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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:

- Thailand's popular Move Forward party faces dissolution
- Iran pulls officers from Syria after Israeli attack
- US crude oil production hits high of 13.3m barrels daily
- Serbia considers reintroducing conscription as regional tensions grow
- World's first mindfulness city for Bhutan

## POLITICS

**Thailand's popular Move Forward party faces dissolution.** Constitutional Court says the party's policy to amend strict royal defamation laws is illegal, with the verdict increasing risks [Move Forward](#), which won the most votes at Thailand's 2023 election, could be dissolved and its leaders banned.

**Senegal's President issues decree postponing elections indefinitely.** This complicates the [political crisis](#) following the disqualification of opposition presidential candidates, with warnings it could spark instability in the West African nation.

**Ex-Pakistan prime minister Khan handed 10-year jail sentence.** Former national cricket captain and PM was [jailed](#) for leaking a classified diplomatic cable, which he denies. Khan's wife Bushra Bibi was also jailed for seven years for unlawful marriage to Khan.

**Unionists agree to restore government in Northern Ireland.** Northern Ireland's [largest British unionist party](#) has ended a boycott that left the region without a

government for two years, paving the way for a possible reinstatement of the power-sharing administration in Belfast.

**El Salvador's Bukele re-elected as president in landslide win.** Credited with driving down gang violence in the Central American nation, [President Bukele](#) has won a second term, securing 83% of votes with 70% counted.

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## CONFLICT

**Iran pulls officers from Syria after Israeli attack.** A series of Israeli deadly strikes made the [Iran Revolutionary Guards](#) suffer one of the highest numbers of casualties since arriving in Syria a decade ago. Tehran will rely on allied Shi'ite militia to help preserve their influence there.

**European Union agrees on new \$54bn aid package for Ukraine.** All 27 [European Union](#) countries have agreed on an additional \$54 billion aid package for Ukraine, despite threats from Hungary to veto the move.

**Saudis push for US defence pact ahead of presidential elections.** Saudi Arabia is willing to accept a political commitment from Israel to [create a Palestinian state](#), rather than anything more binding, in a bid to get the pact approved before the US presidential elections in November.

**Myanmar military extends state of emergency, vows to “crush” opposition.** Myanmar army chief [Min Aung Hlaing](#), who led the 2021 coup, said the military would do “whatever it takes to return the state to stability.” He pledged to crush opposition to military rule.

**Nearly eight million people displaced by war in Sudan.** The [ongoing war](#) is forcing people from their homes, as the UN calls for urgent additional support, while UNHCR faces a chronic shortfall in funds.

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## ECONOMICS

**US crude oil production hits high of 13.3m barrels daily.** The US is the largest [oil producer](#) in the world, surpassing Russia's 9.5m barrels a day, and well ahead of Saudi Arabia's daily 9.1 barrels.

**Farmers protesting across Europe.** Tractors are being used to block highways across France and Belgium as [farmers' protests](#) gain momentum across Europe. Farmers say they are not paid enough for produce, are choked by taxes and green rules and face unfair foreign competition.

**Euro inflation dips, but price pressure falls less than forecast.** [Consumer inflation](#) in the 20 euro-zone nations dipped to 2.8% in January from 2.9% in December, but price growth only dropped slightly and exceeded forecasts.

**Red Sea crisis poses billions of dollars of risk for India.** With Houthi attacks forcing ships to avoid one of the world's most crucial [trade routes](#), exporting India's Basmati rice has become a challenge, and demand is falling as it becomes more costly.

**Record export of US weapons in 2023, boosted by Ukraine conflict.** The demand for [US weaponry](#) hit \$238 billion, a 56% rise from 2022, with sales aided by nations reducing imports from Russia.

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## DEVELOPMENT

**Serbia considers reintroducing conscription as regional tensions grow.** President Vučić said top army commanders strongly argued for a mandatory draft, which was suspended in 2011 in a push to professionalize the [armed forces](#).

**Fish-inspired filter traps 80% of microplastics in washing machines.** With a Proof of Concept Grant, Professor Blanke from Bonn University pioneers a [bionic microplastic filter](#) inspired by fish, aiming for an 80% reduction in washing machine emissions.

**Gene therapy allows kids with inherited deafness to hear.** Up to 60% of cases of children with deafness or hearing loss are caused by genes. [Gene therapy](#) has restored hearing in five out of six children treated in China and is approved to treat illnesses such as sickle cell disease and severe haemophilia.

**SpaceX's Starship to launch space station into low-Earth orbit.** Starlab Space chose [SpaceX's Starship](#) vehicle to undertake a single mission to transport the Starlab into LEO before the International Space Station's retirement in 2030.

**More than 100 die in deadliest Chile forest fire.** Situated in the [Valparaíso region](#), 116km from the capital, Santiago, many of those affected were visiting the coastal region during the summer holidays, with between 3,000 and 6,000 houses impacted.

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## SOCIAL

**World's first mindfulness city for Bhutan.** World-renowned for the concept of Gross National Happiness and being the first carbon negative country, Bhutan will launch the [Gelephu Mindfulness City](#), an interconnected bridge of sustainable development between South and Southeast Asia.

**Oral insulin via pill or sugar-free chocolate could replace diabetic injections.** Scientists created a method to administer [insulin](#) orally, effectively trialled on animals. The human testing phase will commence in 2025.

**Bones from German cave rewrite history of Homo sapiens in Europe.** 13 Homo sapiens skeletons have been discovered in a cave in central Germany. DNA analysis determined the bones were up to [47,500 years old](#), much earlier than previously known.

**First functional human brain tissue produced through 3D printing.** The tissue was created to examine the [function of the brain](#) in relation to various neurological disorders, such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.

**Russian cosmonaut sets record for most time in space.** [Oleg Kononenkoo](#) has spent more than 878 days in space, surpassing compatriot Gennady Padalka, and is expected to reach 1,110 days in September.

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## PEACEBUILDING

With support from [Build Up's](#) Peace Engineering Fellows program, Grace Liberatore, an engineering senior at [Drexel University](#) partnered with [Plenitud](#), an organization dedicated to water security in Puerto Rico, to develop and deliver a training curriculum for homeowners to design and construct their own low-cost water catchment systems. They successfully piloted their approach to water security in the town of Las Marias, and Plenitud now plans to expand the training across Puerto Rico. Over 95% of Puerto Ricans now have water systems that fail to meet federal standards and 60% of the homes have not had running water since Hurricane Maria hit the island in 2017.

**In observance of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, [the Minnesota-based Isles Ensemble played music performed by prisoners in concentration camp orchestras.](#)** The works played highlighted Jewish experience and musical influence and were punctuated by testimonies from the diaries of the prisoners. The Isles Ensemble used the musical arrangements and instrumentation in the original manuscripts, which were introduced to the world at the University of Michigan and now reside permanently in the museum at Auschwitz.

**More than 1600 Madagascar farmers who implemented [new climate-smart practices five years ago have found their food security has increased measurably](#).** These farmers are cultivating drought-resistant crops, mulching to prevent soil erosion and planting native fruit trees that provide both shade and new sources of income. Madagascar is one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries. Drought and cyclones have pushed more than a million people—a third of the population—into hunger. [Conservation International](#) and the United Nations' [Green Climate Fund](#) helped fund the climate-resilient program.

**The Partnership for Learning for All in Nigeria (PLANE) program funds community learning hubs where children can learn basic literacy and numeracy skills.** Most of the hubs are facilitated by experienced retired teachers who receive weekly facilitator's guides. To date, PLANE has provided training and support to 200 facilitators. The effort is funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and implemented by [DAI](#) and [FHI 360](#). Nigeria's rural and remote regions face a widespread shortage of qualified teachers and lack adequate infrastructure, including schools and educational materials. Half of Nigerian children between ages 6 and 16 cannot read.