

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Xi Jinping begins historic third term as China's president

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When you hear from experts in the media, have you ever considered their gender?

Her voice, a podcast from ESCP Business School's media, The Choice, aims to contribute to women's visibility in their domains of expertise. We're talking business and science, willpower to change the world and ambition to have a decisive impact on the future. Join in our conversation and learn from the journeys of these inspiring women. This is the Global News podcast from the BBC World Service. I'm Janet Jalil and at 14 hours GMT on Friday the 10th of March, these are our main stories. The Chinese leader Xi Jinping further cements his power with an unprecedented third term. German police say a gunman killed seven people including an unborn baby in Thursday's attack on a religious meeting in Hamburg. Scientists create the first detailed map of how an insect's brain is wired. Also in this podcast, the use of ums and rs in speech.

So all of the AI conferences are open to anyone who's capable of you know make you know paying for the trip and the ticket. How artificial intelligence is learning to sound more and more human. Xi Jinping has cemented his status as China's most powerful leader in generations after securing an unprecedented third term as the country's president. During a highly choreographed ceremony in Beijing's Great Hall of the People, China's rubber stamp parliament voted to extend his rule by another five years. Nearly 3,000 voted for not one against.

President Xi took the oath of office committing to make China a great modern socialist country. But this all comes at a time of growing tensions with the US, economic challenges at home and global fears that China might invade Taiwan. Our Asia Pacific editor Michael Bristow says it's a significant moment for the world's second biggest economy. In some respects this was a non-event because we knew all along that Xi Jinping at this parliament was going to get a third term in office and indeed the presidency in itself in China is not that much of an important role.

It's largely ceremonial. Xi Jinping gains his power by being head of the Communist Party, that's where his power mainly derives from. But I think it's worth marking because this is a culmination of a five-year project. In 2018 Xi Jinping changed the rules in China to allow him to have a third term as president before then. His two predecessors had both retired after two terms in office. So it really cements his position as really the most important Chinese leader and the one with the most power in a generation. And now really when you look forward it's hard to see how he will be dislodged from that position. He could be in power for the rest of his life.

Yeah, absolutely because it's at the end of the collective leadership system that's existed in China. And Michael, at the same time as this swearing-in ceremony has been happening, the leader of a small Pacific island, David Panuello of Micronesia, has accused China of waging what he calls political warfare, possibly with an eye towards armed conflict. Just tell us about this and what it says about the battle for influence in the Pacific. It's strange, two very different stories about China on the same day, but this is an important story because it tells us a little bit about how Xi Jinping's China conducts itself across the world. And as you said there, it involves the Federated States of Micronesia, a tiny country in terms of land and population in the western Pacific, but a vast country in terms of area. It's got about three million square kilometers of sea associated with the country. It's important strategically for China looking to expand its naval operations in the Pacific. And over the last few years, China and America and Australia have

been

in competition in this area to try and exert their influence. That's the background. Very specific allegations, though, about China and some extraordinary allegations made by David Panuello about China, about the way it conducts its diplomacy. He said he has personally received threats from Chinese officials. He's had to change his mobile number because they consistently and incessantly called him talking about the bribery of officials in Micronesia, about Chinese vessels coming into its waters and not leaving and spying. All these kind of things, very great detail which really if they're taken at face value, if they're true, would really reflect badly on China. Michael Bristo and a Chinese Foreign Ministry official has called David Panuello's accusations smears that don't accord with the facts. We brought you news on an earlier edition of this podcast about a shooting at a Jehovah's Witness meeting hall in the German city of Hamburg. Officials have now released more details about the attack on Thursday night. They say eight people died including an unborn baby and the suspected gunman who is now emerged was once a Jehovah's Witness himself. The German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who's a former mayor of Hamburg, condemned the attack. Last night there was a terrible incident in my hometown of Hamburg. There are fears that more victims will succumb to serious injuries. We are stunned by this violence. My thoughts are with the victims and their families during these difficult hours. We mourn for those whose lives were so brutally taken. Jenny Hill sent this report from Hamburg. We are learning really distressing details which I think have given us all a little bit of an insight into what it must have been like for the 50 or so Jehovah's Witnesses who'd gathered in that meeting hall just across the road from where I'm standing. We believe for Bible study when this gunman burst in. We've learned a little more about him. The police say he was called Philip F, as you know in Germany they won't give his full surname at this stage, a 35 year old man who'd lived in Hamburg for about a decade. Really intriguingly they say he was a member of the Jehovah's Witness community here until about a year ago when he left voluntarily but under terms which they say were not good. Now that is a key piece of information of course for investigators here who of course have confirmed that he turned the gun on himself, killing himself, when police arrived at the scene. Interestingly though whilst no doubt they are pursuing that as a major line of inquiry, investigators have said that they are yet to really determine his motive for carrying out this violent act. Cyclone Freddy which has been spinning and wreaking havoc since February is due to make a second assault on southern Africa. It's expected to make landfall on Mozambique over the weekend. It's already caused devastation but is especially remarkable because it's tracked over thousands of kilometres and has intensified six times more than any other on record. Shingar Enyoka reports. Rare, incredible and dangerous Cyclone Freddy made landfall in Madagascar and Mozambique last month, ripping roofs off homes, flooding entire neighbourhoods and leaving behind a trail of destruction. But instead of losing strength as it headed west towards Zimbabwe, it unexpectedly circled back, gained momentum and struck again with more destructive winds and torrential rain. I live in Tuyen, it's in the southwest region of Madagascar just next to Mozambique. In the scenic coastal town of Tolyara in southwest Madagascar, HIV social strategy specialist Roger Rakoto Malala like many residents was unprepared. Because the first time it made landfall, it wasn't that serious. Lots of people, me included, we didn't prepare for it. Then, when it made landfall last Monday,

it was really incredible. We haven't seen that much rainfall in 10 years. I didn't sleep for three days, a lot of roofs were lifted, the houses have gone, also the roof of my garage has gone and I haven't found it yet. Almost all of the neighbourhoods are flooded and the displays are staying in a gym. Four people died and 14,000 were displaced in the second battering, with many left to pick up the pieces and rebuild their homes.

Severe weather is common here, but experts were surprised by Freddie's resurgence.

It intensified at least four times, a record for the southern hemisphere,

and is on course to break the 1990s record for the longest lasting cyclone.

I'm Dr. Jeff Masters, I'm a meteorologist writing on extreme weather and climate change for Yale climate connections. What's so unusual about this storm?

Definitely an odd ball storm, we've never seen it like. It went through six separate cycles of rapid intensification, something we've never seen before in any other storm worldwide.

The previous record was four. More heat energy in the ocean due to human cause climate change has increased the probability that we'll see intense storms like Freddie.

Cyclone Freddie is making its way across the Mozambican channel,

reaching speeds of 165 kilometres an hour, and it's expected to gain even more strength when it makes landfall in Mozambique over the weekend.

We are prepared as possible. Manuel de Araujo is the mayor of Kilimanizambesia.

He says they're working hard to prepare for Freddie's second landfall.

We have been alerting our citizens to reinforce their ceilings, to keep some food from my internet for at least three days. If some people need to be relocated, then we have got places where they will be relocated.

Mozambique is already reeling from Cyclone Freddie's first hit, when 10,000 people were displaced, hundreds of schools destroyed and 68,000 children now unable to attend classes.

That report by Shingai Enyoka. You may not think it when they're buzzing around your food, but fruit flies are actually very clever insects. Previous studies show that they can form memories and make conscious decisions. Researchers have now created the first detailed map of an insect's brain which could give scientists more information about human behaviour. So why did they choose fruit flies? Chantal Hartle explains.

Well, it is easy really to overlook their intelligence. They are such tiny creatures.

The brain of a fruit fly is about the size of a poppy seed to give you an idea.

But the actual structure of the brain is very, very similar to humans and indeed their whole biology as well. It's similar in the sense that the brain is made up of thousands of neurons, billions in the case of humans which pass information to other parts of the brain, a bit like a messenger if you like. And this study by the University of Cambridge in Britain with help from American scientists used a baby fly. This work was painstaking. The researchers sliced the tiny brain into thousands of thin sections and then they used a microscope to create a detailed image of every single slice. They then pieced all the connections between neurons onto a reconstructed image, a bit like you would a jigsaw puzzle. And then from there, they produced a 3D model which is the first of its kind. The first time we've had this complete map of what an insect's brain looks like. And get this, it took 12 years to complete this.

As I say, such painstaking work to piece that all together. The imaging alone took about a day per neuron. It's quite mind-boggling isn't it? We're talking about a brain the size of a poppy seed

being sliced into thousands of sections. So quite incredible research there. But what does it tell us about the way our own minds work? Yeah, well scientists that have been involved in this research have described it as a landmark achievement that brings us closer in their words to understanding the thought processes of humans. So they haven't actually identified yet exactly the connections between the brains, but they say it certainly paves the way to a better understanding. Work is already underway to go to the next step if you like to map the brain of a mouse using the same techniques which is expected to be completed within the next decade. If you're wondering about human brains, well the current technology, it's simply not advanced enough to map the entire human brain for reasons which we've just explained. It's taken such a long time to do it for a fruit fly. The human brain contains more than 80 billion neurons, so we might never see that during our lifetime. Chantal Hartle. Now normally if you're caught drink driving you can expect a fine and maybe even a ban. In Latvia though they've gone a step further. It's being used as a way of making a geopolitical statement. Nick Miles reports. In a bitter snowy forest clearing a group of eight family cars crunch over the frozen earth and make their way onto a transporter. Their former owners are never going to see them again. The vehicles are about to make a one-way journey out of the country. Latvia has got one of the worst rates of drinking and driving in Europe and last year MPs changed the law so that drivers found three times over the legal alcohol limit could have their vehicles seized and then sold by the government. A lot of people lost their cars that way. Three large car pounds were full up within a matter of weeks. So what to do with them all? Well last month lawmakers came up with a plan. No friend of Moscow, Latvia, decided to send them to Ukraine to replace some of the thousands destroyed in Russian bombardments. The charity delivering the first batch is called Twitter Convoy. It's already sent hundreds of other cars to Ukraine since the war began. Reyners Bosnaks is in charge. He's been telling journalists that the front line is not just where the tanks and jeeps are. These cars can end up helping the war effort by transporting medicine around. Reyners has been overseeing today's delivery, posting beaming pictures of himself as the cars trundled towards Ukraine. He said the journey from our garage to Ukraine begins today. The cars will redeem not only alcohol but also ideological karma. Nick Miles reporting. Still to come on this edition of the Global News podcast. One year we gifted a trip to Kenya to reach your gear. We gifted a baby elephant to Jennifer Love. Sorry, sorry, not to take home presumably. No to be a godmother in Kenya of a baby elephant. Why this weekend's Oscars aren't just about the films. A crisis at a small US bank has demonstrated just how interconnected the world's finances really are. A sharp drop in the shares of Silicon Valley Bank, SVB this week, has kicked off big falls in the US, Asian and European stock markets. We got more from our business reporter, Katie Thilver. We saw more than \$50 billion being wiped off US financial stocks in a day and that's particularly by the big four banks, including the likes of JP Morgan and Wells Fargo. The S&P 500, which is an index of the top 500 companies in the US, it lost almost 2%, which is a huge drop in one day. One venture capitalist, for example, told the BBC that the events were brutal and wild. We've also seen Asia follow suit and opening lower as well, but one lender that does indeed need mentioning is SVB Financial Group. It's a firm, a banking partner for many tech companies in Silicon Valley. It's very startup friendly and in fact it supported a lot of these startups during COVID, but it has absolutely tanked. It lost about 60% of its value during the day's trading, 20% more in after hours trading and that massive drop really came about after the bank revealed

that it lost around \$2 billion by selling some of its securities and as a result of those losses, the bank was going to need to issue more shares to make back some of that money and that surprised

the markets, seeing many investors sell off and therefore that huge loss that I mentioned.

And yet this is a relatively small bank, so why has it had such a big ripple effect?

Yeah, as you say, it is small, but investors are wondering whether or not other US banks that also hold large bond portfolios could be facing the same problem. Analysts, we've been speaking to say that they didn't expect the rates to keep rising. One of these is Ray Wang. He's the head of the tech advisory constellation research and he says companies like SVB are casualties of the US interest rate hikes. Nobody at Silicon Valley Bank and in a lot of places thought that these interest rate hikes would have lasted this long and I think that's really what happened and they bet wrong and so the unrealized losses have been piling up throughout

the last year and they were visible to anyone who was reading financial reports but not normally reported. Now here's an interesting stat. In February, the FDIC reported that US banks unrealized losses on what we call available for sale and held to maturity securities were \$620 billion as of December 31st. It was only \$8 billion a year ago before the Fed's rate hike.

So rising interest rate hikes have caused the value of these bonds that have lower payouts to fall and banks own lots of these bonds so that's why financial stocks around the world are dropping today and it raises that question about whether what's happening with SVB is an isolated issue or whether it's a symptom of wider problems in the US financial system.

Katie Silver. Scientists are calling for a global effort to protect the earth's orbit from the dangers posed by space debris. The team writing in the journal Science say that unless the problem is tackled, the low earth orbit could become unusable. Millions of bits of space junk are currently whizzing around our planet at high speed posing a risk to both human spaceflight and robotic missions. Chris Newman, Professor of Space Law and Policy at Northumbria University here in England, has been speaking to my colleague Rachel Burden.

One of the real problems we have and one of the areas actually I would start in tackling this is getting some certainty, some hardness about these numbers because you know we're tracking but that is the question I need answering is is that tracking good enough? Can we be tracking more? Can we track the bigger big objects that are likely to cause real problems if they collide with other objects so that you know you've unpicked the first issue there. Tracking all of human created debris up there is something we really need to get on and it's something we really need to start doing. And were people not really thinking about this? Were they just chucking stuff out into space and I don't know assuming that it'll sort itself out somehow or what?

Well yeah I mean this what we had at the start of human space activity in the 1950s and the 1960s there was a relatively small amount of activity and the sky above the earth is relatively large so there was this sort of sense that you know the big sky would take care of it but moved on from that and we've analysed and we've identified small pockets of areas of the earth orbit which are useful which we can really use with satellites and so they get congested very very quickly and that's very much a product of the of the 21st century. How difficult is it then to get some kind of global agreement on agreeing this stuff given the difficult international dynamics that we have currently? I think that is the entire problem. Really this needs an international

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collaboration and the price of international collaboration right now is sky high. The main space players are geopolitical adversaries China, Russia and the United States. So I think what we're going to have to see instead is one nation and I'm looking particularly to the United States to this to take leadership and to say okay we can't get global consensus on this so what we actually need to do is take the lead and try and do our bit to set the behaviours in train that over the next decade over the next 20 years will become these norms of behaviour that everyone accepts. This is the way we have to behave if we want to keep using outer space. Professor Chris Newman. Now in the ever-evolving world of artificial intelligence a new system has found a way to sound even more human. Stephanie Prentice reports. To her is human as they say so for a computer system doing its best to mimic being human being too perfect could be a telltale sign. With this in mind developers in the US have turned to the internet to train artificial intelligence on the rhythms pauses and inflections used in real speech and the software quickly learned. Here's a real human. Once we got going the guys uh John Corbett already knew how to play the guitar John Ailes who plays bass he learned how to play the bass and here is AI generated speech.

So all of the AI conferences are open to anyone who's capable of you know make you know paying for

the trip and the ticket. To get to this the team at the Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania ingested almost 900 hours of talking from YouTube and podcasts. The model they developed

uses tech to predict where a human may use an um or a silence and then adds it in.

Their results were put to the test of real human ears and given a 3.89 out of five for how natural it sounded. Actual human speech was rated a four. The next step for developers is to train the AI further and the teams say their human sounding tech could break new ground in situations where using AI voices is appropriate. They say that could include early morning calls and emergency services as well as improving home smart systems. Meaning soon your Alexa or Siri could be pausing,

humming or even yawning at you on a morning. Or perhaps they could seem be reporting or presenting

that was um uh Stephanie Prentice. The Oscars this Sunday is not just about the movies for brands it's the perfect opportunity for product placement from clothes, tech and luxury products to experiences

and holidays. If a celebrity is pictured with a brand it can raise awareness and sales and it's not just the extravagant gift bags the stars are given they're also gift lounges which celebrities get invited to in the run up to the awards to discover products and take their pick for free and it's big business. My colleague Felicity Hannah has been speaking to Natalie Dubois, president of DPA, the company which has been running these gifting suites for 20 years.

They can pretty much give away anything they want to give away something to bring awareness on the

new products or new company so we go anywhere from a new treatment in the medical field or beauty

all the way to a trip to Tahiti. And how much can that be worth to companies if they're giving away things that that can be so valuable? It's very valuable it can you know we can raise basically

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a value of company of millions of dollars especially for an event like the week of the Oscar or something happening at the canteen festival it's amazing. When it comes to a freebie like a bag or a scarf it makes sense the celebrity might be pictured wearing it. Why would brands give away other things things like holidays things like experiences? More and more today you need the experiences because of what's going on in the world I've been listening to the news you understand that. The experiences you know it's basically the celebrities will talk about it they will talk about it to their friends on TV in the news anywhere. Are you bound by a code of secrecy or can you give us a couple of big names some examples maybe of what different celebrities

took from a gifting suite? I'm not born that just have respect for some people but I can tell you for example one year we gifted a trip to Kenya to reach your gear we gifted a baby elephant to Jennifer love you it. Not sorry sorry not not to take home presumably. No to be a godmother in Kenya of a baby elephant. Natalie Dubois well one of the celebrities who may well visit a gifting suite this weekend is Michelle Yeo she's been nominated for an Oscar for her role as Evelyn Wang and laundromat owner turned superhero in everything everywhere all at once. She's the

first Asian woman to be nominated in the lead actress category since 1935. She spoke to my colleague Karishma Vaswani about her character in the film and what this all means to her. This is Wang. This is Wang. Mrs. Wang are you with us? I am paying attention.

Michelle Yeo plays the role of Evelyn Wang a Chinese American immigrant and laundromat owner who becomes a superhero fighting to save the world or in this case worlds. I'm very aware that it's beyond me it's beyond me being recognized as an actress it's like a whole community of Asians coming forward and saying you're going to do this for us. The character of Evelyn how much did she resonate with you you know because as you point out you have been fighting in some respects

in parts of your career and she's a fighter isn't she. It's been a long time since I have even read something that resonated so deeply in me. I think so many of us especially women understand this as your numbers get bigger you get put in certain boxes and especially as an actress the roles get smaller they get more insignificant. When we first got the script a lot of people said to me you know this is a big risk because you're going on from a marvel you're going to do a marvel that could change a lot more things for you but for me it's like life is about challenges and taking risks because if not you'd be doing the same thing over and over again. What we were watching on screen felt very real and relatable for so many people in this part of the world in Asia. What do you think it says about the way the film industry is now. This whole community this whole group of people have felt so unseen for such a long time. I think a lot of the times Asians tend to not really show so much emotion and I think maybe perhaps that's a misconception that we just go about doing our own thing and we don't need our stories to be told which is not true. I think it is also how we tell the story that makes a difference I think especially in Hollywood. Do you think that some people have to work harder than others being Asian being a woman. We've always had to work harder so many of us actresses have faced that problem before and will continue to do so but you know look at some of my peers what do they do. They become directors themselves they become writers themselves they become storytellers themselves they make the opportunities they create the doorways and this is what we have to do.

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And that was Oscar nominee Michelle Yeo speaking ahead of this weekend's Academy Awards ceremony.

And that's almost all from us for now there will be a new edition of the Global News podcast later. Just before we go here's Andrew Peach on what's coming up in the happy pod. Yes this weekend the happy pod is back with half an hour of uplifting positive news stories and contributions from listeners in Ecuador, Nigeria, Finland and France. We've got a story from a guy in Pakistan who thinks the rest of the world has a pretty negative view of his home country and he's trying to change that bit by bit by posting images of some of the most beautiful scenery you've ever seen on social media. We'll hear about that and I wonder if you've heard about the UN High Seas Treaty negotiated this week. There was huge excitement when agreement was reached in New

York because they've been talking about it for 20 years. I'm going to talk to Nicola who is a Global News podcast listener who's been at the centre of those talks about the euphoria but also about what she's going to do now. Join me for the happy pod, a bonus episode of the Global News podcast here on Saturday. That was Andrew Peach and this edition was mixed by Philip Bull. The producer was Rebecca Wood. The editor is Karen Martin. I'm Jeanette Jaleel. Until next time, goodbye.

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