

Hello, this is the Global News Podcast from the BBC World Service, with reports and analysis from across the world. The latest news seven days a week. BBC World Service podcasts are supported by advertising.

This is the Global News Podcast from the BBC World Service.

I'm Jackie Leonard and in the early hours of Saturday, the 11th of March, these are our main stories. Iran and Saudi Arabia restored diplomatic ties over seven years. The US sees its first major bank failure since the 2008 financial crisis and Donald Trump has been invited to testify to a grand jury over the Stormy Daniels case.

Also in this podcast, the story of how a young Afghan woman and her family escaped from the Taliban to safety in Germany.

Every moment whilst I was in Afghanistan, I was scared that someone is looking at me.

I was worried that someone would spot me.

There have been years of diplomatic dispute, political posturing and proxy warfare. But now the Saudis and Iranians are turning over a new page and have agreed to re-establish diplomatic relations. The rapprochement comes after Beijing brokered talks in China.

Speaking in Beijing, Ali Shemchani, Secretary of the Iranian Supreme National Security Council said he hoped the agreement would bring the two countries together.

At the end of the talks, we reached a conclusion to start a new chapter after seven years of severed relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia. We considered the matters of the two countries and the security and future of the region to prevent meddling from countries outside the area and western states and consistent meddling from the Zionist regime in the region.

Our security correspondent Frank Gardner gave us his assessment.

This is the culmination of six months of sit-down talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia, mostly in Baghdad in Iraq. I have to say this has caught a lot of people by surprise, including in the Middle East, because it doesn't change the fact that Saudi Arabia and Iran don't like each other. They have a deep, profound historic mistrust. There are a lot of issues in the region where they are on opposite sides of the table, the most obvious being Yemen, where the Saudis have supported the legitimate Yemeni government in exile and the Iranians are supporting

the Houthis, the rebels. But then you've got conflicts in Lebanon, well not conflict in Lebanon, but politics in Lebanon where they're on different sides, but particularly in Syria and Iraq, and Saudi Arabia's treatment of its Shia minority. There have been instances in the past where there have been terrible stampeds or protests at the Hajj in Mecca, and of course in 2016 the Saudis executed a prominent Shia cleric called Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr and Iranian mobs or protesters then stormed Saudi embassy and consulates in Iran, and diplomatic relations were broken off. So they don't trust each other, but this is a case of real politic. They both live in a dangerous region, they've got to get on together, and they've decided there's more to be gained by signing this than not. But I think there are, well I know because I've spoken to some people who are saying, yeah, you know what, let's just see. I don't think this is worth the paper it's written on.

What can you tell us about the Chinese involvement?

Well this is really interesting. So this was brokered by Wang Yi, the most senior diplomat in the CCP, in the Chinese Communist Party, and I think it's indicative of China's growing

role in the Middle East and on the international stage. A lot of people are very aware that America, if not actually withdrawing troops from the Gulf region, is losing interest in it. And it all started really with the President Obama's talk about a pivot to the East, to the Asia-Pacific region. The Gulf Arabs are very aware that they feel they can't rely entirely on America as a dependable ally. They look at what happened in 2011, in the Arab Spring, when Washington dumped President Mubarak of Egypt like a hot potato. The moment those crowds came out onto the streets in Tahrir Square, in Cairo, they dropped him. And they also look at how the crowds came out onto the streets in Syria, and the Russians stood by their ally, President Bashar al-Assad, a horrible human rights record that he has. The Russians stood by him, and the guy is still in power. So people respect that in that part of the world. So there is a feeling that America is an unreliable ally. And that doesn't mean to say that countries like Saudi are dumping America. They're not. It's still their principal security guarantor, and they're still their principal weapons supplier. But it means that they are diversifying. And having China guarantee, or at least underwrite this agreement, is a big incentive to both Saudi and Iran not to break it.

That was Frank Gardner. The UK is to pay more than \$600 million to France over three years, in an effort to help it prevent people traffickers from sending migrants across the English Channel in small boats. The agreement was announced after talks in Paris between the British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and President Emmanuel Macron. It was the first summit between the leaders of the UK and France for five years. Mr. Sunak told a news conference the agreement took cooperation to a new level. We're announcing a new detention centre in northern France, a new command centre bringing our enforcement teams together in one place for the first time, and an extra 500 new officers patrolling French beaches. All underpinned by more drones and other surveillance technologies that will help ramp up the interception rate. President Macron hailed the talks as a new beginning in the British-French relationship, saying that Brexit had left a lot of issues that needed sorting out.

On the short front, what we have to do is to fix the consequences of the Brexit. A lot of issues we have are direct consequences of the Brexit, and probably some of these consequences were underestimated, but we have to fix them. But what we want to do is now to build new partnerships on defence and security.

Our political correspondent Rob Watson told us about the summit's significance.

This is a hugely significant moment in British and European politics, Jackie, because if you think about it, relations between the UK and France, but not just France, the whole of the European Union have been fairly calamitous since 2016. This is the two countries clearly absolutely determined to press a reset button, and these are two of the biggest, most powerful countries in Europe, so that indeed is very important development.

And to what extent is the migration stuff that was agreed today really more of the same, and what has been the reaction to it here in the UK?

It is more of the same in the sense that it's about more French law enforcement, more police, more drones, at some point a new detention facility. Now, what critics here in the UK are saying is, hang on a minute, we've been giving money to the French authorities for some time, and yet the boats keep coming. The counter-argument from that to that from the government here and from the government in France as well, the problem would be even worse and there would be even more boats. But of course, I guess the problem that Rishi

Sunak and President Macron have left themselves as well, it's a pretty concrete promise that the British Prime Minister has made, that is to cut the numbers of boats coming, and well, we'll all know whether that's happened or not.

Now Mr Macron did talk about Brexit having thrown up lots of issues that need fixing, rich things, and how easy will that be, Rob?

Do you know the most striking thing, Jackie, was the way in which President Macron answered that question was a reminder, rather uncomfortable, I suspect, for his British interlocutor, that France and indeed all of Britain's allies continue to think of Brexit as a rightly or wrongly, as a terrible own goal, as a terrible mistake that Britain has made. What did he mean by the things that need fixing? Well, I think it's cooperation over issues like science, cooperation over trade, there's already been of course that new agreement over post-Brexit trade for Northern Ireland, and clearly there's good intention on both sides. But one suspects, looking forward, how easy it'll be, well, the problem is that the logic at the heart of Brexit is that Britain thinks that it's better off politically, socially, economically, diplomatically, outside of that club, outside of the European Union, so to that extent there are always bound to be sort of tensions in the relationship, not just with Britain and France, but the EU more widely.

That was Rob Watson. Now, you might have heard in our earlier edition of this podcast that the US Silicon Valley Bank is in trouble, while now Californian banking regulators have shut it down. It's the largest banking collapse since the crisis of 2008. Financial troubles at the bank prompted jitters in banking shares around the world, and brought back uneasy memories of the 2008 crisis. But the director of the US Office of Management and Budget, Shalanda Young, says the system is now in a much stronger position.

Our banking system is fundamentally different because of the changes that we put in place in 2008. For example, they have to hold more capital. They undergo stress tests. So we know that we had to build more resilience into our banking system, which allows it to withstand these kinds of shocks. So I do have faith that we have the tools for this sector and for our regulators to be able to absorb.

The bank's customers have been told they will have access to their money again on Monday. Our New York business correspondent, Michelle Flurry, explained how the bank had got to the point of collapse.

What's remarkable about all of this is really the speed in which events have happened. You go back a couple of days ago, and the bank said that as a result of a bond sale on which they made a loss, they were looking to raise funds to cover that, and they failed to do that. And what happened is that when they said they were seeking to raise funds to cover this loss, that sparked a panic. The trust between shareholders, investors, and its customers essentially eroded. And it eroded at such speed that we now find ourselves in the situation where the US government has effectively come in and said it's taking over the bank, creating a new bank, and is hoping to find a buyer ultimately for this firm to keep it going.

But what it means is that its customers, many of whom are tech startups, when they started sort of to get nervous, they rushed to withdraw their money, and that really kind of created this snowball effect that led us to where we are today.

So potentially, could it spread? Are there echoes of what happened in 2008, 2009?

Well, I think that's certainly what investors around the world have been asking themselves. Is this a one-off event, or is it a sign of a sort of broader contagion? This in part goes back to the end of rock bottom interest rates. Typically, when interest rates go up, the value of bonds and bond prices tend to go down. And in the case of this bank, they were forced to sell some bonds at a loss. And the question is, is that going to be a problem for other firms? Now, you talk to people in the industry, they say, no, they don't think so. This was a unique situation for this particular bank. The question is going forward, what it will mean for its customers, all of these startups who may not be able to make payroll next week.

That was Michelle Flurry. The bodies of two Americans who were kidnapped and killed in Mexico have been handed over to the U.S. authorities. They were attacked in the border city of Matamoros,

where they had traveled with two other people who have now returned to the U.S.

On Thursday, suspected members of a drug cartel handed over five people they say were responsible for the killings. Our correspondent, Will Grant, reports from Mexico City.

The Americans had reportedly traveled to Mexico last week for one of them to undergo a minor cosmetic procedure when gunmen surrounded their vehicle and fired on them. All four were kidnapped and two were killed. The abduction prompted a city-wide manhunt in Matamoros, involving Mexican and U.S. authorities.

Yesterday, a local cartel handed over the suspected kidnappers. Pictures of the five men lying face down in the street, their hands tied and their t-shirts pulled up over their heads, were published by Mexican newspapers. A letter left beside them, apparently from a splinter group of the golf cartel, apologized to the local community, saying the men had acted without authorization. It's now being reported that the Americans had criminal records for minor drug offenses which are being investigated by the Mexican authorities. One of the victims is thought to have been charged with manufacturing illegal narcotics with an intent to supply. Will Grant

For five years, Donald Trump has been the subject of an investigation into payments allegedly made on his behalf to the former porn star Stormy Daniels. Now prosecutors in New York are reported to have offered the former president an opportunity to testify before a grand jury next week. Stormy Daniels said she received \$130,000 before the presidential election in 2016 to keep quiet about their sexual relations. Mr. Trump denies any affair and denies knowledge

of a payment. Our correspondent, Neda Taufik, in New York, explained the significance of the prosecutor's alpha.

Neda Taufik

In New York, a grand jury is usually called by prosecutors to decide if there's enough evidence to move forward in charges. Now, it is common for a defendant in a potential case to be invited to testify before that grand jury. That is their right. Now, I think it's very important to understand that that does not necessarily mean prosecutors have made a decision to move forward with charges, but nevertheless, this would be a key step in that process if he does, in fact, decide to charge a former president Trump.

Neda Taufik

Okay, so being clear, no decision has been made yet, but if he were to face charges,

would that necessarily scupper any possible run for the White House next year?

Neda Taufik

Well, there's actually nothing that would stop Donald Trump from running if Republicans nominate him as their candidate. Now, people may be surprised to hear that, but that is the case. He would be the first American president to face criminal charges. So far, Donald Trump has only faced civil charges. He obviously has a lot of inquiries and civil cases ongoing at the moment. And I think for him, a key issue, right, at the moment is this idea of whether he is electable. I mean, a lot of Republicans are now debating this idea about whether he has just too much baggage to make him a viable candidate, but nothing would stop him from actually running.

Neda Taufik

You did mention other charges that Mr. Trump and his legal team are having to deal with. Just run us through what some of those are.

Neda Taufik

Yeah, there are some other potential criminal inquiries going on. In Georgia, you have the Fulton County District Attorney investigating whether he interfered in the 2020 election. Remember famously the phone calls where he told the Secretary of State to find him the extra votes. Then there's also, at the federal level, we still have the special counsel who's looking into, again, that alleged effort to overturn the election results and how he handled classified documents that special counsel's work is ongoing. And then here in New York, again, that civil case into whether Mr. Trump inflated his business assets and falsified documents to get favourable loans.

That was Neda Taufik.

Still to come on this podcast.

With Elton John, for example, Elton was very clear in his instructions that I could ask him anything right from the first moment that I met him.

We'll hear from a filmmaker on the art of the biopic.

In February 2022, a video emerged of a young Afghan woman screaming for help while her door was being kicked in by the Taliban. Little is known about what took place where she was taken or why. The BBC's Yalda Hakim travelled to Afghanistan after gaining access to her and her family once they were released from prison and as they plotted their escape from Afghanistan to Europe.

When I used to travel, I always packed light. Now I pack because I want to leave Afghanistan. 25-year-old Tamana grimaces as she neatly folds a summer dress into her suitcase. She dreams of leaving the country as she faces the prospect of yet another move, to yet another safe house.

It's like a forced evacuation. I grew up here and now I am forced to live to survive.

Since 2022, I'm in Afghanistan to meet with Tamana Pariani and her sisters. Sitting in the living room of the safe house, they've been staying in since their release from prison. One of the sisters, Zarmina, recalls the night the Taliban turned up at their door, changing their lives forever.

The knocking got louder and louder, which was horrible. Then they were kicking the door. I was terrified. I thought they would rape me and my sisters. I wanted to escape so I jumped from the third floor. My sisters tried to stop me, but I couldn't bear it.

Zarina's 18-year-old sister Karishma looks on, solemn-faced, as she relives their three weeks in prison and the abuse they faced at the hands of one of their Taliban guards. I thought he is going to kill us. He came towards me and kicked me in the head. I got two black eyes. Then he went for Zarina and then Parwana. He warned us, if we hear you, next time will be worse than this.

The family falls silent. The trauma of their experience all too evident. Tamana stands in front of a mirror and adjusts her niqab, preparing for the move. Staying hidden is vital when changing location. The car in front is what Tamana is using to get to the next location. We're going through multiple Taliban checkpoints and I can imagine it's quite nerve-racking for her. The safe house is on the other side of town. The owner did not want to be identified for his safety, but agreed to speak with me and explain why he allowed her to stay in the house. As a human being, we're born to help each other. When you see someone who is in danger and are pretty sure her life is in jeopardy and we have the experience of young ladies in our age and her ambition got perished and I don't want to see what happened to those girls who happened to her.

As the night draws in, I leave Tamana and her family in their new accommodation, not knowing when or if I'll see them again. Months later, a message suddenly comes through. After five failed attempts to leave the country, Tamana and her family finally made it across the border to Pakistan and then on to Germany. I go to meet up with them at their temporary accommodation in Cologne. The relief at their escape is clear, as Zarina explains. Every moment while I was in Afghanistan, I was scared that someone is looking at me. I was worried that someone would spot me. They've been in Germany for just over a week and are starting to process what they've been through and despite the smiles, the trauma is evident. Even now, I close the bedroom door. I think of the day the Taliban broke the doors and windows of our house. I think about how I have to sleep in a room where the doors and windows are safe. After lunch, we take a stroll into the city centre. The sisters' faces light up as they spot an Afghan flag chalked on the ground. A light moment. Despite their new found safety, Afghanistan is never far from their mind. Yalda Hakim. A first flight has arrived in the city of Goma in eastern Congo as part of the European Union's new operation to help hundreds of thousands of people displaced by conflict there. Further clashes are taking place between the Congolese army and M23 rebels three days after a ceasefire was supposed to have begun there. This follows peace talks mediated by the Angolan president. The UN refugee agency spokesman Matthew Saltmarsh says a large number of people are having to leave their homes due to the violence. UNHCR teams reported the most horrifying testimonies of human rights violations in affected areas, especially in Rishiru and Maseesi territories, including arbitrary killings, kidnapping, extortion and rapes. Where access permits UNHCR teams are positioned to provide psychosocial counselling and community support to manage the traumas that displaced people are experiencing. Our Africa regional editor is Will Ross. The European Union has decided to start what it's calling an air bridge operation, where it's really going to over a period of time bring in mostly food and medicine to help the enormous number of people who are displaced. They announced this last weekend and said that basically humanitarian agencies can't cope with the demand at the moment because as the fighting continues more and more people are fleeing the villages and heading a lot of them towards Goma, but it varies depending on where the attacks happen. So the EU has

started flying in this aid, which is obviously a very expensive way to bring in what's needed, but they're saying that that's the only way at the moment because the needs are so great. The ceasefire is supposed to have begun, but there are reports it's been breached already. Breached already and numerous times with the M23 rebels who are widely reported to be backed by Rwanda, blaming the army, the Congolese army for starting offensive operations and shelling positions and the Congolese military saying exactly the opposite, saying it's the M23 that have refused to abide by the ceasefire. It was actually Emmanuel Macron last weekend, the French president saying that this ceasefire was going to come into place on Tuesday and he said that the M23 had been involved in the negotiations, so he was sort of bigging this up and saying, you know, this is a real chance, but by the beginning of the week it was pretty clear that things weren't changing for the better and we've had numerous breaches of that ceasefire already and it's now getting to a stage where you're kind of wondering what is going to bring about an end to the fighting because every week there are more people being displaced. The UN have said today that 300,000 were displaced

just during last month and obviously there's pressure on Rwanda, which although it denies backing the M23, numerous reports have found evidence that it is backing the group. So there's more and more pressure on Rwanda, but beyond words at the moment, nothing seems to be changing

things there and it's quite evident that the M23 group is not keen to give up the territory that it's captured over the last few months.

That was Will Ross. Barcelona are footballing giants with a trophy cabinet that is the envy of even some of Europe's biggest clubs, but now the public prosecutor's office in Spain has charged Barcelona with corruption. It all centres around millions of dollars in payments made by the club to a senior member of Spain's referees committee and the implications could be huge to explain here's Nigel Adderley.

Well these charges, Jacqui, are criminal rather than sporting ones. They result from a tax investigation into a company owned by Jose Maria Enriquez Negreira, who was vice president of the referees committee in Spain. And it's emerged that Barcelona paid this company nearly seven million dollars over a 17-year period from 2001. Now none of this has been disputed by Barcelona. They say the payments were for a form of consultancy and the grade would help them in compiling reports about referees who were due to take charge of Barcelona games. So players would have an idea of how they officiate and things to avoid. And the payment stopped when the grader left his position in 2018. And during this period from 2001 Barcelona had a real golden age. They dominated Spanish and European football. And the question left hanging in the air was, as they were so good, why did they pay millions of dollars to a top refereeing official? And the Spanish prosecutors are keen to find out and they've charged Barcelona,

two former club presidents and the grader with corruption, breach of trust and keeping false business records. And so what might happen to Barcelona? And indeed, have there been any response from the footballing authorities? Not yet. Barcelona can't receive any sporting sanction in Spain from La Liga that the league they play in because stripping of titles and honours won't happen because there's a three-year statute of limitation. But European football's governing body UEFA have requested more information on the case. Of course, Barcelona won a

number

of Champions Leagues, the European Cup, during that period. The Barcelona president Juan Laporta, who was also president between 2003 and 2010, has also denied the club ever tried to bribe referees and he said that the consultancy is habitual in Spain. This sort of thing goes on a lot. And this comes with the team top of La Liga at the moment, heading for their first league title for four years. That was Nigel Adderley. Film biographies, biopics make great entertainment. And there are quite a few about well-known people, especially rock stars plotting their rise and then fall, maybe with another rise at the end. Or maybe not. The recent Elvis one comes to mind, nominated for best picture in the Oscars this weekend. But there's Rocket Man about Elton John, Bohemian Rhapsody about Freddie Mercury and Queen and plenty more. Now, a feature of some of the most memorable is that they are the authorised stories. They have family permission and that's how they get rights to the music. One biopic that hasn't been made is a much anticipated Martin Scorsese film about Frank Sinatra. Scorsese and the Sinatras did not see eye to eye. An authorised musical about Sinatra is now coming to the stage in Birmingham in September. Evan Davis asked Dexter Fletcher, the director of Rocket Man, who also produced Bohemian Rhapsody, the Queen biopic, if authorised is the same as sanitised.

It really depends on the subject matter. I've done three biopic, two of people living and one of someone who's died. And I felt actually, you know, the sanitised versions, if there is such a thing, tend to come more from the estate or the loved ones of people who have passed away because they're sort of protecting a memory and an image. And I think that because they don't have direct access to the sources it were, that they maybe tend to become overprotective or kind of cost it about what they feel is permissible or not. I mean, with Elton John, for example, Elton was very clear in his instructions that I could ask him anything right from the first moment that I met him. But he's there to authorise that, literally. Whereas the other situation is that you have people maybe second guessing what people want revealed about themselves. Well, tell us about the Bohemian Rhapsody experience. Was that one where there were people being too protective?

Um, well, yeah, I mean, it's tricky. It was a degree of that, I think, but only coming from the best possible place, you know, because Freddy's there not there to defend himself. So that responsibility comes to the people who knew him, worked with him and loved with him and were close to him. And also that's a band of four people.

No one will play us on the radio. We need to get experimental.

Do it again. One more. How many more Galileo's do you want? Roger, there's only room in this band for one hysterical queen. So it is Freddy's story, but it's also three other people who are intrinsically linked to that story. I suppose it does come down to personalities. Both of those authorised, of course, but both of them, I mean, I don't know where they had all the warts, but they had a lot of warts. So, I mean, there was a lot in there.

Well, as the stories go, Evan, there was some things that simply couldn't make the screen, but I mean, that's not for me to say, even though I've just said it.

But have you ever thought of doing an unauthorised biopic because there you get into the trouble about not being able to use the music because the rights holders won't let you have the right? I haven't, to be honest. I mean, because of that very reason mentioned, you know, I know there's a Jimi Hendrix biopic, but that's not authorised by the estate. And as a result,

you don't have any of the music. And of course, for a lot of people, that is, you know, the connective tissue, if you like, for sort of letting the audience know who this person is. That does make it incredibly difficult because there's going to be a point where you're going to want to hear Elvis sing, you know, Jailhouse Rock.

These songs and this music absolutely, to my mind, plays a pivotal role in the story of the person in that journey. As, you know, in Rocket Man, your song is an incredibly important moment in the lives of Elton and Bernie Tawson.

So I think that would be pretty difficult. Yeah. I don't know whether you know Martin Scorsese, but it seems like he's been working on a Frank Sinatra biopic for quite a while. But he and the family don't see I2I. There's obviously a lot of chatter around Frank Sinatra connections to organised crime and the like. It just seems so odd that they would go to Martin Scorsese in the first place, who does so many mafia related film to make a film that took a decade to work out that we're not going to see I2I on this.

I know. I mean, I just worked on a show last year called The Offer, where we had someone portraying Frank Sinatra and it was the recollections of the producer of The Godfather, a guy called Albert Ruddy. He's 93 years old and he told us his story and we made a ten-part mini-series and Frank in no uncertain terms appears in it. And we made it very clear that as far as what we understood that Frank and certain members of the mafia had communication and spoke about that book and that film. So there is certain stuff that's in the public domain that you could do, you know, but Frank wasn't a central character. I mean, if you're talking about doing the Frank Sinatra life story, it's just, I don't know, it comes down to the point, it's like, how interesting do we want to make it? Do we want to make the PG version of Frank Sinatra's life? You know, it was in the rat pack after all. And Scorsese makes dark, gritty, engaging, grab you by the scruff of your neck kind of movies.

Dexter Fletcher speaking to Evan Davis and you heard their clip from Rocket Man made by Paramount Pictures, Bohemian Rhapsody by 20th Century Studios and Elvis by Warner Brothers. And that's it 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 in it, do please send us an email. The address is globalpodcast.bbc.co.uk. You can also find us on Twitter at Global NewsPod. This edition was mixed by Nick Randall, the producer was Alice Adderley. Our editor is Karen Martin. I'm Jackie Leonard and until next time, goodbye.