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

Here's what you need to know: Ukraine to secure first IMF loan to nation at war, Jordan parliament votes to recommend expelling Israeli ambassador, conciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia raises hopes for peace in Yemen, Central African States decide to introduce an indigenous currency, Israel refills lake with desalinated water, US life expectancy declines.

SPECIAL EDITION: UKRAINE

Ukraine to secure first IMF loan to nation at war. The International Monetary Fund says it has reached an agreement with Ukraine on funding worth \$15.6bn. The organisation's [first loan to a country at war](#) is expected to be approved in the coming weeks.

Ukraine says Russia's Bakhmut assault losing steam, counterstrike coming soon. Russia's missile bombardments are decreasing and with the first of Mig-29 jets arriving from Slovakia, a [counter offensive](#) is expected soon. Wagner mercenaries were unable to take Bakhmut in their winter offensive.

Russian politician fined for making fun of President Putin. A Russian politician has been fined for [noodle ears stunt](#) during Putin speech. The local politician was fined nearly \$2,000 for "discrediting the armed forces" by dangling spaghetti from his ears while listening to a speech by President Putin.

POLITICS

Jordan parliament votes to recommend expelling Israeli ambassador. The parliament of Jordan has voted to recommend the [expulsion of Israel's ambassador](#) to Amman in protest against the behaviour of Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich a minister in Israel's far-right government, who stirred controversy earlier this week after he denied the existence of the Palestinian people.

Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi barred from parliament. India's opposition Congress party suffered a major blow, when the [parliament disqualified its leader, Rahul Gandhi](#), a day after a court convicted him of defamation for comments deemed insulting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Cameroon ruling party wins all Senate seats. President Paul Biya's ruling party, who has ruled Cameroon for more than 40 years, won all 70 seats in the [senate elections](#) after coming out top in all ten administrative regions of the country.

Tigray People's Liberation Front Spokesperson appointed as head of the interim administration in Tigray region. Getachew Reda was appointed by the Ethiopian Prime Minister to [lead the administration](#) in the Tigray region until elections are held.

No White House visit for Israel's Netanyahu as US concern rises. Eleven weeks into his third stint as Israel's prime minister, Netanyahu has yet to be received at the White House, signalling apparent [US unhappiness over the policies](#) of his right-wing government.

CONFLICT

Conciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia raises hopes for peace in Yemen. A renewal in [diplomatic ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia](#) has raised hopes of an end to fighting in Yemen. The two regional powers have been locked in a proxy war for eight years.

Algerian president says relations with Morocco reach point of no return. The [North African neighbours](#) have been locked in a bitter rivalry for decades over the disputed territory of Western Sahara, which was a Spanish colony until 1975. The two countries broke off relations in 2021.

Philippines, China to use diplomacy to address maritime issues. The Philippines hosted the first in-person meeting between diplomats from the countries since before the pandemic. Both the countries' leaders agreed that [maritime issues](#) should be addressed through diplomacy and dialogue and not through coercion and intimidation.

US to send aid to Sahel for fight against Islamist insurgencies. US Secretary of State announced \$150 million in new [humanitarian aid](#) for Africa's Sahel region during a visit to Niger, a country Washington views as an important ally in the fight against Islamist insurgencies.

Hong Kong police keep tight control over first authorised protest in years. Hong Kong police have permitted a small [protest march](#), against a proposed land reclamation and rubbish processing project, under tight restrictions. The demonstrators were required to wear numbered lanyards and were barred from wearing covid masks.

ECONOMICS

Central African States decide to introduce an indigenous currency. Central African States have decided to halt use of the Franc CFA. The Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) is considering following in the footsteps of West Africa in creating a [regional currency](#).

Argentina orders the public sector to give up dollar bonds in a debt shake-up. Argentina ordered public sector bodies to sell or exchange their holdings of 11 sovereign dollar bonds in a bid to [reorganise its debt](#) as inflation soared above 100% and its foreign reserves dropped.

Chad nationalizes multinational oil giant Exxon Mobile. The Central African Country has nationalized the US oil giant company after a disagreement. Many view this decision as detrimental to [future foreign investments](#) in the country. The assets involved include a 40% stake in Chad's Doba oil project.

Brazil to pay debt to multilateral organizations in 2023. Brazil's government will pay [outstanding debts of \\$490 million](#) to multilateral organizations in 2023, reinforcing its commitment to global forums.

Italy approves bill cutting income tax, easing sanctions for evaders. Italy's government approved a [bill to cut income and corporate taxes](#), while also reducing penalties for tax evaders who come clean and agree to pay the overdue sums.

DEVELOPMENT

Israel refills lake with desalinated water. Climate change, demand and poor management mean the world's water sources are drying up. Israel is the [first country to channel desalinated water into a natural lake](#). The project will also allow the country to fulfil a deal to supply water to Jordan.

Argentina soy crop forecast slashed to smallest on record. The Buenos Aires Grain Exchange has [slashed its forecast for the crop by another 14%](#) to 25 million metric tons, which would be the smallest harvest since it began keeping records in 2001. Argentina supplies 40% of the global soya crop.

France to ban TikTok on work phones of civil servants. France will ban the use of Chinese-owned [video-sharing app TikTok](#) on the work phones of civil servants. The Civil Service Minister argued it was 'in order to guarantee the cybersecurity of our administrations and civil servants'.

China detains staff, raids office of US due diligence company Mintz Group. Chinese authorities have detained the five staff in Mintz Group's Beijing office, all of them Chinese nationals, and have closed the operations. [Mintz Group](#) has not received any official legal notice regarding a case against the company.

Japan and South Korea renew ties at historic meeting between leaders. The [summit](#) could revise the strategic map of north-east Asia. The two countries have been at odds over their history, and are seeking to form a united front, driven by shared concerns about a restive North Korea and a more powerful China.

SOCIAL

Volcanoes on Venus may still be active, data from Magellan spacecraft suggests. Now scientists believe they have spotted a large volcanic vent that changed over time in the data. [The discovery](#) provides the first solid evidence Venus may still be volcanically active.

Human and ocean health impacts of ocean plastics. The study calculated the cost of the health repercussions attributed to [plastic production](#) to be \$250 billion in a 12-month period. Toxic chemicals are added to plastics and routinely detected in people causing disease, impairment, and premature mortality at every stage of their life cycle.

UN warns against excessive global water use. A UN report has warned of a looming [global water crisis](#) and an imminent risk of shortages due to overconsumption and climate change. The world is blindly travelling a dangerous path of overconsumption and overdevelopment, the report said.

US and Canada reach deal to reject asylum seekers. The US and Canada have reached a deal to [reject asylum seekers](#) at unofficial border crossings, officials say. The accord is expected to allow officials on both sides of the border to turn back such asylum seekers heading in either direction.

US life expectancy declines. Federal health officials confirmed [life expectancy in US has dropped](#) for a second year in a row. Countries worldwide saw life expectancy rebound during the second year of the pandemic. The US maternal mortality rates are 3 times higher than Spain, Italy and other countries.

PEACEBUILDING

[Ahfad University for Women](#) and [CMI](#) recently organized a [roundtable in Sudan](#) that focused on the role of women during and after the 2018-2019 revolution, particularly whether their participation in the peace process has continued outside the capital region. Discussion highlighted the importance of coalition-building, strengthening political platforms and creating safe spaces for political engagement.

A coalition of activists is attempting to [preserve the dry forests](#) of the Menabe-Antimena region of Madagascar. Conservation efforts are supported by the regional government and national environment ministry as well as local NGO's, including Voahary, [Fanamby](#) and [Fo Sarotiny amin'ny Ala, which was founded in 2018 by a group of local youth](#). International organizations, including the World Wildlife Fund, KEW

Madagascar, Durrell and USAID, are funding efforts such as forest patrols, firefighting, and reforestation.

A new publication provides recommendations and resources for Asian American organizations to respond to near-term community crises as well as to build long-term movement infrastructure. The report, [*Balancing Act: Asian American Organizations Respond to Community Crises and Build Collective Power*](#), is a collaboration of [Building Movement Project](#) and [Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus](#).

A husband and wife in rural Indiana have turned their farm into an artistic oasis where they create and display their clocks, sculptures, jewelry and more, all [made from found objects](#). They sell their art at art shows and since the pandemic, on commissions and pop-up galleries at their farm. They are also trying to spread awareness about waste in their community by hosting school groups and art classes that focus on reused materials. When asked if they make a living from their art, they say “we make a life.”