

February 22, 2022



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Introducing another week of Future Trends — *tracking current global news stories that provide insight into the future.*

IN THIS WEEK'S EDITION

Here's what you need to know: Russia sends forces into East Ukraine, Pakistan struggles to quell violence on its afghan border, sunlight helps clean up oil spills in the ocean more than previously thought, Japan inflation slows toward zero as global price gap grows, Honduras ex-President Hernández arrested at US request, families of Sandy Hook victims settle with gun-maker Remington.

SPECIAL EDITION: UKRAINE

Russia sends forces into East Ukraine. President Vladimir Putin has ordered his Defence Ministry to dispatch Russian forces to [maintain peace](#) in eastern Ukraine's two breakaway regions, the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, after he said Moscow recognises their independence.

EU warns of sanctions after Russia recognises Ukraine breakaway regions. It may be more difficult for the EU, whose members have different interests and views on how to [deal with Moscow](#), to agree on a joint position, and sanctions.

Almost 2,000 ceasefire violations logged in eastern Ukraine. Monitors for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe reported the violations as the eastern region descends into violence making the [prospects of war](#) real.

CONFLICT

Pakistan struggles to quell violence on its Afghan border. Pakistan's military has stepped up operations along the Afghan border in recent weeks after a spate of [militant attacks](#) that have dashed any hope that the frontier might see more peace and stability after the end of the war in Afghanistan.

French military to quit Mali in possible boost to jihadists. France and its military allies said they would leave Mali after almost [a decade fighting Islamist insurgents](#) around West Africa, moving instead to Niger.

Nepal police fire tear gas, water cannon to disperse protest over US aid. Police in Kathmandu fired tear gas and water cannon to disperse protesters opposed to a [US-funded infrastructure programme](#) that was presented in parliament for ratification.

China points military laser at Australian aircraft. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison accused Beijing of an [act of intimidation](#) after a Chinese navy vessel directed a laser at an Australian military surveillance aircraft.

US will deploy a fleet of 100 sea drones in the Middle East. The US Navy established a new task force to integrate [drone systems and artificial intelligence](#) into the maritime operations of its Bahrain-stationed Fifth Fleet.

DEVELOPMENT

Sunlight helps clean up oil spills in the ocean more than previously thought. When sunlight shines on spilled oil in the sea, it can kick off [a chain of chemical reactions](#), transforming the oil into new compounds. Some of these reactions can increase how easily the oil dissolves in water.

Scientists created a robot fish powered by beating human heart cells. The fish's design features a flexible tail that is covered in a layer of [heart muscle cells](#) that are derived from stem cells. When the cells on one side contract, it pulls the tail in that direction.

Artificial intelligence challenges what it means to be creative. As AI programs paint more creative [art based on mood and feelings](#) it redefines what being a creative artist means.

China plans to feed 80 million people with 'seawater rice'. New [salt-tolerant rice strains](#) have been developed by Chinese scientists in the hope of ensuring food security. Tests recorded a yield of 4.6 metric tons per acre last year, higher than the national average for production of standard rice varieties.

Forced displacement in Colombia more than doubled in 2021. At least 73,974 people were [forcibly displaced](#) across Colombia in 2021, more than double last year's figure, amid an increase of violence on civilians by armed groups.

2M in Tigray in urgent need of food, says UN. Families were found to be [exhausting all means](#) to feed themselves with 13% of Tigrayan children under five and almost two-thirds of pregnant and breastfeeding women suffering from malnutrition.

ECONOMICS

Rare earth prices hit record high in China. An index measuring the prices in China of 21 rare earth oxides and combination products [increased by 99%](#) from 12 months ago.

South Korea adds most jobs in almost 22 years in January.

Unemployment is down to 3.6%. January data showed jobs were mostly added in [health care and social services](#), about 250,000, while those in accommodation facilities, restaurants, transportation and warehouses rose a combined 249,000.

Japan inflation slows toward zero as global price gap grows. Japan's key inflation measure weakened last month in another sign that Japan's price dynamics are at odds with a global trend of rapid acceleration that is [prompting central bank action](#) overseas.

The UN says that the pace of Global Trade may decelerate in 2022. Global trade will likely slow this year as inflation pressures in the US and real-estate instability in China weaken growth prospects. There are also record levels of global borrowing, posing a risk to [debt sustainability](#).

Argentina's 50% inflation has crypto credit cards booming. The Visa cards allow [purchases in cryptocurrency](#). For each purchase, holders of the cards receive two percent back in Bitcoin. The cards help to temper the impact of surging prices.

POLITICS

Honduras ex-President Hernández arrested at US request. Police arrested the former Honduran President at his home, following a request by the United States government for his extradition on [drug trafficking and weapons charges](#).

Hungary and Poland lose EU funding fight over laws. The European Court of Justice ruled that [complying with the rule of law](#) was a condition of enjoying membership of the EU. The EU has already frozen Covid recovery money worth €36bn for Poland and €7bn for Hungary, and this ruling could affect further funding.

Albania's highest court revokes parliament's decision to sack president. Albania's constitutional court has revoked the parliament's vote to sack President Ilir Meta for allegedly [advocating violence](#) and violating the constitution.

Mexican president urges US to end the funding of opposition groups. Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador urged the US government to stop funding

groups in Mexico that are critical of his administration, calling the financial support [a shame and a breach of Mexico's sovereignty](#).

Guatemala arrests anti-corruption officials amid brewing political crisis. The Guatemalan Prosecutor's Office confirmed the arrest of [two assistant prosecutors](#) from the Special Prosecutor's Office against Impunity, the latest in a string of detentions of anti-corruption officials.

SOCIAL

Families of Sandy Hook victims settle with gun-maker Remington.

The case marks the first time a gun-maker has faced liability for a mass shooting. The company that made a rifle used in one of the [US's deadliest school shootings](#) has settled with the families of victims for \$73m.

India adds 54 more Chinese apps to ban list. Since the start of political tension with China in 2020 following a border clash, India's [list of banned apps](#), which initially had 59 Chinese apps including TikTok, has expanded to cover 321 apps.

US is proposing new pandemic fund but WHO objects. Efforts to strengthen global health security will only succeed if the role of WHO is enhanced, the agency's head said, as its biggest donor, Washington, proposed a new independent [global pandemic prevention fund](#).

Saudi Arabia: 28,000 women apply for 30 train driver jobs. The successful candidates will drive high-speed trains between the holy cities of Mecca and Medina after a year of training. It is the first time such roles have been [adv](#) Source: BBC News in the conservative Muslim kingdom.

Cambodia steps up surveillance with a new internet gateway. The National Internet Gateway will funnel all web traffic through a [state-controlled entry point](#). ISPs will be ordered to block websites and connections that adversely affect national values and morality.

PEACEBUILDING

Across Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, [Gaza Sky Geeks](#) is a [hub of tech and innovation](#). The organization offers incubator and acceleration services for founders, freelancers, and coders to receive training and support for career opportunities. In addition, Gaza Sky Geeks has built a community of mentors, investors, and business partners across the globe to support Palestine's digital economy and

future technology leaders. The organization started as a [Mercy Corps](#) initiative supporting Gazan entrepreneurship through coding bootcamps in 2011.

With support from [PartnersGlobal](#), the [Al-Shaimaa Foundation in Yemen developed a community dialogue process to address conflict over water distribution](#). A seven-member Conflict Resolution Committee that included local sheiks, authorities, and influential community members proposed and local villagers approved the establishment of a supply network to deliver water equally to all households, formed a maintenance committee, and established a mechanism for dealing with conflicts around water management. Since 2016, PartnersYemen has helped set up over 90 similar community committees in 18 governorates across Yemen.

[Colors of Connection](#) is partnering with [Les Étoiles Messagères](#), a Girls Arts Collective in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to support [Musichana Hamuka](#). The long-term project will provide training and technical support to enable girls to build life skills through arts-based activities, train young women mentors, provide scholarships to participants to pursue their education, and engage community leaders in supporting the initiative through a community arts council.

During the month of February, [Free Mom Hugs](#) is [celebrating LGBTQ+ love](#). In addition to hugs, members offer to serve as officiants or “stand in moms” for LGBTQ+ weddings for couples who may not have supportive family, help families reconcile and heal their relationships, and inspire others to provide support.