

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / UN chief warns a 'climate time bomb' is ticking

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They say they don't have to reinvent the wheel here. Most of the things that we need to fight climate change are already well known. A greater move to solar and wind and other renewable energy, they have come down massively in price. The rise of electric cars, they've gone up a hundred fold over the last decade in terms of popularity. So lots of things like that. And not just things like that money as well. Money is obviously a big thing in climate change, but the report points out that there's plenty of money to make the transition on climate change. It's just been spent on the wrong things. They point to the subsidies being given to fossil fuel companies and the fossil fuel industries and saying if that money was redirected towards a greener transition, it would speed up that process immeasurably. Now we heard Antonio Guterres say it's not too late to stop global temperatures from rising more than 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels. We've also heard scientists say we will almost certainly miss that goal. How do you reconcile those statements? No one can be sure exactly when 1.5 or the world will go past 1.5. And I think Mr. Guterres is speaking perhaps in more general terms about the idea that we should stay below 1.5 or the ideal of it. Whereas the scientists I think in the report are looking carefully and clearly and saying this is not going to work beyond the mid-30s. We're going to go past that and we're going to need to take carbon out of the atmosphere to stay below that temperature in the long term. Matt McGraw. In Paris, protesters have taken to the streets after the French government narrowly survived a no-confidence vote in parliament. This challenge was called after President Macron used his constitutional powers to force through divisive reforms to the French system of retirement pensions. I spoke to our correspondent in Paris, Hugh Scofield. There were two motions of censure tabled by the opposition. One had no chance because it was tabled just by the far right and the far left would have nothing to do with it. But there was a motion also tabled by a centrist group which drew the votes both of the centrist group and the far right and the left and the far left and crucially some conservatives. There's a block of 60 Gaulists, Republican party they call them, who are kind of the linchpin, the hinge of this parliament because don't forget the Macronism minority government, he doesn't have a majority. And this group of 60 MPs though nominally for the reform of the pension system is in fact hopelessly divided and 20 of them went ahead and voted for this motion of censure which meant that the number came tantalizingly close to the halfway mark at which point the government would have fallen but it didn't reach it. It was a 278 votes when it 287 were needed. So the government has survived but what's been revealed is this extremely weak government now in a country which is wouldn't say insurrectional but certainly talking that kind of language. Yeah this all stems from President Macron raising the age at which you can retire with a full pension, this incredibly unpopular move. Why has he been so committed to that plan? What President Macron says is that it's necessary and that it's his duty as someone who has the future of the country at heart to see it through. It may be unpopular for him personally and for the government but it's for the good of the country. That's what he says. The opposition of course says no you're just a dogmatic lonely rich man's president stuck in the Elise who's totally cut off from ordinary people's concerns and they have on their side the fact that polls certainly show that most people do not want this reform. Why other countries have adopted it without much of a problem? Why France can't is I think a question for historians and cultural theorists about why France finds it very difficult to carry out any kind of reform. It's something to do with the revolutionary past and the sense that history can only move in one direction as soon as there's a social change because the other way

they can't stop it. Huskofield in Paris. France is also grappling with the problem of unvaccinated doctors and nurses. Thousands of health care staff were suspended without pay in 2021 after they refused to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and most of them eventually got the jab and returned to work but some of those who didn't are still treating patients. John Lawrence in reports from a village west of Paris. A cardiologist examining a patient who's been suffering from acute heart pain and vomiting. This is a clandestine consultation at the cardiologist's home. Officially she's not allowed to exercise her profession. She was suspended in September 2021 for refusing to get the COVID jabs. The government made compulsory for all health sector, retirement home and fire brigade personnel. She spoke on condition we didn't give her name. I was summoned to the director's office in the health center where I worked and informed that I was not allowed to work there anymore and that this was my last day. My career was over. Looking after people, healing people is my whole life. I decided to become a doctor when I was five years old and now I am forbidden from living out to my vocation with no salary, no revenue, no unemployment benefits. Well not entirely without revenue as although she doesn't ask for payment most of the patients who still come to see her usually insist on giving her something. I asked patient Yael Dubois why she had come to see this doctor rather than a cardiologist who wasn't suspended. Because it's really difficult to get an emergency appointment you have to wait months. There is such a need for doctors and nurses in every part of the health system. For me it is absolutely scandalous that these ones are suspended. Not only are they being denied the right to work we are being denied treatments. The government says that out of the 15,000 health sector personnel who initially refused to get vaccinated only 500 remain. But disbelief about this figure is widespread. The French hospitals federation for example puts the number of suspended staff at 4,000. The health ministry didn't respond to our request for an interview but the health minister François Brun recently told French radio listeners that the ban was still justified. Should we accept that people who are inadequately protected come into close contact with people who are the most fragile, people are still dying of Covid every day in France and it's the most fragile who are dying. So this is both a health issue and one of professional ethics. The French health minister François Brun ending that report from John Lawrence. Last week we reported that the international criminal court had charged Vladimir Putin with war crimes over his invasion of Ukraine and it seemed like the final nail in the coffin for Mr. Putin standing on the world stage that is at least in the West. Now he's got the chance to firm up a valuable alliance in the East as the Chinese president Xi Jinping makes a three-day visit to Moscow. He claims to have a plan to end the war and Mr. Putin says he's reviewed it in detail but the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has warned that Mr. Xi's proposal could merely be a stalling tactic to help the Russian military. The world should not be fooled by any tactical move by Russia supported by China or any other country to freeze the war on its own terms. Such a move would violate the UN Charter and defy the will of 141 countries who have condemned Russia's war in the United Nations General Assembly. President Xi said he hoped the Moscow summit would give new momentum to Chinese Russian relations. As our Russia editor Steve Rosenberg reports it couldn't come soon enough for Vladimir Putin in the wake of those war crime allegations. The Chinese leader was welcomed with military honors, pomp with a purpose. The Kremlin knows it needs China support more than ever now. Later Xi and Putin met one-on-one for talks.

Xi Jinping called Vladimir Putin his dear friend and a strong leader.

The Kremlin leader praised China's economy and promised to discuss Xi's peace initiative for ending the war in Ukraine. There the public remarks ended. We may never find out what was said in private but we know Russia would welcome military assistance from Beijing to help it win on the battlefield. So far though China has been reluctant to provide lethal aid fearing secondary sanctions against Chinese companies. We know there is no detailed Chinese peace plan so progress there seems unlikely. More likely is that in Moscow this week President Putin and Xi will boost economic cooperation and deepen their strategic partnership with Beijing playing the role of senior partner. That's because recent events have accelerated Russia's dependency on China. Having burnt bridges with the West Vladimir Putin has little choice but to look east. Well as Steve Rosenberg just mentioned there China has yet to make public this peace plan it's promised for Ukraine. But officials in Kiev have urged Xi Jinping to use his influence over Russia and make sure that restoring Ukrainian territory is at the center of his diplomatic efforts. Our correspondent James Landale sent this report from the Ukrainian capital. Ukraine is playing a cautious game. There's been no criticism of President Xi's visit to Moscow no anger at the diplomatic boost it's given to Kiev's sworn enemy. Instead political leaders here have simply restated the common ground they have with China namely the importance of sovereignty and territorial

integrity. The foreign ministry spokesman Oleg Nikolenko said Ukraine expected Beijing to use its influence on Moscow to put an end to what he called Russia's aggressive war.

Privately Kiev is lobbying hard for a phone call between President Zelensky and Mr.

Xi something that's yet to happen. Ukraine's fear is that China might give Russia weapons but it's being patient. Ministers know that however and whenever this war ends China may be a key player in helping to guarantee the peace and reconstruct Ukraine. So Kiev is watching and waiting and keeping its diplomatic cards close to its chest. While Russia hopes to strike a deal for Chinese arms the European Union has made a new commitment to buy ammunition for Ukraine. The European Defense Agency says one million artillery shells will be supplied over the next year. A move that Ukraine has said will be game changing. Our Europe correspondent Nick Beek reports.

The deal was agreed by defence and foreign ministers from 17 EU countries as well as Norway. It means they will have to share details of their individual ammunition stockpiles something that's normally kept secret. But they hope to secure lower prices by placing new joint orders of up to one billion euros. This is new territory for the EU which emerged after the Second World War as a project to preserve peace but continues to evolve in light of contemporary Russian aggression. It's unclear whether manufacturers from non-EU countries such as the UK will be

able to bid for new contracts. Current ammunition production in Europe is said to be lagging behind the levels Ukraine insists it needs particularly of one five five millimeter artillery shells.

Analysts warn it may be many months before the political agreement reached today translates to extra firepower for Kiev on the front line. Nick Beek. In the US six people connected to the far-right militia group the Oath Keepers have been convicted of charges relating to the January Sixth Capitol riots of 2021. They were among thousands of supporters of Donald Trump who tried to prevent Congress from certifying President Joe Biden's election victory. Nomia Iqbal reports. The Oath Keepers is a militia group founded in 2009 whose members include current and

retired US military personnel as well as law enforcement officers. There have already been trials involving people connected to the group. In this one three women and one man have been found guilty of entering the capital that day and obstructing an official proceeding. It carries a punishment of 20 years in prison. Two others were found guilty of lesser charges. More than two years on the FBI continues to make arrests and so far prosecutors have brought criminal charges against more than a thousand people. Nomia Iqbal. Still to come. This nepotism, a hiring of family members is something that's deeply ingrained in Afghan society. It didn't start with the Taliban and certainly won't end with the Taliban. The Taliban issues a ban on appointing relatives to the Afghan government. The International Monetary Fund has approved a \$2.9 billion rescue package

to help Sri Lanka out of its worst ever economic crisis. And Barassan at the Rajan has the details. The loan by the IMF offers a lifeline for Sri Lanka that defaulted on its foreign debt almost a year ago as the country plunged into its worst economic crisis since independence from Britain in 1948. Colombo had to take unpopular decisions like sharply raising taxes and fuel prices as part of the conditions to secure the loan. The austerity measures led to strikes in recent weeks. The office of President Ronald Wikramasinghe said the IMF decision would help Sri Lanka to access up to \$7 billion in additional funding from other agencies. Now in return for that aid package, Colombo has agreed to privatize its national airline and restructure state-owned businesses. Our correspondent Archana Shukla spoke to Sri Lanka's foreign minister Ali Sabri who led negotiations with the IMF. But we are looking at, primarily, is investment and probably on renewable energy, energy security as a regional hub, hospitality trade, which we have not fully realized. Some of the tougher measures and reforms you've taken, like the tax hikes or the cut in subsidies for fuel and electricity. More such measures are in store going forward to achieve your tough targets? I think the worst is over. The most of the tough decisions we have already taken, tax hikes. We cannot hike the tax anything more than that, but we can probably expand the tax net. The electricity and the fuel formula is there, so we'll continue with that formula. If the dollar of rupee is strengthened, if the world price goes down, that benefit should be passed down to the ultimate customer and the consumer. So bad times are relatively over, but tough reforms are still there and public sector reforms and digitalization of some of our priorities in order to attract investment.

Sri Lanka's foreign minister Ali Sabri. A French journalist and an American aid worker have been released years after they were taken hostage by Islamist militants in West Africa's Sahel region. Our Africa regional editor Will Ross reports. Photos show a smiling Olivier Dubois looking mightily relieved to be free. The French journalist was kidnapped almost two years ago whilst reporting

near the city of Gao in northern Mali. He was last seen in a hostage video that was released about a year ago by a jihadist group linked to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. It's not clear how he was freed, but he thanked Niger for what he described as a delicate mission. Also out of captivity is the 61-year-old American aid worker Jeffrey Woodka. He was seized at gunpoint from his home in southwest Niger more than six years ago. An American official said no ransom was paid. Will Ross. The Taliban took back control of Afghanistan 19 months ago, and all of a sudden this hardline Islamist group had to form a government and a bureaucracy and start thinking about services like water and sanitation and taxes. And it's alleged that many government positions were filled through nepotism, with senior Taliban officials appointing their relatives to

key jobs. Now the Taliban leadership has announced a ban on that practice. Our chief international correspondent, Lee's Doucet, has been covering Afghanistan for more than 30 years, and I asked her what the Taliban is trying to achieve with this decree. These edicts come often randomly, out of nowhere. So this is a new one by the man who really is in charge of the Taliban, always signed in the name of the Emir, a very reclusive octogenarian leader who has rarely ever been seen since the Taliban came to power. This is very much part of what the Taliban say they want to approach a pure Islamic state, and one of its pillars has to be a drive against corruption. But of course they're all so worried about the fact that there are so few people who are qualified to hold jobs. There was an exodus, much of the educated middle class from Kabul. There is a ban on women working in many of the ministries, including very educated women. So the Taliban found themselves having to fill positions very quickly, and it must be said, a senior Taliban have often said that a degree or some kind of learning in an Islamic school or mosque matters more than the education they derived as being an imposition from the West. But it's also true that this nepotism, a hiring of family members, is something that's deeply ingrained in Afghan society. It didn't start with the Taliban and certainly won't end with the Taliban. What with that in mind, the big question is, will this work? As always with these edicts, no one can overturn them. We've seen them, for example, with edicts like not allowing girls to go to high school or young women to go to university. Senior Talibs speak against those edicts. They speak about it privately. I heard many of them expressing that to me when I was last there in January. They even very boldly speak about it publicly, but they cannot overturn the will of the emir. They can try to find ways around it. But what we've seen with all the edicts that they are implemented in a very irregular fashion, that the sway of the Taliban in some of the most remote areas is not complete. Some people undermine it in different areas. And the fact of the matter is that Afghanistan is deeply mired in crisis. The Taliban are not excluded from this. Their own families are desperate for money to survive. In fact, I've spoken to many young Talibs who, before they came to power, never had any money. They were fighting for God. Now, suddenly, they find themselves in Kabul. They're sitting at a desk. They want to get married. They want to have a family. They need money. I think it would be very difficult to implement this latest edict.

Lee's dissent. Last month, the former U.S. President Jimmy Carter announced that at the age of 98, he was entering hospice care and refusing any further medical treatment. It prompted an outpouring of tributes to his record of public service in and out of the White House. But for one former politician, it was also a chance to set the record straight on an act of sabotage that helped end Mr. Carter's presidency and prolong the Iran hostage crisis.

Rachel Wright picks up the story.

On November the 4th, 1979, at the height of the Iranian Revolution, 52 American diplomats and citizens were taken hostage and held in the American embassy in Tehran. Every evening, the American CBS host, Walter Cronkite, ended the news, marking the number of days they'd been held in captivity.

And that's the way it is. Tuesday, February 19th, 1980, the 108th day of captivity, the 222nd day of captivity, the 377th day of captivity for American hostages in Iran.

The crisis totally consumed the last year of Jimmy Carter's presidency.

His best hope for reelection was to free the 52 captive Americans before Election Day in November

1980. But that didn't happen. The hostages were in fact released minutes after the new Republican president, Ronald Reagan, delivered his inaugural address.

Rumors abounded that this was somehow caused by a secretive deal between the Republicans and the Iranians. Jimmy Carter was interviewed about it in 1989.

There was a flurry of activity in the Iranian parliament, that they were going to vote on whether or not to release the hostages. Just before the votes were cast in this country, the parliament decided under Romania's pressure that they would not release the hostages and this devastating negative news about hostages swept the country by the Election Day. I've always been convinced that this was a major factor.

And now it seems President Carter was right.

Former Texas Lieutenant Governor Ben Barnes has decided to reveal his part in what he claims was a secret operation to sabotage Jimmy Carter's reelection campaign.

Mr Barnes told the New York Times that he was taken by former Texas Governor John Connolly around the Middle East to deliver a blunt message to Iran.

Don't release the hostages before the election. Mr Reagan will win and give you a better deal.

Gary Sick, who was President Carter's advisor on Iran, told the American PBS network that Mr Barnes' revelation was the first concrete evidence that it had happened.

The amazing thing is that Mr Barnes waited for 43 years to tell his story and it's really too bad because I think the American people would really have deserved to know if an election is being fixed.

Ben Barnes told the Times that he wanted to set the record straight after President Carter was admitted to hospice care. The hostages ended up being held captive for 444 days.

It's of course possible that had Reagan's campaign not got involved, they could have been released two months earlier.

Rachel Wright. Now, some of you listening at home may have used a dating app before, like Tinder or Grindr or Hinge, but how about a matchmaking service run by your local government?

The city in China has just launched its own app and state media says everyone who's single in town will be signed up for it, whether they want to or not. We asked our China media analyst, Carrie Allen, why Guishi is getting into the dating game. There are many, many more men than women

in this particular city. This is actually a problem in China as a whole actually.

In China there are 722 million men, 690 million women, and that means that there's a surplus of 32 million men to women. And the country has been making a lot of noise about trying to get couples married because it's got a stalling birth rate. So this is one way that one local government is trying to bring couples together. It's trying to offer a blind date service so

that people on this app can connect with others around the city and potentially get married and have children. So we're used to local governments paving our roads, picking up our rubbish. I'm not sure I'd want them taking care of my love life. How have people reacted to the

idea of this dating app? Very negatively. A lot of people have been saying, hang on a minute, is my information on there? I wasn't even aware of this. And there are questions from people about what information is on there. To give you some examples on seeing a Weibo, which is China's

equivalent of Facebook or Twitter, I'm seeing comments like, this is wrong. It should be voluntary. And is this an invasion of privacy? That there are people who feel that this is quite questionable

and they really want to know what information is on there. At the same time, though, there are some people who are saying this is a government platform and an official platform might be more

trustworthy than others. And they're saying, for example, if they're dating someone, they can presumably find out by this app if they're already married.

But it's not the only city in China that's getting involved in matchmaking?

It's not at all. This has been a big discussion, a big talking point at China's two sessions, which happened early this month, a big government meeting where there's an advisory committee who

discuss some of the changes that might be made in the country. And trying to get couples married and having children was very much discussed on this because China's marriage rate has been falling more and more each year. And in January, it fell below 12 million for the first time since 1985.

There are a few reasons for this. One of them is the one child policy, which has now been abolished.

But it means that there are simply fewer people to get married. But there are also other reasons that people are actually now reluctant to get married because of the cost of living in China.

They're saying they simply can't afford to get married. And yeah, because of the surplus of men to women, there are a lot of men in the country who simply accept that they might never get married. They might never meet a partner. Well, there's a lid for every pot and a squirrel for every nut, as they used to say. Carrie Allen with that story.

And that's all from us for now. But there will be a new edition of the Global News Podcast later.

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This edition was mixed by Caroline Driscoll. The producer was Liam McCheffrey. The editor is

Karen Martin. And I'm Peter Goffin. Until next time, goodbye.

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