

Unable to take the heat, Afghan anxieties and vaccine under fire

Last week's searing temperatures in North America's Pacific north-west were more than just another heatwave.

The 49.6C registered in the tiny British Columbian town of Lytton was not simply the hottest temperature in Canada's history, it also defied computer modelling of how the world might change as emissions rise. Our global environment editor Jonathan Watts looks at how the rare phenomenon known as a heat dome is part of a growing trend towards extreme weather events, while climate science professor Simon Lewis explains why global heating is making more of the planet too hot for humans.

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Starting with the Soviet invasion of the 1970s, Afghanistan has spent four decades as a battleground for proxy wars between competing nations and ideologies.

As US and British troops withdraw, Emma Graham-Harrison returns to Kabul, where she spent several years as a foreign correspondent, to find little optimism and much anxiety at the resurgence of the Taliban.

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Despite a worrying surge in the Delta variant of Covid-19, England is set to end nearly all pandemic restrictions on 19 July.

The world is watching to see if the UK's mass vaccination programme can allow normal life alongside the virus, explains science editor Ian Sample. And Sarah Boseley - writing her final piece as the Guardian's outgoing health editor - tells the story of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, designed to be the world's affordable screen against Covid, but which has been beset by controversy.

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On the cover

Last week's record-shattering heat prompted a stark warning from Sir David King, the former UK chief scientific adviser. "Nowhere is safe ... who would have predicted a temperature of 48/49C in British Columbia?" he said. Scientists had been warning about extreme weather for decades and time was running out to take action, King added.

Illustration: Guardian Design



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