

人类会灭绝吗？ Will humans become extinct?

Hello. This is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English.

大家好。这里是BBC学习英语栏目的六分钟英语。

I'm Neil.

我是内尔。

And I'm Sam.

我是萨姆。

In this programme, we'll be looking at some of the many dangers facing humanity, from climate change and global pandemics to asteroid impacts and nuclear war.

本期节目中我们将了解一些人类面对的诸多危险，从气候变化到全球流行病到小行星影响以及核战争。

We'll be finding out whether human civilisation can survive these risks and looking at some of the related vocabulary as well.

我们将弄清楚人类文明能否挺过这些威胁，并了解一些相关的词汇。

Do you really think humans could become extinct and end up as dead as the dodo?

你真的认为人类会灭绝，最终跟渡渡鸟一个结局吗？

Ah, so of course you've heard of the dodo?

啊，看来你肯定听说过渡渡鸟了。

Yeah, dodos were large, metre-high birds which died out in the 1600s after being hunted to extinction by humans.

是的，渡渡鸟是一种大型鸟类，有一米来高，在17世纪的时候因为人类的猎杀而灭绝。

That's right.

没错。

Dodos couldn't fly and weren't very clever.

渡渡鸟不能飞，而且也不是很聪明。

They didn't hide when sailors with hunting dogs landed on their island.

当水手带着猎狗登陆它们所在的岛屿时，它们没有躲藏起来。

The species was hunted so much that within a century, every single bird had died out.

这个物种被大量猎杀，以至于在一个世纪内全部灭绝。

But do you know which island the dodo was from, Sam?

不过你知道渡渡鸟来自于那个岛吗，萨姆？

That's my quiz question for today.

这就是我今天要问的问题。

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Was it A. The Galapagos, B. Mauritius, or C. Fiji?

是 A. 加拉帕戈斯, B.毛里求斯, 还是 C. 斐济?

I'll guess the Galapagos, Neil, because I know many exotic animals live there.

我要猜加拉帕格斯, 内尔, 因为我知道那里居住着许多奇珍异兽。

By the way, that's also cheered me up a bit because as humans we are much smarter than the dodo!

顺便一提, 这也让我有点高兴, 因为作为人类, 我们比渡渡鸟聪明多了!

We're far too clever to die out, aren't we?

我们这么聪明, 不可能灭绝, 不是吗?

I'm not so sure I agree, Sam.

我不太确定, 萨姆。

Lots of the existential risks-the worst possible things that could happen to humanity, such as nuclear war, global pandemics or rogue artificial intelligence, are human-made.

很多灭世风险——可能发生在人类身上的最糟糕的事情, 比如核战争, 全球流行病或暴走的人工智能都是人造的。

These threats could have catastrophic consequences for human survival in the 21st century.

这些威胁可能会给21世纪的人类生存带来灾难性的后果。

Yeah, that's true.

没错。

But existential risks don't only threaten the survival of the human species.

但是灭世风险不仅仅威胁着人类这个物种的生存。

Instead, they could destroy civilisation as we know it, leaving pockets of survivors to struggle on in a post-apocalyptic world.

相反地, 它们可能会毁灭我们所知的文明, 只留下少数幸存者在末世后的世界里苟延残喘。

And it wouldn't be the first time that has happened, as the BBC World Service programme The Inquiry found out.

而正如BBC世界服务节目《询问》发现的那样, 这不是第一次发生。

Simon Beard of the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk at Cambridge University explains.

剑桥大学灭世风险研究中心的西蒙·彼尔德进行了解释。

The historical record suggests that about once every thousand years an event occurs that wipes out about a third of the human population- So in the Middle Ages, this was the Black Death-huge plague that covered Eurasia, while there was also dramatic global cooling at that time which many people think was related to volcanic eruptions and about a third of the global population died.

历史记载表明大约每1000年就会发生一个事件消灭掉三分之一的世界人口。中世纪是黑死病——席卷了欧亚大陆的大型瘟疫, 当时还有急剧的全球变冷, 很多人认为这跟火山爆发有关, 大约三分之一的全球人口死亡。

So, humanity has been facing these risks throughout history, according to the historical record-the collection of all written and recorded past events concerning the human race.

那么根据历史记载——所有的书面记载的发生过去的跟人类有关的事件——在整个历史进程中，人类一直在面临着风险。

Yes. Wars and plagues-infectious, epidemic diseases which spread between countries can quickly wipe out, or completely destroy, millions of people.

是的。战争，瘟疫——能够在国家之间迅速传染的传染性流行病——能够快速消除，或彻底毁灭数以百万计的人类。

And there's not much we can do to stop disasters like that!

而且对于阻止那样的灾难，我们能做的不多！

True, Sam, but what about individuals who actively work to bring about the end of the world-like apocalyptic terrorists, rampage shooters, fundamentalist cults like those who organised the poisonous gas attack on the Tokyo subway.

没错，萨姆，但是还有那些努力要把世界带向尽头的人——比如末世恐怖分子，凶残的枪手以及原教旨主义邪教，比如策划了东京地铁的毒气事件的那些人。

Those are people who want to end human life on Earth and bring about Doomsday-another word for the final, apocalyptic day of the world's existence.

那些人想要终结地球上的人类生命，让末日降临——即世界存在的最后一天。

Right. And things got even scarier in modern times with the invention of nuclear weapons.

而且随着核武器的发明，这些问题在现代社会变得更骇人。

During the Cuban Missile Crisis between America and the USSR for example, risk experts estimated a 41% probability that human life would be completely wiped out!

比如在美苏的古巴导弹危机期间，风险专家估计人类生命有41%的概率会完全灭绝！

Seth Baum of New York's Global Catastrophic Risk Institute explains how human error almost brought about Doomsday.

纽约全球灾难风险协会的赛斯·鲍姆解释了人类的过失如何差点引发末日。

There are some ways that you could get to a nuclear war without really intending to, and probably the biggest example is if you have a false alarm that is mistaken as a nuclear attack, and there have been a number of, maybe even very serious false alarms, over the years, in which one side or the other genuinely believed that they were under nuclear attack, when in fact they were not at all under nuclear attack.

有很多方式可以让你无意间触发核战争，最典型的例子可能是如果你几年内收到了核攻击的错误警报，而且这样的警报有很多，也许是非常严重的错误警报，在此期间某一方深信他们处于核攻击的威胁下，而事实上他们并没有遭受核攻击。

One such false alarm-an incorrect warning given so that people wrongly believe something dangerous is about to happen, came about in 1995, when the US sent missiles up into the Earth's atmosphere to study the aurora borealis, the northern lights.

像这样的错误警报——让人们误以为危险的事情即将发生的不正确的警报，在1995年发生过一次，当时美国向地球大气层发射了一枚导弹来研究北极光。

Soviet radars picked up the missiles, thinking they were nuclear warheads and almost retaliated.

苏联（译者注：此时应是俄罗斯）的雷达监测到了这枚导弹，认为它们是核弹头，差点就进行了反击。

Nuclear Armageddon was only averted by the actions of one clear-thinking Russian general who decided not to push the red button.

核武器的末日审判被一位头脑清晰的俄罗斯将军扭转了，他决定不按那个红色按钮。

Phew! A close shave then!

呼！好险啊！

Well, Neil, all this doom-mongering has made me want to just give it all up and live on a desert island!

嗯，内尔，这些末日危机让我想要放弃一切住到一座孤岛上！

Like the dodo eh, Sam?

就像渡渡鸟吗，萨姆？

So, which island would that be?

那么会是哪座岛呢？

If you remember, today's quiz question asked where the dodo was from.

如果你还记得，今天的问题就是问渡渡鸟来自于哪里。

I said The Galapagos.

我说的是 加拉帕戈斯。

And I'm afraid to say it was B. Mauritius.

我得遗憾地告诉你答案是 B. 毛里求斯。

So, to recap, in this programme we've been discussing Doomsday-the final day of life on Earth and other existential threats-dangers threatening the survival of humans on the planet.

那么现在来回顾单词，本期节目我们讨论了末日——地球生命的最后一天，以及其它的灭世危机——威胁地球人类生存的危险。

We looked back throughout the historical record - all recorded human history, to see examples of threats which have wiped out, or killed millions of people in the past, including wars and plagues which spread epidemic diseases between populations.

我们回顾了历史记载——所有被记录的人类历史，来了解过去杀死了数百万人生命的威胁的例子，包括战争和在人之间传播传染病的瘟疫。

And we've seen how modern dangers, like nuclear war and climate change, further reduce the probability of human survival.

我们还了解了现代危机，比如核战争和气候变化，如何进一步降低人类生存的可能性。

But Sam, it's not all doom and gloom!

但是并不全是末日和无望！

The same scientific intelligence which spilt the atom could also find solutions to our human-made problems in the 21st century, don't you think?

分离了分子的科学技术同样也能找到解决21世纪人类制造的问题的方案，你不这么觉得吗？

Okay, so, the end of the world might be a false alarm-or unfounded warning-after all!

所以世界末日可能就是一个错误警报——或者说不成立的警报！

Let's hope we'll all still be here next time for another edition of 6 Minute English.

希望我们下期六分钟英语节目播出的时候都还健在。

Bye for now!

再见！

Bye bye.

再见。
