

NEWS IN BRIEF 11

March 21st – 27th 2026

THE INDEPENDENT

Australia's world-first legislation restricting social media access for children under 16 has been in force for about three months, with new data offering initial insights into its impact. A YouGov survey of Australian adults found that 61 per cent of parents observed positive behavioural shifts in their children, such as an increase in in-person social interactions and improved parent-child relationships, since the law's implementation. However, the survey also reported negative impacts, with 27 per cent of parents noting a shift to alternative platforms and 25 per cent observing reduced social connection or peer support online.

THE GUARDIAN

Hong Kong police can now demand that people suspected of breaching the city's national security law provide mobile phone or computer passwords in a further crackdown on dissent. The amendments to the law also empower customs officers to seize items that are deemed to have "seditious intention", regardless of whether any person has been arrested for an offence endangering national security because of the items. Refusing to comply could lead to up to one year's jail and a fine of up to HK\$100,000 (\$12,773), while providing false or misleading information could bring up to three years' imprisonment and a fine of up to HK\$500,000.

THE GUARDIAN

Nasa has begun returning its towering SLS rocket and Orion spacecraft to its Florida launch pad before a planned flyby of the moon, after completing necessary repairs. Artemis engineers began the manoeuvre, which can take up to 12 hours, at 8pm local time. The US space agency will then begin the final preparations before its next launch window opens on 1 April. The immense orange-and-white Space Launch System rocket and the Orion vessel will be slowly wheeled out of the assembly building at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida and painstakingly moved 4 miles (6.5km) to launch pad 39B. If the tests are satisfactory, three US astronauts and one Canadian will head to the moon and fly around Earth's satellite. The mission, due to last about 10 days, would be a huge step towards Americans once again setting foot on the lunar surface, a goal announced by President Donald Trump in his first term. But that ambition has been plagued by delays

THE ECONOMIST

Donald Trump said he may soon have the "honour of taking Cuba". Millions on the island were left without power for more than 24 hours amid a worsening energy crisis. No fuel has entered the Caribbean country since the United States imposed an oil embargo on it three months ago. Meanwhile, Rodrigo Chaves, the president of Costa Rica, announced the closure of the country's embassy in Havana. Mr Chaves, a Trump ally, denied the legitimacy of the Cuban regime, adding that "we must cleanse the hemisphere of Communists."

CBS

ICE agents linger at airports where TSA officers struggle with nightmare lines



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfLIft8yF38>

CNBC

How Retailers Like Gap Are Betting Big On AI Partnerships



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mwSZUARb9vw>

CNN

The World Happiness Report lists the happiest countries in the world and what may be impacting people's wellbeing.



<https://edition.cnn.com/2026/03/20/health/social-media-impact-world-happiness-report-wellness>

POWDERHAM CASTLE, Devon, England — In his 20s, Charles Courtenay left the drizzly English countryside where he grew up, and moved to California. He met his first wife in a bar in Las Vegas, and didn't tell her much about his background. He just took her home to England, about two months into dating, and drove up the driveway of his family home — a 12th century castle. Beyond the moat, there's a sign at the entrance that reads, "Long Live the Earl!" — as in, Courtenay.

Because the man who learned to surf at L.A.'s Topanga Beach, and insists "just call me Charlie," is also the 19th Earl of Devon. When Courtenay's father died in 2015, he inherited the earldom through a mostly male bloodline that goes back to the Crusades. So even though Courtenay has three older sisters, he gets the title and castle.

The gig also comes with political power: A seat in the House of Lords, the upper chamber of the United Kingdom's Parliament — the equivalent of the U.S. Senate. Courtenay is one of 92 lords, out of more than 800 in Parliament, who inherited their seats. They're part of a feudal system that goes back to the Norman Conquest of 1066, when monarchs began doling out land in exchange for military service and counsel.

Now that system is being dismantled. This month, Parliament passed the House of Lords (Hereditary Peers) Act of 2026, which abolishes those 92 inherited seats. In a compromise, some of them will get to stay in Parliament until they die, but they won't be allowed to pass their seats down to descendants. Many say it's about time.

"It is seemingly so wild that anybody in this day and age could inherit the right to legislate. It's quite bonkers!" says Eleanor Doughty, author of *Heirs and Graces, A History of the Modern British Aristocracy*. "I think people do wonder about the legitimacy of these sorts of people."

Symbols of Britain's imperial past are still part of public life. The royal family is one of the largest landowners. The king remains head of state in many former British colonies. In the House of Lords, lawmakers address each other as "noble lord" or "baroness." Judges still wear white horsehair wigs.

Doughty says it's because Britain never had its equivalent of the French Revolution. It never toppled its aristocracy, and redistributed wealth. Nobility never went out of fashion. King Charles I was beheaded in 1649, after his defeat in the English Civil War. But he was an exception, she says.

"We had our civil war, we did chop the king's head off, but we didn't get rid of his peers at all. We never go as far as France," Doughty explains. "So they've just sort of carried on."

Courtenay opposed the elimination of his hereditary seat, but accepts the outcome. "I wish I could do more, but my time is up" he says. The House of Lords "does need to be more representative."

Such reform was Prime Minister Keir Starmer's campaign promise two years ago: Abolish hereditary seats, then set a mandatory retirement age of 80 for the rest of the lords, and eventually replace them altogether, with an upper chamber that's more representative of the country — all by summer 2029.

Last year, a poll showed widespread public support for reforms beyond what Starmer has proposed. For example, 71% of respondents supported restricting the number of seats in the House of Lords. There's currently no limit, and with more than 800 seats, it's already one of the largest legislative bodies in the world.

Back at his castle, the Earl of Devon still wants to be part of the conversation that follows his ouster. He's got lots of ideas: Elect seats by region or profession — maybe even through a lottery or jury duty type system, he says.

After centuries of family service in government, he says he'll lend "a little bit of longer-term memory" to that reform process. "Because we work in generations, not five-year electoral cycles," he says. "We [hereditary lords] are, by definition, somewhat longer term."

P.S. He still gets to keep the castle.

an heir /eə/: un héritier	▲ Note the pun 'heir-a' - 'era' /'eərə/ (or /'ɪərə/)	the end of an era : la fin d'une époque
to inherit Ø sth: hériter de qch.	about two months into dating : environ deux mois après le début de leur relation	
moat : douves	a gig /gɪg/ = a job (usually for a specified time)	
the House of Lords : the higher chamber of 'Parliament' /'pɑ:ləmənt/ in the UK, composed of unelected peers and bishops.		
▲ The lower chamber, composed of elected members, is the House of Commons (la Chambre des Communes)		
feudal /'fju:dəl/: féodal	to dole out = to distribute	
many say it's about time : nombreux sont ceux qui estiment qu'il était grand temps		
bonkers /'bɒŋkəz/= crazy	a wig : une perruque	
to topple sb = to overthrow sb : renverser qn (un gouvernement, un monarque)		
to behead sb /bɪ'hed/= to decapitate sb	I wish I could do more : j'aimerais pouvoir faire plus	▲ Use
<i>a past tense after "I wish" for things that aren't true now.</i>	mandatory = o'bligatory	
eventually /ɪ'ventʃʊəli/ = 'finally [aɪ]	ouster /'aʊstə/: éviction	
jury duty : when citizens are called to serve on a jury in court.		