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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:

- Philippines vow countermeasures to Chinese 'attacks'
- Wagner Group, Malian Army accused of civilian executions
- Nigeria to release 313 suspects accused of terrorism
- Astronauts to carry plants, set up lunar mini greenhouses
- Putin says Russia won't attack NATO, cites no aggression
- Japanese Yen hits weakest level in 34 years

## POLITICS

**Colombia expels Argentine diplomats over Milei 'terrorist' remarks.** Colombia ordered the expulsion of Argentine diplomats, after President Javier Milei called his Colombian counterpart Gustavo Petro a ["terrorist" and "murderer."](#)

**Puntland rejects planned constitution changes, vows to boycott other government institutions.** Somalia's semi-autonomous region is [against proposals to change](#) the country's voting processes from a clan-based system to one based on universal suffrage.

**Fiji PM orders Chinese police out of the country.** Prime Minister Rabuka says his government has removed the officers from the country, [concerned Beijing's growing presence](#) in the Pacific could undermine democratic systems. However, he still wanted senior Fijian police officers to continue training there.

**India to spend \$3.7BN to fence Myanmar border.** Indian plans to boost security and fence its 1,610-km porous border with Myanmar within about a decade would [end a visa-free movement policy](#) for border citizens of its coup-hit neighbour.

**Setback to Turkey's Erdogan, opposition makes huge gains in local election.** The vote was seen as a barometer of President Erdogan's popularity as he sought to [win back control](#) of key urban areas he lost to the opposition in elections five years ago.

**Philippines' Marcos vows countermeasures in response to Chinese "attacks."** President Marcos said proportionate and reasonable countermeasures [would be implemented](#) against "illegal, coercive, aggressive, dangerous attacks" by China's coast guard and maritime militia in the South China Sea.

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## CONFLICT

**Malian army and Wagner Group accused of executing civilians.** Human Rights Watch has called for investigation into arbitrary drone strikes and other attacks. Mali is currently in a [complicated relationship](#) with its neighbours after the withdrawal of the UN mission and threats by the government to pull out of ECOWAS.

**Nigeria to release 313 suspects accused of terrorism.** Nigeria's military will free hundreds of people suspected of being part of the [Boko Haram insurgency](#) after a court ruled there was no evidence they committed any crimes. In 2009 the jihadist group launched an insurgency seeking to overthrow the government and establish an Islamic state.

**Security in Congo's mineral-rich east deteriorating as rebel group expands.** Security in Congo's east has worsened since recent elections, with M23 allegedly linked to neighbouring Rwanda making "[significant advances](#) and expanding its territory," the UN special envoy for the African nation said.

**Ecuador captures leader from Los Lobos gang.** Ecuadorean authorities said they had [captured a leader of a powerful gang](#), Los Lobos, which has been accused of involvement in the assassination of the country's anti-corruption presidential candidate last August.

**Putin says Russia won't attack NATO, but F-16s will be shot down in Ukraine.** The Kremlin said Russia will [not attack Poland, the Baltic states, or the Czech Republic](#),

having “no aggressive intentions towards these states.” But if the West supplies F-16s to Ukraine, they will be shot down.

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## ECONOMICS

**China's factory activity expands.** China's manufacturing activity [expanded for the first time](#) in six months in March, an official factory survey showed, offering relief to policymakers even as a crisis in the property sector remains a drag on the economy and confidence.

**Uganda and Kenya have ended a disagreement over a deal to import oil.** Uganda said Kenya [has agreed to allow shipments](#) to flow through its Mombasa port as soon as May 2024.

**Evergrande faces \$120 billion fraud accusation.** The founder of embattled property developer Evergrande has been [barred for life from China's financial markets](#) after the company allegedly falsified its revenue by almost \$120 billion, overstating its revenue by \$45 bln in 2019 and \$74 bln in 2020.

**Bank of Canada sounds alarm on low productivity, cites inflation risks.** The BoC said businesses urgently need to boost investment to [increase productivity to help insulate](#) the economy against the threat of inflation. Senior Deputy Governor Carolyn Rogers called it an “emergency” as the bank has raised rates to a 22-year high.

**Japanese Yen hits weakest level in 34 years.** Lower expectations that the Bank of Japan would [raise interest rates](#) have led to the weakest level against the dollar in 34 years. Japan’s finance minister, Shunichi Suzuki, has indicated that measures to “respond to disorderly FX moves” were not off the table.

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## DEVELOPMENT

**Global warming may be slowing Earth's spin and affecting time-keeping.** The slowing spin of the earth [also affects the recording of time](#). Since 1972 the Co-ordinated Universal Clock has had 2 seconds added to adjust for a slightly quicker spin. Now that the earth spin is slowing there may need to be an adjustment to take a second off.

**Nigeria to grant mining licences only to companies that process locally.** To extract more value from mineral deposits, Nigeria will only [grant new mining licences to companies](#) that present a plan on how minerals would be processed locally. This signals a shift from its decades-old policy of exporting raw materials.

**Scientists reveal all-day cooling tech that generates clean electricity.** The dual cooling and power strategy can deliver [electricity savings of 30 percent](#) compared to only using solar cells. The concept of clean energy through solar cells allows infrared light to pass through a low-iron glass and into outer space without warming the surrounding air.

**Astronauts will carry plants to the moon in 2026.** The first astronauts to land on the moon in more than half a century will set up a [lunar mini-greenhouse](#), which will study how space crops fare in the exotic lunar environment.

**Google to destroy browsing data to settle consumer privacy lawsuit.** Google has agreed to [destroy billions of data records](#) to settle a lawsuit claiming it secretly tracked the internet use of people who thought they were browsing privately.

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## SOCIAL

**Hundreds of millions in India celebrates Holi, the Hindu festival of colours.** It celebrates the arrival of spring and the divine love between the Hindu god Krishna and his consort Radha, and signifies [a time of rebirth and rejuvenation](#), embracing the positive, while letting go of negative energy.

**Where did Homo sapiens go after leaving Africa?** Bands of hunter-gatherers after leaving Africa appear to have [lingered for thousands of years](#) as a homogeneous population in a geographic hub that spanned Iran, southeast Iraq and northeast Saudi Arabia before going on to settle all of Asia and [Europe](#) starting roughly 45,000 years ago.

**Authorities seize Instagram-famous magpie, ending friendship with English Staffordshire Bull Terrier.** The duo had hundreds of thousands of online followers. But after an individual complained to authorities that the [bird was in danger](#), the magpie was seized. The situation was publicised throughout Australia and the Queensland Premier intervened in a bid to have the bird returned.

**Egypt population growth continues slowing to 1.4%.** Population growth in the Arab world's most populous country (106m) [slowed to 1.4% in 2023](#), its lowest rate in decades. Egypt peaked at 2.8% in 1984-85 before declining to 1.9% in 2006 then surging again to 2.3% in 2014.

**Surging dengue cases in Americas as worst-ever season looms.** Dengue cases in the Americas increased threefold in the first 3 months of the year. Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay are the countries [hardest hit by dengue](#) in what PAHO officials described as potentially the worst outbreak in the Americas to date for the deadly mosquito-borne viral illness.

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## PEACEBUILDING

In the wake of a school shooting in Nashville last March, [11 Tennesseans from across the political spectrum came together to discuss ways to reduce the harm of gun violence in their state](#). The three-day “citizen solutions session” was organized by the national nonpartisan nonprofit, [Starts With Us](#). The Tennessee group came up with five proposals to promote responsible gun ownership, broaden the role of police officers in schools, address trauma from gun violence and increase understanding of gun issues. Polling by Starts With Us indicated these proposals have majority support of Tennesseans, some narrowly. The group invited Tennessee legislators to meet with them, but only 10 showed up and none of the proposals were adopted. There were 82 school shootings in the US in 2023.

[Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) is creating new tools to address climate emergencies](#). The Florida company MyRadar is developing HORIS, a system of tiny satellites the size of a Rubik’s Cube that may detect fires early by monitoring sensitive areas sub-hourly (instead of once or twice a day). If HORIS detects a possible fire, it can send an alert directly to ground technicians who can check out the site in person. The company plans to launch the first of its Armada in October 2024. Robotic lab technicians are also scanning scientific literature on material science around the clock to identify and test recipes for compounds that could make better batteries to store renewable energy.

[The Institute for State Effectiveness](#) has published six reports in its country **stocktakings series**, which evaluate opportunities for reform during pivotal periods. *Stocktakings* diagnose pathways for reform by assessing the performance of state functions, citizens’ views of the state, international partners’ engagement and the attitudes of key stakeholders toward a potential reform agenda. Countries were selected based on the potential for change, such as a strengthened reform agenda, new political leadership or a post-crisis recovery. The stocktakings also identify dynamics across cases that can be harnessed to spur state transformation. Reports on Greece, Malawi, Nepal, Puerto Rico, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste are available on the organization’s website.

The [Asia Foundation](#) has announced the [inaugural class of Pacific Women Climate Leaders](#), a 10-day fellowship program designed to recognize, support, and

amplify women's voices driving climate solutions across the Pacific region. The fellowship will bring three women climate leaders from the Pacific Islands to San Francisco for the Bioneers Conference and to New York City for climate diplomacy training. They will also meet with climate-focused donors and climate justice organizations in both cities. The fellowship also offers seed grants to translate the fellows' ideas into action. The three fellows selected for the 2024 class are from Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Tonga.