

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / US, South Korea and Japan hold historic summit

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 Global News podcast from the BBC World Service.

I'm Janet Jalil and in the early hours of Saturday the 19th of August these are our main stories. President Biden has declared a new era of partnership with South Korea and Japan as the three nations leaders unite to criticise Chinese aggression.

The British government has ordered an inquiry after a nurse was found guilty of murdering seven babies and trying to kill six others. The head of military police in Brazil's capital is arrested for alleged collusion with protesters who stormed government buildings in January.

Also in this podcast. We will protest this policy from Vidae although we don't think there's very much chance of changing it. It's a Russian dominated organisation. Criticism of the decision of the International Chess Federation to ban transgender women from competing in female only events. President Biden with the help of China has achieved something that many thought was impossible. A historic summit between the leaders of South Korea and Japan and Mr Biden at which they agreed a range of security measures. Such a three-way partnership would have been unthinkable until recently given the historical antagonism between Seoul and Tokyo over Japan's colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula. But in the face of an increasingly assertive China and the nuclear threat posed by North Korea the three leaders at the Camp David presidential retreat in the US issued a joint statement accusing Beijing of dangerous and aggressive behaviour towards its neighbors. President Biden also announced the hotline would be created for the three countries to respond to immediate threats. We've all committed to swiftly consult with each other in response to threats to any one of our countries from whatever source it occurs. That means we'll have a hotline to share information and coordinate our responses whenever there is a crisis in the region or affecting any one of our countries. And today we've all reaffirmed our shared commitment to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Straits. Our correspondent in Washington Barbara Plattascha

told us more about what Mr Biden and his South Korean and Japanese counterparts had agreed at the summit.

He was talking about a crisis hotline for the leaders in case of a threat or a danger. And they also signed a new security pledge that would commit them to consult in those events. So a duty to consult. So very much tying their responses together to any sort of threat. They are also going to be holding annual military exercises. Now they had held occasional trilateral three-way military exercises before but this is now going to become a regular yearly event.

As President Biden said they were going to double down on information sharing, especially on North Korean missile launches and real-time information sharing is what the Japanese leader called it. And they're also agreeing to hold an annual summit. So very much trying to make the security relationship a regular organized institutionalized thing drawing them all closer together in that in that respect. But I suppose the big question for a lot of observers will be will this last given the difficult history between South Korea and Japan and given the fact that the leaders of these countries could change. For instance we could see Donald Trump coming back

to power in the US. Yes that's a very good point and it's very I think they're very conscious of the fact that domestic politics in all three countries could reverse this move because there are potential leaders who would not be open to continuing such cooperation and there's also

the public in both South Korea and Japan have their reservations about the kinds of arrangements the two made to deal with historic grievances they're not necessarily happy with them. So there are elements there that could make the agreement fragile but again that is why one of the main aims here was to try to create these structures these regularized formalized moments when they come together and work together sort of institutionalize the partnerships so that it would be harder for successors to dismantle it and then again they reinforce that by this diplomatic weight of holding it at a venue like Camp David which of course has hosted several peace summits. So you had that image of the three leaders at Camp David talking about a new era in their partnership and they're hoping that that will reinforce it. And China very unhappy about this it's dubbed this a mini NATO. China really doesn't like this you're right they see this tightening cooperation as the first steps of a Pacific version of NATO which would be targeted against Beijing and some of the things they talked about was blocks different blocks in the region setting them up would create confrontation and increased tensions and so on. So they have been quite critical

of this summit. I mean analysts say that they had kind of counted on this historical enmity between Tokyo and Seoul in order to keep their rivals divided and also to weaken the US system of regional alliances not wanting this kind of alliance to take place. So that would make them quite unhappy but US officials have said this is not a NATO for the Pacific but they have not pulled any punches. A joint statement accused China of dangerous and aggressive behavior in the South China Sea and frankly I mean I think if you again look at the optics of the summit it was designed to send a political message to China that these three cannot be divided. Barbara Pletusher that's the perspective from Washington now with her assessment of whether this summit will bring about a lasting improvement in relations between South Korea and Japan. Here's our sole correspondent Gene McKenzie.

A year ago this meeting would have been unthinkable. While the US has long been pushing its Asian allies to close ranks, to curb China's influence, bitter historic tensions between South Korea and Japan have kept them apart. Japan's decades-long occupation of South Korea ended with its defeat in the Second World War but disputes over its treatment of the Korean people have dragged on. During the war Koreans were forced to work in mines and as sex slaves. Since taking office last year the South Korean president Yoon Song-yul has pushed tirelessly to improve relations spurred on by the

deteriorating security situation in Asia. Nuclear arm China, Russia and North Korea are increasingly aligning themselves leaving both Seoul and Tokyo now in little doubt they need to cooperate. That the countries have come so far in such little time is remarkable but this is still a delicate moment. The public here in South Korea and in Japan are wary of leaning on each other too heavily. This new three-way relationship cannot be rushed. Gene McKenzie in Seoul.

There are growing questions here in Britain about whether a nurse who killed seven newborn babies and tried to kill another six could have been stopped earlier. Lucy Letby was found guilty of murder and attempted murder after a long and harrowing trial in Manchester in Northern England.

The babies died or were left with injuries during a one-year period from June 2015.

The UK government has ordered an inquiry into the case after it emerged that doctors who worked with Letby had repeatedly raised concerns about her with managers only to be ignored. Our

correspondent

Nick Garnett was in court and sent this report. This is the longest murder trial in British legal history. Lucy Letby convicted of murdering seven babies attempting to kill six more is Britain's most prolific serial killer of children. This complicated trial heard how a neonatal nurse who worked at the Countess of Chester Hospital was able to attack some of the most vulnerable and helpless members of our society. Detective Chief Inspector Nicola Evans from Cheshire Police was the deputy senior investigating officer. This investigation is centered around tiny babies on a neonatal unit who should have been in a really safe place. To carry out her crimes the nurse would

pick quiet times of her shift and would use virtually undetectable methods poisoning the babies with insulin or injecting air into their bloodstreams or stomachs. Speaking outside the court at the conclusion of the trial the senior crown prosecutor Pascal Jones explained how Letby managed to conceal her crimes. In her hands innocuous substances like air, milk or medication like insulin would become lethal. She perverted her learning and weaponised her craft to inflict harm, grief and death. Consultants first became concerned when they noticed a spike in the number of deaths and medical collapses on the neonatal ward. They spotted that one person was always on duty when they happened, Lucy Letby. Police have described her as beige, bland, boring, normal. She admitted nothing that was only ever visibly upset at her own predicament, never at what happened to the babies

she was supposed to be looking after. Letby faced 22 charges and it took the jury 22 days to consider

them. Letby, who refused to go into the dock at the conclusion of the trial, will be sentenced on Monday. That report by Nick Garnett. Another one of our correspondents Judith Moritz spoke to the mother of one of the babies who died. In August 2015 Lucy Letby was on a night shift looking after premature twin boys on the neonatal unit at the Countess of Chester Hospital. The baby's mother was on the nearby maternity ward recovering from their birth. At nine o'clock she visited her sons as she did every night to deliver milk. She says she'll never forget what she heard as she approached. The crying, I've never heard anything like it since. It was screaming, it was screaming and I was like what's the matter with them. A court order prevents us from identifying the families in this case. The twins mother says she went towards the howling baby. They had blood around his mouth and Lucy was there but fattered about not really not doing anything. Lucy said don't worry the registrar was coming and she told me to go back to the ward.

The baby's mum left him in the intensive care area and went to call her husband but a short time later they were told he was dangerously ill and they rushed back to find doctors trying to save him. We were taken in and we were told to talk to him and held his hand

and then the conversation with the consultant and she said we're going to stop, it's not helping and we want to die in your arms. It may be hard to believe that a young nurse with a once promising future can be guilty of such crimes but though 13 babies died in one year when Lucy Letby was present only one infant has died on the unit in the seven years since she stopped nursing and Letby now joins the ranks of Britain's most notorious criminals. That report by Judith Moritz. Leaders of the military police force in the Brazilian capital have been arrested on allegations of collusion with supporters of the former president Jair Bolsonaro. They stormed government buildings

on January the 8th. Our America's regional editor Leonardo Rosha reports. Among those arrested are Brazil's current police commander Kleptar Gonçalves and his predecessor Fabio Vieira who occupied the post on January the 8th. The Supreme Court said the two men and five other officers targeted by the operation either failed to act or encouraged the demonstrators who had been camping in and around the Brazilian capital for weeks. They were calling for a military coup following Mr. Bolsonaro's electoral defeat. For hours they vandalized the presidential palace, the Congress building and the Supreme Court before the security forces intervened. Prosecutors believe that senior figures in the Bolsonaro government orchestrated the attack with the complicity of police and military commanders loyal to the former president. Leonardo Rosha. Still to come. What I liked was really to have actually this opportunity to to leave contemporary times, sometimes during the evenings and enter another era, the era of my childhood really. Iceland's Prime Minister on writing a crime novel during lockdown.

Welcome back to the Global News Podcast. The move by the International Chess Federation, Fide, to ban transgender women from competing in its female only events, at least for now, has been criticized by trans rights groups and some players. Fide says that its review could take up to two years. Malcolm Payne is director of International Chess for the English Chess Federation and an international master and opposes the move. So why does he think Fide has done it? It's difficult to read what they're thinking. We view that the development is unwelcome as discriminatory. I think that what they're concerned about is a very strong male grandmaster transitioning and winning the Women's World Chess Championship, which had a prize fund of half a million euros this year, because most of the tournaments that they're ruling women trans women's participation out in are things that qualify towards the World Championship cycle. So I suspect that might be the motivation for it. So many sports governing bodies have been working on policies towards transgender athletes, but chess, though, does not involve comparable levels of physical activity, does it? That's precisely right. And that's why the English Chess Federation is opposed to this policy, because it implies that there's some intrinsic advantage to being a man over a woman when it comes to prowess at chess. And we simply think that that isn't the case, that the main reason for the disparity in the ratings of male and female players is actually related to the disparity in the levels of participation. Statistically, it makes sense that if you have a lot more men playing than women, you're going to have a lot more stronger men in chess than women. Exactly. I mean, the UK Member of Parliament, Angela A. Eagle, who was a joint winner of the 1976 British Girls Under 18 Chess Championship, said this. She said, I know, I was, I was there. This is what she said, because our listeners wouldn't have been there. So she said, there is no physical advantage in chess unless you believe men are inherently more able to play than women. And she said, I spent my chess career being told women's brains were smaller than men's and we shouldn't even be playing. So she says the ban is ridiculous and offensive to women. She's absolutely right. Angela and her twin sister Maria and I all played on the same team in Liverpool. And they were forced to be reckoned with. And they always took great pleasure in beating the boys. And the more it upset the boys, the more it pleased them. And Angela is 100% right about this. And that's the view of the ECF. And our policy has always been to include trans women. Indeed, we've had a trans woman play for England as the female representative in one of our teams recently. And we had a trans woman playing in the British chess championships, eligible for the for the women's only prize is just a couple of weeks ago in Leicester. And that policy will will remain the same. We will protest this policy from Fide,

although we don't think there's very much chance of changing it. It's a Russian dominated organisation presided over by a man who is former deputy prime minister of Russia, who has a lot of votes from countries that have differing social attitudes and morals to those of the United Kingdom. And they have said that they're still allowed the transgender women are still allowed to compete in the open section of its tournaments. Sure, but the policy is still discriminatory. So we know what the reaction from the transgender community is. What about wider reaction from the rest of the chess community? Yes, so the the German chess federation has issued a statement condemning the policy. Similarly, the United States chess federation has been quite vocal in restating its transgender policy that it passed in 2018. But I don't expect too much of the reaction other than the non social media. I think that the policy, unfortunately, will actually be quite popular with the majority of the 190 odd member nations in Fide. That's a sad fact, I fear. Malcolm Payne talking to my colleague, Carney Sharpe. We heard in our earlier podcast that according to an official in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region, at least 1400 people have starved to death since food aid was suspended four months ago. These deaths come despite the fact that the Ethiopian government and rebel fighters from Tigray signed a peace deal last year, ending a two year civil war that has killed thousands. Aid agencies halted distributions in Tigray in April amid accusations that vital supplies were being stolen. They also announced a suspension of food aid to the rest of Ethiopia in June. The BBC has been gathering testimony in one of the worst hit areas of Tigray to see how this corruption is affecting people there. Mercy Juma reports. Merbitt Highley is needing dough for making injera, a traditional Ethiopian flatbread. She is heavily pregnant and takes a couple of poses in between the kneading. Once ready, the pieces of flatbread would be stretched out to take the 28-year-old and her two children through as many days as possible. Months of hunger have forced Merbitt to beg to save herself, her two starving daughters and the baby she is carrying. I'm expecting to give birth very soon, but I have nothing to eat. Both Merbitt and her children are malnourished. She says her family last received aid way before distributions were officially halted. We received food aid in November. Since then, we've received nothing. We are begging for food to live on. It's thanks to the people in Shire that we're not dead. We're still alive. People in Tigray are dying of hunger. Four months ago, aid organisations including WFP and USAID stopped hunting out food in Tigray because it was being stolen. The impact was immediate and the decision has already taken its toll. There are tens of children suffering from wasting at the Sihul General Hospital. Rahel is one of those suffering the most. She is 80s old and weighs only 10 kilograms. That's the weight of an average one-year-old. Her ribs are exposed and she is very weak. Hewet Lebasi, Rahel's mother, says they stopped getting food deliveries way before the organisations stopped bringing the food. It's because of greed and unjust treatment that we didn't get the food aid. Had the aid been distributed properly, it wouldn't have been stopped. It's not only the patients who are affected. Kibra works at the hospital with her partner and they barely get a salary. We see many children who lose their mothers. They simply die of malnutrition. Many children are near death when they are brought to this hospital. We lost four children this month. Local authorities say they have been investigating the allegations of food theft.

Dr. Kibra Hewet Kibresgarba from the Tigray Disaster Risk Management Commission insists they are taking action.

There is a huge humanitarian crisis in Tigray. People are dying. From the day the food distribution stopped till now, 1,411 people have died of starvation. This is only from three zones in the Tigray region. 492 suspects are under investigation. We've carried out the investigation seriously. We have almost concluded it and 198 of the suspects have been charged.

The majority of those charged work for the local authorities. WFP acknowledged that the consequences

of aid withdrawal have been dire but it says that decision was necessary to be sure no more food will be taken away from those most in need in future. A spokesperson told the BBC that they are accelerating efforts to resume food aid but first it is making sure the most stringent processes are in place to best serve the millions of hungry people who depend on their support.

That report by Mercy Juma. For years Iran and Saudi Arabia have been hostile rivals, backing opposing sides in conflicts in the Middle East but in recent months the neighbouring regional heavyweights have been trying to mend fences, agreeing to normalise relations as part of a deal backed by China. Now Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler Mohammed bin Salman has hosted talks with the Iranian Foreign Minister and it's been reported that he's accepted an invitation to visit Tehran. To assess the significance of this, here's our Middle East analyst Mike Thompson. Shiite dominated Iran and Sunni Muslim Saudi Arabia have spent much of the last decade at each other's throats. While avoiding fighting each other, they've backed opposite sides in several Middle East conflicts, most notably in Yemen and Syria. Things went from bad to worse in 2016 when Riyadh cut diplomatic ties with Tehran after Iranian protesters stormed its embassy following Saudi's execution of a prominent Shiite cleric. Then in March this year the chill suddenly thawed when both countries agreed to restore diplomatic ties in a surprise deal brokered by China. In June Saudi's Foreign Minister visited Tehran, paving the way for his counterparts' trip to Jeddah this week, all of which helped soften sanctions hit Iran's international isolation, and may well ease Saudi Arabia's longed-for exit from its failed fight against Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels. Mike Thompson. The Edinburgh International Book Festival is accustomed to hosting famous authors, but a prime minister is rare. However, this week one of the festival events featured the Prime Minister of Iceland, Katrin Yagkub Stottir, who is well as being in charge of running the affairs of state, has become a best-selling crime novelist. Her book is called Reykjavik. Just what made her write it?

Actually I come from literature, I used to study literature, I used to study Icelandic crime fiction before I became a politician and I was elected to parliament in 2007. So I've always had this dream, but I never had the time to do it until the exceptional circumstances we were faced with during the pandemic, when all our existence was changed. And Ragnarionas on my co-author actually

said, maybe now is the time to write a crime novel, and it actually took quite some time, probably two years during the pandemic. But of course things were, you know, the rhythm of life was very changed. So actually it was very nice to have something else to think about occasionally during that time. What's the reaction been of people in Iceland? Well, it was a best-selling novel last year, and actually I think everybody expected me to write a book at some point, so nobody was really surprised. And of course this genre allows you to say things, doesn't it? What's that, the attraction? Well, actually this novel is set in the 1980s in Iceland,

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / US, South Korea and Japan hold historic summit

in 1986, to be precise, a very big year for Iceland, the year when Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev had their summit in Reykjavik, and many other interesting things happened. So what I liked was really to have actually this opportunity to leave contemporary times, sometimes during the evenings, and enter another era, the era of my childhood really. So it was more of an escape for me to think about something else. And sadly I don't have many hobbies, I'm a passionate politician, so literature is really my only hobby. Yeah, but a crime, when you're writing about crime in Iceland, there is one big problem, isn't there, that you don't have it? Well, actually it poses a challenge that we have, luckily, not a lot of crime, but however it's fiction, so it has to be possible, but not necessarily plausible. I wonder if you're a better prime minister for being a novelist at the same time. Well, I think everybody becomes, you know, I think it's good for any human being to read fiction, and to write fiction is just taking that a step further. So I think actually you can learn a lot from fiction, and a lot has changed in how we see crime fiction, because when I first began studying it, before the year 2000, it feels like ages ago, when I was doing my studies, everybody asked me, when are you going to study something serious and not crime fiction? But I think it really reflects on society, so it has very many dimensions actually. You're going to write another, or is this it? Was it a lockdown thing only? It was a lockdown thing. You never know what's going to happen after politics, but after lockdown, I really haven't found a moment to sit down. Back to the day jobs, for all Icelanders listening. Absolutely. Iceland's Prime Minister and Crime Novelist, Katrin Jakubz. here, speaking to Justin Webb. And that's all from us for now, but there will be a new edition of the Global News podcast later. If you want to comment on this podcast or the topics covered, you can send us an email. The address is globalpodcast@bbc.co.uk. This edition was mixed by Paul Mason, the producer was Alison Davies, the editor is Karen Martin. I'm Jeanette Jaleel. Until next time, goodbye.