

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / The Happy Pod: Six months on, revisiting the baby born under the rubble

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. The captain, you know, he went on the radio and he was like, we just want to make sure everyone knows he has an Olympic champion on the plane.

On the podium is back with more Olympians and Paralympians sharing their remarkable stories. On the podium, listen now, wherever you get your BBC podcasts.

Hey, y'all, I'm Kentucky Gallagher. I'm in San Diego, California, and me and my dog Derby are happy to be on the Happy Pod. Hello, I'm Rose. I'm in South Africa, and this is the Happy Pod.

Hello, my name is Barry Boy, and I am on a recycling mission. You are listening to BBC's Happy Pod. Ready? Let's get on then. This is the Happy Pod from the BBC World Service.

I'm Jackie Leonard, and in this edition, uploaded on Saturday, the 12th of August, from Syria.

People called it a miracle. It was a moment of hope amid a devastating moment for two nations.

Six months on, we catch up with the baby born beneath the rubble of a devastating earthquake.

The teenager who has made it his mission to get people to recycle their batteries.

Also, the discovery that rats like and laugh as much as the next person.

The rats need to get to know the experimenter, and then you can tickle them and they will emit these giggle sounds. A new world record for a martial artist in India,

and the mum and daughter from Antigua, who won a trip to space.

You felt like a part of the team, a part of the ship, a part of the universe. It was incredible.

Now, to check back in on a little moment of hope that emerged from the rubble of a disaster, the earthquake that devastated so much of Turkey and Syria in February.

You might remember it. This was from a report at the time by Lee's Doucet, our chief international correspondent. And then, this moment, a newborn baby pulled from the ruins. Even more, her umbilical cord had to be cut from her mother. That little girl was initially called Aya by medical staff, meaning miracle. But her surviving family now call her Afra after her mother.

She's now six months old, and Hanan Razek, a BBC Arabic, told us about her,

starting with her dramatic rescue. Her family was at home when the earthquake hit,

but Afra was born under the rubble of her family home. All her family was killed,

but when people were running around, her uncle heard crying of a baby,

and he started looking, then he found Afra with her umbilical cord still attached to

her mother's body, so he rescued her. And after she was found amid all this destruction,

people really latched on to this tiny point of joy. Tell us a bit more about the response

to her rescue. I was there in Turkey back then, and the damage was something that I'd never seen

before in other earthquakes or even war zones. So it was absolutely astonishing when the video of

the rescue of baby Afra started to circulate. It managed to captivate the whole world of this

very happy, joyful story. People called it a miracle. It was a moment of hope amid a devastating

moment for two nations. And then the proposals to adopt her started to flood in from all over the

world. And then the uncle also told us that they were offered to go and live abroad, but they decided

to stay in Syria. And why did they decide that? Because it must have been pretty tempting to

leave at that point. They told us they think it's better to stay there, even though that they lost

many of their family members, but they are still attached to this part of Syria. It's their home

and they don't want to leave it. So now little Afra is six months old and she lives with her aunt,

her uncle and seven cousins. How is she doing? She seems very happy. Her pictures, her videos

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are amazing. She seems absolutely fine. Her uncle actually told us that in the beginning her body was understandably full of bruises everywhere. She had a chest infection because of the rubble and all the dust she inhaled as soon as she was born. But he said six months on her health state is 100 percent. You can see her pictures smiling and she seems like a perfectly healthy, happy baby. The uncle told us that he kept some pictures of her family to show her when she's older and he said for him she is one of his children. The pictures really are lovely. She has an incredibly sweet little smile. Obviously her arrival in the world coincided with destruction and loss and trauma, but people do feel hope because of her. So what does the future hold for? At the moment the road ahead seems to be difficult because the family lived in a camp tent for a couple of months. Now they are renting a house, but because of the economic situation they find it more and more expensive, but they are actually, and these are the words, they are grateful for the chance they have and they think Afra maybe brought them a new perspective to life and you start to live and they are just waiting to see what's going to happen. But the uncle said he hopes that there is some light on the Syrians, people especially those living in the northwestern part of the country. And just finally, Hannah, we mentioned the seven cousins, one of whom is actually the same age as Afra. So what do her older cousins say about her? For them she's a sister. She is named after her mother. They say she reminds them a lot of her mother and father. The other baby, the other cousin was born three days after Afra, was also named after another aunt who died in the earthquake and I think for the family, those two babies, they bring a lot of hope and when you look at the pictures, they seem to be quite happy, happy kids.

Hanan Razak of BBC Arabic. Now it's something that only a very few people have experienced, floating in zero gravity and gazing out of a spaceship window to wonder at views of the earth and the black of space. And now a mother and daughter from Antigua who won their tickets in a lottery and an 80 year old British man with Parkinson's disease have joined that select group. They were the first members of the public to go into space on a virgin galactic flight.

The flight lasted just over an hour before returning safely to earth. Sophie Long was watching from the spaceport in New Mexico. Feeling great! John Goodwin and mother and daughter duo Keisha Shahaf and Anamayyas make their way to the spaceship unity. Then at 8 30 local time, liftoff, on schedule and in perfect conditions. This is the moment John Goodwin has been waiting for a quarter of his life. He is now on his way to space on Virgin Galactic's first private passenger flight. Three, two, one, release, release, release. And this is what it's all about as the spaceship unity hit apogee more than 50 miles above the earth's surface.

Congratulations to John, to Keisha, to Anna on becoming astronauts today and a special congratulations to our unity pilot Kelly for her first space flight. Three minutes of weightlessness and views of our planet that only astronauts have ever experienced. You are so much more connected to everything than you would expect to be. Like you felt like a part of the team, a part of the ship, a part of the universe, a part of earth. It was incredible.

Safely back on earth, John told me his experience was better than he ever imagined it would be. Looking at earth from space, the curvature of the earth, the blackness of space, the pure clarity was amazing. In 2014 you got diagnosed with Parkinson's. Three years ago you went up Keela Manjaro. Today you went to space. How are you going to top this? What's next for John Goodwin? The great thing of waiting 18 years was it wasn't a problem. I got something to look forward to which

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was very few other people had done. And that has now happened. I suppose I've got to go to the moon.

Astronaut John Goodwin ending that report by Sophie Long in New Mexico. Michael Breckners, a neuroscientist at Humboldt University in Berlin, doesn't think we know enough about fun, play, and the parts of the brain responsible for laughter. So he has made it his work to find out more. And that involves tickling rats. We understood for a while already that ticklishness and playfulness belong very much together in rats. So we used this connection who was looked for a center for playfulness in the rat brain. And did you find it? Yes, we looked at a midbrain structure, PHE, and this is a place where we indeed found indications of playfulness. We then, while playing and tickling the rats, we measure activity of single neurons, but the rats need to get to know the experimenter and then you can tickle them and they will emit these giggle sounds, these ultrasonic avocalizations when you touch them. Laughter isn't necessarily indicative of what we think of as a sense of humor, of finding things funny. How can you tell? In humans, I think it's debated if ticklishness and humorous laughter are one and the same thing. In the rats, I would say it's 100% the same thing. And amazingly enough, they are also quite non-ticklish rats. You work with them for a while, they just don't enjoy it all that much and you bet they will not play with you. So where does your research go next? There's many things that we do not understand.

For example, the young rat pups we work with, they play night and day and you can see the mother rat, she's unable to sleep because the young pups are so playful. And as they go older, they lose most of their playfulness and we obviously think it ought to be changes in the brain but we don't know what it is. Another thing that we would like to know or that is clear to us, some animals are very playful, others not, like monkeys, incredibly playful, mice, very non-playful animals. We would want to know does it relate to differences in this structure?

Do you enjoy your work, Michael? Absolutely. I think this is a fun thing to study and it's fascinating. Like we had this paradigm where we play hide-and-seek with rats, they are very strategic,

very impressive hide-and-seek players. I've never seen them do anything quite as complex as this hide-and-seek games that we did for them. Neuroscientist Michael Breckners in Berlin.

Now we do love a world record in the happy news team and 27-year-old martial artist Naveen Kumar has just reclaimed one for cracking the most walnuts in one minute with his head. His total, 273. That's over four and a half nuts per second.

By doing so, he broke the previous record of 254, taking the title from serial record breaker Mohamed Rashid. Lipika Pelham takes up the story. Indians have a deep enthusiasm for record

setting, which in recent years has developed into something of an obsession. Hence, the long-standing rivalry between Naveen Kumar and Mohamed Rashid. Mohamed first broke the record in 2014 with the total of 150 walnuts cracked before shattering his own record again in 2016 with 181. Here later, in order to determine who was truly the world's best nutcracker, Naveen, who was 22 at the time and Mohamed, who was 36, were brought together head-to-head, so to speak.

On the set of the Italian TV program La Notte, they record the night of records.

Both contestants broke the standing record with Mohamed emerging victorious, cracking

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254 walnuts compared to Naveen's 239. Now, five years later, Naveen's revenge has made headlines in Indian newspapers, prompting commentaries such as Naveen has put blood, sweat and tears into reasserting himself as the world's foremost walnut cracker. Guinness World Records shared a video of defeat on Twitter showing Naveen smashing walnuts on a table one by one with his forehead. Each had to crack into at least two halves, and he got only one attempt per nut. The video was posted only a few days ago and has already been viewed nearly 100,000 times with hundreds more likes and retweets. The comments included lines like, show me his forehead, there was one which probably best summed it all up, this is nuts. That was Lipika Pelham. Please don't try that at home. Still to come. I just put him out there on the water and he just kind of just loved it. He followed me in the water when I was trying to learn to surf myself. I just put him on a board, pushed him and he rode it all the way to the beach. A man, a dog and a surfboard. It's a pretty good bet that you have at least one lithium-ion battery somewhere near you right now. They turn up all over the place in cell phones, tablets, laptops, scooters, e-bikes, toothbrushes, hearing aids, watches and for solar power backup storage, you get the picture. But it's estimated that only about five percent of lithium-ion batteries get recycled and 14-year-old Serena Hal Tamana wants to fix that. A few years ago I used to just love to play with drones like eight-year-old me. Every day I used to go out with my friends, play with drones. But then after I learned about how much of an impact they're causing on the environment, that is when I got immediately connected. I realized that how could my cool little toy be like connected to this big environmental problem? Just explain to us what the actual issue is. The issue is not that many people know about the importance of recycling used batteries. Did you guys know that over 15 billion batteries are thrown away each year worldwide? So after learning more about this, I realized that since not that many people know about this, I can start my own organization, recycle my battery, to help support battery recycling and teach the people so that they can get the opportunity to recycle their used batteries for a better tomorrow. So your organization is recycle my battery, but what do you actually do? So we basically go to schools, public events and door-to-door, talking to people on the importance of recycling used batteries. What do you guys do with your used batteries? So once a battery dies, what do you guys do with it? Normally throw in the garbage. Yeah, we're throwing in garbage right now. I thought we put in the recycle, they take care of it. Are they going to reuse to create a new battery? Yeah, they basically take the batteries into a sorting facility. Then the chemicals are like extracted and then those can be reused in new batteries or they can be used in other items. So for example, outline battery like a mandanese and zinc can be used to make power for fertilizer to grow and energize corn growth. Me and my team members replace battery bins in stores, libraries, offices, etc. And what sort of response do you get when you go out and you talk to adults? Throughout these years, I have noticed one thing. When an adult talks to an adult, it doesn't have necessarily such a big impact. So usually they're very supportive and shocked whenever I talk to them because they don't expect a young kid like me to run a non-profit like this.

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And little earlier, you mentioned your team. Let's hear from a couple of them.

Hi, I'm Nitya Tamana and I'm the founder and knee-health sister.

I'm eight years old. So I'm an executive board member.

When a battery bin is full, they give it to us and you investigate if the batteries are good or bad.

My name is Devsharya Dosapati. I'm 13. When I was in elementary school,

I heard about all these wildfires that were going on.

And I did a little bit more research on what the causes were.

I knew that I had to do something.

Now you're 14. So where do you see your future lying?

I hope that in the future, I would be able to recycle all the 15 billion batteries, being thrown away each year worldwide to zero.

So that way, everybody knows about the importance of resettling batteries.

So that is my ultimate goal.

And you can hear more from Nihal in the documentary podcast,

A Billion Batteries. Look out for it on BBC Sounds or wherever you get your podcasts.

Now, some of the other things that have caught our attention.

The US has approved the first pill to treat postpartum or postnatal depression,

a serious and potentially life-threatening condition that affects an estimated one in seven mothers in the US. It'll be sold under the name Zazouvet and is a once daily pill taken for two weeks. Somewhat surprisingly, until now, treatment for the condition was available only as an intravenous injection. You might have noticed how obsessed we are with sleep.

A travel company in Belgium is offering a special deal for couples if one of them snores.

Under the De Blau Vogel offer, you'll get two hotel rooms instead of one so you can both sleep in peace with a discount on the second room and a connecting door.

Events have been taking place to celebrate 50 years since the birth of hip hop.

It all began when brother and sister Cindy and Clive Campbell put on a back-to-school party in their parents' apartment in the Bronx using two turntables and a microphone.

Depending on when you are listening, Run DMC, Snoop Dogg and Ice Cube will be, are or have been performing at New York City's Yankee Stadium.

Now I'm not sure if this counts as good news as such, but it's certainly an achievement.

Congratulations Kimberley Winter from the US who now holds the Guinness World Record for the loudest ever burp by a woman at 107.3 decibels. And no, we're not playing it.

Now Nicole from South Africa centres this.

And when we called Nicole, she suggested we talk to her mum, Rose.

That was bacon and egg frying for the breakfast that we have on the weekend when it's a special day.

It's something that in past years when I was on a farm, the whole family had every morning for breakfast. I think bacon and egg is the one thing you can eat every day and never get tired of.

It's delicious. But what makes it special now is that these days because it's fatty, it's wicked as well, which makes it even nicer. I cannot argue with any of that.

Now Nicole centres this sound as the sound that brings her joy. And she said that you took her in and fed her up when she was really quite poorly. Tell us about that.

She got very sick and she did what you do. You come home to mother and yes, I've fattened her up

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nicely and feeding her bacon and egg for breakfast is one of the things that helps. The food you had as a child or the smell of food that you've had before and loved, it brings back good feelings and good food makes you happy. Food is the one way you can show love and show caring. And I live on my own. Then cooking is not very exciting when it's just for you. It's much more fun to cook for somebody else as well.

Roz in South Africa. Six years ago, former paratrooper Christian Lewis set out for a long walk. He had 10 pounds in his pocket, a dilapidated tent and a plan to walk the coastline of the UK. Now that 14,000 kilometre journey is done. And along the way, Chris found some company. His fiancée, Kate, their baby son, Magnus, and, and I know you will want this detail, a dog called Jet. And he says the journey restored his faith in humanity.

After leaving the forces, I'd become a single parent. And somewhere along the line, after 10 years, I'd lost my way a bit. And no matter what I did, nothing seemed to change. I've always described it as being inside a box and you just can't seem to fight your way out of it. I knew that I needed to do something drastic and I knew that this was my chance to change some things. So I just had this epiphany one day, a voice in my head just said, just go and walk the UK coastline. And literally a few days later, I was gone and it was, yeah, a life changing decision. I must say, you know, I made a promise to myself the first day that I started this walk that I just wanted to return back to Swansea, you know, a happy man. And I think the great thing about adventure and, you know, something so unplanned as well is you just don't know what's around the next corner. And I returned to Swansea more than a happy man. And how did you pick up a partner along the way? Listen, I ask myself that question every single day.

I think if you're doing something that you love doing, if you're doing a lot of it, then I think it's only natural that you're going to meet somebody who loves doing the same thing. And Kate and I, when we first met, we just really hit it off. We both talked about things we wanted to do in the future and I couldn't believe I was listening to somebody say stuff that was so similar to what I wanted to do. So I think it was a never school that Kate and I were going to get together. What do you do now though? So you've walked around the UK coastline for six years. You've raised a phenomenal amount for charity. What do you do on a Sunday? I can't imagine you're the kind of guy who just sits down and watches the telly. So Kate and I have decided that we're going to head back up north, I think somewhere in Scotland, where we can just have a bit of time to ourselves and just plan our next adventure. I know for a fact that Kate and I are the sort of people that just love to be on the move all the time, seeing different places, seeing different cultures. So we're just going to go straight on to another adventure. We don't know exactly what it is, but I'm pretty sure it'd be something ridiculous. And it'll take some time. Our little boy Magnus, he is just thriving in the outside life. We're just confident that I think anything that we think of, we're just going to go out there and smash it.

Christian Lewis was talking to Helen Skelton. Now, last week we talked about the joy of watching live sport and to illustrate the point, thousands have just attended a big sporting event on the Californian coast. The annual World Dog Surfing Championships have been taking place with different

categories and disciplines for the competitors who are clad in colourful life vests and call sunglasses or goggles and appear to be thoroughly enjoying themselves. The extra large dog

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category

was won by Derby. Derby and his human friend Kentucky Gallahue also came second in the human dog tandem category. And Kentucky told us about the sport. The competitions are awesome. There's three categories for these competitions. There's the solo division where the dog is by itself on the board and the owner pushes them into the wave and they ride the wave as long as they can and with style and is what is judged on. The second part of the competition is tandem dog dog where there's two or more dogs on a board that get pushed into a wave and is definitely a sight to see with all these different sized dogs on one board. And then there's tandem dog human where both the owner and the dog are riding the waves together trying to make it all the way to the beat. So the dogs usually as a solo when they're getting pushed in the wave, they're actually just riding the board. There are some dogs that I have seen that have actually shifted their weight that make the board do a little dance or even keep the nose up and it's kind of cool to see that they can understand it like hey if I move back a little bit this nose comes up and we go further. Now of course this is a podcast and therefore people cannot see quite how magnificent Derby looks. Describe him for us. Derby is an 11 year old golden doodle. He's kind of a beige color but he has a mohawk that goes all the way from his head down his back to his tail. Also the mohawk part on his head is dyed blue and he wears sunglasses and I actually also have a blue mohawk and we always wear the same matching sunglasses. And he's 11 now. How long has he been surfing? Has he been surfing since he was a pup? No so I got Derby while I was living in Atlanta Georgia at the time. We moved to San Diego seven years ago. He had never even stepped foot on a beach. Put him out there on the water and he just kind of just loved it. He jumped in the water immediately hanging out and followed me in the water when I was trying to learn to surf myself and I just put him on a board pushed him and he rode it all the way to the beach. I was kind of mad and happy at the same time when I first saw him do it because I was like man that's pretty cool you're surfing. Then I was like oh man you just learned how to surf before I did. And you say that he loved it but hand on heart do you think he really loves it or he's just humoring you? Derby when he hits the beach and I'm still out in the water after pushing him he actually turns back around runs back out to me and wants to do it again and it's such a sight to see because like some dogs are kind of like hitting the beach and they're kind of like well I don't know if I want to go back out there or the owner has to get up and put him on the board. He gets on the board when I pull it up. There's times when I want to go surfing by myself and I'll leave the house with my board and he kind of gives me that look like hey man I come with you so I have to get our tandem board out and he jumps in the truck and ready to go. He wants to do anything I want to do. We actually have a motorcycle sidecar that we ride around in. We have a bicycle sidecar. It's all such crazy stuff. Kentucky Galahue friend of Derby and yes I will be sharing his picture on social media of course I will with the hashtag the happy pod. And that's it from us for now. Remember if you would like to be part of the happy pod you can email us the sound that brings you joy. We would also love to hear if you have any stories to share that will make us all smile. As ever the address globalpodcast.bbc.co.uk. This edition was mixed by Emma Crow. The producer was Anna Murphy. This is what editor Karen Martin's listening to right now. Which means that this week's editor was Paul Day. I'm Jackie Leonard and until next time

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goodbye.

Do you ever feel a bit overwhelmed when you check the news on your phone first thing in the morning?

Whenever I open up my phone they're just endless warnings of more extreme weather to come. I'm Hannah. I'm the presenter of a new podcast called What in the World from the BBC World Service.

We're going to be here trying to help you make sense of the world around you so you can feel a little bit better about what's happening in the world.

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