

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Mass protests in Georgia against 'Russian-style laws'

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advertising. The Financial Times follows the money to find business stories in unexpected places. We found a surprising one in the porn industry. I'm Alex Barker, co-host of the FT Pushkin podcast, Hot Money. Through the series we reveal the real power behind this secretive global business.

I want people to discover their own relationship to nature because it's a humbling and awe-inspiring place. And when we learn to navigate it, we'll remember that we belong here too.

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I'm Alex Ritzen, and in the early hours of Thursday the 9th of March these are our main stories. Mass protests in the Georgian capital Tbilisi against government plans that would allow it to label critics such as journalists as foreign agents. US lawmakers hear top-level claims its scientists were gagged from accusing China of leaking COVID-19 from a laboratory and a potentially major breakthrough by British scientists. This is the first potential new treatment for bone cancer in 45 years. Also in this podcast, they're complaining that they're not able to import raw materials as well as spare parts because most of the cars are assembled in Pakistan. More economic woes for Pakistan and a possible reproductive revolution as we hear about the eggs created from the cells of male mice. Tens of thousands of people in Georgia have staged a fresh wave of protests against a controversial draft law which would label many media outlets and rights groups as foreign agents. Riot police have once again used water cannon and pepper spray

to disperse the crowds. From the capital Tbilisi, here's Reyhan Dmitry.

No to the Russian law chants the demonstrators outside the parliament building in the capital Tbilisi. They're protesting against a draft law which they believe will steer Georgia away from its stated goal of becoming part of the European family and back into Russia's orbit. They're mainly young people waving EU and Georgian flags like Lizzie, a student of international relations. We think that our government is under Russian influence and it's very bad for our future.

The governing Georgian Dream Party approved the first reading of the controversial foreign agents bill yesterday. It would require non-governmental organizations and independent media that receive

more than 20 percent of their funding from abroad to label themselves as foreign agents.

The government says it wants to ensure transparency, but the country's opposition and protesters say

it's a Russian-style law that would stigmatize, discredit and eventually silence Georgia's vibrant civil society and free media. Luka Kimmeritze is one of the protesters.

We will show them that our will is just as equal as theirs and we love our freedom just as much as they love money and Russia. Georgia's opposition is powerless to influence what happens inside parliament because the government holds such a big majority. But it doesn't mean that the people of Georgia are ready to give up the fight for their country to have a future in Europe. Rehan Dimitri in Tbilisi. Natalia Antalava is a Georgian journalist.

She told James Kumrasami why she fears her country is sliding towards authoritarian rule.

This is an implosion of a political crisis that has been going on in Georgia for a long time. Georgia is in a very weird place politically where the majority of its population continues to be

very pro-western, very supportive of Ukraine. But at the same time Georgia has a government that has covertly, but very clearly, so many, many messages has made it clear that they are not committed to that European power. And this foreign agents law is the most brazen example of that. So how has it come to the fact that people feel so differently from their elected representatives on this key issue? Russia invaded Georgia in 2008. It was a short but very painful conflict and 20 percent of Georgian territory is occupied. And the scenes that we're seeing in front of parliament today are basically the scenes that have defined Georgian history really for the past centuries that strive for independence from Russia has always been part of the Georgian DNA. It has made Georgia the rebellious republic that it was always in the Soviet Union. But what happened after the 2008 war that ultimately weakened the government that was in place is that that new party swept to power and that party came to power on the same promises of a European future that Georgians have all signed up to no matter whether they agreed or not on who they voted for. That party is run by a billionaire called Bidzina Ivanishvili who has made these billions in Russia. So it was ultimately the Russian money that financed the Georgian dream. That's the name of the party, a rival to power. And very slowly since 2012, they have been pulling apart that Western infrastructure that had been put in place and very much to obdurate, very subtle. But ultimately all these messages very much reflected the worldview that the Kremlin represents rather than the West. In many ways, it feels like we're on this airplane that has been hijacked and is now flying into completely unknown direction. But most of the people were okay with getting on that plane at the start. And as far as the outside world is concerned, have they not wanted to look at what's going on there, ignored Georgia? How has this all happened without any intervention? I think the fact that this is self-inflicted, it was the Georgians who voted the Georgian dream and brought them to power and turned a blind eye for a very long time to the signs that there was an alignment with Russia. It was Georgians who voted them in. The second thing I think the bandwidth is very, very limited. I think this is what's happening in Georgia now is the direct result of the war in Ukraine. Georgian journalist Natalia Antolava. When Russia invaded Ukraine in February last year, it had a huge global impact, not least on the price of grain. That's because Ukraine supplies it to multiple countries around the world. Last year, the UN, with help from Turkey, struck a deal with Russia to lift its blockade on Ukraine's Black Sea ports and allow millions of tons of trapped grain to be exported once again. That agreement is due to expire next week and the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres says it's critically important that it's renewed. He was speaking after talks with President Zelensky in Kiev from where our diplomatic correspondent James Landau reports. The ability of Ukraine to export its grain matters, not just for the country itself, so it can earn hard currency and employ its farmers. But it matters also for the world, for without Ukrainian wheat and maize, global food prices would soar and millions would face food insecurity. Last July, the United Nations and Turkey brokered a deal with Russia that allowed Ukraine to export some food through the Black Sea. But that agreement comes up for renewal on March 18th and the United Nations is keen for the extension to go ahead without a hitch. It doesn't want either Ukraine or Russia to complicate the agreement by linking it to other issues. So, after meeting President Zelensky, Antonio Guterres emphasized the deal had allowed Ukraine

to export 23 million tons of grain. That, he said, had helped lower the global cost of food and had offered critical relief to people who are paying a high price for the war.

I want to underscore the critical importance of the roll over of the Black Sea grain initiative on 18 March and of working to create the conditions to enable the greatest possible use of export infrastructures through the Black Sea in line with the objectives of the initiative.

President Zelensky agreed the deal was critically necessary. But Russia has signalled it might oppose an extension if it doesn't see curbs on its own food exports lifted. It claims

Western sanctions on banking and insurance sectors hamper its ability to export its grain.

Turkish sources said Russia's concerns had not yet been overcome. Diplomats have until the end of next week to find a solution and the pressure is on. For without a deal, food prices would rise, adding to global inflation and hunger. James Landale. Another US official has added his voice to the opinion that COVID-19 was likely to have resulted from an accidental laboratory leak in China. The former director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr Robert Redfield, was testifying at an investigation into the origins of the virus. Based on my initial analysis of the data, I came to believe and I still believe today that it indicates that COVID-19 more likely was the result of an accidental lab leak than a result of a natural spillover event. This conclusion is based primarily on the biology of the virus itself, including the rapid high infectivity for human to human transmission, which would then predict rapid evolution of new variants as well as a number of other important factors. I got more on what Dr Redfield had to say from our Washington correspondent, Gary O'Donoghue. Essentially what he's saying is that while he was directors of the Centers for Disease Control, on bearing mind, they were absolutely caught at the whole COVID response in the United States when COVID broke out in the beginning of 2020. He said that he wanted people to look carefully at the origins at that time and that because he had a view that it had come from the laboratory in Wuhan rather than through a natural transmission from animals, he said that view was closed down because that was the narrative that wasn't wanted at the time and that he was excluded from some key meetings. So he's not only expressing

a view about the origins of COVID, he's expressing a fairly controversial view about the way the science was handled at the time by both scientists and politicians. There have been other people ahead of the FBI saying similar things. What's the evidence behind it though?

Well, we don't know a lot of the evidence. A lot of the evidence has been gathered by the intelligence community. There are 17 or 18 separate intelligence agencies in this country and we know

that the FBI believes one thing. We know that the Department of Energy believes that it's with low confidence, as they put it, that it came through the lab. But we don't know what the CIA thinks. We don't know what the NSA thinks. We don't know what a whole range of other government departments think. And that's part of the complaint that Republicans are making is that there isn't and there hasn't been a comprehensive independent investigation into the origins of COVID and that's what they want to see happen and that is something that to date the administration has resisted.

Gary O'Donoghue in Washington. Scientists here in Britain have developed a new drug that could treat primary bone cancer, one of the most common forms of cancer in children. The researchers at the University of East Anglia say the drug targets a gene that controls how the cancer spreads. Currently the only treatments are chemotherapy and amputation. Dr Darryl Green is the lead

author of the study published in the Journal of Bone Oncology. He told James Menendez more about the significance of this new drug. I don't usually use the word breakthrough too often because science and research is usually very incremental steps forward. But I think on this occasion we genuinely can use that word because this is the first potential new treatment for bone cancer in 45 years. How does it work then? Historically cancer chemotherapies work by poisoning

the body and the hope is that the cancer dies before the patient does. It's horrible as that sounds. What there's a move towards now with improvements to genetic technologies and biological techniques is that we can try to delineate the biology of what is actually driving a cancer cell and not what is going on in a normal cell. So when we develop new medicines and new treatments

to target those very specific biologies, the treatment will specifically intervene and interrupts a very important part of the disease process for that cancer cell, but it will leave the rest of the body alone. The main thing that the new drug targets is to reduce metastasis. What I mean by that is cancer spread around the body. So metastasis is the reason why most cancer patients die and it's

why most treatments end up failing. So if we can stop the spread of cancer from the primary tumour to other places around the body, for example in bone, it normally goes to the lungs. If we can stop that process and we're basically taking off that 90% treatment failure rate so we can treat the cancer as more of a chronic problem that then can be removed by surgery.

And that is one of the characteristics, if I can put it like that, of bone cancer, isn't it that it does spread quickly to other parts of the body?

Yeah. So because of the type of tissue that the bone cells come from, the cells are more willing to move around the body if you will. So they're already primed to spread when the tumour first develops and that makes it incredibly aggressive right from the onset.

What will this mean then in real terms for patients in terms of the treatments and in terms of the prognosis? Providing we have all of the funding that we need to do the next steps, we could see this going into patients in a clinical trial within two to three years.

So far our studies have shown that we can increase metastasis free survival by at least 50% using the drug on its own. What we're hoping is that by the time we get to patients where other treatments would be given alongside that, so for example surgery, we'll actually see an increase far larger than 50%. The ultimate end game is that we want to replace chemotherapy, we don't want to use that anymore, it's outdated, it's archaic. We'd much rather bring in these new targeted therapies where you go to the hospital or even at home you take a tablet, your cancer is treated and you go on about your day. And there is a personal element to all this,

someone you lost to bone cancer? When I was at high school my best friend Ben Morley passed away from bone cancer just before his 14th birthday and at the time I didn't even know what bone cancer was. I always loved biology and medicine when I went to school and went through university and so by the time it came to doing my PhD and starting my research career, it just made perfect sense to me to combine my love of biology with my personal connection to bone tumors.

For me it's been a long time coming, I do feel that today is the first big day that something has happened. I mean, it's weird to say but I don't feel completely happy because I'm also reminded by the fact that this drug wouldn't have been developed and I wouldn't be here had my friend not passed away. So I'm kind of reminded that he's not here and that's why this is happening.

Dr Daryl Greene. It's been eight years since the hashtag Oscars So White was trending in Hollywood and around the world and since then the academy has worked hard to expand its ranks, inviting a younger, more diverse and more global group of artists to the exclusive club. Now, a new study shows that is paying off. There have been more nominations for people of colour at the Oscars even though the industry is still disproportionately white and male. The BBC's Sophie Long reports from Hollywood. Black Panther Wakanda Forever showcases black culture. Not only was it a box office hit, it also has five Oscar nominations. For Angela Bassett, who's nominated for Best Supporting Actress, the recognition from the academy has been a long time coming. Did you just think oh that's wonderful or did you think a bit more like about damn time? I would say a little bit of both. No, no, absolutely wonderful. It means the world to me, especially a little girl who came from Florida looking for representation in the industry, looking toward others in the industry that look like me, that gave me the idea that I could have a place in it and to be any sort of inspiration for those who are coming behind because I certainly have those that I look toward. But the omission of actors like Viola Davis for her role in The Woman King was seized upon by critics as evidence of the academy failing to acknowledge black talent. What's your excuse though? How you treat friends, your family, everybody there just to be escaped from, just to be left behind. Like they let you down instead of the other way around. Only six of the 20 nominees in the main acting categories are people of color. Among them is Brian Tyree Henry. He's nominated for Best Supporting Actor for his role in Causeway, which explores the impact of physical and mental trauma. You know there's still a lot of progress to be made, but at the same time what I love is that the recognition that's coming from my peers and my contemporaries that are here, we know exactly what needs to be done and it's just about really moving the needle forward. By me sitting here I feel like we're doing something new. Everything everywhere all at once, a time travel multi-universe adventure ultimately about love has been sweeping up awards. It has a mostly Asian cast with Michelle Yeoh in a good position to win the Oscar for Best Actress. Kei Hui Kuan, who plays Yeoh's husband in the film, was a child star with roles in the Goonies and Indiana Jones, but his career stalled for decades because there were so few roles for Asian men. The president of the academy Janet Yang told me they're moving as fast as they can. We are doing everything we can to diversify our membership, to create mentoring programs, to really inspire more women to enter the business and also we have now a new program for mid-career women and just underrepresented groups so we cannot dictate hiring but we're doing everything we can to try to level the playing field. New research by the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative led by Dr Stacy Smith shows the hashtag Oscar's So White and the movement it created eight years ago has had a clear impact. Eight percent of nominees before, the eight years before, the eight years after, 17 percent for people of color. It's nowhere near what it needs to be which is 40 percent which reflects the US population. Stacy Smith ending that report by Sophie Long. Still to come in the Global News Podcast. This film was so full of inaccuracies. The only accurate thing was the weapons so it was like a dream for people who are interested in warfare and all that. A classic story, Gordon of Khartoum gets a rewrite. Pakistan's economic woes have been dealt an additional blow with another car manufacturer halting production because it can't get parts and raw materials. Honda Atlas Cars Pakistan says it will shut down until the end of the month. Several other car manufacturers have done the

same

thing for shorter periods of time. Our South Asia regional editor and Bharatan Etibrajan told me more

about what was going on. Honda Motors as well as Suzuki and Indus Motors they're complaining that they're not able to import raw materials as well as spare parts because most of the cars are assembled in Pakistan so you need to import these car parts from different countries.

For that you need to open letter of credit LC which you need to pay it in dollars but the government is facing a huge foreign currency reserve problem as we saw in Sri Lanka last year. They have less than four billion dollars with the central bank of Pakistan that means they can pay for imports only less than four weeks. Food, medicine and oil are being given priority so automobile is in the in the last in the queue but in the large picture there are thousands of people working in these companies so there is a danger that you know these people might lose job so the country is grappling with this foreign exchange currency crisis as well as negotiating with the international monetary fund for a bailout loan. What has caused Pakistan to get into this mess? Their exports have not been growing. Number one on also remittances from workers abroad that also plays a key role and third because of this increasing oil prices since the beginning of the war in Ukraine you see the prices of oil going up and fertilizer is also a key component so when these prices go up that means Pakistan has to pay more money than what they were paying earlier and also the country witnessed one of the devastating floods in recent decades.

Millions of acres of farmland were devastated. People were killed. People were uprooted. Still people are trying to find their way back into their villages because crops were ruined so the country is going through an enormous issue in addition to the political crisis.

Japanese police have made the first arrests over a spate of videos showing people carrying out unhygienic pranks at restaurants. The social media posts have led to concern from potential customers in a country famed for its cleanliness. Will Leonardo has more details?

Police in central Japan detained three people over a video of a man licking a communal soy sauce bottle at a branch of the popular sushi chain Kudazushi where food is served on a conveyor belt.

The prank last month went viral causing outrage online. It even led to fluctuation in the chain's share price. It's one of a spate of unsanitary attacks known by some as sushi terrorism that have caused disgust in the country. Other restaurants have also been targeted by people filming themselves touching sushi as it glides by on the belt and licking disposable chopsticks. The announcement of the arrests made headlines on many news outlets.

One of those detained has reportedly apologised for its actions.

Since the video started, some sushi chains have dropped the famed belt model, while others have promised more stringent checks on customer behaviour.

Will Leonardo? A Japanese scientist says he's created eggs from the cells of male mice. The development could have implications for human fertility treatment and open the door to the prospect of male couples having children which are genetically related to both of them.

Professor Katsuhiko Hayashi from Osaka University made the announcement at a Human Genome Editing Summit here in London.

Our science correspondent, Palab Ghosh, was there.

Professor Hayashi told delegates that he'd successfully taken the skin cells of a male mouse and turned them into eggs. The technique involves first transforming the skin into a

stem cell which can then turn into other types of cells. Because they're male they have X and Y chromosomes so Professor Hayashi's team deleted the Y chromosome, duplicated the X and stuck the

two X's together. This adjustment allows the stem cell to be programmed to become an egg. He said that the work was at a very early stage but Professor Hayashi told BBC News if it could be proved to be safe for humans he'd like to see it available as a fertility treatment for both male and female and same-sex couples. If the people want it, my personal opinion, if the society accepts such a technology, yes, I follow it.

Professor Hayashi is developing the technique to help infertile couples where women are not able to produce their own eggs. He stressed though it was a long way off from being available in hospitals because even in the mice experiments the eggs were of low quality and could not be used for reproduction. Human physiology is quite different and so much more research is needed. The story of Gordon of Khartoum, the British general killed by the troops of the Mahdi, the Sudanese religious leader in the late 19th century, has travelled around the world in history books and Hollywood films. It has though almost always been the British version of events. Now the award-winning Sudanese writer Leila Abu Leila has taken on the topic in her new novel River Spirit. She told James Coppnell why this project was her calling.

It seemed time for us to kind of revisit the idea of the British Empire and to look at it in a fresh way and I had grown up with the story of Gordon of Khartoum and the Siege of Khartoum. So it was a very exciting story, I mean I knew it very well and the Mahdi and the wars but I felt that it was maybe time to look at it in a different way and I was very much interested in looking at it from a Sudanese perspective. Because the story that you had grown up with, that millions maybe around the world had grown up with, was essentially the British version of what happened. Glorifying Gordon, the colonial hero. Yes that was the version and there was also the Hollywood film in the 1960s called Khartoum with Charlton Heston as Gordon and Lawrence Olivier in Blackface as the Mahdi and this film was so full of inaccuracies. The only accurate thing was the weapons apparently. They spent so much time and effort getting every single weapon correct so it was like a dream for people who are interested in warfare and all that but it wasn't even filmed in Khartoum so it's so disappointing that there was very little accuracy to it.

So I wanted to retell the story and make it from a Sudanese point of view and how they saw the events unfolding and how it all happened. It's also I suppose one of the foundational stories for Sudan as a nation. It is because what the Mahdi did and what this movement did is that it brought the Sudanese together almost maybe for the first time. They felt an identity that they were

united against the foreigners whether they're Egyptians, whether they're Ottomans, whether they're British and it also caused a lot of demographic movements so there were a lot of the tribes from the west started to move into Omdurman and the Mahdi set up the capital in Omdurman and so there was a lot of demographic movements and a lot of like the foundation maybe of Sudan as we see it now was started up then. Your book very much puts women at the heart of the story I suppose perhaps in part because often they haven't been in the past in other accounts. Yeah they're mentioned as footnotes in the history or they're really not mentioned at all but they were there they were part of the army they would move around with the army of course nursing and also every time the army stops they would set up stalls they would be selling eggs they would be cooking and a lot of their life was spent on the road marching with the men having

their babies bring up their children so they were very much part of it and they played a part in espionage they would carry news and they would encourage the men to fight and encourage their sons to go to join the resistance so they were very much playing an active part and it was interesting to kind of explore that. Is it necessary for Sudan to fully understand its past as it tries to work out where it's going? Definitely and I think the negative thing about the Mahdist revolution was it's very insular nature it's very parochial it was very much looking inwards it was very much anti foreigners anti any other influence and this trend can continue till today so that we get governments in Sudan that don't care what the international community says and that's not the good thing because so many Sudanese aspire to belong to the international community they want to have contact they don't want Sudan behind an iron wall they don't want sanctions and this is what the revolution was about partly.

Layla Abu-Layla speaking to James Coppnell and finally an empowering story for International Women's Day which is marked on Wednesday one of Kenya's leading female runners has set up the country's first girls only running camp Mary Ngugi was spurred into action following the murder of her former teammate Agnes Tirop who was stabbed to death at home in October 2021 her husband is

awaiting trial for the crime which reopened the debate about gender-based violence and the way female athletes are treated in Africa particularly in Kenya Michelle Katami reports.

The daily walk back home the excited charters of girls who no lessons are over for another day the school gate may be shut but another door is open to them as they head to their athletics camp to meet Mary Ngugi their mentor I've always wanted to do something to try to help the girls and also to change what is happening not just in athletics but also in the society.

Mary Ngugi is a two-time gold medalist at the World Half Marathon Championships the 34-year-old has seen the dangers young girls can face as they prepare for life in a Kenyan athletics camp. Being abused by men harassed intimidated girls not being able to be themselves some are getting pregnant even dropping out of camp because maybe the coaches or the paces the guys in the camp are

trying to harass them. As a junior Mary received her training and education in a mixed sex camp her new venture aims to give traditional camps a run for their money because it's just for girls it's called NALA. NALA is an African name for a powerful woman or a Ryaness so we want these girls to be that strong empowered someone who can say no. NALA track club was founded in October

last year funded by Mary and well-wishers the camp currently has eight girls aged between 14 and 22

this girl's only club is located in Nyahoruru town which is a four-hour drive from the Kenyan capital Nairobi as they hit the dusty truck at Nyahoruru stadium the mentor Mary Ngugi watched on.

In Kenya it's the father who decided what to do maybe you're the brothers but when these girls are the other camp they have the confidence to be themselves. Mary was inspired to start NALA by the mother of Agnes Tirop a fellow Kenyan athlete stabbed to death in her own home in 2021. In 2022 Kenyan distance runner Damaris Mude was also killed. When Agnes Tirop died it was really sad I was like we don't have to wait for someone else to go through a tragedy we have to begin somewhere and this is the last straw. And so NALA was born hitting the books is equally as important

as training on the truck we are trying to empower these girls to know that I'm not just another it I can handle my properties I can handle my businesses they can be able to know even when they're signing contracts I'm just trying to tell these girls you can be better you deserve better. It's no doubt the camp could be life-changing for some of the girls like Melissa and Celangats. I am 17 years old I am happy at NALA camp because we get all training facilities I am improving I'm learning so much at this camp like how to interact with others and live well with people I want to be like Mary Mora she is my role model and I want to also be a journalist. In future Mary hopes to see more female coaches and even agents in Kenya supporting young girls in athletics. When I see them how happy they are this mouse in their faces them treating me like a big sister it's an amazing experience. With Mary and Gogi supporting them the girls of NALA have their own lioness. Michelle Katami. And that's all from us for now but there'll be a new edition 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 Ethan Connolly Forster and the producer was Emma Joseph the editor is Karen Martin I'm Alex Ritzen until next time goodbye. During the cost of living crisis the financial times can help you understand how global news stories can impact your personal finances I'm Claire Barrett host of the FT's Money Clinic podcast. Each week we discuss ways to stay on top of your money it's news you can use delivered in a way that anyone can understand featuring the top experts at the FT and beyond so check out our podcasts and read selected articles for free at ft.com slash insights. If you're listening to this podcast you must recognize the value of asking questions. At a Ramco our questions help us engineer a better future how can today's resources fuel our shared tomorrow how can we deliver energy to a world that can't stop how can we deliver one of the fuels of the future how can we sow curiosity to harvest ingenuity to learn more about how innovation drives us forward visit a ramco.com slash powered by how.