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Future Trends

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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: Lithuania ceasing all Russian gas imports for domestic needs, Sri Lankan cabinet resigns, social media ban lifted as country's economic crisis worsens, Pluto's ice volcanoes may still be erupting, Shanghai asks entire city to self-test for COVID, China hammers home its message of US blame for Ukraine war, Indonesia greets Ramadan with mass prayer.

SPECIAL EDITION: UKRAINE

Lithuania ceasing all domestic Russian gas imports. Lithuania will no longer import Russian gas to meet its domestic needs, becoming the first country in Europe to have secured its [independence from Russian supplies](#).

Ukraine claims Russia is sending troops to Moldova. President Zelensky has stated that [Russian troops](#) are deploying to Moldova after departing Ukrainian territories.

Russia tech 'brain drain'. Up to 70,000 [computer specialists](#) have left Russia since the country invaded Ukraine five weeks ago. A further 100,000 tech workers are predicted to leave in the coming months

CONFLICT

Sri Lankan cabinet resigns amid worsening economic crisis. The entire Sri Lankan cabinet have resigned, as anti-government protesters defy curfews in the country's worsening [economic crisis](#).

El Salvador: 62 killed by gang violence in deadliest day in 30 years. The nation's parliament has enacted a 30-day [emergency rule](#) to fight violence that will restrict some civil liberties, and allow for government surveillance of civilian communications.

U.S Special Envoy says Yemen truce paves way to end conflict. A UN led truce in Yemen is a "[decisive moment](#)" in the near seven-year conflict and offers hope the warring parties and international community can bring a lasting peace.

Russians are bypassing blocks to access Western websites.

Citizens are increasingly turning to Western news sources to get accurate information about the situation in Ukraine, using VPN tools and apps in an [effort to bypass](#) Kremlin internet censorship.

DEVELOPMENT

Pluto's ice volcanoes may still be erupting. NASA researchers examined images of two mounds that scientists have [proposed as ice volcanoes](#), concluding that the surrounding surface was likely formed by recent ice volcano activity.

New cancer immunotherapy fails its first trial. The highly anticipated drug [failed to reduce the rate](#) of disease progression and death. The failure may also impact rival drug developers working on similar compounds.

UN requests record \$4.4 billion for Afghan relief. With more than 60% of the population requiring [humanitarian assistance](#), the aid would provide food, shelter, medical care, and other essentials.

Food convoy heads to Ethiopia's Tigray region. A convoy of trucks carrying food aid entered territory controlled by fighters loyal to the leaders of Ethiopia's Tigray region, the first [humanitarian convoy](#) to do so since last year.

UN Security Council approves new peacekeeping force in Somalia. The new force will [replace the current mission](#) of nearly 20,000 military, police and civilians that will be gradually reduced to zero by the end of 2024.

ECONOMICS

Shanghai orders entire city to self-test for COVID. Shanghai ordered its 26 million residents to undergo two rounds of COVID tests as [public anger grows](#) over the authority's handling of its latest coronavirus surge.

UAE, Israel deepen trade and investment ties. The [Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement](#) will create jobs, promote investment flows, reduce tariffs and deepen cooperation on strategic projects.

Post-Brexit London races to keep its head-start in fintech. Investment in [UK fintech companies](#) was up more than 217% to \$11.6 billion last year. There are approximately 2,500 fintech companies in the UK.

Russia to generate \$321 billion from energy exports this year, an increase of more than a third from 2021. Trade partners have [continued to buy oil and gas](#) from Russia, despite the invasion of Ukraine.

Australia, India sign 'historic' trade agreement. After a decade of negotiations, the nations have signed an interim free-trade deal seen as a significant step in [diversifying export markets](#) and reducing Australia's economic dependence on China.

Egypt's currency loses 17% of its value ahead of Ramadan. The conflict in Ukraine has impacted Egypt's [food imports](#), destabilising the economy. Egypt is a leading importer of wheat from Ukraine and Russia.

POLITICS

China underlines its message of US blame for Ukraine war. Beijing is ramping up its [domestic messaging on Ukraine](#), with a Communist Party commentary calling Washington the 'culprit in the conflict'.

US pandemic package looks to be \$10BN, 50% less than requested. Lawmakers will look to [cut \\$5BN in aid](#) from the global coronavirus vaccination effort, to fund critically-needed domestic pandemic programs.

Britain will increase military presence in the Arctic. Amid increased [geo-strategic concerns](#), Britain would commit militarily with countries including Norway to protect the seas of the North Atlantic.

ICC to open Venezuela office. The prosecutor's office of the ICC will open an office in Venezuela as it investigates [allegations of torture and killings](#) by the country's security forces.

US begins construction of \$537M consulate in Nigeria. The consulate in Lagos will employ nearly 2,500 Nigerians. It will be the [most expensive consulate](#) in the world.

South Korea's Han Duck to return as prime minister. The transition committee of South Korea's President-elect named [Han Duck-soo as incoming prime minister](#) in the new administration.

SOCIAL

Indonesia greets Ramadan with mass prayer. The world's largest Muslim-majority nation welcomed the start of the [holy fasting month of Ramadan](#) with a mass prayer at Jakarta's grand mosque, following eased COVID restrictions.

Robot made of magnetic slime could grab objects inside your body. Slime that can be [controlled by a magnetic field](#) could navigate tight spaces and grasp objects, making it ideal for possible uses inside the body.

Americans donated a record amount of money to each other during the pandemic. [Year-over-year increases in financial charity](#) were highest in areas with the most serious threat from COVID-19.

Quantum technology could help cut electric car charge time. South Korean scientists presented technology that aims to cut the charging time to just nine seconds. The technology would help increase [EV adoption](#) by making it faster to charge a battery than to fill a gas tank.

Insects, octopus and other invertebrates feel emotions. Experiments with bees have shown lower dopamine and serotonin levels when under stress. They also show [negative emotional bias](#), meaning their choices are less adventurous when under stress.

PEACEBUILDING

Build-up has released a report on [Leveraging Technology for Peacebuilding in the ECOWAS Region](#). The document presents the findings and recommendations of a regional consultation process that reviewed interventions in the region using technology for conflict prevention, the challenges peacebuilders face in adopting technology and the opportunities for supporting technology-based programming to build peace. The report was based on surveys of 64 organizations and online consultation workshops with 76 practitioners based in West Africa. The workshops were facilitated by Build Up on behalf of the [ECOWAS Commission](#).

The [Environmental Law Institute](#) is launching a [new project](#) in partnership with the Belfast, Maine-based [Friends of Harriet L. Hartley Conservation Area](#) to identify best practices for sustainable, environmentally responsible industrial aquaculture. Aquaculture is a rapidly growing industry, representing 46% of the global fish market in 2018, and experts project that two-thirds of all fish will be farmed by 2030.

Washington State is creating the United States' [First Alert system for missing indigenous people](#). The bill creating the system was passed unanimously in both the State House and Senate and was signed into law by Governor Jay Inslee. The bill pointed out the need for the alert, saying that "indigenous people experience disproportionate rates of violence in Washington." The new system is similar to [Amber Alerts](#) and silver alerts, which are used respectively for missing children and vulnerable adults in many states.

[Women in rural and remote communities in three Mexican states -- Chiapas, Yucatan and Campeche -- are acquiring leadership and other](#)

skills through Creative Learning's Aid to Artisans program. The program is supported by the Kellogg Foundation.