

Trump unveils AI plan aiming for ‘global dominance’

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump unveiled an aggressive, low-regulation strategy on Wednesday to boost big tech's race to stay ahead of China on artificial intelligence and cement US dominance in the fast-expanding field.

Trump's 25-page "America's AI Action Plan" outlines three aims: accelerating innovation, building infrastructure, and leading internationally on AI.

The administration frames AI advancement as critical to maintaining economic and military supremacy. Environmental consequences are sidelined in the planning document.

"America is the country that started the AI race, and as president of the United States, I'm here today to declare that America is going to win it," Trump told an AI event in Washington.

Columbia Univ to pay \$200m in clash with Trump

AFP, New York

Columbia University said Wednesday it will pay \$200 million to the US government after President Donald Trump threatened to pull federal funding over what he said was its unwillingness to protect Jewish students.

In a sweeping deal that will restore the prestigious New York institution's federal monies, Columbia has pledged to obey rules that bar it from taking race into consideration in admissions or hiring, among other concessions.

"Columbia University has reached an agreement with the United States government to resolve multiple federal agency investigations into alleged violations of federal anti-discrimination laws," a statement said, adding that the \$200 million would be paid over three years.

The university will also pay \$21 million to settle investigations brought by US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, it said.

"Under today's agreement, a vast majority of the federal grants which were terminated or paused in March 2025 will be reinstated and Columbia's access to billions of dollars in current and future grants will be restored," the statement said.

Walking 7,000 steps a day a huge boost to health: research

AFP, Paris

People who walk 7,000 steps a day have a dramatically lower risk of a broad range of serious health problems, the largest review of the evidence yet said yesterday.

The most widely promoted target for people tracking their number of steps is 10,000 – but that figure reportedly originally came from a 1960s marketing campaign for a Japanese pedometer.

To find a more scientific target, an international team of researchers sifted through 57 previous studies that covered 160,000 people.

The results published in the Lancet Public Health journal found that walking 7,000 steps a day nearly halved people's risk of early death from all causes, compared to 2,000 steps.

The study also looked into health problems not previously covered by research into step counts.

Walking 7,000 steps a day was linked to people's risk of dementia falling by 38 percent, depression dropping 22 percent and diabetes decreasing 14 percent.

It was also associated with lower rates of cancer and falls, though the researchers warned this was based on less evidence. "You don't need to hit 10,000 steps a day to get major health benefits," Paddy Dempsey, a study co-author and medical researcher at Cambridge University, told AFP.

"The biggest gains happen before 7,000 steps, and then benefits tend to level off," he said.

While people's speeds vary widely, 7,000 steps adds up to roughly an hour of walking throughout the day.

Dempsey emphasised that people already managing 10,000 or more steps should keep it up.



Palestinians seeking aid supplies from the US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation travel in an animal-drawn cart near Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Hamas submits Gaza ceasefire response

Israel studies reply, continues air, ground strikes across enclave; 17 Palestinians killed

AGENCIES

Israel is reviewing a revised response from Hamas to a proposed ceasefire and hostage release deal, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said yesterday, as Israeli air and ground strikes continued to pound the Gaza Strip.

Hamas confirmed it had handed over a new proposal, but did not disclose its contents. A previous version, submitted late on Tuesday, was rejected by mediators as insufficient and was not even passed to Israel, sources familiar with the situation said.

Both sides are facing huge pressure at home and abroad to reach a deal, with the humanitarian conditions inside Gaza deteriorating sharply amidst widespread, acute hunger in the Palestinian enclave that has shocked the world.

A senior Israeli official was quoted by local media as saying the new text was something Israel could work with. However, Israel's Channel 12 said a rapid deal was not within reach, with gaps remaining between the two sides, including over where the Israeli military should withdraw to during any truce.

A Palestinian official close to the talks told Reuters the latest Hamas position was "flexible, positive and took into consideration the growing suffering in Gaza and the need to stop the starvation".

Since dawn yesterday, Israeli air and ground offensive across the enclave killed 17 Palestinians, medical sources told Al Jazeera Arabic. Three aid seekers are among the dead.

Dozens of people have starved to death in Gaza the last few weeks as a wave of hunger crashes on the Palestinian enclave. The World Health Organization said on Wednesday 21 children under the age of five were

among those who died of malnutrition so far this year.

Gaza is suffering man-made mass starvation caused by a blockade on aid into the Palestinian enclave, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

Turkey on Wednesday branded the Israeli parliament's vote calling for the annexation of the occupied West Bank an "illegitimate and provocative gesture aimed at undermining peace efforts".

Meanwhile, International news agencies Agence France-Presse (AFP), Associated Press (AP) and Reuters as well as the BBC called on Israel yesterday to allow journalists in and out of Gaza which is subject to a strict blockade, reports AFP.

"We are desperately concerned for our journalists in Gaza, who are increasingly unable to feed themselves and their families," the media groups said in a joint statement, adding: "We once again urge the Israeli authorities to allow journalists in and out of Gaza".

Israeli forces yesterday hit the central Gaza towns of Nuseirat, Deir Al-Balah and Bureij.

Health officials at Al-Awda Hospital said three people were killed in an airstrike on a house in Nuseirat, three more died from tank shelling in Deir Al-Balah, and separate airstrikes in Bureij killed a man and a woman and wounded several others.

Washington has been pushing the warring sides towards a deal for a 60-day ceasefire that would free some of the remaining 50 hostages held in Gaza in return for prisoners held by Israel, and allow in aid.

US Middle East peace envoy Steve Witkoff travelled to Europe this week for meetings on the Gaza war and a range of other issues. An Israeli official said Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer would meet Witkoff today if the gaps between Israel and Hamas over the terms of a ceasefire had narrowed sufficiently.

Gaza facing man-made 'mass starvation': WHO

Int'l media groups urge Israel to allow access to Gaza

Israeli vote to annex West Bank 'illegitimate': Turkey

India's crime agency probes Ambani's Reliance Group

REUTERS

India's financial crime-fighting agency searched 35 locations linked to Reliance Anil Ambani Group as part of an investigation into alleged money laundering and siphoning of public funds, a government source said yesterday.

The Enforcement Directorate alleges the group orchestrated a "well-planned" scheme to siphon off 30 billion rupees (\$350 million) in loans from YES Bank to many shell companies between 2017 and 2019, the source said.

Anil Ambani's Reliance group entities are accused of paying bribes to YES Bank officials before loans were disbursed, the source said, adding that loan approvals violated the bank's processes.

The probe also found gross violations in YES Bank's loan approval process, such as lending to companies with weak financials, backdating credit memos, "evergreening" loans - issuing fresh loans to avoid labelling assets as nonperforming - and misrepresenting financials.

Representatives for Reliance group and YES Bank did not respond to requests for comment.

SUMMIT WITH EU OFFICIALS

China's Xi calls for 'proper handling of frictions'

REUTERS, Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping urged top European Union officials yesterday to "properly handle differences and frictions" as he criticised Brussels's recent trade actions against Beijing at a tense summit dominated by concerns on trade and the Ukraine war.

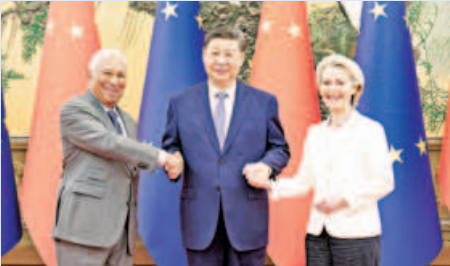
Expectations were low for the summit in the Chinese capital marking 50 years of diplomatic ties after weeks of escalating tension and wrangling over its format, with the duration abruptly halved to a single day at Beijing's request.

"The current challenges facing Europe do not come from China," Xi told visiting European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa, state news agency Xinhua said.

He urged the EU to "adhere to open cooperation and properly handle differences and frictions", after von der Leyen earlier called for a rebalancing of trade ties with the world's second largest economy, saying relations were at an "inflection point".

"Improving competitiveness cannot rely on 'building walls and fortresses', Xi added, according to Xinhua. "Decoupling and breaking chains' will only result in isolation."

"It is hoped that the European side will keep



- » Xi warns EU leaders to 'make correct strategic choices'
- » Von der Leyen says EU-China ties at 'inflection point'
- » Summit to tackle trade imbalance, rare earths, Ukraine

the trade and investment market open and refrain from using restrictive economic and trade tools," Xi said. During the meeting in Beijing's Great Hall of the People, von der Leyen told Xi, "As our cooperation has deepened, so have imbalances," according to a pool report.

"We have reached an inflection point," she added, urging China to "come forward with real solutions". She was referring to the EU's trade deficit with China, which ballooned to a historic 305.8 billion euros (\$360 billion) last year.

EU trade actions in the past year have targeted Chinese exports of EVs among other goods, and its officials have repeatedly complained about Chinese industrial overcapacity.

In a further veiled criticism of Brussels's recent hawkish stance on China, Xi also warned EU leaders to "make correct strategic choices".

The two EU officials are set to meet Chinese Premier Li Qiang later. Both sides hope to reach a modest joint statement on climate, now one of the rare bright spots in their cooperation.

At the start of US President Donald Trump's second term, both sides had more of a consensus in working together to tackle trade challenges from the US, said Cui Hongjian, a foreign policy professor at Beijing Foreign Studies University.

"Recently the situation has changed," Cui said. "The EU has continued to compromise with the United States, which means that there is currently a lack of impetus for EU-China ties to become closer."

TYPHOON CO-MAY

Philippines shuts schools, scraps flights

AFP, Manila

The Philippines shut down schools and cancelled flights yesterday as typhoon-driven rains pounded the northern island of Luzon, a situation President Ferdinand Marcos called "the new normal".

Typhoon Co-May, upgraded from a tropical storm overnight, follows days of monsoon rains that have killed at least 19 people and left another 11 missing across the archipelago since July 18, according to the national disaster agency.

With maximum sustained winds of 120 kilometres (75 miles) per hour, the typhoon was expected to make landfall on the west coast in either La Union or Ilocos Sur province by this morning, the country's weather service said.

Marcos said yesterday that climate change meant Filipinos needed to be thinking about how to adapt to a "new normal".



Migrants aboard a fiberglass boat listen to instructions from lifeguards on the NGO Open Arms rescue vessel Astral, in international waters south of Lampedusa in the Mediterranean Sea, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS