

February 16, 2024



Brought to you by



Institute for
Economics
& Peace



Alliance for
Peacebuilding

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:

- Malaysia's top court **strikes out 16 Islamic laws** in landmark case
- **330,000 displaced** as fighting continues in Sudan
- Egypt threatens to **void peace treaty** with Israel
- World's first year-long **breach of key 1.5°C** warming limit
- Negotiations after Pakistan elections **return hung parliament**

POLITICS

Negotiations after Pakistan elections return hung parliament. Independent candidates backed by jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan [won the most seats](#) and are looking for allies to form government. Ex Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's party won 75 seats, and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's party 54 seats.

Malaysia's top court strikes out 16 Islamic laws in landmark case. The provisions of Kelantan's Sharia criminal code declared "[void and invalid](#)" included incest, gambling, and sexual harassment. It is possible the decision will affect similar sharia laws in other parts of Muslim-majority countries.

Ex-president Bolsonaro to surrender passport as Brazil probes 'coup'. Tens of thousands of Bolsonaro supporters stormed the Presidential Palace, Congress and Supreme Court, [calling for the military](#) to oust veteran leftist Lula, alleging that the election was stolen.

Ex-PM Stubb wins Finnish presidency, narrowly defeating Haavisto. Stubb, the centre-right candidate, was prime minister in 2014-2015 and will become the [13th president of Finland](#) since the Nordic country's independence from the Russian empire in 1917.

Taiwanese ally Guatemala seeking to build trade ties with China. Guatemala is one of 12 nations with formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan, and the Central American nation is now [seeking to find a Chinese market](#) for their domestic products.

CONFLICT

Colombia's government and National Liberation Army agree to ceasefire. A [new ceasefire agreement](#) has been reached after the previous 6-month deal ended last week.

More than 330,000 displaced as fighting continues in Sudan. Within Sudan, over [330,000 people have been displaced](#), and 100,000 are attempting to cross available borders, due to ongoing conflict, according to the UN.

Thousands flee in eastern DR Congo as M23 rebels advance. The Congolese army and UN peacekeepers are [struggling to contain](#) the advancement of M23 rebels, causing communities to flee to Goma.

Russia uses Zircon hypersonic missile in Ukraine for first time. Researchers said [Russia hit Kyiv last week](#) with the missile for the first time, presenting a new challenge to Ukraine's air defences. The Zircon has a range of 1,000km and travels at nine times the speed of sound.

Egypt threatens to void peace treaty with Israel. Egypt may suspend the decades-old peace treaty if Israeli troops invade Rafah. Rafah's population has [swelled from 280,000](#) people to an estimated 1.4 million as Palestinians flee fighting elsewhere in Gaza.

ECONOMICS

CHART: [Mexico becomes US' biggest trading partner](#)

Deflation fears deepen as China consumer prices fall. While the country's economy has been facing deflation since last summer, prices have [fallen more dramatically](#) in the last month by 0.8% in comparison with the previous year, with food prices facing the biggest decline.

Exxon Mobil to hand over its investments in Equatorial Guinea. The company said the local government will [take over all of its assets](#) when it leaves later this year.

Lawsuit challenges Canada's migrant farmworker system. The suit alleges that Canada's [migrant worker programs](#) violate the country's constitution, formally known as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Cocoa price hits record high as El Niño hits crops. Following a period of drier weather in West Africa, especially in Ghana and Ivory Coast, the [cost of cocoa has now doubled](#) since the beginning of last year.

DEVELOPMENT

UK lab uses nuclear fusion to produce more energy than ever. The reaction yielded 69 megajoules of energy over five seconds - enough to run four baths. It could produce [endless amounts of energy](#) without carbon emissions, taking the world a step closer to using unlimited, clean power.

World's first year-long breach of key 1.5°C warming limit. The period between February 2023 and January 2024 reached 1.52°C of warming [above pre-industrial levels](#). It remains to be seen whether or not this will continue in the long term.

EU: digital ecosystems to be included in Big Tech antitrust, merger probes. The EU announced an update to nearly three-decade-old rules [following criticism from lawyers](#) and academics that the EU's antitrust and merger laws have failed to keep up with the times, especially in tech markets.

First US-India joint space mission to give hyper-detailed view of Earth. The upcoming satellite mission will provide a [glimpse of how shifting geopolitics](#) on the ground may play out in space, helping answer crucial questions about the impacts of climate change and to guide responses.

France to end birthright citizenship in overseas territory Mayotte. France plans to amend its constitution to revoke birthright citizenship on the Indian Ocean territory of Mayotte, the poorest department of the country, which [has been struggling](#) with social unrest and a crippling migration crisis.

SOCIAL

Rio de Janeiro dengue health emergency ahead of Carnival. Since the beginning of 2024, the municipality has [registered more than 10,000](#) dengue cases. That is just under half of the total cases in all of 2023.

Mother of a US school shooter first to be found guilty of involuntary manslaughter. Jennifer Crumbley, 45, was convicted for [being negligent and failing to secure the gun](#) used by her son to murder four classmates at Oxford High School in Michigan in 2021.

US agency declares AI-cloned voice robocalls illegal. The Federal Communications Commission said calls made with [AI-generated voices are illegal](#), giving state attorneys general new tools to go after the entities behind robocalls.

Experts craft spiral lens that delivers sharp vision at all distances. The lens, with a spiral design, performs [in various lighting conditions](#) and can maintain its multifocality regardless of the size of the pupil, which is an improvement over existing multifocal lenses.

One in five migratory animal species now face extinction. A [first-ever global survey](#) of migratory species finds them at risk from overhunting and habitat loss, with fish in gravest danger. Migratory animals frequently congregate at predictable stops, making them more vulnerable.

PEACEBUILDING

The government of Sierra Leone has [launched the Western Area Peninsula Water Fund](#) to ensure a healthy watershed for Greater Freetown and beyond. The project is a collaboration of the [Nature Conservancy](#), [Catholic Relief Services](#) and local partners. The Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation will manage the Fund, bringing together government, business and community representatives to develop sustainable watershed management practices. With an initial \$2 million investment, the Fund is projected to generate about \$55 million in economic and social benefits over a 30-year period. The Nature Conservancy launched Africa's first water fund in Nairobi in 2015 and has since expanded the approach to 17 locations across Africa.

In the fall election, [the city of St. Paul, Minnesota elected an all-female City Council](#), six of its seven members are persons of color in a white-majority city, and the oldest member is just 39. Members of this group endorsed each other, campaigned together as an informal bloc, and swept every seat, including four new members. Their professional experiences range from teacher to nonprofit director to civil engineer. The members say the council's diversity will help it address St. Paul's challenges, including the Twin Cities area's persistent racial inequities.

A report by the [Carter Center](#) and the [Baker Institute for Public Policy](#) lays out [10 principles for US election administrators](#) to follow in trying to balance equal access to the polls with ensuring the integrity of election results. This initiative builds on related

efforts to strengthen US elections, including an effort led by the Carter Center and Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation urging candidates for national and local offices to agree to follow a similar list of principles. Since 2020, the Carter Center and Baker Institute have established a collaboration to continue studying election issues with the goal of providing [a national framework](#) for bipartisan and effective policies.

The Rotary clubs of Tegucigalpa Sur and Peterborough, Ontario, have teamed up to improve school education in Honduras. They constructed a teacher training center in Lepaterique and supplied books and other learning materials. Most recently, they partnered with a nonprofit organization and the country's Ministry of Education to provide literacy training for 160 primary school teachers from 62 schools. Nearly 40 percent of adolescents are not in secondary school in Honduras.