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

CONFLICT

Colombia army 'behind 6,400 extrajudicial killings'. An inquiry by a [special court](#) in Colombia has found that 6,402 civilians were killed by the military between 2002 and 2008 and falsely passed off as enemy combatants. The number of killings, known as "false positives", is almost three times higher than previous estimates.

Indian farm protests keep gathering momentum. More than 100,000 farmers and farm workers gathered in India's northern Punjab state in a [show of strength](#) against new farm laws, where union leaders called on supporters to amass outside the capital New Delhi on Feb. 27.

A boycott by bureaucrats is undermining the coup in Myanmar. Thousands of [public-sector workers](#), from at least 245 districts and 21 ministries, are on strike. Government offices are deserted. Many public hospitals have in effect shut and the banking system is seizing up with most branches closed and internet banking not always available.

Spanish rapper sentenced to prison for rapping. Pablo Hasel has been sent to prison after he was [found guilty](#) for insulting the crown and promoting terrorism. This has caused protests across Spain asking for his liberty appealing to the freedom of expression.

DEVELOPMENT

The world may have already passed 'peak agricultural land' use. Since 1961, the amount of [land used for agriculture](#) increased by only 7%. Meanwhile, the global population increased by 47%. This means that agricultural land *per person* more than halved.

Scientists decode the genome of million-year-old mammoths. The team's work represents a new record and [provides insights](#) into the slow workings of evolution that very ancient DNA can offer.

Flying autonomous robot uses AI to identify and pick ripe fruit. The robot uses [AI perception algorithms](#) to locate the trees and vision algorithms to detect the fruit among the foliage. The robot picks only ripe fruit by classifying its size and ripeness.

Electricity can be transmitted through the air. In a series of trials in New Zealand, energy from a solar farm will be beamed to [remote settlements](#) several kilometres away as a narrow beam of microwaves.

ECONOMICS

India central bank warns of bad debt surge as pandemic relief ends. Nonperforming loans are [projected to rise](#) to 13.5%, with auto and steel industries hit hard. India's bad debt towers above that of other major nations with the US and UK ratios at 1%.

China overtook the US as the EU's biggest trading partner last year. China's [trade volume in goods](#) with the 27-member EU, excluding Britain, reached €586 billion in 2020.

US high salaries recover while low paid jobs disappear. Americans as a whole are now earning the [same amount](#) in wages and salaries that they did before the virus struck, however nearly 9 million fewer people working, mainly in low paid jobs.

Syrian pound sinks to record low on foreign currency crunch. The Syrian pound has fallen more than 18% lower since the end of last month. The [collapse of the currency](#) has driven up inflation as Syrians struggle to afford food, power and other basics.

Makhtar Diop, former Minister of the Economy of Senegal, becomes the first African to run the International Finance Corporation. In 2019 it is estimated that the IFC gave roughly [\\$20 billion](#) in loans.

POLITICS

Facebook blocks, news, NGOs, business and essential services in Australia. In response to the Australian government's [news sharing laws](#), Facebook blocked pages from state governments, essential services, law enforcement and charities.

US will pay \$200 million in back fees to WHO. The US will pay more than \$200 million it owes to the World Health Organization [by the end of the month](#), US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told the UN Security Council.

Lebanese court removes investigator who charged politicians over Beirut blast. The court of cassation decided to take Sawan off the case [after a request](#) from two of the former ministers he charged. It is unlikely that the case will proceed angering the families of many of the 200 dead from the blast.

Cambodian government increases its control of the internet. The China-style internet gateway would allow [all online traffic](#) to be controlled and monitored. This would be a new tool for long-time leader Hun Sen to monitor and control messaging opposed by the government, including any opposition to his rule.

It's likely to be a long road to new Iran nuclear deal. The main challenges to a deal are the [scores of sanctions](#) that Trump imposed on Iran after walking away from the deal in May 2018 and the steps Iran took, after waiting more than a year, to violate the pact in retaliation.

The US returns to the Paris climate accord. Just 107 days after leaving it, US President Biden [restored the commitment](#) to the Paris climate accord.

Niger prepares for the first peaceful presidential succession. Niger's president has announced a [voluntary step down](#) after serving two terms. This will be the first time that the country has a democratically elected leader in power.

SOCIAL

China steps up online controls with new rules for bloggers. China has introduced new rules for bloggers requiring them to [obtain a license](#) to comment on health, economics, education and judicial matters.

Physicists create microchip 100 times faster than conventional ones. Using graphene researchers [created a nano chip](#) that is 100 times smaller and faster than current technology.

There are now more than half a million people aged 100 or older around the world. The US has the [highest absolute number](#) of centenarians in the world with 97,000. Japan comes second with 79,000.

COVID sickness dropped 95.8% after both Pfizer shots: Israeli Health Ministry. The vaccine was also 98% effective in [preventing fever](#) or breathing problems and 98.9% effective in preventing hospitalizations and death.

France to scour universities for ideas that weaken French society. The government announced an investigation into [social science research](#) considered to have undermined key aspects of French society. It is especially related to race, gender and post-colonial studies.

PEACEBUILDING

[The Alliance for Peacebuilding](#) has collected and publicized [statistics on peace and conflict](#). Every dollar invested now in peacebuilding could reduce the cost of conflict by \$16 in the long run, according to [estimates](#) of the Institute for Economics and Peace. Nevertheless, since 2010, [violent conflict events have tripled](#), according to the World Bank. Additionally, rising prices and falling incomes resulting from COVID-19 could lead to an [increased risk of internal violence in an additional 13 countries](#), according to University of Denver professors.

[The Democracy Fund](#) has published an assessment of [The Costs of Political Violence in the United States: The Benefits of Investing in Communities](#). The document details physical, psychological, and economic costs of political violence as well as costs from catalyzing additional violence. The authors advocate specific resilience-based strategies for individuals,

groups, and civil society organizations to prevent political violence, including examples of initiatives using these strategies and a summary of evidence on their effectiveness.

The four women who created [Zebras Unite](#) have publicized a “[manifesto](#)” advocating a cooperative approach to the world of business. They urge potential business owners to consider employee ownership structures and working conditions that protect the planet and benefit broader communities as well as all employees. They provide a range of advisory services focused on participatory design processes.

Over the past two years, a range of climate justice activists and policy advocates have participated in a [series of dialogues on Transforming the Conversation on Carbon Pricing \(TCCP\), to cultivate common ground.](#) The initiative, which is housed at the [Deep South Center for Environmental Justice \(DSCEJ\)](#), is a joint initiative of DSCEJ, [the Karuna Center](#), the [Pricing Carbon Initiative](#), and the [Citizens’ Climate Lobby](#).