

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

Yes, we're back and we're here to stay, hopefully. And in this edition, we will hear from Sudan, Finland and Lithuania, also brain implants helping a paralysed man from the Netherlands to walk.

The most surprising thing, I think, happened after two days. I could control my hips, so that was like the best outcome. Why some people are taking smiling lessons in Japan.

When Covid restrictions were lifted, they were like, really? So now I have to actually take my masks off. And the 100 greatest children's books in the world.

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Also in the podcast. What happened to the maths teacher's garden?

What did happen to the maths teacher's garden?

We begin in Sudan with the rescue of hundreds of children caught up in the war there.

There hasn't been very much in the way of positive news from there since mid-April, but now around 300 children and babies have been successfully evacuated from the Maigoma orphanage in the capital Khartoum to Wad Madani in the south of Sudan.

Sara Manetta reports from Nairobi.

After a difficult four-hour drive, the relief of finally having reached safety, the city of Wad Madani about 200 kilometres south of Khartoum.

297 children were taken here, about 200 of them below the age of two.

Some were taken to hospital for treatment as soon as they stepped off the bus.

The children's ordeal started when the war between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary rapid support forces broke out in mid-April. The Maigoma orphanage was caught up in the crossfire.

400 children trapped near the front line.

The area where the cradles were kept was damaged after a bomb hit a nearby building.

Power and water were cut and most of the staff was unable to reach the orphanage.

67 children died in the past few weeks due to malnutrition and heat.

A group of older kids between the ages of four and 15 was evacuated last week and by local activists.

Four white and blue mini buses made their way to the town of Hala Saisa with a blanket hung at the front of the convoy.

On it, a handwritten message to the militias. There are kids on board.

Back in Wad Madani, the hope now is that the orphans will find families to take them in.

So the most important thing for these children is that we get them into safe and loving family care.

This is Marie-Louise Eagleton, UNICEF's deputy representative in Sudan.

There are lists of foster families who have been prepared, who've been trained, who stand ready to take these children and that's what's so extraordinary is that it's really about communities coming together to help in this crisis.

What did it feel like when you found out the kids were safe and sound?

I can't describe it. For the whole team, it was really incredibly a huge relief, a huge, huge relief.

With no peace talks and no end to the fighting inside, the war in Sudan can often feel like a desperate conflict.

This evacuation, a much needed glimmer of hope.

And we asked Sarah about how important it had been to tell this story.
Oh, it's essential because it kind of restores your faith in humanity a little bit.
I've been covering this story for several weeks now and it all felt very hopeless.
It started as a very grim news story, these kids trapped in a war zone.
But then I got the good news that they were actually planning an evacuation.
I knew that they were trying to do it for several days now.
And I was waiting to hear back from them whether they were successful or not.
And then on the morning that they started the evacuation, I got a message very early in the morning saying, we will try today, fingers crossed, it will go well, I'll let you know.
So basically I spent the entire day on the edge of my seat thinking, oh my God, let's hope that these kids managed to be taken out of this horrible war zone.
And then eventually late at night, I got the message saying, we made it.
They're in what Mandali.
And that was just, it was incredible.
That was Sarah Manetta.
Now to a medical and technological breakthrough that's been in the headlines.
Khayat Yan Oskom from the Netherlands was paralyzed in a cycling accident 12 years ago.
Now though, electronic brain implants allow him to walk simply by thinking about it.
Here's how it works.
Electrodes on Mr. Oskom's brain transmit the brain waves made when he tries to move his legs.
These are processed and turned into pulses that are sent to other electrodes implanted in his spine. These control his muscles, allowing him to move.
The most surprising thing, I think, happened after two days.
Within five to 10 minutes, I could control my hips.
The brain implant picked up what I was doing with my hips.
So that was like the best outcome, I think, for everyone.
It was a long journey, but at the end, I can really build functional things from it.
Training 10 years to stand up with a friend, having a beer.
And that's something I think people don't realize.
Now the system is still at an experimental stage, but it is said to be very encouraging.
We wanted to find out more, so we spoke to Andrea Carmina,
who conducted most of the sessions with the patient.
We started out was two days after the implantation.
And after a few minutes, we were able to calibrate the system and we tested for the first time.
And he expressed in that instant how for the first time after 12 years,
he was able to reconnect that feeling from his life.
It's extraordinary. When you go home from work after a day like that and someone says,
how was your day? What did you say?
Well, the first days were very emotional. I think there were a lot of peers around in the room.
Then, well, it was very intense, but it was a big investment for everyone, from the team
and from the participant. But it was every day extremely excited.
We were testing so many things and we knew that it was working.
And the participant was so motivated that it was amazing.
Taking something like this from an idea, obviously, it's fascinating to be involved.

It is ultimately about human beings dealing with something which profoundly affects them.

How do you approach that?

Every case is a particular case. And each patient has a very specific need.

So we, of course, have a very close relationship with the participants.

I think whatever happens with my career, he's a human being that profoundly marks my path.

And well, it's not over, right?

Martin has been working with us the last six years and we continue working.

He's back home and we connect every time he has a question.

And he works there with his clinical team.

And when he wants to use the system, we do this online session.

And as you say, it's not all over yet.

At what point do you think this thing that you have been part of might be more generally rolled out? Because obviously, there's still a lot to do.

So this is our biggest motivation, guardian, it's a source of inspiration for us.

We're trying to push forward the technology to bring it to many people.

And that's our main goal.

Andrea Carmina on her extraordinary work.

Now, there's been a lot of focus recently on high energy prices and concerns about ensuring supply, especially for countries that had been dependent on Russia.

Indeed, in Finland last year, as winter approached, people were warned to watch their consumption.

Fast forward.

And in recent weeks, Finland has been producing so much clean power that for a while, electricity fell into negative prices.

The man in charge of the Finnish electricity grid company Fingrid, chief executive Yuka Rusinen, agreed to talk to us.

We have been investing in cheap generation.

We just installed one of the biggest nuclear power plants in the world.

And then Finland was number five in investing in onshore wind power.

So that's together with our neighbors doing the same.

So we have been able to press prices down after this huge crisis from last winter.

Yes, because there was a period of time when people in Finland were being told to watch their energy consumption.

There were concerns about being able to produce enough.

It does seem quite a turnaround.

It is a turnaround and actually Finland over the past years has been very dependent on the electricity imports.

And then we also cut the imports from Russia.

So that was quite a difficult period last winter.

But people were warned that if we have a very cold period and with calm wind, then we might have some trouble and then we even would have to have interrupted the consumption over some periods of time.

And tell us a little bit more about the specific technology that you're using.

It's mainly renewables is onshore wind.

We are a big country where the wind power plants don't disturb people so much.
You mentioned that there's a new nuclear reactor.
Are there any concerns about nuclear power, particularly after what happened in Chernobyl and what happened in Fukushima?
In Finland, people are very positive to nuclear power because we have a very good experience of using nuclear power in a very safe way.
And then also we have a long-term solution to take care of the nuclear waste.
People vote yes for nuclear if you would ask from ordinary people in Finland.
And that is, I think, our strength that we can have various forms of producing the electricity.
And we don't put all the x into one basket, as you could say.
And Finland is aiming to be completely carbon neutral by 2035, isn't it?
Yes, it's well on the way and especially in this electrification because now that we have a lot of potential in generating cheap and green electricity, so then we have sort of a potential also to clean our industry, like metal industry, for example.
And if that's not sort of possible, the direct electrification, then we go into hydrogen and generate hydrogen and use that hydrogen to clean the industries.
Now Finland, as you say, has a relatively small population and it's very well placed for wave and wind power.
What do you think other countries can learn from Finland's approach?
I think it is that you have to use the strength that you have.
We are using our own, but then some countries are perhaps well located when it comes to offshore wind power.
So all the countries, like any companies, have to play with their strengths.
But that, of course, needs some wisdom from political decision makers and then companies follow if you have a good strategy in the country.
That was Yukaroosinen.
Still to come.
They wore their terrible wars and gnashed their terrible teeth and rolled their terrible eyes.
The greatest children's book in the world.
If you've listened before, you'll know we like to hear about the sounds that warn the cockles of your heart.
This one is from Kevin Neurian, currently in Lithuania.
This is the sound of my motorcycle.
One of the most beautiful sounds I know in the world.
I've ridden this motorcycle from the United States to where I am here in Lithuania.
Along the way, I have gotten married.
I have a son.
I have bought a house and I've become a data scientist.
Kevin's bold tale of adventure left us wanting more.
So let's start with what it is he looks for in the sound of a bike.
So the sound shouldn't be so loud and rough.
And it shouldn't sound like an electric car.
It should have a nice buzz to it, a nice smooth sound.

And I cannot explain it because it's just you have to hear it.
But it's something like.
That's very good.
You've clearly given this some thought and some practice by the sounds of things.
So you are now in Lithuania, but you were originally from the US.
What sent you off on your travels?
Going back, it all starts in my childhood.
I wanted to travel around the world.
And as a child, I said, I will get on a bicycle.
I will put cheese and bread behind me and I will go.
This was my dream.
And then when I became a teenager, that didn't seem like very realistic.
And I began to fall in love with motorcycles.
And this is how motorcycle travel started.
And you've traveled to a lot of places.
Give us a few ideas of some of the places you've been to,
your favorite bike journeys and where you're going next.
I started in the US.
I went through Canada.
Then I got to Greece.
And in Greece, in a community, I met my wife, who's Lithuanian.
And from there, I went to Turkey, the other countries that I visited.
Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Poland.
Estonia, Latvia, all these other countries.
You have at least one more big trip in mind, though, right?
My big goal when I left America was to go to Nepal.
Why Nepal?
I don't have a clear answer, but Nepal was the one that kept coming up.
Nepal, Nepal.
And I want to go to spiritual centers.
And Nepal is one of them.
Kevin Neurian, speaking from Lithuania.
Now, a surprise growth industry in Japan, smiling lessons.
During the pandemic, mask wearing there was pretty much universal.
And there are people who are concerned they have forgotten how to perform,
the sort of warm, friendly smile that helps smooth social interactions.
Some Japanese people in London shared their thoughts on the subject.
People in the West smile a lot when they talk to each other and make fun of each other.
While people in the East don't smile because they are very serious about work.
I believe smiles rather come from inside, rather than being forced.
Well, think about some happy things such as family events with some friends.
Or even just stay on the weekend and the coach had a drink watching TV and make a smile.
Would you pay for smiling lessons?
Actually, I don't need it.

Well, he clearly doesn't need cheering up.
Our correspondent, Mariko Oi, is herself Japanese.
So what does she make of it all?
Even before the pandemic, people in Japan used to wear masks just as a precaution.
You know, when you have a bit of a sore throat or cough or whatever,
you know, you would wear face masks.
So that's always been with the Japanese culture, if you like, for a very long time.
But then when COVID hit, it really kind of normalized things.
And then when COVID restrictions were lifted, they were like, really?
So now I have to actually take my masks off.
And a lot of people were quite reluctant.
And some of them started taking these lessons.
Whether or not you need it, that's obviously up for discussions, you know.
Obviously, you should force yourself to smile or laugh or whatever.
But at the same time, there's clearly enough demand
that those courses get enough people who sign up for it.
We did hear one voice there suggesting that cheery smiling isn't really
a Japanese thing at all.
Is that true?
Again, it's difficult to say.
I mean, you know, when I first started appearing on the BBC,
you know, some people said, you know, the way that you smile, the way you speak,
you know, that's not very Japanese.
I mean, you know, that's very easy to say, isn't it?
And I don't know whether that's just typically a Japanese thing.
I think it can possibly apply to other countries.
You know, you could probably say, you know, that's a very,
that's not a very British way of speaking or whatever.
But generally speaking, you don't express your opinions that overtly.
So, you know, in terms of smiling, I think people do say that, you know,
you don't show your teeth when you smile because that's just expressing too much
emotion and all that kind of stuff.
And for my 20th birthday or my wedding or whatever, you know, some very
traditional event, my parents would like me to not show my teeth when I smile
for a professional photography.
And I'm like, but that's just what I usually do.
And I would show my teeth and she'll be like, no, no, no, no teeth, no teeth.
And it's really, yeah, it's really strange.
And but at the same time, I'm, I find myself now, like at the age of 41,
that I'm doing the same to my children, like, don't show teeth.
That was Mariko Oi, who has a lovely smile.
And she was speaking to us from Singapore.
Now, what was your favorite book as a child?
The one that became doggerled through repeated reading,

the one you can still remember whole chunks of?
BBC culture has carried out a poll of children's authors, illustrators, editors, publishers, academics, librarians, writers and readers from across the world and has come up with the 100 greatest children's books.
The oldest is over 2000 years old, the Panchatantra, a collection of Indian children's stories.
The newest is A Kind of Spark by L. McNichol, published in 2020.
Among the top books, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Pippi Longstocking, The Little Prince and The Hobbit.
The BBC culture editor is Rebecca Lawrence.
She told us more about what makes a brilliant children's book.
But let's begin with a bit from the book that took the number one spot, Where the Wild Things Are, by the US author Maurice Sendak.
They roared their terrible roars and gnashed their terrible teeth, and rolled their terrible eyes and showed their terrible claws.
And Max said, Be still!
And tamed them with the magic trick of staring into their yellow eyes without blinking once.
And they were frightened and called him the most wild thing of all and made him king of all wild things.
So Where the Wild Things Are came in at number one on our poll, and I think the magic of it is not only in its message, but in the visual aspect of it.
So it has very few words, but it manages to translate something really universal to children, but also adults alike, about human emotions.
And I think specifically to children, it was seen as one of the first books to really recognise the sort of intensity of children's emotions and to encourage children to play, to fantasise and to really express themselves.
And you boiled it down to 100 books, but there are only 80 authors, so who made the list more than once?
So the most popular author is not a big surprise, that's Roldar.
So he had several books in there, but quite interestingly was the popularity of some of the Swedish language books.
So Astrid Lindgren was very popular, obviously Pippi Longstocking came in at number three and some of her other books as well.
And then the Moomin books were the most popular series, so Tovia Janssen is finished, but they were originally published in Swedish.
So they were incredibly popular too.
So Rebecca, you don't get to become the BBC culture editor without having first been the sort of child who loved a book.
Take us back, if you can, to a time when you opened a book, read the first few pages for the first time and were transported.
I think I have to talk about My Love of Roldar, because the first book that really captivated my imagination was the BFG.
And it's about a magical, fantastical world,

but it's also ultimately about friendship and family.
And that's what really captivated me about that book.
I mean, I feel like most children who have the privilege of being encouraged to read at a young age realize it's just a kind of portal into a magical world.
I think children, they've been kind of unburdened by the trials and tribulations of adult life.
So they just have an endless capacity for awe and for wonder.
And I feel like that was something that I had at a very young age.
But just to add to that, my number one book was a picture book called Good Night, Moon by Margaret Weisbrown.
That made it to the list.
And I revisited my dog-eared copy recently.
And I just was captivated by how beautiful and simple the message is.
It's about a rabbit who's being told a story and being put to bed.
And I think it really is the essence of what makes children's books so wonderful.
It's an atmosphere and it's extremely comforting.
And it really captures the magic of reading at a very, very young age.
And into the night of his very own room,
where he found a supper waiting for him.
And it was still hot.
The BBC culture editor is Rebecca Lawrence, the readers Wooludo and Cassia.
Climate activist Greta Thunberg first made the headlines when she started encouraging students to strike in 2018.
Her mission was to demand action against climate change and her movement became known as Fridays for Future.
Yesterday she graduated from school and completed her final strike day.
Since the Swedish teenager started,
she has clashed horns with some of the most powerful people in the world.
And why we don't condone bunking off school here at the BBC,
here are some of her words about how small actions can turn into bigger movements.
Many people say that Sweden is just a small country and it doesn't matter what we do.
But I've learned that you are never too small to make a difference.
And if a few children can get headlines all over the world just by not going to school,
then imagine what we could all do together if we really wanted to.
Greta Thunberg.
And to end, have you heard the one about what happened to the maths teacher's garden?
This joke made up by children at a school in the Midlands in England,
secured them the coveted title of Funniest Class in Britain.
The contest was run by the world's oldest comic, The Beano,
and attracted thousands of entries. Oliver came up with the joke.
The winners last year, they were like related to school,
so I thought most of the people in our class love maths.
So I started to make it up and then I thought what happened to the maths teacher's garden.
And then I just had to find the punchline, so that's how I sort of wrote it and stuff.

And did you know you'd written a winner?
Not really. When Miss Dyer said we were in it, I was bouncing.
But I said to my mum, even if we don't win it, I'll still be happy
because we're in the top 10 in Britain and there's like thousands of schools that entered,
so I'm just dead happy.
So when it did win, what on earth did you feel?
I felt a whirlpool of emotions really.
It was, most of them were happy, excited.
And then when I went into school the next day,
I said that we've actually won it and it was really cool.
Or just flabbergasted really.
So let's end on that joke then, all together now.
What happens to the maths teacher's garden?
So what did happen to the maths teacher's garden?
It's Roots, Square Roots.
Square Roots, get it?
And that's it from us for now, but if you want to share the sound that brings you joy,
send us the audio global podcast at bbc.co.uk.
You can also find us on Twitter at Global NewsPod.
This edition was mixed by Phil Bull, the producers were Anna Murphy and Harry Bly.
Our editor is Karen Martin.
I'm Jackie Leonard and until next time, goodbye.