

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / US Congress harshly grills TikTok boss

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. You're listening to the Global News Podcast from the BBC World Service. Hello, I'm Oliver Conway. This edition is published in the early hours of Friday, the 24th of March. American lawmakers take aim at TikTok, accusing it of being a tool of the Chinese Communist Party. Israel's Prime Minister delays a scheduled trip to Britain amid increasing turmoil at home. And World Athletics issues a new ruling on transgender athletes.

The council has agreed to exclude male to female transgender athletes from female world ranking competitions from March the 31st.

Also in the podcast, why Europe needs to up its game or risk losing out in the space race.

And the campaign in New Zealand to help youngsters navigate their breakups.

TikTok is a tool of the Chinese Communist Party, which allows China to decide what American children see on their phones. That is the charge US lawmakers have been putting to the TikTok boss at his first ever committee hearing in Congress. Zhou Zichu faced hours of hostile questioning over the effects of the app on young people's mental health and the data it harvests.

This was the chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Republican Cathy MacMorris Rogers. TikTok collects nearly every data point imaginable, from people's location to what they type and copy, who they talk to, biometric data and more. Even if they've never been on TikTok, your trackers are embedded in sites across the web. TikTok surveils us all. And the Chinese Communist Party is able to use this as a tool to manipulate America as a whole. Your platform should be banned. Well, growing numbers of lawmakers, both Republicans and Democrats, want TikTok banned. In his testimony, Zhou Zichu acknowledged that US data was currently accessible to staff in China. But he said protecting American users was a top priority.

US TikTok data is stored by default in Oracle Service, only vetted personnel operating in a new company called TikTok US Data Security can control access to this data. We have plans for this company to report to an independent American board with strong security credentials. We have legacy US data sitting in our service in Virginia and in Singapore. We're deleting those and we expect that to be complete this year. When that is done, all protected US data will be under the protection of US law. TikTok says it has 150 million users in America and has been running a campaign to try to persuade Congress not to ban it. The BBC's North America tech reporter, James Clayton, watched the hearing from San Francisco and talked me through the lawmakers' key concerns. Well, the concerns are generally that TikTok is passing users data and it scrapes a lot of data from users. To the Chinese Communist Party, you've got the chief executive of TikTok saying over and over again that they don't do that. But what we do know is that bite dance employees do have access to some US data. He confirmed that today. And so it's a pretty easy jump to make that if the data is in China, that Chinese engineers have access to this, that potentially the Chinese Communist Party could also have access to it. So I think anyone listening to this, I'm not going to have their fears allayed by some of this testimony because there are specific laws in China that essentially mean that if the Chinese government wants to request data and the data was in China, they can get that data. I don't think from what I've heard at the moment, Republicans and Democrats are going to be listening to this and changing their minds.

Show Chu, what are the chances of him stopping them imposing some kind of ban in the near future?

I don't think Joe Biden wants to see a ban of TikTok. I mean, it sounds like there is pressure on bite dance to sell TikTok. So there is a clear delineation between TikTok and bite dance. But I think bite dance simply doesn't want to sell. It certainly doesn't want to sell because US politicians have asked them to sell. And as a result of that, I think that's probably unlikely at the moment. And so you are going to end up in a place where Joe Biden is going to have to make a decision. Do I ban this app or not? Our North America technology reporter, James Clayton, the French Prime Minister, Elisabeth Bourne, has condemned violence that occurred during the latest

mass demonstrations against the deeply unpopular pension reforms being pushed by President Macron.

There were clashes in numerous French cities as more than a million people took to the streets to demand that the president withdraw the increase in the age of retirement from 62 to 64. Hugh Scofield reports from Central Paris. The big Paris demonstration has converged here on the Place de l'Opéra, where most people are dispersing. But as throughout the afternoon, there are continuing low-level clashes between police and small groups of rioters who have been throwing stones and starting fires. Similar scenes have been reported from many other towns and cities. Unions and the political left are calling the day a success, with once again a large turnout of people showing their rejection of the pension bill. Where the situation goes from here, though, is an open question. The government hopes the protests will dwindle now. The opposition promises they won't. Hugh Scofield in Paris and later on Thursday evening, the town hall in Bordeaux was set on fire. On Thursday, we had a clear example of the fog of war, as Ukraine claimed that Russian troops had withdrawn from a town on the eastern side of the Nipro River before swiftly saying the information was wrong. But further north, Russian forces are continuing to sustain heavy losses as they struggle to advance. Months of battles have turned the countryside and the town of Velika Novosilkha into a wasteland, as civilians and the military come under daily Russian bombardments. From there, our correspondent Quentin Somerville sent this report.

The last 10 minutes, about three Russian mortars came into the town of Velika Novosilkha, quite close to the car that we were in. But we're going to the infantry positions to speak to some of the soldiers who were with the first separate tank brigade, and Dima is one of them. Hi Dima. Dima is 22 years old and unnervingly tall for someone who spends so much time hunkered down in trenches. He's six foot four. He was a factory worker before the war.

Wow, that was close. The Russians basically have an unlimited amount of shells. But us, we would run out of shells within the year. So we are forming various assault brigades and we've been given tanks. I think with those we will win. We are Cossacks, so brave guys, we can handle it. In Volodar, about 30 kilometers away, Russia lost hundreds of men and dozens of tanks trying to break through. They have tanks close to this position, observation posts and drone teams too. Russian eyes are always watching. Closest we get to Russian positions here, about 700-800 meters eventually. Still about a kilometer away.

That was a Russian shell, landing very close to us within meters away.

Holy, let's get to that trench quick.

That last round landed pretty close to the Ukrainian trenches and me, but everybody has made it inside safely and are now sheltering with a bunch of Ukrainian infantrymen. We were walking in a group and the Russians saw us walking with the drone. And that is why we are being

sheltered. I guess the fire will continue for the next 20 to 30 minutes.

This is what these men go through every day. Continual Russian fire for months on end and they endure it. We're just targeting civilians, towns and villages too.

Velika Novosilka was nothing special, but the people who lived here were proud of it.

They took pride in their new school, they sent their kids to the local kindergarten. Now all of that is gone, destroyed by Russian shells. It's a town of what's 10,000 people. There's fewer than 200 left. Off a cold damp corridor in one of the town's remaining bunkers is 74-year-old Maria. Wearing a knitted berry, she's sitting alone on a bed in a room warmed by a wood-burning stove.

How was life before here, I ask? It was good, very good. Now everything has been demolished, everything has been burned and my husband was killed. Can you tell us about your husband? What is there to tell? We were married for 54 years. He was 74 years old. A shell flew towards the neighbour's house. He came out to sea and the shrapnel killed him. We buried him and that's it. 74-year-old Maria ending that report by Quentin Somerville from Eastern Ukraine.

It is a divisive issue to say the least and World Athletics has put itself firmly on one side of the debate after ruling that transgender female athletes will no longer be allowed to compete in female track and field events regardless of their levels of testosterone.

The head of World Athletics, Sebastian Koh, said it was decisive action to protect the female category in our sport. The decision was taken in consultation with a number of stakeholders including 40 member federations, our coaches, our athletes and through the athletes commission as well as a range of other community groups including trans groups, UN experts, the International Olympic Committee and Para Athletics. But Joanna Harper visiting fellow for transgender athletic performance at Loughborough University and a transgender woman criticised the decision.

Because I don't think it's necessary. There's no trans woman who has competed at international levels of athletics and in those sports that continue to allow trans women to compete, trans women are not taking over and are still hugely underrepresented.

I spoke to our sports news correspondent Alex Capstick, so this feels like a significant moment for athletes.

It is and it follows similar decisions by swimming and rugby in banning anyone that has been through male puberty from competing or entering into elite female competition in the track and field world. As you heard there, Sebastian Koh said the decision was based on the fact that he couldn't risk the integrity of female competition. He admitted that the science was unclear so a working group is going to be set up to look at that so there could be a change of heart in the future but right now while it remains unclear and while there might

be a physical advantage for trans women competing in the female competition he had to act decisively.

It's a bit different for DSD athletes, that's those with differences of sexual development.

The rules for them have been tightened so the upper limit of testosterone has gone down from 5 to 2.5 nanomoles per litre and that has to remain for a minimum of six months depending on which competition or event they're competing and it could be as much as two years. Now that's more important for world athletics because there are 13 DSD international athletes and as you heard there from Joanna Harper there are no trans athletes competing at the elite level.

How is this decision likely to go down because of course it feeds into a wider debate in society?

As you said in your introduction it's very divisive and there'll be those people that say it's discriminatory against the trans community. It's a basic human right for them to choose which category they want to compete in but for people who want to protect female sport and we've heard from one or two since this decision was announced this is a good day. They are happy that this has taken place. They say that they're not against the inclusion of transgender athletes but they say trans women should not be competing in the female category because they say it's unfair. Our sports news correspondent Alex Capstick. Tiggie Trathown is travelling all over the world from Costa Rica to Antarctica to see some of the most beautiful and eye-catching places around while she can. Tiggie who is 65 is going blind. She has no sight in her right eye and just 6% vision in her left. Her aim she says is to make a visual bank of memories. She spoke to Amal Rajan about when she discovered that she had eye problems.

15 years ago I was on a walk on Cornish coast path with my then pet dog and I was just going over a style but suddenly my right eye I couldn't open my eyes the sunlight was too bright I was getting flashing colours it was extremely disturbing and well I was driving then I managed to get myself up to Bristol and was sort of in and out the eye hospital. The right eye went within two weeks and unfortunately 10 operations later recent MRI scan I found out that the left eye which is you said as a manious extent will go completely. Just tell us how you responded then Tiggie because you did decide to go and see the world and create this visual bank of memories what have you been doing? If I went to Helen back lost the job because I was freelance etc etc having spent quite a lot of time under my duvet thinking the world is going to stop I thought well what's my choice I either stay here I get out of bed and I go and make a visual memories list because people are losing their sight won't have the opportunity to look at photograph albums or indeed beautiful works of art I think we all need to consciously remember things that we've seen if I see something I want to remember I I literally in my head go click it's a mental connection that I'm going to store that photograph in my brain to be bought out later but as you said I did go to Antarctica with a great friend of mine who's a guide and we went out to work on a whaling station because we do everything on a budget we went across the Magellan Straits in a fishing boat in a four seven gale which was interesting but we work with humpback whales out there and for me to be able to be so close I mean they were around us like stepping stones so a 30 at one point. Do you actually mention you got a podcast which has got 52 episodes what's the podcast called? It's called Drake Up Diaries I decided to go make a podcast about my village it stretched through Covid I've never done it before in my life I saddled up my guide dog I grabbed a recording machine and often I went to various places in the village and I tell you everybody has a story and everyone I think is as fascinating as the next so yeah I've made 52 episodes

and during Covid with a group of volunteers hopefully to bring a little bit of joy to people's lives in the village during a difficult time and also to be an audio historical account of a country village that went through Covid. Tiggy Trithon talking to Amal Rajan and still to come. Some people will be telling me like I wouldn't make it to Paris Opera because there was a mixed race or because my feet were flat or some things like that. Guillaume Diop who made ballet history in France talks to the BBC. The political crisis that's been brewing in Israel for months has intensified with reports that the Defence Minister could be about to resign over controversial plans to curb the power of judges. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had been due to fly to Britain late on Thursday but delayed his departure amid huge protests and growing

opposition among Israel's military reservists. Instead he spent the evening talking to his Defence Minister and making a televised address to the nation promising to reach a solution acceptable to both supporters and critics of his proposal. I will do everything I can to calm the situation and to end division among the people. The judicial reform has to provide a solution to both of our basic needs. To prevent a fracture between our people both sides need to take into consideration the claims and concerns of the other side. This latest turn of events follows 12 weeks of protest by Israelis deeply opposed to the hardline coalition's plans. At the same time violence between some Israelis and Palestinians has been getting worse. Our Middle East correspondent

Tom Bateman has this report. Demonstrators with flags and banners you can hear them blowing horns.

Israelis are stopping the traffic over their politicians plan to overhaul their courts but weeks of protest are boiling over. Into bitter division a driver attacks one of the demonstrators. The protesters respond by beating the motorist back with an Israeli flagpole. This is a fight over the identity of their state and now it's spilling blood on the streets of Tel Aviv.

He sprayed us with mace and then I tried to stop him and he hit me with the can on the face.

How does this make you feel about all of this what's happening in your country?

We have a dictator in Israel that is trying to make these people hurt us. You tell your government you tell your people. Shame they chant at the driver. The demonstrators had reached the British embassy last week wanting foreign governments to add pressure as Mr Netanyahu heads abroad ahead of this week's visit to London. They warn of dystopia and dictatorship a muscling of legal protections by the new coalition of the ultra religious and the far right as one protester Nitzan Weisberg tells me. This government is the first post Zionist messianic government.

My father and his brothers didn't fight in wars for a theocracy for orthodox Jews. The Israeli leader is caught between deepening dissent and a coalition he depends on to survive but his far right and religious coalition is under growing international pressure over both its rhetoric and its policies amid spiralling violence in the region. In the West Bank the protests feel a world away. For Palestinians the faces of Israel's forces may change but the occupation remains. I'm in the town of Hawada in the occupied West Bank an Israeli army jeep moving past me now

we've been told not to get any closer to what is a flying checkpoint of Israeli soldiers but currently at the entrance to this town it's kind of thing that's adding to the sense of tension and the feeling here that things can so quickly ignite. The town was the scene of a Palestinian gun attack that killed two Israelis before Israeli settlers went on the rampage attacking civilians and torching homes like that of Nawal al-Dumaidi. This is all the damage to your homes though. She tells me no one protects them. We are suffering all the time settlers descend from the mountain burn olive trees and attack homes. I am afraid that they will occupy Hawara because of our strategic location on the main road. For people here the crisis is coming from all directions the most extreme Israeli government in the country's history and a Palestinian leadership losing its limited security grip to armed groups in key cities close by. Lethal Israeli military raids come amid waves of Palestinian armed attacks against Israelis. The political turmoil for the Israeli leadership comes amid calls for calm that are likely to go unheeded.

Tom Bateman reporting. Europe is in danger of losing the next space race and needs to raise its game or risk falling behind. Tosa's a new report commissioned by the European Space Agency.

It argues that human space exploration is undergoing a revolution and countries which don't get on board will end up being dependent on others and missing out on huge economic rewards.

The findings will be discussed at the summit of European leaders in November. Our science correspondent Jonathan Amos has seen the report. I asked him how involved in space Europe is at the

moment. It's very active. It's spending something on the order of six seven billion euros a year on its various space activities. In the past traditionally it's concentrated on space science of things like telescopes and also civil applications like satellite navigation and Earth observation. What it's tended to take a back seat in is human space exploration.

So Europe cannot launch its own astronauts for example doesn't have a system for getting them off the earth or carrying them through space and it's relied on the United States obviously but also Russia in the past but it's an interesting position Europe now finds itself in because if it looks east it is seeing some nations catch up and overtake it and China is the obvious example but India too and this report says that Europe is in danger of missing out. We're starting to see kind of an inflection point in space a bit like there was in the internet 20 years ago as critics are quite keen to point out Europe doesn't have a google or a facebook or an amazon or whatever it's tended to miss that wave and the concern is that unless it ups its game with the big push into space chances are that it could miss that next wave. Of course ramping up investment in human exploration will cost a lot of money but this panel says it's worth it because the value of being in space is going to be so great in future. Yeah they're talking about space activity being worth a trillion dollars by 2040. It's not so much you know about vastly increasing funding it is about spending the money wisely and what we've seen in the United States and

everybody's heard of SpaceX and they're incredible reusable rockets. SpaceX has completely upended

that particular sector of the space economy and one of the ways that that was done was NASA changed

the way it procured hardware so in the past it used to give large sums of money to old aerospace companies like Boeing and it turned around and started running competitions and the contracts that were awarded were fixed price they weren't open-ended and that really forced these young companies to come through with innovative ideas very efficient processes quite aggressive business models as well and the result are companies like SpaceX and there's quite a few of them now in the United States and Europe really needs to have a look at the way it does procurement too if it wants to bring similar companies forward on the continent. Now science correspondent Jonathan Amos

El Salvador has a strict ban on abortion regardless of circumstances it's proved controversial and the ban is now the focus of a test case in the Inter-American Human Rights Court.

Alex Ritson got the details from Mimi Swaybe. This case centres around a young Salvadorian domestic worker only known as Bitris who was denied abortion in 2013 after having a life-threatening

pregnancy her fetus had a condition which meant it could not survive it was growing without a skull and a brain so doctors recommended 15 doctors recommended she had an abortion but they were unable to perform this procedure given El Salvador's severe blanket ban with no abortions under

any

circumstance this could land someone having an abortion while someone even performing it up to 50 years in jail. Bitris made an appeal it was rejected and she had a really intrusive C-section which meant her daughter died hours later sadly Bitris' health actually deteriorated and she herself died four years later but her legacy and fight to challenge this anti-abortion in El Salvador has carried on the legal representatives of Bitris and her family today said in court these words the absolute criminalisation of abortion even when women's lives are at risk and when the product of pregnancy is unviable is a violation of rights it violated Bitris's right to life the right to personal integrity and the right to health and she's become a symbol of opposition to the law which is severe. El Salvador has one of the strictest most severe laws in the continent it criminalises abortion under any circumstances but Bitris' family are really hoping for a favourable ruling so that this is relaxed this law is relaxed to allow abortion to happen when the mother's life is at risk as Bitris was but even a favourable ruling which could open up several scenarios really depends on the government of Naib O'Kaley El Salvador is present he's a very authoritarian leader who has very strong views on abortion himself often comparing it to genocide even if the inter-american court of human rights puts forward procedures or implementations that he must follow he may not follow these he may go against that because of his own views.

Mimi Swabey talking to Alex Ritzen the government of New Zealand has launched a campaign to help young people navigate breakups in hope it will prevent family violence in the long term officials believe it's the first programme of its kind in the world to help teenagers deal with hurt and emotions the details from Andrew Ocheng. A video promoting the Love Better campaign in New Zealand it's to get four million dollars over three years from the government to help teenagers deal with early experiences of love and hearts and breakups the government says these have been identified as common challenges young New Zealanders face a survey found that 62 percent of people

aged 16 to 24 had been through a breakup with 72 percent of them reporting harm or having done harm it's a community of the freshly broken up helping the freshly broken up to keep a little hurt from becoming a lot of hurt New Zealand says it's the first time such a campaign has been tried out in the world it includes dedicated helplines for those going through a breakup the video highlights the agony they go through i'm doing it i'm officially deleting my acts from all my socials i'm losing on i'm gonna have to do it honestly this is getting ridiculous this is getting so out of hand i need to sleep at night i need to get over her get over this hurdle just delete it unblock no unblock block the government says the Love Better campaign is part of its broader national strategy to eliminate sexual violence and build cohesive families Andrew Ochieng reporting in a recent edition we heard about the history making appointment of Guillaume Diop has danced a toile or principal dancer at the Paris Opera the first person with african roots to get the coveted position well now Guillaume Diop has spoken to the BBC he told James Coppnell about his long journey to the top we kind of start working for this since we are like eight or like twelve when we get into the Paris Opera ballet school but it takes yeah lots of work and dedication and and a lot of determination too did you come from a family where doing ballet was a perfectly natural thing that kind of thing that a child was likely to do no not really i mean my parents weren't like dancers or working in any kind of art it wasn't easy for them to understand why i would i wanted to be a professional dancer because i feel like they were a bit scared for me that it would be very hard and that you wouldn't be like a real job

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so yeah they kind of discovered the ballet world through me and they tried to trust me even though they were scared but yeah they didn't know the ballet world they were clearly right to trust you seeing the success you've had the glorious reviews i've just been looking at online were they right too though that it was hard yeah ballet is really hard it takes a lot of work like physically and also mentally you have to be really like strong to get through all the exams and to work on your body this hard so yeah they were kind of right and what about as a young mixed-race ballet dancer did that add an extra complication in the minds of some yeah before i got into paris opera ballet school some people would be telling me like i wouldn't make it to paris opera because i was a mixed race or because my feet were flat or some things like that but then when i got into paris opera ballet school it was actually better because i made it to the school of paris opera it means it would be fine there isn't a lot of people of color in paris opera and so there weren't a lot of representation for me to project myself and to see myself in this company so there was a lot like of thinking for me wondering if i will be able to make it to paris opera even though i'm not white so it was a lot of personal thoughts and a couple of years ago when you were very much part of paris opera you signed a manifesto calling on it to tackle racism that it wasn't doing enough in certain fields have things changed since then yeah i feel like we made a lot of proposition to make paris opera a safer place for people of color and they really wanted to change and they were happy that we took a step forward to them to talk about it and now yeah lots of things i've changed i mean the girls are now can wear like the point shoes they want to we have better hair products better makeup there's no more blackface yeah a lot of things have changed a couple of years ago there was still blackface in certain ballet even though we haven't made it like for a while there was still some videos of blackface Guillaume Diop talking to James Coppnell and that's all from us for now but the global news podcast will be back very soon this edition was mixed by Chris Guzaris and produced by Emma Joseph our editors Karen Martin i'm Oliver Conway until next time goodbye

during the cost of living crisis the financial times can help you understand how global news stories can impact your personal finances i'm claire barrett host of the ft's money clinic podcast each week we discuss ways to stay on top of your money it's news you can use delivered in a way that anyone can understand featuring the top experts at the ft and beyond so check out our podcasts and read selected articles for free at ft.com/insights