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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:

- Solomon Islands elect Jeremiah Manele as new PM
- Russian troops enter base housing US military in Niger
- Egypt's outlook positive on reduced external financing risks
- Congestion in Earth's orbit is getting even worse
- Archaeologists reveal face of 75,000yo Neanderthal woman

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## POLITICS

**Solomon Islands elect Jeremiah Manele as new PM.** Solomon Islands lawmakers elected former Foreign Minister [Manele](#) as prime minister in a development that suggests the South Pacific island nation will maintain close ties with China.

**German government denounces rising political violence.** Greens politicians faced the most aggression, according to the government data, with [attacks](#) on them rising sevenfold since 2019, to 1,219 last year. AfD politicians suffered 478 attacks and the SPD 420.

**Togo ruling party wins sweeping majority in legislative poll.** Togo's ruling party has won 108 out of 113 seats in parliament, according to the final provisional results of last

month's [legislative election](#). This may allow the president to stay on beyond the normal two terms.

**France, Japan to start talks on reciprocal troops pact.** France and Japan agreed to start formal talks on a [reciprocal troop access deal](#), strengthening military cooperation amid rising maritime tensions in the Indo-Pacific region and the war in Ukraine.

**Russia proposes revised UN resolution banning weapons in space.** Russia's proposition calls on all countries to take urgent action to prevent [putting weapons in outer space](#) for all time, "from space against Earth, and from Earth against objects in outer space." It goes further than the US-Japan resolution Russia vetoed previously.

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## CONFLICT

**Russian troops enter base housing US military in Niger, US official says.** Russia's move follows a decision by Niger's junta to [expel US forces](#). A senior US defence official said Russian forces were not mingling with US troops but were using a separate hangar at Airbase 101, next to Niger's capital.

**Turkey halts trade with Israel, cites worsening Palestinian situation.** Turkey stopped all exports and imports to and from Israel, citing the [worsening humanitarian tragedy](#) in the Palestinian territories.

**Rwanda denies US claims its troops attacked displaced persons camp in DR Congo.** The US said the attack was mounted from positions held by the Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF) and the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group. The US is "gravely concerned about the [recent RDF and M23 expansion](#)" in eastern Congo.

**Ethiopia's Amhara militia says resettlement plan 'beats war drum'.** Leaders of a militia in [Ethiopia's Amhara region](#) accused the administration in neighbouring Tigray of "beating a war drum" over plans to return hundreds of thousands of Tigrayans to territories Amhara fighters captured during a civil war.

**Macron reaffirms possibility of sending troops to Ukraine.** French President Macron reaffirmed that he did not rule out [sending troops to Ukraine](#), saying the issue would legitimately arise if Russia broke through Ukrainian front lines and Kyiv made such a request.

**Al Jazeera condemns Israeli government decision to shut offices.** The Israeli cabinet voted unanimously to [close Al Jazeera's operations in Israel](#) immediately, which the network condemned as a "criminal act" and a violation of international and humanitarian law.

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## ECONOMICS

**Fitch revises Egypt's outlook to positive on reduced external financing risks.** Global ratings agency Fitch revised Egypt's outlook to positive from stable on the back of IMF loans. The agency affirmed [Egypt's rating at 'B-'](#), citing reduced external financing risks and stronger foreign direct investment.

**Oil settles down on US jobs data, steepest loss in 3 months.** Oil prices posted their [steepest weekly loss in three months](#) as investors weighed weak US jobs data and possible timing of a Federal Reserve interest rate cut.

**UK to suffer slowest growth of all developed nations next year: OECD.** UK's "sluggish" growth prospects have put it on course to be the [worst-performing economy of all advanced nations next year](#), according to new forecasts from the OECD. The British economy is forecast to expand by one per cent in 2025 as the effects of high interest rates and inflation linger.

**Apple unveils record \$110bln buyback as results beat low expectations.** The record [share buyback program](#) is the largest in the company's history. The iPhone maker's quarterly revenue fell, but less than analysts had expected, while Apple also increased its cash dividend by four per cent.

**Petrol demand to slow to 1.5% on EV growth in China, US.** Global petrol demand growth could halve in 2024, squeezing second-half refinery margins, analysts said, [driven by a shift to electric cars](#) in China and the US, and a return to normal consumption after last year's bounce following Covid-19.

**EU ready to use trade tools to defend against China.** EC President Ursula von der Leyen said the EU is prepared to deploy all tools available to [defend its economies against China](#), if it fails to offer fair access to its markets. Speaking after talks with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Paris, she said heavily subsidised Chinese products such as electric vehicles and steel are flooding Europe, and that the world cannot absorb China's surplus production.

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## DEVELOPMENT

**Ethiopian Airlines sees 30% surge in passengers this year.** Ethiopian's passenger numbers in the first nine months of its financial year show it is [on course to hit its annual growth target](#), including a 20% increase in revenue to \$7.3 billion. It also aims to double its fleet by 2035.

**UK's new climate action plan unlawful due to delivery risk: High Court.** The court ruled that carbon budgets set by the government in 2023 to meet the UK's target of net zero emissions by 2050 were set without evidence they could be achieved. Britain will now have to submit a [new plan](#).

**Top US official warns famine has started in Gaza.** The US aid chief confirmed that [famine was beginning](#) to take hold in parts of the besieged coastal strip.

**Nigeria's 25% - 35% pay hike for government workers.** Nigeria [raised salaries](#) for government workers by between 25% and 35%, backdated to January, the salaries commission said, as Africa's biggest economy grapples with its worst cost of living crisis in nearly three decades. Inflation is running at 33 per cent, the highest in 28 years.

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## SOCIAL

**UK archaeologists reveal reconstructed face of 75,000yo Neanderthal woman.** The face which is called [Shanidar Z](#) was named after the cave in Iraqi Kurdistan where her skull was found in 2018.

**Orangutan uses medicinal plant remedy to treat wound.** A Sumatran orangutan has [self-treated a facial wound](#) in an Indonesian jungle by applying a bandage of leaves from a medicinal tropical plant, liana, used by people throughout South-East Asia to treat pain and inflammation. It's the first-time researchers have observed a wild animal treating a wound directly.

**New device to extract blood for sampling instead of needles.** People with a phobia of needles may soon experience relief with an [innovative blood sampling method](#) inspired by leeches. Scientists have developed a technique that draws blood samples by employing microneedles and a suction cup instead of a large needle.

**Microsoft bans US police departments from using enterprise AI tool for facial recognition.** Microsoft has changed its terms of service to [ban certain police departments](#) from using its Azure OpenAI. The ban is focussed on the use of real-time facial recognition technology on mobile cameras, like body cameras and dashcams, to attempt to identify a person in uncontrolled environments.

**People with two copies of a risk gene will get genetic form of Alzheimer's, scientists say.** Those with two copies of the APOE4 gene are virtually guaranteed to develop [Alzheimer's](#) and face symptoms at an earlier age, a study reported. The reclassification could change Alzheimer's research, diagnosis and approaches to treatment, according to the researchers.

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## PEACEBUILDING

The documentary, [Join or Die](#), urges Americans to join community organizations in an effort to reverse the decline of social capital. The film follows the career of Professor Robert Putnam, who documented the drop in community engagement over the previous half-century in his 1995 book, *Bowling Alone*. In a follow-on book in 2020, *The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again*, Putnam and co-author Shaylyn Romney Garrett offer ideas for rebuilding US social capital. At a recent showing of the film in Falls Church, Virginia, members of local groups had an opportunity to recruit new members.

The European Union Council recently ratified the [European Union-Central America Association Agreement](#), which commits the parties to a long-term relationship in major policy areas. The agreement aims to strengthen relations between the parties based on three parts: dialogue, cooperation, and trade. They have eliminated most import tariffs and improved access to government procurement and investment markets. They have also pledged to promote democracy and human rights, sustainable development, good governance, the rule of law, the peaceful resolution of disputes, and the development of social, labor and environmental standards.

Students and administrators in [some US universities are working together to defuse tensions](#) over the war in Gaza. At least six universities have negotiated agreements in which students have closed tent encampments in return for administration promises to publicly disclose investments and take steps toward divestment from Israel. Northwestern University has agreed to disclose investments to all internal stakeholders and establish a committee to look at divestment. Brown University has committed to take a vote on divestment in the fall.

The Rwanda Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement has released a new research document on a [\*\*\*Community-based Participatory Framework for the Assessment of Resilience in Rwanda\*\*\*](#). The study developed indicators of resilience, devised a methodology for assessing those indicators, established a baseline for community resilience across all 30 districts of Rwanda and offered policy recommendations for enhancing resilience nationwide. Their suggestions highlighted the need for “intensified efforts in societal healing initiatives, infrastructure development, and facilitating access to finance and employment opportunities.” The study was conducted in collaboration with [Interpeace](#).