South Asia Floods

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has warned that an estimated 16 million children are "in urgent need of life-saving support" following the torrential monsoon rains and catastrophic flooding that have hit Bangladesh, India and Nepal. Up to a third of Bangladesh is currently under water. A total of 45 million people have been badly affected in the rains, which started several weeks ago. UNICEF said: "Millions of children have seen their lives swept away by these devastating floods. Children have lost their homes, schools and even friends and loved ones." It added: "There is a danger the worst could still be to come as rains continue and flood waters move south."

UNICEF said it is putting all its efforts into helping those who need it most. It said: " We are on the ground working in close coordination with respective governments and humanitarian partners in the South Asian countries to scale up our responses and respond to the immediate needs of affected children and their families." It added: "Massive damage to school infrastructure and supplies means hundreds of thousands of children may miss weeks or months of school. Getting children back into school is absolutely critical in establishing a sense of stability for children during times of crisis and provides a sense of normality when everything else is being turned upside down."

Why do people yawn?

Do you ever wonder why we yawn? Do you always yawn when you see other people yawn? A new study from Nottingham University in the UK has done research on this. Researchers found that yawning is contagious. It is a powerful and unstoppable reaction. People automatically want to yawn when they see other people yawning. The researchers said people actually yawn more when they try to stop yawning. The researchers also found that some people have a much stronger urge to yawn than other people. Lead researcher Professor Stephen Jackson said that even reading about yawning could be enough to make people yawn. You might even want to yawn right now.

The researchers studied the reactions and brain activity of 36 adult volunteers. The volunteers looked at video clips of other people yawning. They then had two choices - either to stop themselves yawning or to allow themselves to do it. The volunteers were videoed as they yawned or tried not to yawn. The researchers also monitored the brain activity of the volunteers and checked how strong their feeling to want to yawn was. Jackson said understanding more about yawning will help to treat conditions such as dementia, epilepsy and Tourettes. He said: "We are looking for potential non-drug, personalized treatments…that might be effective in changing imbalances in the brain."

Irish TV station “forced” to use Queen’s English

Radio newsreaders and television presenters at Ireland's national broadcaster RTE are up in arms at being told to pronounce words according to the Queen's English. A report in The Irish Sun newspaper claims that RTE's broadcasters have been issued an A-Z style guide of words which instructs them on how to pronounce certain words in an effort to ensure they are clearly understood. The A-Z comes with audio clips containing elocution lessons of how to "properly" pronounce the "problem" words. An official at RTE told the Irish Sun that producers issued the guide to keep up standards. It said RTE had received complaints from the public over how certain words were supposedly mispronounced.

Irish linguistics expert Professor Raymond Hickey called the RTE's actions "internalized colonialism". He expressed his disbelief that Irish speakers were being asked to use words with an English accent. He said: "The basic issue is RTE expects its staff to speak as if they were English. Why? We have our own form of English, which is different but fully legitimate and accepted worldwide." Professor Hickey highlighted some examples of the words Irish presenters are being asked to pronounce with a British English accent. He said: "The Irish don't pronounce the TH in 'birthday' as a fricative, but as a stop with no breath….The same is true of 'news' - the Irish pronunciation is and always has been 'nooze'."

Binge-watching television causes sleep problems

New research shows that binge-watching television can adversely affect your health. Binge-viewing involves excessive watching of back-to-back TV shows in a single sitting. It has become prevalent across the world with the advent of online streaming and downloading services. Researchers from the University of Michigan in the USA and the Leuven School for Mass Communication Research in Belgium surveyed 423 people aged 18-25 on their TV-viewing habits. Their research found that binge-viewing greatly interrupted sleep patterns. Co-author Professor Jan Van den Bulck said: "Our study signals that binge-viewing is prevalent in young adults and that it may be harmful to their sleep."

The researchers asked participants about their sleep quality, levels of fatigue and prevalence of insomnia. They also enquired about their frequency of binge-watching programs on televisions, laptops and desktop computers. Over 80 per cent of the participants reported binge-watching, with 20 per cent doing so several times a week. Binge-watchers are 98 per cent more likely to experience poor sleep quality. A researcher said: "Bingeable TV shows have plots that keep the viewer tied to the screen. We think they become intensely involved with the content and may keep thinking about it when they want to go to sleep." She said this caused people problems when trying to sleep.

**The Guardian**

**My year of no spending is over – here’s how I got through it**

**Michelle McGagh**

**26 November, 2016**

1. Just over 12 months ago, I gave myself a challenge: to stop buying everything except the essentials for a whole year. I started on Friday, 27 November, 2015. It hasn’t always been easy but a year later, I am richer and wiser. I have also realized just how much money I’ve wasted in the pub, in restaurants and on mindless shopping.
2. I am a personal finance journalist so people thought I was good with money but I wasn’t. I thought that, because I earned a good salary and didn’t have any debts, I didn’t need to worry about how much money I was spending. I was stuck in a cycle of consumerism – earning money to buy stuff I didn’t really need, which wasn’t making me happy.
3. The aim of giving up spending for a year was to live cheaply and change my spending habits. I could continue to pay my bills, including electricity, broadband, phone bill, life insurance, money to help my family and basic groceries.
4. I’ve learned to shop for food in a better way than I did before – I have planned meals and improved my awful cooking skills a little. My husband agreed to help with the grocery part of the challenge and we reduced our weekly shop (which covered three meals each a day, toiletries and house cleaning products) to £31.60 a week.
5. I’m not going to say it was easy, especially in the first few months when I tried to live my old life without money and found it wasn’t working. There were plenty of times I wanted to stop the challenge and get some retail therapy, buy a drink in the pub or even just buy a bus ticket instead of getting on my bike again.
6. But I realized I just had to find new ways to have fun that didn’t include spending money and going to the pub. Living in London, I have a lot of free cultural activities near my home and I’ve been to more art exhibitions this year than ever before. I even had a free holiday, cycling along the coast and camping on beaches. It’s something I’d never done before and now, I can’t wait to go again next year.
7. There were bad times, such as when I missed concerts and new films. And I’ve not been able to join friends when they have gone out for a nice meal. There have also been some difficult moments when I’ve gone to a friend’s house for dinner empty-handed because I couldn’t buy a bottle of wine as a thank you. I did a lot of washing up at my friends’ houses this year as a way of saying “thanks for feeding me”.
8. Despite the difficult moments and missing concerts and films, this year has encouraged me to try new things. The best thing about the challenge is that I’ve been willing to say “yes” more and that I’ve become more adventurous. I have also begun to realize that consumerism keeps us chained to our desks, working to earn money to spend on stuff we think will make our lives better. And when the stuff doesn’t make us happy, we go back to work to earn more money to buy something else.
9. Many people have said to me, “I bet you can’t wait to get down the shops and have a splurge” but I’m not interested in going shopping. I have one more day of no spending and, after that, there are just two things I will buy this weekend: drinks for my friends and family to say thanks for their help and a flight to see my grandad in Ireland. A year of no spending has taught me what things I really need and it really isn’t that much.