



Χαροκόπειο
Πανεπιστήμιο

Εργασία Εφαρμογές Τεχνητής Νοημοσύνης αναφορά

Automatic News Anchor -
The hands-free news reader

Ομάδα :
Κατερίνα Μανιουδάκη 21335
Ηλίας Παπαδάκης 21352
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1)

Η μοντελοποίηση του προβλήματος:

Φορτώνει από αρχείο news.data σε text μορφή τα κείμενα 4
ειδήσεων

- Αξιοποιεί εργαλεία NLP για επεξεργασία κειμένου και εξαγωγής λέξεων-κλειδιών
- Αξιοποιεί εργαλεία για Text Summarization για την εξαγωγή της περίληψης
- Αξιοποιεί εργαλεία για την αναπαραγωγή των περιλήψεων (textual summaries) με ανθρώπινη φωνή

Οι δομές δεδομένων που χρησιμοποιήθηκαν στο project :

- Στην κλάση AltextToSpeech :

line 75 πίνακας : String[]

stories=LinesFromNewsFile.split("&&");//εμπεριέχει μία ειδήση

line 78 Map (έχει κατακερματισμό , έχει ζευγάρια τιμών key value): Map wordFrequencies =
Utilities.getWordFrequency(stories[i]);

line 79 Set (τυχαίο το πώς θα είναι διατεταγμένα): Set
mostFrequentWords = getMostFrequentWords(10,
wordFrequencies); //poses polles keywords 8a vgazei

line 80 πίνακας : Object[] arrayView =
mostFrequentWords.toArray(); //keywords

line 150 ArrayList: ArrayList<String> summaries=new ArrayList<>();

- Στην κλάση AudioPlayer :

Line 289 πίνακας: byte[] abData = new byte[65532];



Τα βασικά σημεία της υλοποίησης των αλγορίθμων που χρησιμοποιήθηκαν:

- Στο αρχείο news.data εμπεριέχονται τέσσερα **άρθρα** που χωρίζονται μεταξύ τους με τον χαρακτήρα “&&” τα οποία θα γίνουν περίληψη.
- Οι **περιλήψεις** των άρθρων δημιουργούνται στο αρχείο newssummaries.data και φυσικά τις εκφωνεί το πρόγραμμα όταν τρέχει.
- Τα **keywords** εμφανίζονται στην οθόνη(φαίνονται στα screenshots).
- Όσον αφορά τον κώδικα :
Στην κλάση AltextToSpeech καλείτε η main() .
Στη γραμμή 60 φτιάχνουμε ένα αντικείμενο SimpleSummariser.
Στη σειρά 62 φτιάχνουμε ένα αντικείμενο TextToSpeech.
Γραμμή 75 ξεχωρίζουμε τα άρθρα μεταξύ τους με το &&.

Στις σειρές 86-141 αποκλείονται κάποιες λέξεις (που είναι πολύ συχνές) από τις λέξεις κλειδιά.

```
155: summaries.add(katerina.summarise(stories[i],  
2));//how big will be the summarise
```

Στο τέλος της main() υλοποιείτε η εκφώνηση των περιλήψεων
Στη κλάση TextToSpeech δημιουργείτε ένα αντικείμενο
AudioPlayer.

2)

Σύντομη περιγραφή των βασικών λειτουργιών του κώδικα

Ο αλγόριθμος:

The Idea behind OTS is that the important ideas in an article are described with

many of the same words while redundant information uses less technical terms

and is not related to the main subject of the article. Important lines are lines

that are related to the subject of the article. The subject of the article is the

list of ideas that are most discussed in the article.

In practice , the article is scanned once and a list of all of the words and their

occurrence in the text is stored in a list. After sorting this list by the

occurrence of words in the text we will see a list similar to this:

11 are

17 is

16 a

14 Harry

14 on
13 Sally
11 Love
11 such
4 an
2 taxi
1 university
1 chicago
1 meets

...

...

Now we will remove all the words that are common in the English language using a

dictionary file. Example of such words:

"The","a","since","after","will".

These words are words that don't teach us anything about the subject of the article.

Knowing that the word "Police" is in a given text can tell us that the article might

talk about the police , however knowing that the word "will" is in the text can't

teach us anything about the subject of the text.

After removing the redundant words the new list will look like this:

14 Harry
13 Sally
11 Love
2 taxi
1 university
1 chicago

1 meets

From this list we may assume that the text talks about "Harry , Sally , Love".

So an important sentence in the text will be a sentence that talks about Harry,

Sally and Love. A sentence that talks about the university of Chicago may be


neglected because we find the word "chicago" only once in the text, so we may assume

that "chicago" is not one of the main ideas in the text. Each sentence is given

a grade based on the the keywords in it. A line that holds many important words will

be given a high grade. To produce a 20% summary we print the top 20% sentences with

the highest grade.

 **3) 3 παραδείγματα εκτέλεσης screenshots αρχικά και στη συνέχεια τα περιεχόμενα των αρχείων news.data newssummaries.data .**

1^ο παράδειγμα εκτέλεσης

```
Output - efarmogestexn (run)

run:
Story:1 key words are:
*****
year
2016
record
warmest
climate
0
warming
temperature
o
ice
el
world
data
office
ni
*****
Story:2 key words are:
*****
manning
said
snowden
obama
us
s
she
president
had
*****
Story:3 key words are:
*****
cia
records
available
archives
information
documents
which
include
more
psychic
*****
Story:4 key words are:
*****
gambia
senegal
jammeh
office
west
security
said
*****
BUILD SUCCESSFUL (total time: 12 minutes 58 seconds)
```

2^ο παράδειγμα εκτέλεσης

```
Story:1 key words are:
*****
ban
us
order
court
s
trump
appeals
executive
against
government
travel
*****
Story:2 key words are:
*****
his
grammy
jarreau
singer
pop
jazz
him
which
album
time
*****
Story:3 key words are:
*****
s
germany
steinmeier
president
democrats
social
merkel
*****
Story:4 key words are:
*****
s
vr
facebook
oculus
t
company
gear
more
his
*****
BUILD SUCCESSFUL (total time: 8 minutes 23 seconds)
```

3^ο παράδειγμα εκτέλεσης





Story:1 key words are:

dogs
owners
their
mirror
stress
more
than
can
personality
each
dog
other
emotional
s
experience
coping
she
were
assessed
said
also
humans

Story:2 key words are:

whales
were
new
zealand
conservation
volunteers
s
refloated
beach
stranded
said

```
Story:3 key words are:
*****
brain
tissue
technology
doctors
two
operating
school
she
remove
laser
cancer
her
surgeons
lot
tumour
more
help
while
no
can
*****
Story:4 key words are:
*****
hearing
therapy
mice
ear
virus
dr
gene
hair
about
near
s
instructions
cells
loss
usher
researchers
birth
hairs
able
synthetic
forms
*****
BUILD SUCCESSFUL (total time: 11 minutes 10 seconds)
```

 Output  Notifications

1^ο παράδειγμα

Όταν το αρχείο news.data περιείχε :

Temperature data for 2016 shows it is likely to have edged ahead of 2015 as the world's warmest year. Data from Nasa and the UK Met Office shows temperatures were about 0.07 degrees Celsius above the 2015 mark.

Although the Met Office increase was within the margin of error, Nasa says that 2016 was the third year in a row to break the record.

The El Niño weather phenomenon played a role, say scientists, but the main factor was human emissions of CO₂.

The latest conclusions won't come as a much of a shock to observers, as the likely outcome was trailed heavily towards the end of last year.

So warm was the early part of 2016 - influenced by a powerful El Niño - that some leading climate scientists were predicting as early as May that a new record was likely.

During an El Niño, a band of unusually warm ocean water develops in parts of the Pacific. The phenomenon affects the climate globally, disrupting weather patterns.

What is climate change?

How global temperature has changed

According to Nasa figures, 2016 is now the warmest year in a record that dates back to 1880.

"2015 has been the warmest year on record up until now, so 2016 has just beaten that and it's beaten that by about 0.1- 0.12 of a degree Celsius, which doesn't seem like a lot, but in terms of the year to year variations it's actually huge," Dr Gavin Schmidt from Nasa told BBC News.

"This is a very clear record that we're seeing. It is driven mainly by changes in the tropical Pacific where we had an El Niño event that produced a lot of warmth. But we've also seen long term trends in warming mostly due to the increasing greenhouse gases."

Many parts of the world had their warmest recorded year in 2016

Another factor that has affected temperatures in 2016 is the unusual warmth in the Arctic.

The sea-ice covering the Arctic reached its second lowest level (in terms of extent) in September 2016. The sea-ice grows in autumn and winter and shrinks each spring and summer.

While the sea-ice extent last year didn't break the record, the mercury stayed high and the smaller amount of ice now present in the region is at unprecedented levels for the time of year.

A number of meteorological agencies from around the world have released their figures today. They all suggest that warming in 2016 was a record that had an important contribution from El Niño.

The Met Office says it contributed about 0.2C to the annual average for 2016. However, researchers believe that while this is substantial, it is not the whole story.

"We understand the contribution El Niño makes fairly well and we've seen it many times," said Prof Ellie Highwood from the University of Reading.

"But even if you take that contribution away, we would expect 2015 and 2016 to still be the warmest years we've seen, so a majority of it is coming from global warming and the greenhouse effect."

The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), which pulls together temperature data from a number of sources, agrees that 2016 broke the record by 0.07C.

Not all of the reports on temperature data in 2016 are clear that the warmest-year record has been broken. Century dominated by records

The Met Office says that 2016 was 0.77 above the long term rate, but with a plus or minus error margin of 0.1C, meaning that last year was at the very least, one of the two warmest years on record.

"The final figures confirm that 2016 was yet another extremely warm year," said Peter Stott from the Met Office.

"The temperature for last year was very close to the year before, temperatures for 2016 exceeding those for 2015 by a small margin."

Regardless of the small margins, when the new data on 2016 is included, 15 of the warmest 16 years on record have now occurred since 2001.

According to NOAA (the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), the only year from the 20th Century to break into the top 16 is 1998, and which ranks seventh warmest.

This prolonged period of warming was having significant impacts around the world.

The Arctic region exceeded the long term average by up to 6C through most of 2016

"We have also broken sea ice minimum records in the Arctic and Antarctic," said Petteri Taalas from the WMO.

"The Arctic is warming twice as fast as the global average. The persistent loss of sea-ice is driving weather, climate and ocean circulation patterns in other parts of the world. We also have to pay attention to the potential release of methane from melting permafrost," he said.

Of great concern to scientists and politicians is the fact that the newly published temperature data shows the Earth is once again more than one degree warmer than pre-industrial times, and edging closer to the threshold of 1.5C set under the Paris climate pact.

With the Trump administration about to take office in the US, there are concerns that political support for climate action might fade. This would be a big mistake according to scientists.

"Climate change is one of the great challenges of the 21st Century and shows no signs of slowing down," said Prof Mark Maslin, from University College London.

"The decarbonisation of the global economy is the ultimate goal to prevent the worst effects of climate change. The hottest year on record is such a clear warning siren that even President-elect Trump cannot ignore it."

Researchers say that 2017 is unlikely to break the warming record but will be in the top five hottest years. &&

US President Barack Obama has come under fire from top Republicans for his decision to commute the sentence of Chelsea Manning, who leaked documents to Wikileaks in 2010.

House Speaker Paul Ryan said the move set a "dangerous precedent".

But White House spokesman Josh Earnest said the time already served by Manning was an appropriate punishment.

The 29-year-old transgender US Army private, born Bradley Manning, will be freed on 17 May. She had been scheduled to be released in 2045.

Manning was sentenced to 35 years in 2013 for her role in leaking diplomatic cables to the anti-secrecy group, one of the largest breaches of classified material in US history.

The commutation reduces Manning's sentence but is not a pardon, which some campaigners had called for.

US Republican Senator John McCain called the commutation a "grave mistake"

Senator John McCain, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, called it a "grave mistake".

He said in a statement: "It is a sad, yet perhaps fitting commentary on President Obama's failed national security policies that he would commute the sentence of an individual that endangered the lives of American troops, diplomats, and intelligence sources by leaking hundreds of thousands of sensitive government documents to Wikileaks, a virulently anti-American organisation that was a tool of Russia's recent interference in our elections.

"Her prison sentence may end in a few months' time, but her dishonour will last forever," he said.

Mr Ryan said President Obama "now leaves in place a dangerous precedent that those who compromise our national security won't be held accountable for their crimes".

White House press secretary Josh Earnest hit back at Republican criticism, suggesting the party was being hypocritical given President-elect Donald Trump has praised Wikileaks.

The group released hacked Democratic Party emails during the election campaign.

"It is outrageous for them to suggest that right now what Chelsea Manning did is worse than what the man who they endorsed for president did," he told CBS News.

He also told CNN that Mr Obama believed Manning had served an "appropriate punishment", having been jailed for nearly seven years.

Most people convicted of leaking have received sentences of between one and three years, according to the New York Times. The Obama administration has prosecuted more people for leaking government secrets than were charged under all previous presidencies, the paper says.

Manning twice attempted suicide last year at the male military prison where she is being held at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

She also went on a hunger strike last year, which she ended after the military agreed to provide her with gender transition treatment.

Mr Obama granted commutation of sentences to 209 individuals and pardons to 64 others, in one of his final acts as president.

Why is the decision so controversial?

Leaked footage among files leaked by Chelsea Manning showed a US helicopter pilot killing civilians and journalists in Baghdad in 2007

Critics argue that Manning's decision to leak a massive trove of documents to Wikileaks - including 250,000 diplomatic cables and more than 450,000 reports from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan - endangered US troops, intelligence agents and diplomats, in addition to foreigners who had helped them in hotspots abroad. By uploading the material online, they say that the documents were made available to everyone, including Al-Qaeda. They also caused major embarrassment to the United States.

Chelsea Manning been characterised as a traitor, even though she said she believed the leaked material would "spark a domestic debate".

Why did Obama act to help Manning, but not Edward Snowden?

Edward Snowden, a former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor, leaked documents revealing extensive internet and phone surveillance by US intelligence, sparking a global debate on internet privacy.

Russian authorities said on Wednesday that Mr Snowden had been granted a two-year extension to his temporary asylum in the country.

More than a million people have signed a petition asking for him to also receive some sort of clemency from President Obama.

But the White House has poured water any hopes that he might be next. Mr Earnest said that in comparison to Mr Snowden, Chelsea Manning went "through the military criminal justice process, was exposed to due process, was found guilty, was sentenced for her crimes, and she acknowledged wrongdoing."

Edward Snowden fled the US in 2013, evading charges that could see him imprisoned for up to 30 years

Mr Snowden, Mr Earnest said, "fled into the arms of an adversary and has sought refuge in a country that most recently made a concerted effort to undermine confidence in our democracy."

He also said the NSA leaker had not filed the paperwork required to seek clemency, and, in any case, Mr Snowden's leaks were said to be "far more serious and far more dangerous" than Manning's.

Media caption Journalist Glenn Greenwald: Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden "acted with extreme amounts of courage"

What do his supporters say to that?

They argue that what he revealed - and the impact it had - has improved American democracy.

"Thanks to Edward Snowden's act of conscience, we have made historic strides in our fight for surveillance reform and improved cyber security," American Civil Liberties Union executive director Anthony Romero has said.

Human Rights Watch says that the Espionage Act is "a First World War-era law that does not distinguish between selling secrets to foreign governments and giving them to journalists working in the public interest".

Pardoning Snowden, they say, would encourage other whistleblowers to step forward without fear.

&&

About 13 million pages of declassified documents from the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) have been released online.

The records include UFO sightings and psychic experiments from the Stargate programme, which has long been of interest to conspiracy theorists.

The move came after lengthy efforts from freedom of information advocates and a lawsuit against the CIA.

The full archive is made up of almost 800,000 files.

They had previously only been accessible at the National Archives in Maryland.

The trove includes the papers of Henry Kissinger, who served as secretary of state under presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, as well as several hundred thousand pages of intelligence analysis and science research and development.

Among the more unusual records are documents from the Stargate Project, which dealt with psychic powers and extrasensory perception.

Those include records of testing on celebrity psychic Uri Geller in 1973, when he was already a well-established performer.

Memos detail how Mr Geller was able to partly replicate pictures drawn in another room with varying - but sometimes precise - accuracy, leading the researchers to write that he "demonstrated his paranormal perceptual ability in a convincing and unambiguous manner".

Other unusual records include a collection of reports on flying saucers, and the recipes for invisible ink.

While much of the information has been technically publicly available since the mid-1990s, it has been very difficult to access.

The records were only available on four physical computers located in the back of a library at the National Archives in Maryland, between 09:00 and 16:30 each day.

A non-profit freedom of information group, MuckRock, sued the CIA to force it to upload the collection, in a process which took more than two years.

At the same time, journalist Mike Best crowd-funded more than \$15,000 to visit the archives to print out and then publicly upload the records, one by one, to apply pressure to the CIA.

"By printing out and scanning the documents at CIA expense, I was able to begin making them freely available to the public and to give the agency a financial incentive to simply put the database online," Best wrote in a blog post.

In November, the CIA announced it would publish the material, and the entire declassified CREST archive is now available on the CIA Library website.

&&

Senegalese troops have been seen moving towards the Gambian border in a show of force to pressure President Yahya Jammeh to stand down.

Senegal gave him a midnight GMT deadline to quit and Nigeria has sent an air force contingent to Senegal in support of the possible intervention.

Wednesday was meant to be his last day in office but parliament has granted him three more months in the post.

It effectively stops successor Adama Barrow being sworn in on Thursday.

His shock victory in the 1 December election plunged The Gambia into crisis. Mr Barrow is currently in Senegal.

West African countries are seeking UN backing to intervene militarily to eject Mr Jammeh, who has ruled The Gambia since taking power in a bloodless coup in 1994.

Meanwhile, thousands of UK and Dutch tourists are being evacuated from the tiny West African state, which is popular with European holidaymakers because of its beaches.

Why is Senegal taking the lead?

Ecowas, the Economic Community of West African States, has mandated Senegal, which almost surrounds The Gambia, to spearhead military intervention, but only as a last resort and with the backing of the UN Security Council.

"We are ready and are awaiting the deadline at midnight," Col Abdou Ndiaye, a spokesman for the Senegalese military, was quoted as saying by Reuters news agency.

"If no political solution is found, we will step in."

The Gambia's entire armed forces are made up of only about 2,500 troops, making it difficult to see how they can defeat a regional force if it moves in, says BBC Africa Monitoring security correspondent Tomi Oladipo.

Nigeria says it sent fighters and other aircraft, along with 200 personnel, to Senegal on Wednesday morning. Nigerian navy vessels are also on standby and a warship that sailed from Lagos on Tuesday will have the task of evacuating Nigerian citizens while putting on a show of force.

Ground troops are also being provided by Ghana.

Ecowas has always maintained that it will only deploy troops as a last resort, triggered by the overt use of violence by Gambian security forces against civilians.

A military operation by West African forces would first have to be approved by the UN Security Council.

Could there be a refugee crisis?

At least 26,000 Gambians, mostly women and children, had crossed into Senegal by Monday evening amid fears that violence could erupt, the UN refugee agency said, citing Senegalese government figures.

"The flow has increased sharply since then," regional spokeswoman Helene Caux was quoted by Reuters as saying.

Travel firm Thomas Cook said it would fly back to the UK, over the next 48 hours, 985 customers from package holidays after the Foreign Office advised "against all but essential travel to The Gambia due to ongoing political uncertainty and potential military intervention following the presidential elections".

About 1,600 Dutch citizens are also being flown home after similar advice from their government.

Tourism has become the fastest-growing sector of The Gambia's economy, and the country, which has a population of about two million, was marketed to holidaymakers as "the smiling coast of West Africa".

But many of its citizens are poor and complain of political repression. Some, including the goalkeeper of the national women's football team, have drowned in the Mediterranean trying to reach Europe in the hope of a better life.

Why is Mr Jammeh refusing to leave office?

Mr Jammeh has declared a 90-day state of emergency, telling security forces to "maintain absolute peace, law and order".

He says there were irregularities in the election process, including the turning away of some of his supporters from polling stations, and errors made by the electoral commission.

The commission accepted that some of the results it initially published contained errors but said Mr Barrow had still won.

Mr Jammeh has said he will stay in office until new elections are held.

Retaining power would also ensure he was not prosecuted in The Gambia for alleged abuses committed during his rule.

The US state department urged Mr Jammeh to peacefully transfer power to Mr Barrow on Thursday.

"Doing so would allow him to leave office with his head held high and to protect The Gambian people from potential chaos," spokesman John Kirby said.

Το αρχείο newssummaries.data που δημιουργήθηκε:

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served by Manning was an appropriate punishment. The 29-year-old transgender US Army private, born Bradley Manning, will be freed on 17 May. She had been scheduled to be released in 2045. Manning was sentenced to 35 years in 2013 for her role in leaking diplomatic cables to the anti-secrecy group, one of the largest breaches of classified material in US history. The commutation reduces Manning's sentence but is not a pardon, which some campaigners had called for. US Republican Senator John McCain called the commutation a "grave mistake". Senator John McCain, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, called it a "grave mistake". He said in a statement: "It is a sad, yet perhaps fitting commentary on President Obama's failed national security policies that he would commute the sentence of an individual that endangered the lives of American troops, diplomats, and intelligence sources by leaking hundreds of thousands of sensitive government documents to Wikileaks, a virulently anti-American organisation that was a tool of Russia's recent interference in our elections." Her prison sentence may end in a few months' time, but her dishonour will last forever," he said. Mr Ryan said President Obama "now leaves in place a dangerous precedent that those who compromise our national security won't be held accountable for their crimes". White House press secretary Josh Earnest hit back at Republican criticism, suggesting the party was being hypocritical given President-elect Donald Trump has praised Wikileaks. The group released hacked Democratic Party emails during the election campaign. "It is outrageous for them to suggest that right now what Chelsea Manning did is worse than what the man who they endorsed for president did," he told CBS News. He also told CNN that Mr Obama believed Manning had served an "appropriate punishment", having been jailed for nearly seven years. Most people convicted of leaking have received sentences of between one and three years, according to the New York Times. They also caused major embarrassment to the United States. Chelsea Manning been characterised as a traitor, even though she said she believed the leaked material would "spark a domestic debate". Why did Obama act to help Manning, but not Edward Snowden? Edward Snowden, a former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor, leaked documents revealing extensive internet and phone surveillance by US intelligence, sparking a global debate on internet privacy. Russian authorities said on Wednesday that Mr Snowden had been granted a two-year extension to his temporary asylum in the country. More than a million people have signed a petition asking for him to also receive some sort of clemency from President Obama. But the White House has poured water any hopes that he might be next.

About 13 million pages of declassified documents from the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) have been released online. The records include UFO sightings and psychic experiments from the Stargate programme, which has long been of interest to conspiracy theorists. The move came after lengthy efforts from freedom of information advocates and a lawsuit against the CIA. The full archive is made up of almost 800,000 files. They had previously only been accessible at the National Archives in Maryland. The trove includes the papers of Henry Kissinger, who served as secretary of state under presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, as well as several hundred thousand pages of intelligence analysis and science research and development. Among the more unusual records are documents from the Stargate Project, which dealt with psychic powers and extrasensory perception. Those include records of testing on celebrity psychic Uri Geller in 1973, when he was already a well-established performer. Memos detail how Mr Geller was able to partly replicate pictures drawn in another room with varying - but sometimes precise - accuracy, leading the researchers to write that he "demonstrated his paranormal perceptual ability in a convincing and unambiguous manner". Other unusual records include a collection of reports on flying saucers, and the recipes for invisible ink. While much of the information has been technically publicly available since the mid-1990s, it has been very difficult to access. The records were only available on four physical computers located in the back of a library at the National Archives in Maryland, between 09:00 and 16:30 each day. A non-profit freedom of information group, MuckRock, sued the CIA to force it to upload the collection, in a process which took more than two years. At the same time, journalist Mike Best crowd-funded more than \$15,000 to visit the archives to print out and then publicly upload the records, one by one, to apply pressure to the CIA. "By printing out and scanning the documents at CIA expense, I was able to begin making them freely available to the public and to give the agency a financial incentive to simply put the database online," Best

wrote in a blog post. In November, the CIA announced it would publish the material, and the entire declassified CREST archive is now available on the CIA Library website.

Senegalese troops have been seen moving towards the Gambian border in a show of force to pressure President Yahya Jammeh to stand down. Senegal gave him a midnight GMT deadline to quit and Nigeria has sent an air force contingent to Senegal in support of the possible intervention. Wednesday was meant to be his last day in office but parliament has granted him three more months in the post. It effectively stops successor Adama Barrow being sworn in on Thursday. His shock victory in the 1 December election plunged The Gambia into crisis. Mr Barrow is currently in Senegal. West African countries are seeking UN backing to intervene militarily to eject Mr Jammeh, who has ruled The Gambia since taking power in a bloodless coup in 1994. Meanwhile, thousands of UK and Dutch tourists are being evacuated from the tiny West African state, which is popular with European holidaymakers because of its beaches. Why is Senegal taking the lead? Ecowas, the Economic Community of West African States, has mandated Senegal, which almost surrounds The Gambia, to spearhead military intervention, but only as a last resort and with the backing of the UN Security Council. "We are ready and are awaiting the deadline at midnight," Col Abdou Ndiaye, a spokesman for the Senegalese military, was quoted as saying by Reuters news agency. "If no political solution is found, we will step in." The Gambia's entire armed forces are made up of only about 2,500 troops, making it difficult to see how they can defeat a regional force if it moves in, says BBC Africa Monitoring security correspondent Tomi Oladipo. Nigeria says it sent fighters and other aircraft, along with 200 personnel, to Senegal on Wednesday morning. Nigerian navy vessels are also on standby and a warship that sailed from Lagos on Tuesday will have the task of evacuating Nigerian citizens while putting on a show of force. Ground troops are also being provided by Ghana. Ecowas has always maintained that it will only deploy troops as a last resort, triggered by the overt use of violence by Gambian security forces against civilians. A military operation by West African forces would first have to be approved by the UN Security Council. Could there be a refugee crisis? At least 26,000 Gambians, mostly women and children, had crossed into Senegal by Monday evening amid fears that violence could erupt, the UN refugee agency said, citing Senegalese government figures. "The flow has increased sharply since then," regional spokeswoman Helene Caux was quoted by Reuters as saying. Travel firm Thomas Cook said it would fly back to the UK, over the next 48 hours, 985 customers from package holidays after the Foreign Office advised "against all but essential travel to The Gambia due to ongoing political uncertainty and potential military intervention following the presidential elections". About 1,600 Dutch citizens are also being flown home after similar advice from their government. Tourism has become the fastest-growing sector of The Gambia's economy, and the country, which has a population of about two million, was marketed to holidaymakers as "the smiling coast of West Africa". But many of its citizens are poor and complain of political repression.

2^ο παράδειγμα

Όταν το αρχείο news.data περιείχε :

Trump travel ban: Policy adviser attacks US federal appeals court

A top White House adviser has attacked the US federal appeals court for upholding a ruling suspending Mr Trump's travel ban order.

Stephen Miller told US media the court ruling was a "judicial usurpation of power" and that "the president's powers here are beyond question".

The court rejected Mr Trump's attempt to reinstate the ban on Thursday.

His executive order barred citizens from seven mainly Muslim countries from entering the US.

The ban caused chaos at US airports and sparked protests across the country.

Several lawsuits have been filed against the ban, and a federal judge has issued a temporary nationwide block on the travel ban.

Mr Trump has said he may fight the case in the courts, but could also consider issuing a new executive order. Speaking on Fox News Sunday, Mr Miller accused the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals, which upheld the block on Mr Trump's order, of "overreaching".

He also told ABC's This Week: "We have equal branches of government in this country. The judiciary is not supreme."

Under the US system of checks and balances, courts can declare laws, or acts by the president, unconstitutional.

More on this story:

The US government has argued that the president is best placed to make decisions about national security, and that the ban does not discriminate against Muslims.

But upholding the suspension last week, the three appeals court three judges said that the government had provided "no evidence that any foreigner from the countries named in the order" had carried out a terrorist attack on US soil.

Lawsuits against the ban have been launched in 14 states.

The states of Washington and Minnesota have argued that the travel ban is unconstitutional and harmful to their residents, businesses and universities.

Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson told ABC on Sunday the current order was "unlawful" and had an "improper motive" because it was intended to discriminate against Muslims.

If necessary, he could ask government officials to testify, and examine "documents and emails to get behind what truly motivated that executive order", he added.

What did the executive order say?

nationals from Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen - even those with visas - banned from entering the US;

a temporary ban on all refugee admissions;

the reprioritisation of minority religion (interpreted to mean Christian) refugee claims;

a ban on all Syrian refugees;

a cap on total annual refugee admissions to the US of 50,000.

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Al Jarreau: Seven-time Grammy-winning jazz singer dies at 76

Seven-time Grammy Award-winning jazz and pop singer Al Jarreau has died in Los Angeles at the age of 76, his publicist says.

The cause of his death was not immediately clear. He was in a hospital being treated for exhaustion.

A rare artist to have won a Grammy in jazz, pop and R&B categories, Jarreau was famed for writing the theme to hit television show Moonlighting.

Earlier this month, he retired from touring after more than 50 years.

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1940, he started singing as a child, joining his family in church concerts and events.

But his career did not kick off until years later - first, he graduated in psychology and worked at a rehabilitation centre in San Francisco.

His first album, We Got By, came out in 1975 and earned him a German Grammy.

One year later, he launched Glow, with which he also won a German Grammy. In 1977, he released a live album, Look to the Rainbow, which earned him his first Grammy for best jazz singer.

He was awarded again one year later, this time for the album All Fly Home.

He then crossed over into pop, and in 1981, launched Breakin Away, which included the hit We're in This Love Together, which catapulted him to fame. Another Grammy came in, this time as best pop singer.

Finally, his 1992 Heaven and Earth album earned him a Grammy for best R&B vocal performance, meaning he had prizes in the three categories.

According to a post on the star's Twitter profile, his son had recently caught Jarreau singing Moonlighting to one of the nurses in hospital.

Jarreau had suffered health issues in recent years and was hospitalised in 2010 for respiratory problems when touring in France.

A statement on his website read: "His 2nd priority in life was music. There was no 3rd. His 1st priority, far ahead of the other, was healing or comforting anyone in need.

"Whether it was emotional pain, or physical discomfort, or any other cause of suffering, he needed to put our minds at ease and our hearts at rest."

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Germany president: Steinmeier chosen by lawmakers

Former German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier has been elected president by a parliamentary assembly.

The Social Democrat, 61, is one of Germany's most popular politicians.

The post is largely ceremonial, but the president represents Germany abroad and is seen as carrying moral weight.

During the US election campaign, the usually circumspect ex-lawyer described Donald Trump as a "hate preacher" and predicted more challenging relations with Washington.

He has also criticised those who "make politics with fear", and spoken out against right-wing populism.

'Straight-talking'

Mr Steinmeier was chosen by the Federal Assembly meeting in parliament in Berlin.

He won 931 out of 1,260 votes.

Lawmakers and representatives from various social fields delegated by Germany's 16 states are represented in the assembly.

Electors include Joachim Loew, the national football coach, and Olivia Jones, a colourful drag queen sent to vote by the Green Party in Lower Saxony.

Mr Steinmeier, who takes up the job on 19 March, held the post of foreign minister twice for a total of eight years.

Both terms were served under Chancellor Angela Merkel in grand coalitions of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats.

In 2009, he stood unsuccessfully against Mrs Merkel in the federal election.

Mr Steinmeier is seen as straight-talking, and as foreign minister was widely respected for taking a strong stance on issues important to German voters, the BBC's Damien McGuinness reports from Berlin.

Many expect he will work to support Germany's reputation as global defender of tolerant liberal values, our correspondent adds.

Mr Steinmeier's election to the presidency is seen as a boost by the Social Democrats as they seek to unseat Mrs Merkel in September's federal elections.

The current post-holder, President Joachim Gauck, decided against bidding for a second five-year term due to his age - 77.

Mr Gauck is a former Lutheran pastor and civil rights activist in the former East Germany.

Mrs Merkel's Christian Democrats failed to find their own candidate for the presidency, and agreed to back Mr Steinmeier for president.

Other candidates included Christoph Butterwegge from the opposition Left Party, and Albrecht Glaser from the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany.

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Has Facebook slipped up with VR?

I first tried the Oculus Rift virtual reality headset in the corner of a drab conference room in Las Vegas. I was convinced within seconds - despite feeling a little dizzy - that the device, held together by duct tape and hope, was destined for big things.

A year or so later, I met the same company, Oculus VR, in a (slightly) fancier room at the E3 gaming event in Los Angeles. "Hold this," I said, abruptly thrusting an audio cable into the hands of a young man who I thought was helping out - but was in fact the company's chief executive, Palmer Luckey. Again, I was blown away by the technology.

The next time I'd meet Luckey he'd be many, many millions of dollars richer, and Oculus would be a Facebook-owned company. But despite that very real marker of success, our topic of conversation each time we met remained the same: How are you going to convince people it's worth it? And isn't it going to be way too expensive?

"It isn't," he said the last time I asked him - but he's wrong.

At around \$600 (plus a powerful PC) to get started, it is too expensive.

But money isn't the problem. The price of the technology will come down, and I'm still convinced virtual reality can be a success - but will it be Facebook's success? The company's strategy in this blossoming market is under question.

Best Buy retreat

This week we learned that demo stations set up in Best Buy - the huge US technology retail chain - are being rolled back due to poor foot traffic.

Facebook has described the move as a "seasonal" change, but suffice it to say, if they were shifting units they'd still be there. Instead, 200 of the 500 stations across the US are being shut down.

It's a potentially troubling moment for the company. Those who back virtual reality - myself included - always subscribed to the view that the key to selling them would be to get people to try it out. Once you've been in VR, we all assumed, you'd be hooked, and your wallet would follow soon after.

But that doesn't seem to have been the case. For whatever reason, too few people were bothering to even try the demo, let alone buy the product. There are a few theories for this, but the most likely, in my mind, was suggested by NPR's Molly Wood. The problem, she observed recently, might be the "pink-eye factor". She said: "It could be as simple as - and I have said this a million times - not wanting to go into a store and put something on your face that has been on a bunch of other people's faces."

But that wouldn't explain why the Oculus Rift is apparently performing poorly against its closest rival.

At the high-end of the virtual reality market, Oculus is up against HTC's Vive, an extremely capable device which has the involvement of Valve, the revered games publisher.

Good enough

Unofficial data (which I'm using as the companies themselves haven't shared sales figures with us) suggest that the Vive, despite being more expensive, is trouncing Oculus. Games research firm SuperData estimated that 420,000 Vive headsets were sold in 2016, compared to 250,000 sales for the Oculus Rift.

The lower end of the market is far more positive for Facebook. The Samsung Gear VR runs the Oculus VR experience, and that is by far and away the most popular device for VR on the market today, according to SuperData. But the hardware is all Samsung's and, for the most part, the headset itself (a simple plastic frame with lenses) has been given away with many smartphones.

The hope that the Gear VR might act as a kind of gateway drug into pricier VR experiences has yet to come to fruition.

Or maybe it has, just not for Oculus: the middle ground in VR is Sony's PlayStation VR, \$399 and works with the PlayStation 4. It's more powerful than the Gear VR, but less powerful than the high-end headsets. But here's where Facebook should be worried - it seems to be good enough for most gamers.

And it's "good enough" that makes Facebook's strategy all the more precarious. Who is the Oculus Rift for, exactly? Super serious gamers are gravitating to the HTC Vive. Moderately serious gamers are happy with PlayStation VR. And at the budget end, the Gear VR, while popular now, faces a clear and present threat from Daydream, Google's new VR ecosystem which is far more open.

While Gear VR insists you have a Samsung smartphone, Daydream is designed to eventually work with any sufficiently powerful Android device (and it wouldn't be too tricky to make it work with Apple's iOS, either). This compatibility comes at a price, mind - the Daydream View headset is far less comfortable, in my experience, than the Gear VR. But it's comfortable enough, and the little handheld controller provides a far more intuitive way of navigating the VR world than tapping blindly at the side of your head, a la Gear VR.

Here comes Hugo

So what are the next steps if Facebook is to get on top of this? I'd ask Palmer Luckey, but he's hard to reach at the moment - hidden away from public view after controversy surrounding his support of Donald Trump which involved funding a hateful trolling group.

He still works at the company, but Facebook and Oculus have repeatedly refused to tell me what his job actually is. (Palmer, if you're reading... my Twitter direct messages are open!)

The only public appearance he has made since that debacle has been to turn up in court where Facebook (unsuccessfully) defended against claims Oculus illegally used intellectual property belonging to games publisher Zenimax in the early days. A \$500m bill for damages awaits, unless Facebook can win on appeal.

In a recent earnings call, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, who is still incredibly enthusiastic about VR and what it means for his network's future, called for patience from his investors. "It's not going to be really profitable for a while," he said.

He's never claimed otherwise, it has to be said. VR appears on Facebook's 10-year strategy, a slow burner with potentially big rewards.

But falling behind now would be a serious blow, which is why Zuckerberg has brought in Hugo Barra, a man most recently at Chinese firm Xiaomi, but before that, a major name at Google. He'll be in charge of Facebook's efforts in virtual reality from here on in.

In Barra, Oculus gains both a visionary and a safe pair of hands. He having worked on Android, today's most popular smartphone platform.

At Xiaomi, his role was to help the company expand globally - and while the company didn't, as some had expected, break into the US under Barra's watch, it did cement a reputation as making good quality devices. He hasn't started his new role at Facebook just yet - he'll be at the company in a month or so, apparently excited to be back in California after a few years away.

When he starts his first day - I feel those two questions I've been asking Palmer Luckey still stand: Isn't it still too expensive? And more importantly - how are you going to convince people it's worth it?

Το αρχείο newssummaries.data που δημιουργήθηκε:

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Steinmeier, who takes up the job on 19 March, held the post of foreign minister twice for a total of eight years. Both terms were served under Chancellor Angela Merkel in grand coalitions of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats. In 2009, he stood unsuccessfully against Mrs Merkel in the federal election. Mr Steinmeier is seen as straight-talking, and as foreign minister was widely respected for taking a strong stance on issues important to German voters, the BBC's Damien McGuinness reports from Berlin. Many expect he will work to support Germany's reputation as global defender of tolerant liberal values, our correspondent adds. Mr Steinmeier's election to the presidency is seen as a boost by the Social Democrats as they seek to unseat Mrs Merkel in September's federal elections. The current post-holder, President Joachim Gauck, decided against bidding for a second five-year term due to his age - 77. Mr Gauck is a former Lutheran pastor and civil rights activist in the former East Germany. Mrs Merkel's Christian Democrats failed to find their own candidate for the presidency, and agreed to back Mr Steinmeier for president. Other candidates included Christoph Butterwegge from the opposition Left Party, and Albrecht Glaser from the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany.

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3^ο παράδειγμα

Όταν το αρχείο news.data περιείχε :

'Dogs mirror owners' personalities'

The idea that a dog takes on the personality of its owner has received scientific support.

Researchers in Austria say dogs can mirror the anxiety and negativity of owners.

And dogs that are relaxed and friendly can pass this on to humans, perhaps helping their owners cope with stress.

More than 100 dogs and their owners underwent various tests, including measurement of heart rate and their response to threat.

Saliva samples were also taken to measure cortisol levels, a marker for stress.

The owners were then assessed for the big five hallmarks of personality: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness.

The personality of dogs was also assessed with a questionnaire.

Dr Iris Schoberl, of the University of Vienna, said both owners and dogs influenced each other's coping mechanisms, with the human partner being more influential than the dog.

"Our results nicely fit to experience from practice: owners and dogs are social dyads [a group of two], and they influence each other's stress coping," she told BBC News.

She said dogs are sensitive to their owners' emotional states and may mirror their emotions.

Dogs have lived alongside humans for more than 30,000 years.

Evidence shows they can pick up emotional information from people and adjust their behaviour accordingly.

The research is published in the journal, PLOS ONE.

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New Zealand whales: Hundreds refloat on high tide at Farewell Spit

More than 200 whales stranded on a remote beach in New Zealand on Saturday have refloatated themselves and returned to sea.

But conservation officials have warned that they could still turn back to the beach at Farewell Spit, South Island.

Earlier, volunteers managed to refloat some 100 of the more than 400 pilot whales which beached on Thursday.

However a human chain, with volunteers wading neck-deep into the water, failed to prevent a fresh pod making landfall.

"The 240-odd whales that had stranded between Puponga and Pakawau late on Saturday have mostly refloatated themselves on last night's high tide and are milling around in shallow water," conservation spokesman Herb Christophers said.

Seventeen of the group which remained stranded were refloatated by rescuers and volunteers who were working on the spit.

The environmental group Project Jonah, which is assisting with the rescue, has a plane flying over the bay to keep track of the whales' movements.

The whale stranding is one of the worst ever in New Zealand. Dozens of volunteers have turned out to help since the incident was first reported on Thursday.

More than 300 of the 400 original arrivals died while medics and members of the public tried to keep survivors alive by cooling them with water.

It is not clear why the whales continue to arrive on the 5km-long (three mile-long) beach next to Golden Bay.

One theory is that they may have been driven on to land by sharks, after bite marks were found on one of the dead whales.

Mr Christophers, from New Zealand's department of conservation, told the BBC that the whales were trying to get round the top of South Island, but if their navigation went wrong they ended up on the beach.

In the shallower waters, the animals' use of echo location was impaired.

"It's a very difficult place if you get lost in there and you are a whale," he said.

Experts say that whales that become beached will send out distress signals attracting other members of their pod, who then also get stranded by a receding tide.

Sometimes the whales are simply old, sick, or injured.

Andrew Lamason, from New Zealand's department of conservation, said those refloatated had been tagged, whereas the latest arrivals were not, indicating that they were a new group.

He said 20 whales had been humanely killed by conservation workers as they were in a poor condition.

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Lasers help doctors remove brain cancer

Lasers can help surgeons rapidly analyse brain cancers and decide how much tissue to remove, a study shows.

It is a difficult decision as taking too little leads to the cancer coming back, while too much could lead to disability.

The technique, called SRS microscopy, has been tried on more than 360 patients at the University of Michigan Medical School and Harvard University.

The next stage is for it to be tested in full clinical trials.

"Brain cancer is like a cloud, you can define the centre, but the edges are really hard to discern," says one of the researchers, Dr Daniel Orringer.

In other cancers - such as in the bowel - doctors would just take some of the non-essential surrounding tissue as well.

However, there is no non-essential tissue in the brain.

Karen Wischmeyer, a pre-school teacher in Michigan, is the type of patient who could have benefited from the technology.

She needed two operations in quick succession to remove her brain tumour.

Two years ago, she had a massive seizure in the middle of the night and doctors found a growth in her brain.

But while surgeons removed some of the cancer, they did not get it all.

Karen told BBC News: "It would have spared a lot of anxiety and anguish and pain.

"I had two craniotomies [removing part of the skull], weeks of bad headaches, about four months total recovery time and I missed a lot of school."

She still has regular scans to ensure there is no growing tumour left in her brain.

How the technology works

At the moment, sections of brain tissue are taken to a lab to be frozen, stained with dyes and then analysed. The process can take 30-40 minutes.

The technology, described in Nature Biomedical Engineering, sits in the operating theatre.

It fires a beam of light at the tissue, and the laser-light's properties are changed depending on what it hits.

The differing chemistry of a cancerous cell and normal brain tissue means the laser help surgeons find the outside edge of a tumour.

No decisions were made with just the laser-technology while it was still being tested.

Dr Orringer said the aim was to give "more efficient, safer and more accurate care".

He told the BBC News website: "It was magical when we made that transition to the operating room.

"It makes a huge difference, the process currently in place dates back to the 1800s, and we have something disruptive, in a good way, and the implications are pretty profound."

He says one of the early lessons is "a lot of the times we think we're done operating we should probably keep going, with the microscope we have the capacity to see that".

However, it is not yet clear whether the technology will increase survival rates. That will not be known until it has been used in long-term clinical trials.

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Gene therapy: Deaf to hearing a whisper

Deaf mice have been able to hear a tiny whisper after being given a "landmark" gene therapy by US scientists.

They say restoring near-normal hearing in the animals paves the way for similar treatments for people "in the near future".

Studies, published in Nature Biotechnology, corrected errors that led to the sound-sensing hairs in the ear becoming defective.

The researchers used a synthetic virus to nip in and correct the defect.

"It's unprecedented, this is the first time we've seen this level of hearing restoration," said researcher Dr Jeffrey Holt, from Boston Children's Hospital.

Hair defect

About half of all forms of deafness are due to an error in the instructions for life - DNA.

In the experiments at Boston Children's Hospital, Massachusetts Eye and Ear and Harvard Medical School, the mice had a genetic disorder called Usher syndrome.

It means there are inaccurate instructions for building microscopic hairs inside the ear.

In healthy ears, sets of outer hair cells magnify sound waves and inner hair cells then convert sounds to electrical signals that go to the brain.

The hairs normally form these neat V-shaped rows.

But in Usher syndrome they become disorganised - severely affecting hearing.

The researchers developed a synthetic virus that was able to "infect" the ear with the correct instructions for building hair cells.

Experiments showed that once profoundly deaf mice could hear sounds down to 25 decibels - about the volume of a whisper.

Dr Gwenaelle Geleoc told the BBC: "We were extremely surprised to see such a level of rescue, and we're really pleased with what we have achieved."

There are about 100 different types of genetic defect that can cause hearing loss. A different therapy would be needed for each one.

Dr Holt told the BBC News website: "We've really gotten a good understanding of the basic science, of the biology of the inner ear, and now we're at the point of being able to translate that knowledge and apply it to human patients in the very near future."

One of the big questions will be whether the synthetic virus is safe.

It was based on adeno-associated virus, which has already been used in other forms of gene therapy.

The researchers also want to prove the effect is long-lasting - they know it works for at least six months.

There are also questions about the "window of opportunity". While the therapy worked in mice treated at birth, it failed when given just 10 days later.

Dr Ralph Holme, the director of research at Action on Hearing Loss, said: "This research is very encouraging.

"However, there is a concern that delivering this gene therapy at birth to babies with Usher may be too late [as the ears are more developed in people than mice by birth].

"The technology may be better suited to treating more progressive forms of hearing loss."

Το αρχείο newssummaries.data που δημιουργήθηκε:

'Dogs mirror owners' personalities' The idea that a dog takes on the personality of its owner has received scientific support. Researchers in Austria say dogs can mirror the anxiety and negativity of owners. And dogs that are relaxed and friendly can pass this on to humans, perhaps helping their owners cope with stress. More than 100 dogs and their owners underwent various tests, including measurement of heart rate and their response to threat. Saliva samples were also taken to measure cortisol levels, a marker for stress. The owners were then assessed for the big five hallmarks of personality: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. The personality of dogs was also assessed with a questionnaire. Dr Iris Schoberl, of the University of Vienna, said both owners and dogs influenced each other's coping mechanisms, with the human partner being more influential than the dog. "Our results nicely fit to experience from practice: owners and dogs are social dyads [a group of two], and they influence each other's stress coping," she told BBC News. She said dogs are sensitive to their owners' emotional states and may mirror their emotions. Dogs have lived alongside humans for more than 30,000 years. Evidence shows they can pick up emotional information from people and adjust their behaviour accordingly. The research is published in the journal, PLOS ONE.

New Zealand whales: Hundreds refloat on high tide at Farewell Spit More than 200 whales stranded on a remote beach in New Zealand on Saturday have refloated themselves and returned to sea. But conservation officials have warned that they could still turn back to the beach at Farewell Spit, South Island. Earlier, volunteers managed to refloat some 100 of the more than 400 pilot whales which beached on Thursday. However a human chain, with volunteers wading neck-deep into the water, failed to prevent a fresh pod making landfall. "The 240-odd whales that had stranded between Puponga and Pakawau late on Saturday have mostly refloated themselves on last night's high tide and are milling around in shallow water," conservation spokesman Herb Christophers said. Seventeen of the group which remained stranded were refloated by rescuers and volunteers who were working on the spit. The environmental group Project Jonah, which is assisting with the rescue, has a plane flying over the bay to keep track of the whales' movements. The whale stranding is one of the worst ever in New Zealand. Dozens of volunteers have turned out to help since the incident was first reported on Thursday. More than 300 of the 400 original arrivals died while medics and members of the public tried to keep survivors alive by cooling them with water. It is not clear why the whales continue to arrive on the 5km-long (three mile-long) beach next to Golden Bay. One theory is that they may have been driven on to land by sharks, after bite marks were found on one of the dead whales. Mr Christophers, from New Zealand's department of conservation, told the BBC that the whales were trying to get round the top of South Island, but if their navigation went wrong they ended up on the beach. In the shallower waters, the animals' use of echo location was impaired. "It's a very difficult place if you get lost in there and you are a whale," he said. Experts say that whales that become beached will send out distress signals attracting other members of their pod, who then also get stranded by a receding tide. Sometimes the whales are simply old, sick, or injured. Andrew Lamason, from New Zealand's department of conservation, said those refloated had been tagged, whereas the latest arrivals were not, indicating that they were a new group. He said 20 whales had been humanely killed by conservation workers as they were in a poor condition.

Lasers help doctors remove brain cancer Lasers can help surgeons rapidly analyse brain cancers and decide how much tissue to remove, a study shows. It is a difficult decision as taking too little leads to the cancer coming back, while too much could lead to disability. The technique, called SRS microscopy, has been tried on more than 360 patients at the University of Michigan Medical School and Harvard University. The next stage is for it to be tested in full clinical trials. "Brain cancer is like a cloud, you can define the centre, but the edges are really hard to discern," says one of the researchers, Dr Daniel Orringer. In other cancers - such as in the bowel - doctors would just take some of the non-essential surrounding tissue as well. However, there is no non-essential tissue in the brain. Karen Wischmeyer, a pre-school teacher in Michigan, is the type of patient who could have benefited from the technology. She needed two operations in quick succession to remove her brain tumour. Two years ago, she had a massive seizure in the middle of the night

and doctors found a growth in her brain. But while surgeons removed some of the cancer, they did not get it all. Karen told BBC News: "It would have spared a lot of anxiety and anguish and pain." I had two craniotomies [removing part of the skull], weeks of bad headaches, about four months total recovery time and I missed a lot of school." She still has regular scans to ensure there is no growing tumour left in her brain. How the technology works At the moment, sections of brain tissue are taken to a lab to be frozen, stained with dyes and then analysed. The process can take 30-40 minutes. The technology, described in Nature Biomedical Engineering, sits in the operating theatre. It fires a beam of light at the tissue, and the laser-light's properties are changed depending on what it hits. The differing chemistry of a cancerous cell and normal brain tissue means the laser helps surgeons find the outside edge of a tumour. No decisions were made with just the laser-technology while it was still being tested. Dr Orringer said the aim was to give "more efficient, safer and more accurate care". He told the BBC News website: "It was magical when we made that transition to the operating room." It makes a huge difference, the process currently in place dates back to the 1800s, and we have something disruptive, in a good way, and the implications are pretty profound." He says one of the early lessons is "a lot of the times we think we're done operating we should probably keep going, with the microscope we have the capacity to see that". However, it is not yet clear whether the technology will increase survival rates.

Gene therapy: Deaf to hearing a whisper Deaf mice have been able to hear a tiny whisper after being given a "landmark" gene therapy by US scientists. They say restoring near-normal hearing in the animals paves the way for similar treatments for people "in the near future". Studies, published in Nature Biotechnology, corrected errors that led to the sound-sensing hairs in the ear becoming defective. The researchers used a synthetic virus to nip in and correct the defect. "It's unprecedented, this is the first time we've seen this level of hearing restoration," said researcher Dr Jeffrey Holt, from Boston Children's Hospital. Hair defect About half of all forms of deafness are due to an error in the instructions for life - DNA. In the experiments at Boston Children's Hospital, Massachusetts Eye and Ear and Harvard Medical School, the mice had a genetic disorder called Usher syndrome. It means there are inaccurate instructions for building microscopic hairs inside the ear. In healthy ears, sets of outer hair cells magnify sound waves and inner hair cells then convert sounds to electrical signals that go to the brain. The hairs normally form these neat V-shaped rows. But in Usher syndrome they become disorganised - severely affecting hearing. The researchers developed a synthetic virus that was able to "infect" the ear with the correct instructions for building hair cells. Experiments showed that once profoundly deaf mice could hear sounds down to 25 decibels - about the volume of a whisper. Dr Gwenaelle Geleoc told the BBC: "We were extremely surprised to see such a level of rescue, and we're really pleased with what we have achieved." There are about 100 different types of genetic defect that can cause hearing loss. While the therapy worked in mice treated at birth, it failed when given just 10 days later. Dr Ralph Holme, the director of research at Action on Hearing Loss, said: "This research is very encouraging." However, there is a concern that delivering this gene therapy at birth to babies with Usher may be too late [as the ears are more developed in people than mice by birth]. "The technology may be better suited to treating more progressive forms of hearing loss."