

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Record rain causes floods in Hong Kong

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

I'm Valerie Sanderson and on the 8th of September, these are our main stories.

There's heavy flooding and disruption in Hong Kong and the nearby city of Shenzhen after a record rainfall. An army base in northern Mali has come under Islamist attack a day after dozens of people were killed in two attacks in the same area.

Elon Musk has acknowledged that he did not act on a request from Kyiv to activate his Starlink satellite network to help the Ukrainian army carry out an attack on Russia's Black Sea Fleet. Also in this podcast.

If you don't walk past any CCTV, if you don't carry a mobile phone, if you don't have a device, then you can't be trapped and you can literally just fall off the radar.

You can disappear. It's how you choose to disappear.

The massive manhunt here in the UK to find the terror suspect who escaped from prison strapped to the bottom of a lorry.

Streets and buildings in Hong Kong and southern Chinese cities have been hit with intense flooding and landslides after some of the heaviest rainfall on record. It comes just days after the city dodged major damage from a super typhoon. These people in Hong Kong were shocked at the ferocity

of the floods. I've never seen a scene like this before. It's the first time I've witnessed such a severe situation. Even during previous typhoons, it was never this bad. It's quite terrifying to see. This is my first time ever seeing this because before it rained, it never happened like this. There was no landslide ever. We never thought there would be any landslides here, but today it changed. This is the first time a landslide happened here. I didn't think that something like this would happen, so it's very traumatising.

I got more from our Asia Pacific regional editor, Silia Hatton.

Really dramatic scenes in Hong Kong. To put this into context, this is a place that is used to dealing with torrential rain. It really is no big deal for many people who just go through typhoon season every year, usually without really batting an eyelid. The whole area is built to deal with heavy rain. However, even for Hong Kong, this rainfall broke records. They recorded the heaviest rainfall within one hour in 139 years. Since records started being kept,

that's more than 15 centimeters of rain fell in just an hour. That's led to quite dramatic footage. We've seen shopping malls completely flooded with strange scenes of escalators just descending into muddy water, metro stations flooded, roads that have just fallen away under the weight of the rain. Really, for people in Hong Kong to be talking about how they've never seen something like this before, that should really raise some eyebrows and really raise alarm bells. How are the authorities reacting? What are they saying and doing?

They did issue a black rain warning. That's the highest rain warning well before the rain hit, and that just tells people, everybody to stay inside and the city effectively ground to a halt, 7.5 million people all sheltering indoors, or many of them. But then people who were caught in the rain, that's when we saw rescue workers dressed in bright yellow, trying to pull people from submerged cars. Luckily, we haven't recorded any deaths yet, but quite a few injuries were recorded during that period. The big thing we're watching forward next is in the neighboring hub of Shenzhen, which is in mainland China, has already issued a warning that they are going to have to release some water from their reservoir, and that could lead to more flooding in neighboring Hong Kong. Celia Hatton. The army in Mali says there's been another attack on one of its bases in the north, a day after two raids by Islamist militants killed more than 60 people. The country has begun three days of national mourning. Mali and other Sahel nations have seen a jihadist insurgency sweep across the region, in part triggered by the pullout of UN peacekeeping troops from Mali. Our Africa regional editor, Richard Hamilton, told me about the three attacks, starting with the first two on Thursday. The first one, the militants fired three rockets at the engines of a passenger boat, which was traveling along the river Niger from Gao to Mopti, and about

50 civilians were killed. River routes are the main ways of getting around because the roads are often blockaded by militants, and there are very few railway lines. And then later on, there was a raid on an army base at a place called Bamba, also near Gao, halfway between Gao and Timbuktu, and a fresh attack in northern Mali at a military base belonging to the Mali army, with two vehicles being driven into it, and an apparent suicide attack.

Is it your sense, really, that the security situation in Mali and the region is unraveling now?

Yeah, very much so, and it will probably get worse. Timbuktu has been blockaded. There are a variety of Islamist groups. The one that's carried out, this attack is called JNIM, which is linked to al-Qaeda. The Islamic state is growing in power. The militants are spreading across the borders into Niger, Burkina Faso. It's taken over as the sort of epicenter of jihadism from places like Syria and Iraq. The United Nations is packing up. French troops have been told to leave, so there's a security vacuum, and it's just getting really, really bad.

And Mali and other military regimes in the area, they're also looking to the Russian mercenary group Wagner, aren't they? What impact do you think that is having?

Well, the evidence is that they are not, despite being heralded as the alternative to the French and the United Nations. And there was legitimate criticism that the United Nations were a bit ineffective. But the evidence is that actually the radicalization is increasing, the violence is increasing, and there are only something like 1,500 Wagner mercenaries operating in Mali. If you compare that to the 13,000 United Nations peacekeepers, it's pretty obvious if you do the maths that that's not enough to contain the Islamists. And analysts are saying that attacks by Wagner mercenaries on the civilian population is only putting fuel on the fire, and it's radicalizing local people. So this anti-French rhetoric certainly appealed to the young Mali and

population, but in the countryside they're seeing the true horror of what's happening. Richard Hamilton. The American billionaire Elon Musk has denied allegations that he deactivated satellite connections to his Starlink network to thwart a Ukrainian attempt to attack Russia's black sea fleet in occupied Crimea with maritime drones. It follows a report in the American media linked to a forthcoming biography of Mr Musk, as Danny Eberhardt reports.

The incident reported by CNN is said to have taken place last year. Starlink's satellite connections, crucial for Ukraine's military effort, would have been used to guide explosive maritime drones. Elon Musk said he did not deactivate connections to occupied Crimea, but rather that no such connections existed. He indicated he had not acted on what he called an emergency request by Kiev to activate Starlink as far as the port of Sevastopol, where the Russian fleet is based. If he'd agreed, he said his company would have been complicit in a major act of war and escalation. Kiev has not responded to Mr Musk's latest remarks. According to the CNN article, the maritime drones reportedly used lost connection and washed ashore harmlessly. Danny Eberhardt.

Russians are voting in regional and municipal elections over a number of days, ending on Sunday. So far, so run of the mill, but the votes have been extended to Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine. That's even as Ukrainian forces are trying to win the territory back.

Katya Adler got more from our Russia editor, Steve Rosenberg.

There's been international condemnation of the decision by Moscow to hold these so-called elections in Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories. The Council of Europe called it a flagrant violation of international law. Washington's also called them predetermined elections with fabricated results. Not surprisingly, that hasn't gone down well with the Russians. The Russian embassy in Washington accused America of meddling in Russia's internal affairs. Just to remind you, Russia claimed to have annexed these Ukrainian territories a year ago.

That wasn't recognized by the international community, except Syria and North Korea.

I mean, as you said, that their accusations are a result of a foregone conclusion.

I mean, that's widely said about these local elections, municipal elections right across Russia that are taking place in Ukraine. Is there any idea about voter turnout or a few Ukrainians without Russian passports would be allowed to vote if they wanted to express opposition? Not really. And I think it's really important if we're talking about elections.

I mean, overall, in Russia today, these municipal elections, we have to qualify the word election right at the start. When we talk about elections for mayors and governors, when we talk about municipal and local elections, it's important to point out that all the main Russian opposition figures are either in jail or in exile. The result of a crackdown by the authorities, which began before Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine, but which has accelerated since. And public criticism of the authorities risks landing you in big trouble. And that's hardly conducive to free and fair elections. And also election monitoring groups have come under intense pressure, like the election group Golos, which for years has been training election observers, been monitoring elections and gathering evidence of election fraud. Well, last month, it's co-chairman

Grigori Malkanyans was arrested along with reportedly 14 of his associates in several Russian regions. And Golos put out a statement recently saying that these elections were neither free nor fair in all the Russian regions where they're taking place. Russia editor, Steve Rosenberg.

The 2023 Rugby World Cup starts today with the hosts, France, facing New Zealand and Paris. Last

year's winners, South Africa begin the defense of their crown on Sunday against Scotland as the spring box aim for a record fourth world championship. For many South Africans, the iconic image of 1995's winning captain, Francois Pinard, being handed the cup by Nelson Mandela, South Africa's president at the time, demonstrated the reconciliation of the country after years of a part eight. Francois Pinard told BBC Sport Africa's Ian Williams about that iconic moment when President Mandela, affectionately known as Madiba, gave him the trophy. The importance of rugby under the Afrikaners and if you fast forward now, how rugby has managed in a couple of World Cups to unite our country like no other event has done before. You still have hope in terms of the country going forward and making that progress that we all wanted to see in 1995. Yeah, and it was a big step forward. For the first time in the history of our country, everybody was a World Cup winner. For the first time. I mean, it's just incredible. So the stories I hear from people on a weekly basis when I travel, where they were, what they were thinking and how they felt and some of them, they hated rugby, now loves rugby. And Mr Mandela said, sport has the power to unite people in a way that little else does, because it does. It just does. Well Francois, you were the first spring box captain to lift a World Cup trophy. Can they do it again for what would be a record fourth time? Will be a fantastic record and Sia doing it for the second time. You know, he was battling with injury and he came through the Argentinian game 30 minutes and he's been playing well. So he would want to make history and the team would want to make history. There's a lot of them there that have tasted that four years ago. And yes, they have a chance. I mean, the top five teams in the world, six teams in the world definitely have a chance, but there's going to be a couple of things that they need to get right in order to become world champions in Paris. Do you think that what started in 1995 and we saw then carry on in 2007 and 2019 is what makes the Rugby World Cup so special to the people of South Africa when the country wins it? Yeah, definitely it is. The flame was lit in 1995 and that has become a big, and that's a big thing now. The World Cup, they can't find jerseys in South Africa anymore, sold out because it's kicking off against Scotland on Sunday and I'll be there. So definitely the flame started now. It's like I said, 60 million people that love the game and more players getting opportunities than ever before to play the game of rugby. So the platform has been much bigger for a talent to come through and we're seeing that on our side. Francois Pinard talking there to Ian Williams. Still to come on this podcast? No time to wait until it's finished to rebuild, you know, so it's like really time to do something. We join Revellers in Kiev in Ukraine to discover what a night out is like in a country under attack. But first here's Andrew Peach with news of this week's Happy Pod. Yes, this week on the Happy Pod, a familiar voice to Global News podcast listeners, my BBC colleague Ola Gurin, on how she managed to get back into Yemen to catch up with a little boy who teaches his fellow pupils at school. We're also going to hear about a new app that's teaching hundreds of thousands of people literacy skills in the Horn of Africa. We're off to a Greek island where they repair, reuse or recycle pretty much everything. And if you heard me asking for your little win, the thing that's made your week, prepare to meet a US Navy lieutenant in Washington

State and a proud dog owner in Western Australia. The Happy Pod in this feed every Saturday. The names may have changed at the top of Japan's biggest boyband agency, but the allegations of sexual abuse at the J-pop talent group are continuing. Now, the newly appointed CEO of Johnny and Associates, Noriyuki Higashayama, is facing questions over sexual allegations. In an earlier podcast, we reported that Julie, the niece of agency founder Johnny Kitagawa, had stepped down after admitting for the first time that sexual abuse committed by her late uncle had taken place over decades. So, what do we know about the new CEO? I spoke to our correspondent in Tokyo, Shyma Khalil. Well, Noriyuki Higashayama is a household name in his own right. He's one of the oldest talents recruited by Johnny and Associates. He's been with them for decades. He's a singer, an actor, a veteran entertainer, very recognizable face and name. And yet, yesterday, he faced his own accusations of sexual abuse. These came out in a book that was published in 2005, and one of the journalists asked him whether he inappropriately touched boys, if he inappropriately exposed himself to young boys. And Mr. Higashayama said that he didn't remember. Maybe it happened, maybe it didn't, he said. I have trouble remembering. He also added that he may have been stricter with younger performance and may have done things in his 20s and teens that he wouldn't do now. It's not an outright no, but it's also not a confirmation. What we know is that as it stands, we have a company that is in the midst of a huge sexual abuse scandal, who's hired a CEO that himself is facing allegations of sexual misconduct, which then begs the question, as you mentioned, the face may have changed, but what actually changes structurally in this talent agency? Now, Noriyuki Higashayama is on the front pages of many newspapers today, many commenting on the fact that, yes, he's the new CEO, but Julie Fujishima, the outgoing CEO and president and the niece of Johnny Kitagawa, owns 100% of the shares in the company. She will stay on as representative director, taking care of the money. So yes, the face at the top again has changed what is changing in terms of practices. One thing also that remains the same, Valerie, is the name, the name of the company, Johnny and Associates. And for decades, this is a name that has been synonymous with Japan's K-pop culture, but now it is essentially, it conjures up really difficult memories for many of these victims, and it is associated with a brand and a man that are disgraced in Japan's worst sexual abuse scandal. And this is a really big deal, this agency, where you are, isn't it? Oh, it's a huge deal. I mean, I don't think you can overstate how hugely influential Johnny Kitagawa was, the sway and the power that he held over the entertainment industry, the fact that if you are a young Japanese teenager wanting to cut your teeth into the entertainment industry, be part of a boy band, this was your gateway, this agency. But keeping that name, many survivors have said is not only bad for business, but they feel that it's an insult to them and what they have gone through. Shyma Khalil. Here in the UK, an enormous manhunt is underway to track down Daniel Khalif, a former soldier and terror suspect who escaped from Wandsworth Prison in London on Wednesday. It was an audacious escape. One minute, 21-year-old Khalif was working in the prison kitchen.

The next, he'd apparently strapped himself to the bottom of a lorry delivering food to the jail, and when the lorry left, so too did Daniel Khalif. He'd been on remand in prison. It's understood he's accused of working for Iran and has been nicknamed Iran's spy in the media. The incident has triggered long delays at ports and airports, as police look for him. The BBC's Dominic Kashiani give us this update. We've had an announcement in the last few minutes from the Metropolitan Police saying that an overnight search of Richmond Park, now that's in southwest London,

was in connection with the disappearance of Daniel Khalif. We've had a lot of speculation about how this pretty enormous manhunt is now going on, but last night, people saw two police helicopters over the park, and Richmond Park, for those who don't know, is the largest in the capital. It's about two and a half thousand acres. It's actually a large piece of open countryside on the edge of London, and those helicopters were seen overhead. That indicates that they must have been using effectively infrared technology looking for body heat, and possibly the route he would have taken from once with prison towards potentially where he has connections to in Kingston and southwest London. It could have been a good place to search. People have seen and experienced longer queues at

Dover, at the Channel Tunnel, particularly for the lorries. We've seen some of the pictures of that. I'm told that yesterday afternoon there was some quite substantial police activity, and also there's a drone at one point was put up in the air around either the Channel Tunnel or the port. Clearly police are taking very seriously the possibility that he may try to leave the country. They're taking no chances here, and that's why there was an alert which went out to the airports shortly after he disappeared. There are more than 150 officers from the Metropolitan Police's counter-terrorism command involved in the manhunt. Former police officer Mel Thomas has experience of searching for fugitives on the run. The way the individuals managed to escape from

the actual establishment is pretty unique. Obviously underneath a vehicle you would only have been able to hold onto that vehicle for so long, I would guess obviously because of the moving parts and the heat on the vehicle. So yes, I'm sure he would have relighted on the vehicle very close by and then obviously made his way from there whether or not he would have gone straight to his network. That might be the obvious thing. Some people might think, well, he wouldn't go to his network because that would be the obvious thing for somebody to do. So all avenues are open. If you don't walk past any CCTV, if you don't carry a mobile phone, if you don't have a device, then you can't be tracked and you can literally just fall off the radar, drop off the radar. So if you end up going into the wilderness where there is no tracking devices, there is no CCTV, then you can disappear. Unfortunately though, with our world as it is, a lot of people will always find that hard to do because a lot of people are reliant and dependent and addicted and we know it is an addiction to devices. So you can disappear, it's how you choose to disappear. Mel Thomas, now to North Korea where the nation's leader Kim Jong-un has unveiled a new submarine which he claims can carry nuclear weapons.

The vessel has been in production for years and Pyongyang says it will give them the capability to launch underwater nuclear attacks. Jean McKenzie reports from Seoul in South Korea. In photographs released by state media, Kim Jong-un is standing in a shipyard surrounded by naval officers and overshadowed by an enormous black submarine which according to this morning's report is capable of launching nuclear weapons. Mr Kim has been working to develop this submarine

for many years. It's seen as a crucial part of his nuclear weapons program. Submarines are difficult to locate underwater, meaning having one could allow Pyongyang to strike its enemies from the sea after its land weapons had been destroyed in an attack. But we don't know if this submarine is operational. The North Koreans have yet to demonstrate it can successfully fire nuclear capable missiles. Jean McKenzie, China's currency has hit a 16 year low and August saw its exports fall for the fourth month in a row. It's hardly the economic bounce back that was expected after Beijing lifted its harsh cover restrictions earlier this year. So what's going on? The BBC's Felicity Hanna spoke to Rebecca Chung Wilkins, a senior correspondent from Bloomberg News in Hong Kong.

Instead of that big reopening that we were expecting to have and expecting to see, we've seen quite a considerable slowdown in growth and the latest indication are these sort of quite weak trade figures where again we're seeing exports and imports for China both slowing about seven, eight percent there. The only sort of bright glimmer is that that slump is slightly better than people are expecting. There was an expectation among economists we were going to see both of those figures drop by quite a bit more than that. It does suggest that the economy may be starting to stabilize. It's interesting isn't it? Its exports have fallen for the fourth month in a row and I was looking at one report this week that showed China's share of US goods imports fell to the lowest level since 2006. So what is going on? Why is global demand for Chinese goods decreasing? Well there's sort of two elements to that. The first is this global slowdown that we've seen. Now during the pandemic there was such a demand for and such strong consumption that actually Chinese exports in the rest of the world were really bolstered.

Now since reopening and because of global weakness and global demand that has waned a little bit and in addition to that we of course had these ongoing tensions between China and the US. China on for its part is actually moving away from importing US goods and equally the US appears to be importing less from China. Although it is worth noting that although those that China figure appears to be falling the US is still importing products from China that come via other manufacturing

hubs. So for example we see a bit of an uptick in Vietnam and Mexico. Now that's bolstered by China rerouting some of its goods through those alternative nations.

If the Chinese economy is slowing and if the price of Chinese goods therefore falls could that actually be deflationary for the rest of the world? It is sort of worth mentioning that actually those deflationary pressures in China appear to have eased off just a little bit and going back to those trade figures just again that figure of Chinese imports just being a little bit better than expected points to that. It points to the fact that demand in China's domestic consumption and domestic audience might be just improving a touch and that's what really is needed that domestic demand is needed to prevent deflation in the Chinese economy.

Rebecca Chung Wilkins from Bloomberg News in Hong Kong. Let's return now to Ukraine where Russia's

invasion has upended every aspect of everyday daily life including trips to the pub.

So just how do you have a big night out in a war zone? Toby Luckhurst reports from Kyiv.

Last order is in Kyiv. It's been 18 months since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the war has changed every part of people's lives here. That includes their leisure time. Air raids, curfews, government restrictions have all changed the culture of night's out.

So how do you spend a Friday night in a city at war?

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Our first stop is a place called Abo. It started a year ago as a record shop but it's now grown into a bar, a club, a hangout place. There are people playing table tennis, drinking with friends, smoking, enjoying their Friday nights. We're going to speak to one of the co-founders, Amir, about why they set this spot up during the war.

It was to support local people, local artists. It's like the time when our neighbours they like destroying our country daily you know and no time to wait until it's finished to rebuild you know so it's like really time to do something right now because like they're destroying, we're building. Under wartime rules all bars, clubs and restaurants have to shut here at 10 p.m. You can't sell alcohol after that time either. So we're heading now to a bar called Venisage which I'm told is an iconic Kiev night spot. Let's go check it out.

We sat down outside Venisage. It's a grungy graffiti bar that only sells beer and cider.

It's a sign saying that no vodka will ever be sold here. That hasn't dampened the fun.

Everyone here seems very merry. We've met a group of students who are going to tell us about how war has affected their nights out. The Arislav is talking about the wartime curfew. The student looks sharp. He's got bleach blonde hair, he's wearing an earring, an ascot and a crisp white shirt plus sunglasses even though it's been dark for the past hour. He tells me they respect the government

rules but he also says he's keen to travel once the war ends. As things stand, mayonnaise 18-60 can't leave Ukraine without special government permission. Yes, I want to see the world. I want to see something new. I want to share a new culture. So it's now just before 10 p.m. Venisage has closed and everyone's happily and quickly heading down to the metro. Although it turns out not home

time for us. Bars and clubs have to shut at 10 p.m. You can't sell alcohol after 10 p.m. But curfew, the point when everyone has to be off the streets, is midnight here in Kiev, which gave us just enough

time to get an invitation to a house party. It was bottled. This is one of the last bottles. It was produced the 5th of January of 2022. We're in Konstantin's apartment, about six of us in total.

He's popped a bottle of sparkling wine from Bakhmut to share with us. He's a great host.

He's originally from Donetsk and then he moved to Maripole and is now settled here in the capital Kiev. Russia has pushed him further and further west in the last 10 years. Despite all that, he does see some positives to wartime curfews. There's actually entire new culture emerging of parties. You know, people don't stay overnight because of the curfew. So everything is during daytime and don't drink too much. You remember that public transport will be shut down. You have to

get home somehow. It's interesting how this culture is changing.

Slanjiva, Toby Luckhurst reporting.

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.ca.uk. You can also find us on X, formerly known as Twitter, at Global NewsPod. This edition was mixed by Gareth Jones. The producer was Alison Davis.

The editor, as ever, is Karen Martin. I'm Valerie Sanderson. Until next time, bye-bye.