



Palestinians make their way with belongings as they flee their homes after the Israeli army issued evacuation orders in the Shujaiya neighborhood of Gaza City yesterday. Inset, a family leaves the Shujaiya neighborhood. Story on page 12.  
PHOTO: REUTERS

## AI could impact 40% of jobs: UN

AFP, Geneva

The global artificial intelligence market is projected to reach \$4.8 trillion – roughly the size of Germany's economy – by 2033, the UN said yesterday, warning nearly half of jobs worldwide could be affected.

While AI is transforming economies and creating vast opportunities, the technology also risks deepening existing inequalities, the UN trade and development agency UNCTAD warned in a report.

In particular, the report cautioned that "AI could impact 40 percent of jobs worldwide, offering productivity gains but also raising concerns about automation and job displacement".

While previous waves of technology mainly impacted blue-collar jobs, UNCTAD highlighted that knowledge-intensive sectors would be left most exposed by AI.

This means advanced economies will surely be hardest-hit, it said, adding though that these economies were better positioned to harness the benefits of AI than developing economies.

"The benefits of AI-driven automation often favour capital over labour, which could widen inequality and reduce the competitive advantage of low cost labour in developing economies," UNCTAD said.

In a statement, the agency chief Rebeca Grynspan underlined the importance of ensuring people are at the centre of AI development, urging stronger international cooperation to "shift the focus from technology to people, enabling countries to co-create a global artificial intelligence framework".

## Major child sexual abuse image platform busted

AFP, Berlin



German investigators said Wednesday that they had dismantled a major platform for the distribution of child sex abuse images with 1.8 million users worldwide in an international operation coordinated by Europol.

The move to shut down the "KidFlix" streaming service was "one of the biggest blows against child pornography in recent years, if not ever", said Guido Limmer, deputy head of the Bavarian criminal police.

The probe was led by German police and supported by authorities in 38 countries and was coordinated by Europol.

In all, "KidFlix" is said to have hosted more than 91,000 videos with images of child sex abuse, totalling around 6,288 hours of film, according to Bavarian police.

Authorities were able to identify almost 1,400 individual users of the platform, which was hosted on the so-called darknet.

Police in March carried out searches at locations in 31 countries in the "largest operation ever" organised by Europol, according to Limmer.

A joint raid by German and Dutch authorities resulted in the seizure of a hard drive with around 72,000 videos of child sex abuse.

In Germany, police carried out raids at 96 locations, targeting 103 individual suspects, the Bavarian criminal police said.

Police arrested a 36-year-old man in the eastern German city of Chemnitz in January 2024 who had searched for abuse images on "KidFlix". The man had also "offered his young son for games", Limmer said. The child had been handed over to child protection services.

Investigators had also been able to identify a "serial" abuser in the United States, Limmer said.

## Israel steps up strikes on key Syria structures

Says Ankara trying to turn Syria into a Turkish protectorate

REUTERS, Damascus/Jerusalem

Israel stepped up airstrikes on Syria overnight, declaring the attacks a warning to the new Islamist rulers in Damascus as it accused their Turkish allies of trying to turn the country into a Turkish protectorate.

The strikes, targeting air bases, a site near Damascus and the southwest, put renewed focus on Israeli concerns about the Islamists who deposed Bashar al-Assad in December, with Israeli officials viewing them as a rising threat at their border.

The Israeli army, which seized ground in the southwest after Assad was toppled, said its forces killed several militants who opened fire on Israeli troops operating in that area overnight. Syria's state news agency SANA said that Israeli shelling had killed nine people in the area.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said that the airstrikes late on Wednesday evening were "a clear message and a warning for the future - we will not allow the security of the State of Israel to be harmed".

Katz said in a statement that

Israel's armed forces would remain in buffer zones within Syria and act against threats to its security, warning Syria's government it would pay a heavy price if it allowed forces hostile to Israel to enter.

Reflecting Israeli concerns about Turkish influence in the new Syria, Foreign Minister Gideon Saar accused Ankara of playing a

aggression".

Israel bombed Syria frequently when the country was governed by Assad, targeting the foothold established by his ally Iran during the civil war.

The strikes late on Wednesday night were some of the most intensive Israeli attacks in Syria since Assad was toppled.



The Syrian foreign ministry said Israel struck five separate areas within a 30-minute window, resulting in the near-complete destruction of the Hama air base and wounding dozens of civilians and soldiers.

The Israeli military said it had struck remaining military capabilities at air bases in Hama and Homs provinces, in addition to remaining military infrastructure in the Damascus area, where Syrian media and officials said the vicinity of a scientific research facility was hit.

In Hama, a Syrian military source told Reuters a dozen strikes had demolished the runways, tower, arms depots and hangars at the military airport. "Israel has completely destroyed Hama air base to ensure it is not used," the source said.

"negative role" there, in Lebanon and other regions.

"They are doing their utmost to have Syria as a Turkish protectorate. It's clear that is their intention," he told a press conference in Paris.

The Syrian foreign ministry said the Israeli strikes were an unjustified escalation aimed at destabilising the country, calling on the international community to put pressure on Israel to "stop its

## 'Catastrophe' if Iran is attacked

Says Russia, terms US threats against its ally 'unacceptable'

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia yesterday said that threats of military strikes against its ally Iran were unacceptable and warned that attacking the Islamic Republic could lead to potentially catastrophic results if nuclear installations were bombed.

US President Donald Trump threatened Iran on Sunday with bombing and secondary tariffs if Tehran did not come to an agreement with Washington over its nuclear program, and the United States has moved additional warplanes into the region. Asked about Iran's nuclear programme and the dangers in the current situation, Russia's foreign ministry said that Moscow was committed to finding solutions to Iran's nuclear programme which respected Tehran's rights to peaceful nuclear energy.

"The use of military force by Iran's opponents in the context of the settlement is illegal and unacceptable," Maria Zakharova, spokeswoman for the ministry, told reporters.

"Threats from outside to bomb Iran's nuclear infrastructure facilities will inevitably lead to an irreversible global catastrophe. These threats are simply unacceptable."

Western powers accuse Iran of having a clandestine agenda to develop nuclear weapons capability by enriching uranium to a high level of fissile purity, above what they say is justifiable for a civilian atomic energy program. Tehran says its nuclear program is wholly for civilian energy purposes.

Russia and Iran signed a "comprehensive strategic partnership agreement" in January, though there is no mutual defence clause. Under the agreement, if one party is attacked, the other will not help the aggressor.

## Rubio reaffirms US commitment to Nato

Says Europe must spend more on defence

REUTERS, Brussels

The United States is as committed to Nato as ever but demands that European allies spend substantially more on defence, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said yesterday, while adding that the US would give allies some time to do that.

Rubio spoke as he met fellow Nato foreign ministers gathered in Brussels, with Europeans hoping he would dispel doubts about the US stance even with tensions rising over President Donald Trump's steep new trade tariffs.

The Trump administration's words and actions have raised questions about the future of Nato, the transatlantic alliance that has been the bedrock of European security for the past 75 years.

"The United States is in Nato ... The United States is as active in Nato as it has ever been," Rubio told reporters, dismissing doubts about that commitment as "hysteria".

Rubio added that Trump was "not against Nato. He is against a Nato that does not have the capabilities that it needs to fulfil the obligations that the treaty imposes

upon each and every member state."

Trump has said the military alliance should spend 5% of gross domestic product on defence – a huge increase from the current 2% goal and a level that no Nato country, including the United States, currently reaches.

Washington has also bluntly told European countries that it can no longer be primarily focused on the continent's security.

European allies have been anxiously seeking details on the timeframe and extent to which the US aims to reduce its engagement in Nato for weeks, in order to coordinate the process of a European defence ramp-up to avoid security gaps in Europe.

In Brussels, Rubio brought some element of response on that.

"We do want to leave here with an understanding that we are on a pathway, a realistic pathway, to every single one of the members committing and fulfilling a promise to reach up to 5% of spending," he said, adding that this included the United States.

"No one expects that you're going to be able to do this in one year or two. But the pathway has to be real."



Survivor Tin Maung Htwe is comforted by his sister as he receives treatment yesterday, a day after his rescue from the ruins of a hotel in Sagaing following the March 28 earthquake. Entombed under his hotel bed for five days in the debris, two things enabled teacher Tin Maung Htwe to survive Myanmar's devastating earthquake: old school lessons and his own urine.

PHOTO: AFP