ukraine is still crying out for western military support. Some of this has been forthcoming but the West is yet to send its fighter jets which need high maintenance and training. For now it has to make do with aging Soviet era MiG fighter jets.

Today Slovakia followed Poland by promising to send them to Ukraine. I heard more from our Europe regional editor Danny Aberhardt. These are MiG 29 planes. They were produced first in the 1980s

in the Soviet Union during the Cold War and many of them were brought up by countries in Eastern Europe in the 90s. So they are old but they're still supersonic jets and crucially the Ukrainian military already uses these so air force pilots in Ukraine are familiar with them and wouldn't need training to fly them. So that's why it's important. The government in Slovakia say they're no longer needed. They were taken out of service last summer partly amid security fears that with Russian technicians working on them and Slovakia airspace is covered now by the Czech Republic and Poland in a deal arranged through NATO and Slovakia is waiting for US jets which are to be delivered next year. So of these jets 10 are thought to be operational. Three have been out of action for a long time and even those might be useful for Ukraine for providing spare parts to its fleet. Yeah because there was a similar offer from Poland yesterday. Yes Poland offered to send four working MiGs in the coming days and it plans to send more in the future. There might be it has more than 20 MiGs in total and Ukraine has obviously welcomed this but Ukraine really wants modern Western fighters. Yeah and any sign of those modern jets the sort that are used by Britain and the US perhaps. The US has repeatedly rejected these requests although President Biden

last month at one time he said for now so that opens up a small window of possibility that at some point in the future the US could provide things like the F-16s or Britain has said similar rejections for its Typhoon aircraft but these aircraft require a lot of training and other technical problems such as having long smooth runways for example so the West is very reluctant to do that also for reasons of seeming like an escalation. Danny Aberhart. Prosecutors in the US state of Virginia so they've charged three more people in connection with the death of a black man who died in custody at a state hospital. After watching a surveillance video of his death Ivo Otieno's mother called his death inhumane and said he was treated worse than a dog. David Lewis is following the story. New details have emerged overnight into the death of the Kenyan born Mr Otieno. The 28 year old aspiring hip-hop artist was being transported from the Henrico county jail to a nearby psychiatric hospital on the 6th of March when investigators said he became combative. His family said he was experiencing mental health distress and he died while being restrained by several officers. The preliminary report from the chief medical examiner's office identifies asphyxiation as a cause of death. At a news conference his family's lawyer Ben Crump said Mr Otieno was subjected to horrific treatment. You see in the video he is restrained with handcuffs he has leg irons on and you see in the majority mark of the video that he seems to be in between lifelessness and unconsciousness. Now the video which has not been released is the core piece of evidence in the case. Mr Crump went on to describe what he saw in the footage. You see him being restrained so brutally with knee on his neck the weight of seven individuals on his body while he's face down handcuffed with leg irons and you say my god why. So speaking alongside Mr Crump

Otieno's mother Caroline Uko said the footage had been distressing and claimed her son had been tortured and there have been a number of arrests. That's right three more central state hospitals and employees were arrested on Thursday charged with second-degree murder there in addition to seven

Henrico county police officers arrested on Tuesday and facing the same charge. We'll soon know a little more about the direction of this case there'll be a county court meeting next week and we should find out then which final charges will be brought. David Lewis the BBC has learned that negotiations to get the UK back into a major EU research programme could begin within weeks. Britain has been blocked from the horizon scheme because of the row about post-Brexit arrangements for Northern Ireland. Our correspondent Jessica Parker is in Brussels.

Horizon is the EU's flagship science programme and the UK was supposed to become an associate member of it after Brexit but its membership was never ratified because of the dispute about trade rules for Northern Ireland. When a deal on that was struck in principle last month hopes rose for fast progress on horizon. So reports the prime minister was skeptical about the scheme's value sparked dismay among university and business leaders who say the stalemate has been damaging for both research and innovation. Now UK officials say that while they'll still work on a plan B negotiations for access could begin within weeks but because Britain has already missed out on part of the seven-year programme there may be some haggling about the UK's financial contribution and its ability to shape the scheme. Jessica Parker now before we move on with news of this weekend's happy pot here's Andrew Peach. Yes the happy pot is half an hour

of the happiest news stories in the world and you'll find them here every Saturday. There's a big tech story this week about using a data centre to heat a swimming pool for free. I've been talking to the man at the centre of it about how he had the idea in a pub and how his idea might change how we

heat lots of things. There are academic studies about happiness published pretty much every week going to hear from the oldest this weekend at Harvard University in Massachusetts. They've been working on it since 1938 and we've got many more of our listeners with the sounds that make them happy this week from Berlin, Tallahassee, Vienna and Mexico City. Oh and Alison who thinks she's got the happiest job in the world. Do get involved send me your happy news global podcast at bbc.co.uk and join me Andrew Peach for the happy pod this weekend. Still to come in the global news

podcast. It looked quite professional till at some point they were announcing maintenance and the money just disappeared. How thousands of people say they lost their life savings after trying to ride the cryptocurrency wave. As we approach the 20th anniversary of the invasion of Iraq one searing image has come to symbolize the suffering of civilians. It was of 12 year old Ali Abbas in a hospital bed with both arms amputated and burns all over his torso. He had lost 16 relatives in an American missile strike. After treatment in Kuwait he was flown to the UK to continue medical treatment and he now lives in London where Caroline Hawley who was the BBC's Baghdad correspondent went to meet him. A warning some of the details in this report are distressing.

The invasion of Iraq blew Ali's life apart and still affects him every hour of every day.

As it began his father had been excited to see the back of Saddam Hussein.

You know when he see the Americans coming you know he'll just make like a party for them

you'll make a barbecue you know we were just hoping for a better life we were thinking that getting rid of Saddam we will have a good life and a good future for Iraq.

Ali's family had left the capital Baghdad for safety but returned thinking the worst was over just hours before their home was hit by an American rocket while the family were asleep.

The fire everywhere I I hear my my mother screaming and my father also yeah it was it was terrible I felt the fire burning my my body and my arms and what is worse even to inhale the smoke was was really really hard. And who rescued you? My neighbour you know he got my father and mother first you know and then they were they were dead you know they were gone and so he got me

he got me out after that and yeah they put me in a car and sent me to the hospital. I remember my neighbour was telling me that when he pulled me out of the rubble because my arm was so badly burned so when he pulled me out one of my arms came off. Can I ask how your injuries have affected your life what are the things you can and can't do? My amputation is so high up you know it's not so easy to use prosthetic arms you know I tried using them yeah but at the moment I'm I'm trying to use my feet you know so much easier than prosthetic arms like I can I can write with my feet I can use the phone. Using his toes Ali's just dialed up his five-year-old son Yusuf who's in Baghdad with his mother though he hopes that one day he'll be able to bring him to the UK. He's always spoiling me you know he doesn't let me do anything he's trying to be my carer you know he's taking good care of me yeah I can also hug him with my with my feet so it's it's okay with that. Eli's going out with me in the car a lot he always gets the car keys open the door for me before we go. This is an amazing video of Ali driving in Baghdad with friends music's blaring he's got one foot on the steering wheel the other on the brake and just incredibly dexterous with his feet.

I have been through a very difficult times especially just after the injury I have to deal with it without parents and without arms so it was very difficult in the beginning but I've seen many people with injuries that are much worse than mine and I always thank God for what I what I have got so I think of the positive things. Ali Abbas ending that report by Caroline Hawley. Thousands of people are believed to have lost their savings after investing in a crypto trading app called iERNBOT. Experts who have investigated the company say it could be one of the largest crypto scandals to date. Trading in cryptocurrencies has become popular as people are often attracted by the promise of large rewards over short periods of time but law enforcement agencies advise caution as they're seeing a growing number of scams. Sara Monetta reports. We had enough knowledge to think this might be a scam the fact that in between us and the company

there was a reputable teacher made it that we didn't check too much. Roxana is from Romania. She lost hundreds of euros when she invested in a crypto trading app called iERNBOT which was sponsored by a leading IT expert in the country. She's asked me not to reveal her identity so we are not using her real name. It looked quite professional till at some point they were announcing maintenance. Roxana says the app blocked all withdrawals and when the alleged maintenance was over things didn't go back to normal. I made the request and the money just disappeared so portfolio became zero but I was never credited with any money. iERNBOT presents itself as a US-based company with apparently excellent credentials and a top-notch marketing team. On YouTube there are several promotional videos explaining the app. I would like to showcase the iERNBOT and on TikTok content creators from different countries were recruited to promote it but when we fact check the information on their website a few red flags come up. The man who's

mentioned as the company's founder told us he never heard of them. iERNBOT claims it's a strategic partner of MIT and companies like Huawei and Qualcomm but they too say they don't know them. My name is Sylviata Boushka I'm a researcher with the Center for Legal Education and Research. After thousands of investors lost their money in Romania Sylvia started to look into the company. When they have enough money invested in a specific country they do not allow that country to withdraw

money and they open other countries at the global level. It's closer to a Ponzi scheme and not to real business. We have reached out for a comment to iERNBOT but they have not engaged with us.

In some countries people still trust the app. Dozens took part in this recruiting event that was organized in Medellin in Colombia by a group of local mentors. Andres is one of them and he still believes the company is legitimate. They had their registration in the US showed they were legit and I still believe they are. In Colombia withdrawals have been blocked since December and now some local organizers are receiving threats. People took loans to invest and many people were affected. As the leaders did not have answers people started to get angry. With the help of an analyst we managed to identify one main crypto wallet that received payments from around 13,000 potential victims for a total profit of almost 1.3 million dollars in less than one year. But we couldn't identify the people behind this wallet. So the question is in cases like this how can those responsible be tracked down and held to account?

One of the challenges is to identify and attribute to who the illicit actor is, where the value is going and then being able to take investigative steps and you know law enforcement action. John Wyman is the chief of the virtual assets unit at the FBI. Knowledge and doing some due diligence before you know the investment process is critical. It's like anything else if it sounds too good to be true it oftentimes is. The FBI has told us they cannot confirm nor deny that they've opened an investigation into ironbott but they insist the best way to defeat scammers is prevention. Sarah Monetta. An Australian has broken the world record for the longest surf session. Blake Johnston has eclipsed the previous mark of 30 hours and 11 minutes at a beach in Sydney and as Phil Mercer reports from Sydney he wanted more. Blake Johnston has deserved the cheers and support he's received. He said he felt pretty cooked after catching more than 500 waves during his non-stop record-breaking attempt at Cranulla Beach in Sydney. He was surfing for more than 30 hours and said he wanted to keep going and reach 40 hours in the water. Yeah, pretty good. Yeah, I still got a job to do though. I said 40 so I'll go and give it a crack. Yeah, pretty cooked. I'm pretty cooked. Yeah, thanks everyone. You're the best. Everyone deserves to feel awesome. So deserve to yeah, take care of yourselves and yeah. The surf here in Sydney has been good for this exhausting record-breaking attempt but Blake Johnston's efforts have put him at risk of infected ears, dehydration, hypothermia and drowning. There is a very serious side to this marathon. The 40-year-old former Australian professional surfer is raising thousands of dollars for youth mental health projects. A decade ago his father took his own life. He wants the children he now coaches to have the resilience and support to cope with life's challenges. Phil Mercer in Sydney. Now giving babies tiny tastes of smooth peanut butter could dramatically cut peanut allergies. According to a new study giving little ones a taste during weaning could cut peanut allergy cases by up to an amazing 77%. So how did scientists come up with it? Here's our health and science correspondent

James Gallagher. This is a big study that's been conducted by a team of researchers in the United

Kingdom and the United States but its implications are truly global and they've been looking at updated evidence that's come out over the past 15 years or so on what happens when you give peanut butter and things like that earlier on in life and showing that you can massively reduce the risk of peanut allergy and that's in sharp contradiction to what many people will be familiar with because you don't have to go back that long to when the advice was don't give peanut before the

age of three. This is a series of scientific studies and this is an official government recommendation but truly it would apply globally because the findings have been tested in lots of different races and ethnicities and in many respects it is a global story really because this actually started in Israel where peanuts is given much earlier in life but peanut based snack is given from kind of like earliest weaning and some researchers went there and went why is nobody here having peanut allergy and yet it is soaring in other countries like in the United Kingdom it's like one in 50 children now has a peanut allergy and it really stemmed from there and showing that actually early exposure while the immune system is still learning and developing and trying to figure out what's friend and what's foe what's safe to eat that earlier exposure is what can help prevent peanut allergy. James Gallagher as I record this it is March the 17th and around the world people are celebrating St Patrick's Day marking Ireland's national saint and national day the Irish government well most of it has chosen to spend the day elsewhere though 36 members of the government are traveling to 74 cities in 44 countries this week I asked our Ireland correspondent Chris Page who was overseas why they'd left Ireland. In Irish government circles

Alex just a point everybody is overseas and this is really as big as St Patrick's Day tradition in political circles in Ireland now as the parades are on the streets of Dublin and New York and Sydney and many other cities around the world to commemorate all things Irish really the Irish government in Dublin and also politicians in northern Ireland they see St Patrick's Day as the key opportunity in the year to promote Irish interests abroad so obviously those are diplomatic interests cultural interests but maybe most of all economic interests so really this whole week Irish ministers see as the best opportunity they have to travel the world and sell Ireland as an investment destination so they really hope to come back to their home countries to their constituents to their citizens with news of jobs announcements with news of multi-million dollar investments by overseas companies so while it seems like it's a major diplomatic push that basically there's nobody at home well Ireland would say that in the long run it really boosts the economy substantially yeah yeah you say there's no one at home who is minding the shop basically civil servants it seems to me government officials just about every government minister is overseas the head of the Irish government known as the Taoiseach Leo Varadkar he is in Washington to meet with President Biden now there's a tradition there that the Taoiseach gives a bowl of shamrock a plant very much associated with St Patrick's Day in Ireland to the president and that's happened regularly nearly every year in fact since the 1950s so that's a reflection of the fact that lots of people living in the US have Irish ancestry and what Ireland Irish ministers will say is look what country in the world really has annual access to the White House like that so as far as Ireland is concerned it's a high point of the year it is a public holiday at home but abroad is a highly significant time where Ireland celebrates the fact that it is and I think we can say this objectively a country that really punches above its weight internationally Chris Page and that's all from us for now but there'll be a new edition

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / China's Xi to meet Putin in Moscow

of the global news podcast later if you want to comment on this podcast all the topics covered in it you can send us an email the address is globalpodcast at bbc.co.uk you can also find us on twitter at global news pod this edition was mixed by Russell Newlove and the producer was Stephanie

Prentiss the editor is Karen Martin I'm Alex Ritzen until next time goodbye