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

Welcome to this week's Future Trends—the must-read weekly briefing covering the changing face of global politics, economics, development, social factors, and conflict.

Here's what you need to know this week:

- Ferrying voting machines to remote areas in India is a Herculean task
- Israel offers 40-day ceasefire in exchange for hostages held by Hamas
- Plane makers look to new manufacturing hubs
- Blow for workers as inflation drives real wages down
- Patch to protect against measles in children shows promise

POLITICS

Ferrying voting machines to remote areas in India is a Herculean task. Election officials are traveling through jungles and snow-covered mountain tracks, even wading through rivers to [set up polling stations](#) in tents, shipping containers, and school buildings in remote areas.

Portugal needs to 'pay the costs' of slavery and colonialism, says president. The country's president, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, said Portugal [takes full responsibility](#) for the wrongs of the past and that those crimes, including colonial massacres, and should pay reparations.

Modi accused of using anti-Muslim statements at election rally. India's main [opposition party](#) has accused Prime Minister Modi of using hate speech after he called Muslims "infiltrators," with too many children, days after the country began its weeks-long general election.

Ukraine Agriculture Minister accused of corruption. The minister's involvement in an [illegal acquisition](#) of state-owned land worth about \$7 million has made him the first known minister under President Volodymyr Zelensky to be named a suspect in a corruption case.

UN peacekeeping mission MONUSCO leaves Congo. After 25 years the UN peacekeeping mission, MONUSCO, is [leaving](#) the DRC after a request from the government. There are concerns the security situation may deteriorate especially in South Kivu.

Humza Yousaf quits as Scotland's first minister. Yousaf said he was [quitting](#) as head of the pro-independence Scottish National Party and first minister of Scotland's devolved government after a week of chaos triggered by his scrapping of a coalition agreement with Scotland's Greens.

Vietnam parliament chief quits amid deepening political turbulence. The chairman of Vietnam's parliament Vuong Dinh Hue [resigned](#) over unspecified "violations and shortcomings", the ruling Communist Party said, a new sign of political turbulence weeks after the dismissal of the country's president.

CONFLICT

Israel offers 40-day ceasefire in exchange for hostages held by Hamas. The deal would involve the release of up to [40 hostages](#) from the remaining 130 hostages believed to be held by Hamas, plus thousands of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. The US, UK and other leaders urged Hamas to take the deal.

Houthis continue attacking ships in Red Sea. Yemen's Houthis said their [missiles](#) hit the Andromeda Star oil tanker in the Red Sea, as they continue attacking commercial ships in the area in a show of support for Palestinians fighting Israel in the Gaza war.

Thailand urges bigger ASEAN role in resolving Myanmar conflict. After weeks of fighting near its border that halted trade and led to a brief influx of refugees, Thailand called for the regional bloc ASEAN to take a more proactive role in trying to [resolve the crisis](#) in military-ruled Myanmar.

Swiss parliament backs \$5.5 billion aid plan for Ukraine. A Swiss parliamentary committee voted to back a [\\$5.5b aid contribution](#) for Ukraine as part of a package aimed at improving Switzerland's defence capabilities.

Evidence of torture as nearly 400 bodies found in Gaza mass graves. [Mass graves](#) were found in two hospitals in the Gaza Strip containing nearly 400 bodies which showed signs of torture and execution, Palestinian Civil Defence officials said.

ECONOMICS

Plane makers look to new manufacturing hubs. Morocco is among countries vying for [contracts](#) with big manufacturers looking to speed up production and deliver more planes to meet demand. Companies like Boeing and Airbus are outsourcing design, production, and maintenance to countries from Mexico to Thailand.

Tesla's profits fell by 55% in the first quarter. This adds to investors' concerns about the company's strategy amid increased competition. Elon Musk recently said that Tesla would focus on [autonomous driving technology](#) which challenges the company's promise to lower the price of its vehicles.

US GDP falls short of expectations, growing calls for potential stagflation. Gross domestic product expanded [1.6%](#) in the first quarter, lagging the 2.4% projected by economists, while inflation continues to be firmer than expected in March.

Nigeria seeking fund managers for \$10 billion diaspora fund. The fund seeks to pool together [billions](#) of dollars remitted monthly by its citizens overseas for investments, including infrastructure, healthcare and education.

'End of oil not in sight', according to OPEC Secretary General. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries believes oil use will [keep rising](#) in coming decades, in contrast to bodies such as the International Energy Agency, which predicts it will peak by 2030.

DEVELOPMENT

Blow for workers as inflation drives real wages down. A second consecutive year of [high inflation](#) pushed up labour taxes across OECD countries in 2023. The OECD reported effective tax rates on labour incomes rose in most OECD countries with the post-tax or real income of workers earning the average wage declining in 21 out of 38 OECD countries.

Malawi gets \$58 million World Bank grant to address food crisis. Support comes in the context of the [severe food crisis](#) the country is suffering due to El Niño conditions in the wider southern Africa region. A series of intense disaster events over the last few years has left little time for the country to recover.

Biden sets new target to protect US water sources. The US administration set a new goal to protect vast water sources, from rivers to wetlands, as part of a series of announcements marking Earth Week, including 3.2m hectares of threatened wetlands and [160,000km](#) of rivers and streams.

India expects annual power output to grow fastest in a decade. This is expected to [boost demand](#) for fossil fuel-fired power, which is projected to grow at 9.3% and account for over 76% of total output for the second straight year.

SOCIAL

Pro-Palestine protests sweep US colleges. [Student protests](#) in the US over the war in Gaza have intensified and expanded, with encampments now in place at colleges including Columbia, Yale, and New York University.

Patch to protect against measles in children shows promise. A vaccine patch could be a safe and effective alternative way to protect young children against measles, a trial in Gambia suggests. The patch is [easier to transport](#) and store than standard injections, especially in remote areas and can address falling vaccination levels since the Covid pandemic.

Millions of Afghans hide in Pakistan to escape deportation. Some [600,000](#) Afghans have been returned home since last October, when the crackdown began, leaving at least a million remaining in Pakistan. Many of the remaining Afghans were born in Pakistan.

Dubai's ruler announces construction of world's largest airport terminal. Dubai has started work on a [\\$35bn](#) airport terminal that is set to handle up to 260 million passengers annually. The new terminal would be five times the size of the current Dubai International Airport, said Dubai's Prime Minister, Sheikh Mohammed.

Pre-Roman necropolis unearthed in southern Italy during excavations. A necropolis with rich grave artifacts such as weapons and bronze ornaments has been found [50km](#) from Naples during preliminary excavations to build an electric station. The best-preserved archaeological evidence dates between the end of the Iron Age and the 8th-7th century B.C.

PEACEBUILDING

Minneapolis has made a series of changes to its zoning rules in recent years, facilitating more construction of affordable housing, according to [NPR](#). The city ended single-family zoning, allowed two- and three-unit homes to be built in every neighborhood, dropped parking requirements and permitted more density downtown and along transit corridors. A report by Pew Charitable Trusts called the policies a "[blueprint for housing affordability](#)." In five years, Minneapolis added 12% to its housing stock while rents rose just 1%, compared to 14% in the rest of Minnesota. The University of California, Berkeley has built a [zoning reform tracker](#) that has identified zoning reform efforts in more than 100 municipal jurisdictions in the US.

The [Lotus Circle](#) has given [the 2024 Lotus Leadership Award](#) to the [Bangsamoro Women's Movement](#) for their courageous contributions to enduring peace in the Philippines and to [Visa and Visa Foundation](#) for their support of women's economic development. The Leadership Awards are an initiative of the Lotus Circle, a group of generous supporters of The Asia Foundation's women's empowerment program, which recognizes contributions to women's and girls' empowerment and gender equality in Asia and the Pacific.

[Saferworld](#) recently convened a [consultation](#) with UK government officials, academics, and civil society organizations from conflict-affected countries to inform the UK government's response to contemporary conflict trends. The group included experts on high-level Track II dialogues, peacebuilding, security sector reform, and human rights promotion from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen. The group concluded that the UK can play a positive role in preventing and resolving conflict if it improves localization efforts; strengthens efforts to ensure the aid budget is conflict sensitive; acts as a broker between civil society, authorities and security forces; plays a diplomatic role with other allies in norm setting around technology and conflict; and addresses the perceived hypocrisy of UK militarism in the Middle East.

The [USAID Prevent project](#) has helped establish three local networks that are monitoring the Peruvian Amazon in order to protect the rainforest for biodiversity conservation, economic security and sustainable development. The project, which is being implemented by [DAI](#), provides grants and technical assistance adapted to the local context and using a bottom-up structure agreed by local powers. The work of the Peruvian networks suggests that replicating this effort in other places would need to rely on the power of numbers, the importance of building trust, and the significant role that market systems can play.

Two recent reports –the Bipartisan Policy Center's [Election Official Turnover Rates from 2000 – 2024](#) and the Institute for Responsive Government's [Contextualizing Turnover Among County-Elected Local Election Officials from 2019 – 2023](#) – document a rise in turnover among US election officials due to chronic issues, such as inadequate resources, as well as a surge in threats and harassment. Numerous recent

publications and programs provide guidance for addressing this harassment. The Election Reformers Network and Bridge Alliance are creating the Election Overtime Project to help journalists prepare the public for close elections. The Brennan Center for Justice has published [Guidelines for Local Election Offices](#) and [Poll Worker Memo Talking Points](#). The Campaign Legal Center released a document on [Protecting Voters from Intimidation](#). The Bridging Divides Initiative at Princeton University has made its **Threats and Harassment Dataset** capturing hostility against local US officials publicly available.

Members of the [Women's Alliance for Security Leadership](#) and other peacebuilders recently attended [a 1.5 day workshop to engage with UN and governmental representatives of the security sector](#) and discuss how to use a localized, transformative approach to strengthen community security, share analyses and practical solutions to advance the WPS agenda, and create strategic, trusting partnerships. The event was convened by the [International Civil Society Action Network](#), in partnership with the Permanent Missions of Norway, Sweden, and Canada, the United Kingdom Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office, the Ministry of Gender, Child and Welfare of South Sudan, the [Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict](#), and the [National Transformational Leadership Institute](#). The Permanent Missions of Norway and Sweden to the UN hosted the event.

Tiny businesses started by local people are helping Hazard, Kentucky rebound economically, according to [PBS](#). Clothing stores, a bookstore, local coffee and candle shops, and new restaurants have sprung up. According to the town's coordinator of downtown development, 68 businesses have opened over the last five years. Many of the business owners and 25 percent of new employees are people in recovery, most from opioids. Hazard's success offers a model of small local enterprises stimulating the economy.

[Mediators Beyond Borders International](#) has received the 2024 [Frank E.A. Sander Innovation in ADR Award](#). This award was established to recognize innovative methods and extraordinary achievements in the field of Alternative Dispute Resolution by the [American Bar Association Section of Dispute Resolution](#). Representatives of the Board, staff and members from across the US attended the annual conference and award ceremony.