

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Mediterranean wildfires kill more than 40 people

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I'm Valerie Sanderson and at 1400 hours GMT on Wednesday the 26th of July, these are our main stories. The battle to control wildfires in Southern Europe continues. After 40 years in the top job, Cambodia's Prime Minister makes way for his eldest son. The head of Nat West Bank resigns after admitting a leak about the former Brexit champion Nigel Farage.

Also in this podcast the struggle to save 45 whales still alive after 100 of the creatures stranded themselves in Western Australia. The moment that a pilot whale or any other whale in the world strands, the clock of survival starts ticking. And don't run, squat. Scientists rethink the way we should work out. More than 40 people have died in Algeria, Italy and Greece as Mediterranean wildfires threaten villages and holiday resorts. Thousands of people including many tourists have been evacuated from the areas where they were staying. Greece is preparing for more evacuation flights from roads as fires also continue burning on the islands of Corfu and Evia. Richard Galpin reports. This is the desperate situation near Lisbon, the capital of Portugal, where firefighters have been battling the flames with local people trying to help in any way they can. Some have been overwhelmed by what's happening and angry the fire engines did not arrive earlier. This is not right. We've been here for hours. The firemen waited for the flames to come. The interior minister should be here now. Many have had no choice but to move away. The elderly and the vulnerable being helped to safety. In Algeria it's a different story.

Most of the flames have been extinguished here but there have been casualties. At least 34 people have lost their lives in the fires. They told us to collect our precious items and leave our homes. When we returned we found everything was burnt and there was nothing left. No furniture, no money,

no herd of sheep, everything was burnt. The island of Sicily has been particularly badly affected. Thick smoke is reported to be drifting across Palermo. A couple in their 70s have been found dead in a fire-gutted holiday home near the capital. Amongst the many countries affected around the Mediterranean, the wildfires are also raging near the historic city of Dubrovnik in Croatia. And the Greek fire service has warned that today will be one of the most dangerous for wildfires on the island of Rhodes. A spokesman said strong and dry winds still posed a serious threat. Well let's get more on the situation in Greece. Our correspondent Azadeh Mashiri is in Rhodes.

I'm in the town of Mazzari. It's in the southern part of the island of Rhodes because remember that's where these fires are very much localized. It's not the whole island but for the people who are living in the areas affected it's been devastating. I spoke to one man, a local, who said that everything is pretty much working again but not this and he was pointing to his heart. He said that he was very unhappy about what had happened to the locals, the tourists, but also the trees because it's their hills, their environment that is being destroyed by these wildfires. And another man just came up to me moments ago saying that they depend on tourism, that their businesses were completely ruined and that they were very worried about what kind of support they'd receive to rebuild. In a town like this, even a town that's fairly untouched, where people are coming back after having been evacuated, they don't have proper running water. It's slithers of water right now because their supply has been drained by the fires. And we understand more evacuation flights are being prepared because of course there are tens of

thousands out there of tourists on the island but are planes still bringing tourists there?
Yes they are and the Foreign Office's advice is that people can still come here, that they should check they have travel insurance, that they should contact their airlines and make sure that the areas

they're traveling to are safe, that they should sign up for emergency alerts and they do have a rapid deployment team which is still here but flights are coming in as some people are evacuating and so there is a bit of a split reality there in terms of people's experiences but again when we're talking about tens of thousands of people being on the island, not everyone wants to leave. The southern part is where these fires had all these traumatic events for holiday makers. The north again it was untouched.

Azadeh Mashiri in Rhodes. He's been in the top job for almost four decades but Naohun Sen, Cambodia's prime minister says he's stepping down and confirmed his departure in a television address.

I would like to ask for understanding from the people as I announce that I will not continue as prime minister. Hun Sen added that carrying on would cause instability but he's keeping power in the family. I asked our Southeast Asia correspondent Jonathan Head why the Cambodian leader is handing over the reins of power to his son now. I suspect because he feels confident enough to do it and when we say he's going he's leaving the prime minister's post it's the most powerful post in the country and it's one he's held for 38 years but he is retaining other important positions notably leadership of his ruling party, the Cambodian People's Party. He'll remain on the royal council. Cambodia is a constitutional monarchy at least notionally and he also aims to be president

of the senate which is a very important position in the sort of political hierarchy so I think everyone expects he will carry on pulling the strings. I think what we can see this as the beginning of a carefully planned and probably quite lengthy power handover to a younger generation

of politicians it's not just Hun Sen the people around him people of his own age who shared with him the incredibly rough years of the Khmer Rouge and the Civil War that brought up with those kinds

of experiences as lessons are also resigning or backing down and handing over surprise surprise to their own children keeping it in the family as well so the ruling party which completely dominates Cambodia now you know they've they've no opposition party of any significance was allowed

to run in the election on Sunday is in effect carrying out its own large-scale dynastic change and I think they will be wary of things potentially going wrong when you have a power transfer after one man has dominated proceedings for so long it's always a slightly delicate moment for any country and of course Hun Sen handing over power to his own son I mean can we expect

more of the same is he going to be Hun Sen Mark II well he's a very different personality at least if you judge superficial appearances and we don't know a lot about what he'd be like in power because

he actually hasn't held any political positions until now he was elected in this recent election before that he was head of the army for a long time he's got a very different background I mean Hun Sen and his cronies as we like to call them are immensely wealthy now and their children have

had very prestigious upbringings Hun Manette was educated at British University at West Point in America but I think whatever his change of style I think they hope that the style will be different the essentials will carry on it'll still be an autocratic intolerance system. Jonathan Head the civil war in Yemen which began in 2014 has left 21 million people that's two-thirds of the population needing humanitarian assistance but international aid is shrinking and the UN has only received a quarter of the funding it asked for as we heard on the podcast yesterday children are often caught up in the violence with more than 11,000 killed or maimed they're also suffering from the lack of aid nearly 500,000 Yemeni children under the age of five are expected to suffer from acute malnutrition this year. Our senior international correspondent Ola Geron reports now from her data province in western Yemen. We've just arrived at a local health center this is a room full of desperation mothers have come here to show us how sick how thin their children are but this clinic is normally closed it's been open today just because we're here and doctors say they'll be able to do nothing for these children except send them home tell me doctor why is the clinic normally closed Dr Ali Bin Ali says the staff are on strike because they haven't been paid a penny for the past four months. He says some of them are looking for jobs that pay so they can feed their own children. I'm with one of the mothers here Oma Ahmed she's cradling her daughter Safa in her arms Safa looks incredibly weak she doesn't have the energy to lift her head she's completely listless her arms are extremely thin she's 11 months old her mother says but she looks a lot younger we've come home now with Safa and her mother it's a bare brick house there's no glass in the windows this is a family living hand to mouth Safa's father Anwar is here I don't work every day I go to sea for 15 to 20 days and catch what I can god willing sometimes I find fish sometimes I don't for the past three months I had no work this is a family that was forced to flee because of the war they became internally displaced in this one home in this one room you see the tragedy of Yemen and you see it also in a sprawling camp nearby for many more families made homeless by the war I'm sitting with Jamal Mahmoud al-Mashrahi who is in charge of camps for the displaced here in Hodeida but he's also been displaced himself the reaction is very weak now especially after the war between Ukraine and Russia the earthquake in Turkey and the war in Sudan there is less and less funding each time the excuse from international aid agencies is that they don't have enough money and even if there is a reaction it's just too small and too slow the camp stretches out into the distance what's striking looking around is the appearance of permanence there are some tents but in many places now there are rough breeze block houses some people have already been here for five years the international community is now talking about hopes for a peace process in Yemen but people here aren't talking about hopes for peace they're talking about the lack of food and water and how they're supposed to survive for another day Orlegeran wildlife officials are scrambling to save 45 whales after a mass stranding at a beach near the city of alban in western Australia more than 50 were confirmed dead during the massive ongoing operation to get as many as possible of the animals safely back out to sea harry bligh has been talking to a whale expert and has this report Tuesday morning in western Australia almost 100 long finned pilot whales were seen swimming very close to the shoreline at chains beach near the city of alban over the course of a few hours the group moved closer to the beach and by four o'clock in the afternoon local time the shoreline was covered in dozens of whales pilot whales are actually a large oceanic

dolphin so they're found offshore environments and they're known to be a very highly social so they're found in groups known as pods this is Dr Vanessa Pirotta wildlife scientist at mccoore university specializing in marine mammals the sheer number of stranded whales on the beach

was cause for alarm among the local wildlife authorities and experts and so began a rescue mission the moment that a pilot whale or any other whale in the world strands the clock of survival starts ticking it's a very rapid moving environment and it's a very tiring and mentally exhausting environment because you have animals around you dying they're calling out for each other

51 of the almost 100 whales were confirmed dead for the remaining whales a group from the local wildlife service and volunteers are still working to get them back out to sea with some paddling alongside in kayaks to help herd them into deeper water they're going to attempt to get those animals back out together then hopefully these these pilot whales will will make their way out together and i really hope that they don't restrain but there is also the possibility that that could happen as Vanessa explains there is a silver lining to this event the footage captured of the whales swimming perilously close to the shore could help experts better understand their behavior and learn more about why whales strand the drone

footage of pre-stranding is gold here this is really what's going to set us this apart from other stranding events with other stranding events you have no warning the whales are on the beach in this case we were all kind of going what is happening here could this be pre-stranding behavior and unfortunately it did result in that so that'll be a point of difference that we'll be looking at officials from the state's parks and wildlife service have said they are optimistic that the other 45 whales in the pod could survive and you can see remarkable images of the whales on our website at bbcnews.com still to come i did some like local tv like singing shows and and i would always get the same comment like people would be so fascinated like why is this 13 year old girl singing like a you know a 50 year old divorced woman we talked to Icelandic Chinese singer Leve world football at the women's world cup is the podcast bringing you all the action from the tournament in australia and new zealand listen now by searching for world football from the bbc world service wherever you get your bbc podcasts welcome back russia's defense minister has arrived

in the capital of north korea to join celebrations to mark the armistice that ended fighting in the korean war 70 years ago sergi shogu's trip is being seen as a mark of the importance that mosco now places on north korea as a diplomatic and military ally pomos explains why it comes as a shock for some people don't normally visit north korea to go shopping but russia's become an increasingly important customer for asia's hermit kingdom according to us intelligence north korea has sold russia rockets and artillery shells to use in its war against ukraine and when defense minister sergi shogu arrived in pyongyang he was told that north korean people fully supported russia

in its struggle to defend its sovereignty according to state television a sign there's is also a relationship of like-minded nations pomos for days now the story dominating the headlines here in the uk has been the row between nijal faraj the former leader of yukip the brexit party and the nat west bank it was given fresh impetus when the bbc reporter that mr faraj's account with the private bank kutz which is owned by nat west had been closed for financial reasons

when it was actually because of his political views the source of the information was the head of nat west dame allison rose who's now resigned after coming under mounting pressure from dining street this was nijal faraj's reaction this morning the first rule of banking is client confidentiality she clearly broke that she was the source of the leak and if anybody in a more junior position working at the nat west bank had done that they would have been out the door yet we got this extraordinary statement that said yes she breached client confidentiality but we the board still have confidence in it i asked her correspondent robots and why this has become a political story involving the government i think it came a political story because it was about nijal faraj right i mean he is one of the most recognizable and most divisive figures in british politics as the former leader of the very anti-eu ukip party and of course one of the prominent campaigners for brexit so it was about him and then of course there was the sort of wider issue of well how do banks deal with politicians with publicly known people like nijal faraj and of course the allegation is that the government has moved rather quickly against the banker involved partly because you know as a pro brexit government itself it's rather in awe of mr faraj and his sort of populist appeal and i suppose the taxpayer owns part of nat west doesn't it to me it bailed out the banks yes that's also that's also a part of it but i guess the criticism that's been made towards the government is two fold so the opposition labor party said well how come the government hasn't got kind of worked up about other executives or people within the conservative party you've had lapses of judgment and of course the other issue that's been raised tangentially is is it a good look for britain if government ministers are able to pressurize executives into resigning if indeed that is what has happened in this case whatever the merits or whether she should have resigned or not and why does this matter internationally do you think well i think it matters internationally partly just to show you as interesting looking in at britain as to what an important figure or what a divisive figure mr faraj remains but i think more broadly it's this issue of kind of what do you do about banking involving what are known as p e p's politically exposed persons because this just isn't in britain it's you know how do banks deal with public figures when there are these concerns as they may use their public positions for sort of private gain to what extent should they be exposed to all sorts of checks because one of the complaints that's been made more broadly in britain and it was before mr faraj that there are an awful lot of checks on politicians and their families which the politicians can deem to be rather excessive rob watson recently here on this podcast we've discovered some of the ways artificial intelligence is causing alarm around the world from concerns about fake news to whether humans will become obsolete so it's something of relief to bring you news of one of the many ways that ai can make things better scientists are using it to monitor the number of insects birds and bats to get a better understanding of the extent of the threat to biodiversity nick robinson heard more from dr tom august ecologist at the centre for ecology and hydrology here in the uk so we know that wildlife populations around the world are experiencing many changes a lot of those unfortunately are declines and that's due to climate change and use change and traditional methods for monitoring these species can be quite costly involves lots of experts going out and wilderness and recording the birds and bats but we're asking the question how much can we use technology to help to monitor biodiversity and more specifically can we create something akin to a weather station that instead of monitoring rain and temperature is counting moths bats and birds and so what sort of technology will he use so um at the

uk centre for ecology and hydrology we're bringing together acoustic microphones so like the microphones that we're using right now which can hear birdsong ultrasound microphones which can hear very high frequency sounds high pitched which used by bats and we've got a digital camera which is photographing moths as they approach a bright light that we set off at night and all this is controlled by a little computer that sits inside this kind of suitcase sized bit of equipment and recording all of these species as they call or as they fly in close to this light now that's the relatively and i do stress relatively all tech what the new tech is presumably the computer programming that makes sense of what's being heard exactly so one that one

the problems with using these sensors is you get thousands of hours of audio and hundreds of thousands

of images of these nocturnal insects and there's simply no way that a person can process all that manually so what we have developed is AI algorithms that can ingest all of this data and effectively spit out the results of what species that's seen what species have been heard and that's really uh we're going to make a very big difference to how we can monitor biodiversity using these kinds of sensors and these monitors these sensors you can effectively package up an export can you to other countries where are you hoping to do this yes so thanks to funding from the Aberdeen charitable foundation we're going to be putting 40 of these primarily in the tropics so tropical locations including Costa Rica Singapore and locations in Africa these are areas that are incredibly biodiverse there's tens of thousands of species but traditionally quite poorly monitored as you say we can kind of pop these systems out they're solar powered they can last weeks or months

completely unattended and go back at the end of the season collect them and pour over all that wonderful data which is kind of tell us a lot about the biodiversity that's present there as well as how it's changing over time what might be impacting these populations you presumably need a few years data to know whether it's declining means you've got no baseline at the moment have you yeah so you know we need to help to set that baseline in places where we don't have

that historical data you know as you say you know these some of these places we have very little data we may well even be losing species that have yet to even be described so it's very important to help set that that baseline obviously this technology can be put out for for many years we've we've tested these systems underwater and in ovens so it can it can stay out for a long time and help to then produce that trend going forward dr tom august ecologist at the uk center for ecology and hydrology control stress eat well and do a spot of walking and running and stub out those cigarettes for good those are the traditional tactics for keeping blood pressure down but now researchers here in the uk are adding other exercises into the mix including doing planks and wall sits a house reporter filipa roxby told me more this is a big a big analysis of 270 trials which looked at different types of exercise and their impact on bringing blood pressure down and this is important because if you increase increased blood pressure increases your risk of heart attacks and strokes so they found out that all exercise no matter what type was good at bringing down your your blood pressure but one particular type of exercise was particularly good and that was a type of exercise called isometric exercise which effectively is planks and wall squats so it's strengthening muscles without actually moving so you're staying in a fixed position and you're tightening your contracting muscles usually the core muscles for a length of time

and they found that was really good at bringing down blood pressure and if you don't do the plank and wall sits describe to us we're not on telly you have to describe on radio right here we go i'm tempted to get on the floor and have a go okay so you've got to get into the position where you're nearly doing a press up with your elbows under your shoulders and your legs stretched out behind you and you hold that position for two minutes it's quite difficult you start quicking after a while it certainly is i know but it that's all about core strength isn't it it's all about core strength and the wall sit wall sit very similar your it in fact for your sitting in a sitting position against a wall so your backs against the wall your feet are about two feet out from the wall and your your legs are bent and again you're holding it and you feel it in your thighs you feel it in your stomach muscles and again hold it for as long as you can you see i would think that would put your blood blood pressure up not down so why does it bring it down well you've got to breathe while you're doing it so the researchers behind this say you get a rush of blood when you finish that exercise and that could be behind the improvement a very healthy health reporter filipa roxby levy is an Icelandic chinese singer and multi instrumentalist who first came to fame during the covid 19 pandemic with her videos online of her performing old jazz classics a graduate of berkeley's school of music in the us at the time she's still only in her mid 20s with the global following particularly in asia levy has a new album coming out soon and the bbc's michael rossie spoke to her when she was in london

so i started singing when i was like 12 or 13 and i always had this like quite a deep voice and especially when i was that young i was like a little bit embarrassed like i would sing around iceland and i did some like local tv like singing shows and and i would always get the same comment like people would be so fascinated like why is this 13 year old girl singing like a you know a 50 year old divorced woman and that was kind of a little bit like a party trick and now i've kind of matured more into it but i've kind of just always been this way i mean i'm sure playing the cello and listening to a lot of classical music and and mostly jazz music listening to elephidster old billy holiday those singers growing up i think that's like subconsciously influenced me a lot but yeah i don't know how to sing differently this is just the way that i sing somehow and there are plenty of 50 year old divorced women who sound very good

yeah no it's and now i take it as a as a big compliment

i know when i first heard you i i think it was your version of an old charltonne

a song i wish you love which and there is a certain sort of old-time feel about it it became hugely popular amongst audiences and a lot of younger people as well yeah it's it it resonates so much with gen z it's been why why why why why why don't you think that is i i don't know i think maybe it's just it's a it's a simple love song that is you know something that feels timeless and i think especially during the time of the pandemic when i was starting people didn't want to be reminded of the weird times that we were in they just wanted something timeless like some sort

of an escape

with your new album it comes out in september is that right september 8th

September 8th bewitched so we've already had from the start a sossa inflected songs come out and there's another one out called promise what's the promise you're you're making in that song so the promise i'm making myself is is that i have to stop talking to a boy just because i didn't think it was very it wasn't it wasn't a good idea and then i end up breaking

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the promise so i hasn't been kept the promise then it absolutely has not no oh well well bewitched is to the core it's a love album in my first two projects i was checking out a little bit like how far i could go into jazz or how far i could work with like more classical inspirations without losing my young audience and then i just so happily came to find that my audience seems to like the jazziest songs and the ones that are recorded with symphonies the most the voice of singer levy from her new album bewitched which comes out this september and that's it 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 or the topics covered in it 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 chris lovelock the producer was venessa heaney the editor as ever is caron martin i'm valerys sanderson until next time bye bye the women's world cup has kicked off in australia and new zealand this world cup is going to be the biggest and best and most competitive join me mani jasmine katie smith and mas faruki for all the latest from the tournament on world football at the women's world cup just to be in front of that type of crowd i'm so excited for you know like fans always make the experience like 10 times better that's world football at the women's world cup from the bbc world service find it wherever you get your bbc podcasts