

March 2, 2021



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

## CONFLICT

**US intelligence says Saudi Crown Prince approved Khashoggi murder.** Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman approved, and [likely ordered](#), the 2018 murder of Saudi dissident journalist. The Biden administration is considering [halting arms sales](#) to the Saudis.

**Deadly protests rock Niger over contested election result.** Supporters of the [losing presidential candidate](#) in Niger set several buildings on fire, burnt tyres and threw rocks at the police. Two people had been killed in post-election protests. This was the first peaceful transition of power in Niger.

**Police and army mobilise after hundreds of Nigerian school girls taken in mass abduction.** In the second such kidnapping in a week [unidentified gunmen](#) have seized more than 300 schoolgirls in a night-time raid on a school in north-west Nigeria and are believed to be holding some of them in a nearby forest.

**India and Pakistan agree to ceasefire in Kashmir.** The nuclear-armed neighbours signed a [ceasefire agreement](#) along the Line of Control in 2003, but that has frayed in recent years with mounting casualties, but locals fear it will not hold.

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## DEVELOPMENT

**UN says disappointing \$1.7 billion pledged for Yemen, impossible to avert famine.** The UN Secretary-General said \$1.7 billion that has been pledged is [less than half](#) the \$3.85 billion the world body was seeking for 2021. It is not enough to avert a large-scale famine.

**New tech is allowing indoor farms to produce more food with less water.** Vertical farms are now being commercialised in Germany. They use [five litres of water per kg](#) of food produced compared to 322 using conventional techniques.

**Self-healing chip converts body heat into electricity.** The device uses [thermoelectric generators](#) to convert the body's internal temperature into electricity. It is low cost and can generate approx. one volt for every 1 sq cm of skin and to be used to power wearable electronics without a battery.

**Gulf Stream system at weakest in a millennium due to climate change.** Studies detect [major changes](#) in ocean current that carries warm water to Europe and influences storms. The temperatures in Europe are likely to plummet if the stream ceases to flow.

**Quantum computing breakthrough: Scientists sent the first 'landline' message.** Researchers at the University of Chicago sent [entangled qubit states](#) through a communication cable linking two quantum computers with entangled qubits on either side of the landline.

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## ECONOMICS

**Pandemic travel ban triggers spike in global food prices.** Shortage of seasonal labour for harvests causes the International Food Price Index to [reach its highest level](#) since July 2014. This was an 11% increase over the same month last year and the sixth consecutive month of year-on-year increases.

**Nature Bonds may be the next big thing for emerging markets.** Emerging-market nations are looking at issuing the first [nature-linked bonds](#). The proposals aim to link new debt to targets for biodiversity and carbon emissions.

**Prices in the world's biggest carbon market are soaring.** The EU's emissions-trading system (ETS) prices have [surged by 60%](#) since November. The European Commission auctions allowances nearly every day; it caps the overall supply of permits based on the EU's politically determined emissions targets.

**Water supply troubles hits Taiwan computer chip supply, as Biden asks for more.** Plans to [ramp up production](#) of chips in Taiwan have been hampered by droughts, affecting factories' water supplies.

**EU's biggest banks asked to justify why they still clear euro swaps in London.** Europe's top banks [must justify](#) why they are not clearing euro-denominated derivatives worth billions in the European Union rather than London after Brexit.

## POLITICS

**French court finds former president Nicolas Sarkozy guilty of corruption.** Sarkozy had offered to secure a job in Monaco for judge Gilbert Azibert in return for [confidential information](#) about an inquiry into allegations that he had accepted illegal payments from the L'Oreal heiress for his 2007 presidential campaign.

**European companies back out of Gazprom's Nord Stream 2.** 18 companies have terminated their participation or are in the [process of withdrawing](#), following US sanctions threats. The US has only imposed sanctions on one company, but has threatened to "take further action."

**Moldova's top court rules against pro-EU president's attempt to form new government.** Moldova's constitutional court said it was unconstitutional for President Maia Sandu to nominate Natalia Gavrilita as prime minister [for a second time](#) after parliament had already voted to reject the nomination.

**China's President Xi Jinping claims complete victory in the campaign to end rural poverty.** The victory is based on \$2.12 a day being assessed as the measure of [extreme rural poverty](#). A report by the party newspaper People's Daily on the "historic leap" refers to Mr Xi by his full name and title 121 times.

**Honduran president says US probe of his alleged drug ties could scuttle cooperation with Washington.** US prosecutors have said Hernandez accepted a [million-dollar bribe](#) from Mexican drug lord El Chapo Guzman, who was convicted in 2019 and is serving a life sentence in a US prison.

**Armenian PM says open to snap elections if he stays as PM until the election.** He is facing a crisis after the army last week [demanded he step down](#). This prompted him to claim a coup attempt and try to sack the army's top general. The PM agreed to a Russian-brokered ceasefire over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh which ceded Armenian territory.

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## SOCIAL

**Israel ships COVID-19 vaccines to other countries before Palestine.** Israel [will ship vaccines](#) to Honduras, Guatemala, Czech Republic and Hungary before large scale vaccinations in Palestine. Israelis are 60 times more likely to be vaccinated than Palestinians.

**Facebook ends the news blackout.** Australia passed a new law [forcing companies](#) such as Facebook and Google to pay domestic media for content. Facebook has rescinded its ban on Australian news content after government compromises on the legislation.

**North Korea: Russian diplomats leave by hand-pushed trolley.** A group of Russian diplomats and their families made an [unusual exit](#) out of North Korea on a hand-pushed rail trolley due to strict COVID measures. North Korea has blocked most passenger transport to limit the virus' spread.

**Japan creates new cabinet post, Minister of Loneliness.** Japan has one of the [highest suicide rates](#) in the world that increased by over 3% in 2020, and is three times higher than Japan's COVID-19 deaths.

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## PEACEBUILDING

[SaferWorld](#) has published a [policy brief](#) **advocating for a transformation of security and justice systems in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.** It calls on international partners including the UK government and other donors and policymakers to design programs that support peacebuilding goals, especially in conflict-affected contexts and prioritizes legitimacy,

inclusion and accountability. The paper is part of SaferWorld's UK-funded Peace Research Partnership.

**[The Rotaract Club of Nakivale, Uganda may be the first Rotaract club based inside a refugee camp](#)**. The club started as a competition, co-sponsored by Rotary and the office of Uganda's [prime minister](#), for young residents to propose innovations that could improve lives in the settlement. Leaders from Rotary Clubs in Kampala and Minnesota worked with the 13 competition winners to put their ideas into action. Sponsored by the [Rotary organization](#), Rotaract clubs around the world bring together young people ages 18 and older to "exchange ideas with leaders in the community, develop leadership and professional skills, and have fun through service."

The [Environmental Law Institute](#) has published a policy brief on [Environmental and Justice Legislation: Recommendations for the First 100 Days](#). The paper advocates the reintroduction and passage of The Environmental Justice for All Act (Senate 4401) and the companion bill (House of Representatives 5986). In addition, the paper argued for a more robust national environmental justice law that incorporates provisions from legislation passed by New Jersey, New York and other US states.

**The Parliamentary Working Group on the Moldovan autonomous region of Gagauzia has [committed to continuing a five-year sustained dialogue process](#)**. The sustained dialogue process is facilitated by [Crisis Management Institute](#) (CMI) and supported by Sweden. Over the past five years, CMI has facilitated about 50 formal and informal meetings, during which the Parliamentary Working Group adopted more than 60 decisions.