

May 18, 2021



Brought to you by  

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

## CONFLICT

**Massive demonstrations in Columbia cause prices to skyrocket and tax reform to stall.** After three weeks of [nation-wide strikes](#), Cali is recording a surge in food prices. The protests were in response to a proposed [government tax reform](#) resulting in over 800 people being injured.

**Philippines flags 'incursions' by nearly 300 Chinese militia boats.** The Philippines reported what it said were incursions into its [exclusive economic zone](#) by 287 maritime militia vessels from China, in a further sign of cracks reappearing in a relationship after a period of improvement.

**Myanmar army battles anti-coup rebels as armed resistance grows.** The resistance has [expanded in recent weeks](#) from daily street protests and strikes to attacks on junta-appointed administrators and ambushes of security forces by civilians.

**Japan speaks out against alleged Chinese military cyberattacks.** Tokyo's Police Chief went on the offensive and named Beijing as being [responsible for a cyberattack](#) on Japan for the first time ever.

---

## DEVELOPMENT

**An area of forest the size of France has regrown across the world in the last 20 years.** Since 2000, the Atlantic Forest in Brazil has regenerated an area the size of the Netherlands while Mongolia regenerated 1.2 million hectares. Other [regeneration hotspots](#) include central Africa and the boreal forests of Canada.

**The global problem of underreporting COVID-19 deaths.** Around the world, [actual coronavirus deaths](#) are estimated to exceed reported deaths by 113%.

**Afghans who helped the US fear being left behind.** Immigration numbers are capped at 26,500 people with [half of the number already allocated](#). Complicated applications and vetting processes are leading to complaints with 18,000 applications still pending.

**Giraffes identified with facial recognition software.** A new application of facial recognition software is [enabling scientists](#) at Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park to identify giraffes and support efforts to save the creatures from extinction.

**The smallest-ever injectable chip hints at a new cybernetic medicine.** The chip is the size of a dust mite and only visible under a microscope. It is a [fully functional electronic circuit](#) and is injected with a hypodermic needle.

---

## SOCIAL

**Petra Diamonds reaches settlement on claims of human rights abuses.** The UK firm has reached a settlement after claims from 79 individuals of alleged [widespread human rights abuses](#), including beatings and detentions, at the company's Williamson mine in Tanzania.

**Russia releases first coronavirus vaccine for animals.** Russia is the first country to develop a [COVID-19 vaccine for animals](#). Researchers in Finland and the US are also working on the vaccine for animals.

**India may overtake China as most populous country by 2024 at 1.45 billion.** With Chinese birth rates [expected to drop](#) in the coming years and India's higher fertility rate, it will become the most populous country by 2023 or 2024.

**Czech town launches local 'currency' to boost post-COVID recovery.** A Czech town has launched a scheme with residents given [digital vouchers](#) to spend in shops and cafes badly hit by COVID-19 lockdowns. The digital vouchers are marketed as a special local currency.

**Switzerland: controversial vote on pesticide ban.** Switzerland is holding a referendum on a [pesticide ban in agricultural production](#). Environmentalists, farmers and agrochemical companies are skeptical over the potential switch to organic agriculture.

---

## ECONOMICS

**Job openings in US surge to a record high 8.12 million.** US job openings surged in March to a record high, underscoring a [rapid increase in labour demand](#) as vaccinations accelerate and states reopen their economies. The number of job vacancies exceeded hires by more than 2 million, the largest gap on record.

**UN raises global economic forecast to 5.4% growth in 2021.** The UN responded to the rebounding Chinese and US economies by revising its [global economic forecast](#) upward to 5.4% growth for 2021.

**US inflation sees biggest jump since 2008.** Consumer prices jumped 4.2% in the 12 months through to April marking the [biggest increase since September 2008](#). The report comes amid fears that rising consumer prices could push up interest rates.

**COVID-19 recovery causing supply chain shortages.** Surging corporate demand is [upending global supply chains](#). The difference between this and other disruptions is the sheer magnitude of it, and there appears to be no end in sight.

**India keeps global rice prices stable with record exports.** The world's biggest rice exporter is heading for [record shipments this year](#) that will help to keep rising food prices in check, according to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization.

---

## POLITICS

**Chile constitution: Sweeping changes possible as independents win.** Chileans have voted for the 155 people who will draft the new constitution. The vote was called after [massive protests swept the country](#) in 2019. Only 25 percent of the successful candidates were backed by the government.

**US lifts sanctions on senior figure in Mexico's Sinaloa cartel.** The US lifted financial sanctions on a top lieutenant of [Mexico's Sinaloa drug cartel](#), saying Jesus "El Rey" Zambada, who gave testimony against kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, had shown behavioural change.

**Zimbabwe minister rebukes judiciary after chief justice ruling.** The Zimbabwean Justice Minister stated that the country's judiciary has been [influenced by foreign parties](#) after the High Court ruled it was illegal to extend the Chief Justice's term for another five years.

**Ethiopia delays national elections for second time.** Ethiopia has again delayed its national election after some opposition parties said they [would not take part](#). Conflict in the country's Tigray region means no vote can take place there.

**Two main contenders sign up for Iran's Presidential election.** The June 18 election to succeed President Hassan Rouhani will be a test of the legitimacy of the [country's clerical rulers](#) who are hoping for a high turnout. One is a hard-line judiciary chief and the other a former parliament speaker.

---

## PEACEBUILDING

[Saferworld](#) has released a new facilitation guide for [Gender-sensitive Conflict Analysis](#). The publication describes this kind of analysis as a "starting point" for understanding how "gender inequality fuels conflict and discrimination, exclusionary politics and violence against marginalised groups" and highlights how different types of violence are used to maintain power in public (political) and private (family and community) spaces.

[Beyond Conflict](#) and [Peace Initiatives Network](#) have publicized a [Peacebuilder's Pledge against the Use of Dangerous Speech in Our Communities](#). The pledge was developed as part of an effort to address violence between conflicting groups in Nigeria.

**The 2021 Jack Wood Award winners include the partnership initiative, [Connecting Fairfax City for All](#), between the City of Fairfax and George Mason University's Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution.** The partnership is facilitating discussions about how

Confederate-related street and place names and historical markers and monuments affect the City Council's goals of inclusivity and building community. GMU's Office of Government and Community Relations presents the Jack Wood awards to recognize GMU and community individuals and groups who demonstrate leadership in fostering mutually beneficial relationships between the university and the community.

**[The University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies held its annual conference virtually in 2021.](#)** The conference is organized by students for students and aims to prompt dialogue about peacebuilding, social justice and conflict transformation. This year's conference drew over 180 attendees representing 46 universities and colleges in 19 countries, including Canada, China, Colombia, the Gambia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malta, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Serbia, South Africa, South Korea, South Sudan, the United Kingdom, and the United States.