

## **[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Thailand: 14 year old boy arrested after mass shooting in Bangkok shopping mall**

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

I'm Valerie Sanderson and at 13 hours GMT on Tuesday, the 3rd of October, these are our main stories.

A 14-year-old boy has been arrested in Thailand after a deadly shooting at a Bangkok shopping mall. In India, police have raided the homes of several journalists, linked to a prominent news website that's been accused of receiving illegal funds from China.

Also in this podcast, Pope Francis has suggested that same-sex couples could be blessed by the Catholic Church in the future.

In Australia, votes have been cast early in a landmark referendum which could result in a permanent body of Indigenous people to advise Parliament.

And we look at a novel way in which artificial intelligence is being used in the art world.

What is your favourite painting?

It's hard for me to choose a favourite painting among my artworks because each painting is dear to me in its own way.

But if I have to choose one, I think my painting called Story Nice is one of my favourites.

First to Thailand, where a 14-year-old boy has been arrested on suspicion of carrying out a mass shooting,

the teenager was detained after a gunman opened fire at a luxury shopping mall in the capital Bangkok.

As Southeast Asia correspondent, Jonathan Head joined me from Bangkok shortly before we recorded this podcast.

We're still seeing ambulances leaving this shopping mall more than three hours after this shocking incident.

Well, we believe that the police are still inside with the 14-year-old boy that they apprehended and who they say carried out the shooting.

It started in the late afternoon when this mall, as it pretty much always is, would have been very crowded.

I mean, it's an exceptionally popular mall in Bangkok and people had multiple gunshots on the lower floors.

Some of them went for the exits, people were seen streaming out of the exits in panic.

Others went to hide inside stores barricading themselves in until the police could come.

The police have released a video showing them confronting the young shooter.

He went down on his knees, he was carrying a handgun and then surrendered quite quickly to them and they are now trying to ascertain

what his motives could possibly be for carrying out such an attack.

I mean, Sam Paragon, sometimes cited as the most visited spot in Asia, pops up on people's social media feeds.

It's visited by most tourists who come to this city, so it's a very high-profile location.

Gun crimes like this are relatively uncommon in Thailand.

There is a lot of small-scale gun crime, there's quite a lot of gun ownership.

There have been in recent years a couple of very shocking large-scale shootings outside Bangkok, but nothing like this right in the very heart of the capital.

Jonathan Head in Bangkok.

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In Delhi, Indian police have raided the homes of several prominent journalists and authors in connection with an investigation into the funding of news website NewsClick. Critics say the operation in the country's capital is an attack on press freedom. I got the latest from the BBC's South Asia regional editor and Parasan Ethirajan. This morning many journalists have tweeted saying that their houses were being raided. Some of these journalists were connected with the news website called NewsClick.in. It is described as a left-leaning website, an independent news website. And police say that more than a dozen locations were raided and they had seized several laptops, telephones or mobile phones of these journalists. And this has set a strong condemnation from various media groups, rights groups in India. They say that it is an attempt to control the press, to control dissent in the country. And this is part of an ongoing efforts by the government, the Hindu nationalist BJP government, to intimidate the press because this particular website had been publishing articles of the government's policies and what these policies are having an impact on millions of people in India. But the government denies that it is going after the press. It says that India has a very vibrant and free press. There's another read too and Parasan isn't there at the website's office in Delhi. This is in regard to what the New York Times published last month. A detailed investigative report talked about a US millionaire. He was setting up in a various funds and shell companies to donate monies to various think tanks and news websites to put forward a Chinese propaganda. So this was the allegation made by the New York Times. So the latest rates on this news click website comes after this report was published. And now the police have registered a case under anti-terror laws. That means that anyone who gets arrested in this case, it will be difficult for them to get bail. But the news click website has firmly rejected these allegations that they were also part of these efforts to put forward Chinese point of view. As you may know, India and China, they have raging border tensions for the past few years. And both countries have been accusing each other of trying to occupy each other's territory. So this is in the background of what the New York Times said. So that is why police say that this is in regard to money laundering in connection with money laundering allegations against this news portal in India. The Republican House Speaker in the United States, Kevin McCarthy, is facing a direct threat to his leadership after a hard line fellow Republican called for a vote to ask him. Declaring the office of Speaker of the House of Representatives to be vacant resolved that the office of Speaker of the House of Representatives is hereby declared to be vacant. Republican Congressman Matt Gates introduced the motion after Mr McCarthy had cooperated with the Democrats to pass a funding bill that averted a government shutdown to the fury of Mr Gates and some of his colleagues

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as our US correspondent Peter Bose told Alex Ritzen.

Well, this follows those protracted negotiations in the House of Representatives over the past few weeks.

Negotiations that led to this short-term budget being passed on Saturday night.

It was possible only because the majority Republicans had the support of House Democrats.

In fact, more Democrats voted for the stopgap bill than Republicans.

And the Democrats didn't get everything they wanted, including aid for Ukraine, but they had a significant input in the bill.

And the fact that there was this cross-party cooperation angered those on the far right of the Republican side

who flatly disagree with doing deals with the Democrats.

And Matt Gates was quick to indicate that he would attempt to get Kevin McCarthy ousted from his job,

and that's what he's doing with this motion.

And Kevin McCarthy has responded. What has he said?

Yeah, in a post on X, formerly Twitter, Kevin McCarthy's response was brief, though.

It was to the point he said, bring it on.

He is going to fight this, and of course he is well used to fighting for his job.

He won a really marathon struggle to become Speaker in January after apparently promising those on the right of his party that he wouldn't make such deals with the Democrats.

He clinched the job after some 15 rounds of voting.

He also, at that time, promised to change the House rules to allow anyone member to call for a vote to oust the Speaker, which is exactly what's happened.

So he's been on thin ice ever since he got the job.

Peter Bose.

In Australia, votes have been cast early in a landmark referendum

which could result in a permanent body of Indigenous people to advise Parliament.

A yes vote would see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people included in the Constitution for the first time.

Supporters in favour of establishing the body include the country's Prime Minister, Antony Albanese, who says it will help introduce laws to address inequality.

But critics insist the body will be divisive and ineffectual.

The referendum has divided many.

I'm concerned about...

If the voice were legislated into Parliament, there could be legal challenges

where some Aboriginal is called to claim people's lands,

like where people live, their houses, and it's not fair.

We're just hundreds of years behind the rest of the planet, Australia,

marginalising the Indigenous people, putting them down, putting them in jail, locking them up.

It's so embarrassing to be an Australian.

From Sydney, Phil Mercer told us more about the issue

and what it would mean for Indigenous people in Australia.

Australians have a very big decision to make.

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Referendums don't come along very often.

The last was in 1999 when the country rejected an opportunity to sever its constitutional ties to the British monarchy and become a republic.

What the Australian Prime Minister, Antony Albanese, wants to do is to see this referendum pass and set up a so-called Indigenous voice to Parliament.

This would be enshrined in the constitution.

It would offer non-binding advice to Parliament and the government.

The vote takes place on Saturday, October 14th,

but early polling stations have opened up now

in every of Australia's six states and two main territories.

So referendum day is ten days away, but the race for votes is already underway.

And as we heard there from campaigners, this referendum is really dividing opinion, isn't it?

It is. You have on the one side the Prime Minister, Antony Albanese,

who believes that the voice, this Indigenous advisory panel,

would deliver positive outcomes for Indigenous people

who, by and large, are the most disadvantaged people in the country.

They suffer very high rates of unemployment, poverty, ill health and imprisonment.

Indigenous Australians, on average, live eight years less than non-Indigenous people.

On the other side of the debate you have the No Campaign.

This is a very broad church, including opposition Conservative politicians.

They criticise the lack of specific detail about what the voice will actually do,

how it will work and who will be on it.

There are other campaigners who say that the whole proposal presumes that Indigenous people will always be disadvantaged and will always need special treatment.

So as we heard from those two voters earlier, this has been a very divisive debate.

And yet, as you mentioned, the advice from the body of Indigenous people,

if it's voted through, it wouldn't be binding.

So why such a fuss about it?

I think the problem that some Australians have,

there has been a lot of misinformation, a lot of disinformation about the voice.

We heard earlier that some people believe that the voices will be able to impose a rent on ordinary people for living on Indigenous lands.

Now, the Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, who says this clearly is not the case, that the voice to Parliament will not have special powers.

It will not be able to veto government decisions and will be an advisory body, essentially giving Aboriginal people a direct line into the heart of government.

And millions of Australians will vote before referendum day,

but the big decision will come for this country on the 14th of October.

Phil Mercer.

Two people and their pet dog have been killed in a rare, grisly bear attack in Banff National Park in Alberta, in Canada.

The case has appalled the country. A Stephanie Prentice told me.

Park Canada, who run this region, they've said it was a couple out in a remote part of the park

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with their dog when they came into some sort of contact with a grisly bear.

It's unclear whether it was accidental or whether it was an attack.

They did somehow manage to send out an emergency alert calling for help, and teams immediately responded, but they just couldn't get a helicopter up to them.

They had bad weather, they had to trek there on foot, and they thought they were a few hours later to find two bodies.

They have said the victims were Canadian citizens, but they have no more information that they've released yet.

The bear itself was still in the camp, close to the bodies.

Park Rangers said it was demonstrating aggressive behaviour and they shot it dead, and they've now closed off the area to bring in teams to try and work out what happened and give the relatives some sort of answers.

And how unusual is this kind of attack?

Well, Banff is a place that really showcases the best of Canada.

It's those pictures you see of turquoise waters, rocky mountains reflecting them, and as such, you get tourists from all around the world, more than four million a year there, as well as Canadians that go there on holidays.

So, given that level of football, bear encounters are actually very rare.

There's only about 60 to 65 grizzlies in the entire park, as well as some black bears, but those encounters and those sightings are increasing recently, according to experts.

More people are in the park.

Bears are out looking for food before they hibernate for winter from around October onwards.

But generally speaking, around the world, only 14% of grisly bear attacks lead to fatalities.

Usually people just make a lot of noise and the bear runs away.

So this case has been particularly shocking.

And what's been the reaction to it?

Well, family members of the deceased have said they were always out in national parks, they knew bear protocol, and they followed it to a tee.

But the attack has prompted media in Canada to re-issue the advice that everyone kind of knows there

around entering the bear's habitat.

That includes things like trawling in groups, making a lot of noise during a trek,

so you don't suddenly startle a bear, carrying bear spray,

and for hikers to leave an area if they see things like claw marks or maybe an animal carcass or something.

There's also been some shock online around the bear being killed, given they are considered to be a threatened population in Alberta.

And on the flip side of that, there's been a sort of conversation around gun rights.

Some people are tweeting to call for looser rules on guns there to enable hikers to defend themselves.

There's been a lot of response from different corners,

but overall just a real sense of sadness for this young couple.

They were said to be huge lovers of the outdoors,

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and as a couple, they were said to be inseparable.

Stephanie Prentice.

Still to come on this podcast,

pressure grows on Japan's government to legalise same-sex unions.

I don't feel that we're protected here as a couple.

When I gave birth, I wrote a will to appoint my partner as the legal guardian of our son.

And even that didn't guarantee her custody.

Pope Francis has suggested that same-sex couples could be blessed by the Catholic Church in the future.

While some other Christian denominations have allowed gay marriages and blessings, the Vatican has always rejected the move.

Charlotte Gallagher reports.

Pope Francis is viewed as more liberal than his predecessors,

speaking out against LGBTQ discrimination,

declaring that being homosexual isn't a crime.

He's now suggesting that priests could bless same-sex couples in contradiction of official Vatican policy.

In a letter to Cardinals,

Francis wrote that any request for a blessing must be treated with pastoral charity,

and we cannot be judges who only deny, reject and exclude.

But he also added the Church still considered same-sex relationships sinful

and would not recognise gay marriage.

But even the idea of blessing same-sex couples puts Pope Francis on a collision course with the more conservative members of his Church.

They're already unhappy with his views on LGBTQ issues,

the role of women in the Church and divorce.

Some Catholic leaders have accused the Pope of diluting their faith

and have even called for his resignation.

Charlotte Gallagher.

And pressure has been mounting on Japan's government to legalise same-sex unions.

After a court rule earlier this year that a ban on them is unconstitutional.

The world's third-largest economy is the only G7 country not to fully recognise same-sex couples or to offer them clear legal protection.

Parliament has recently passed a law targeting discrimination against sexual minorities, but it stops well short of marriage equality.

Artuku correspondent Shama Khalil reports.

Aki and Hikari have been together for seven years.

Now the same-sex couple are parents to a one-month-old baby.

There are many things to get used to for the new mothers.

Among them is the fact that only Aki, who gave birth to their son, has parental rights.

I don't feel that we're protected here as a couple.

When I gave birth, I wrote a will to appoint my partner as the legal guardian of our son, in case I died during labour.

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And even that didn't guarantee her custody.

Despite the support around them, they've kept the relationship a secret from many people.

It's why they don't want to reveal their real names.

Akira Nishiyama is the deputy secretary general of the Japan Alliance for LGBT legislation.

Through her work and as a young gay person,

she knows firsthand how difficult it is to feel invisible in the eyes of the law,

the government and a conservative male-dominated society.

Because they are not legally considered as a family,

for instance, let's say when one of them was sent to hospital,

when they needed surgery or any medical procedures,

even if the same-sex partner wants to sign the paper for consent,

maybe the doctors or other people at the hospital reject

because they are not considered as a family, a legally family.

Same-sex couples could apply for special permissions in these circumstances,

but the decision depends on the discretion of officials.

Parliament has recently enacted a law to promote understanding of sexual minorities.

Despite fierce pushback from conservative lawmakers within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party,

but the law stops short of legalizing same-sex marriage

and the wording angered many activists who took to the streets outside the parliament building.

It says that in taking measures to promote understanding of sexual minorities,

schools, workplaces and organizations must ensure that all citizens can live with peace of mind.

Critics have said the law prioritized the rights of the majority

and implied that the existence of the LGBTQ community was a threat to the public's peace of mind.

It was parenthood that encouraged Hikari and Aki to come out to their families

and their close circle of friends and to consider marriage.

When their application was rejected in Japan, they got married in Canada

where Hikari went to university.

I ask her if she sees a future for her small family here.

If you ask me, yes, I can actually.

We are very fortunate to have lots of support so I can see our future where we live happily here.

I do hope that same-sex marriage is accepted one day though.

Aki, I'm wondering why you chose to live in a country where your relationship is not recognized.

Partly because my family are in Japan.

Also, if we live overseas, we would become minorities there, foreigners.

Here, we're supported by many people. We also need to show that we exist.

Aki and Hikari are both hopeful that one day they'll be legally married in Japan

and that their son will be at their wedding.

For now, all they want for him is to live in a society that accepts his family without prejudice.

Shima Khalil.

In China, people are already looking ahead to 2024,

which according to superstition is said to be a very unlucky one for some.

Our China media analyst, Kerry Allen, told me more.

It's a year that's based on the lunar calendar that's associated with infertility and widowhood.

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Now, it's a superstition and this doesn't happen very often, but it's considered a solar and lunar mismatch.

If you think of the ideas of Yin and Yang being basically the sun and the moon, but also a relationship,

the idea is that women who marry will either become widows, their marriages will break down, they'll become infertile or their children will suffer bad luck.

Generally, it's a year that some people don't want to get married.

One to avoid indeed.

You have to be pretty superstitious, don't you, to believe in a widow year?

It is quite widespread.

So, the last widow year was in 2010 and there was a lot of media at this time about how some couples rush to get married sooner.

And what I'm seeing in Chinese media today is reports that if people do want to get married, that they should think about doing it now before the Lunar New Year comes round in 2024.

But also, there are some young people who are skeptical.

I mean, these are superstitions, but what they don't want to do is offend their elders, their parents, their grandparents who do believe this.

And this isn't just the case for China.

People in China, it's also the case for overseas Chinese as well.

So, are people actually not making wedding plans?

Because that means others will suffer, won't they?

I'm thinking of hospitality, hotels, they won't get the bookings.

Absolutely.

And we're reading about this today because it's Golden Week in China.

So, it's a week-long holiday when people gather with their families.

So, the idea is really being pushed on Chinese people that this is a good period of time if you want to get married, try and get married as soon as possible.

But what I've been seeing over a number of years now in China are reports that marriage is just no longer popular anymore.

And it's largely a hangover from the one-child policy

because there is a smaller demographic of young people.

The older generation are retiring and it means that young people are working longer hours.

And so, they don't really have time to meet partners.

Also, they're watching their money a lot more.

So, the idea of getting married in general is very expensive.

And are the state trying to counter this and indeed the superstitions?

Absolutely, yes.

It's been a priority in the government for the last few years to really prioritize a lot of messaging on marriage,

to tell people getting married is a good idea because as well as marriage, there's the birth rate.

So, it recognizes that there is a much smaller birth rate as a hangover from the one-child policy.

So, it wants people having children as well.

Kerry Allen.

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And finally, to a new Vincent van Gogh exhibition at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris where visitors will be able to ask the great artist's questions with the help of artificial intelligence. What is your favorite painting?

It is hard for me to choose a favorite painting among my artworks because each painting is dear to me in its own way.

But if I have to choose one, I think my painting called Story Night is one of my favorites.

The painting depicts the village of Saint Rémy in southern France with vibrant colors and a swelling sky.

So, people can now hear how van Gogh, who died in 1890, might have answered their questions in a range of languages.

The responses are based on a database which came partly from work by Wouter van der Veen, an art historian at the University of Strasbourg and the author of books on Vincent van Gogh.

He's been speaking to Michel Hussain.

Primarily, we choose to feed the AI with van Gogh's correspondence.

He wrote about 900 letters, so that's about one million words.

And it sounds like a lot for a human being, but for the AI it was quite easy to digest and ingest this large quantity of data.

And do all the letters date from this period?

Because this exhibition is specifically about work produced by him in the last two months of his life at Orversus was near Paris.

Was that a very important period creatively?

Yes, it was his final outburst of an incredible number of high quality works.

Really great masterpieces such as the Church of Auvers, the portrait of Dr. Gachet.

Wheatfield with Crows were created in a very short time.

But of course, when he is in Auvers, it's the very end of his life.

And all the books he read, all the people he knows, they are in his head.

And my job was to provide the machine with all that information.

Well, was it all of it, or did you hold anything back?

Well, it was all of it, but still it's fragments.

Of course, we do not have all the information about Vincent van Gogh that would not be possible.

So it's like our own memories.

The history comes to us through fragments that we can remember, and we just connect the dots.

And that's what the AI has to do also in an autonomous manner.

And that's when you can have some surprises, of course, and you have to train the AI too.

When we hear an answer like the one a moment ago saying his favorite painting was Starry Night, do we know that? Is that documented?

No, we don't. It is improvised by the AI.

He must have deduced that from the letters and from the information we gave him.

We did not guide that.

Him the AI?

Yes, sometimes he answers that his favorite painting is Sunflowers.

That makes him quite human also because it shifts from time to time.

And I think that if you ask him to do anybody, you will have different answers also.

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Right, so they are credible then, the answers.

No, we should not trust this machine.

It is still in infancy. It is only a couple of weeks old and it's learning.

And this is an experimental phase and what I noticed from the engineers are working on it.

They are like the inventors of air travel.

When the first aircraft took off and even if they crashed after one minute, everybody was very happy because it proved that the technology was working and that's where we are now.

Art Historian, Wutter van der Veen.

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, send us an email.

The address is GlobalPodcast at [bbc.co.uk](mailto:bbc.co.uk).

You can also find us on X, formerly known as Twitter, at Global NewsPod.

This edition was produced by Alice Adderley and mixed by Joe McCartley.

The editor is ever is Karen Martin.

I'm Valerie Saundersen. Until next time, bye-bye.