

INTERNATIONAL

AI can't be left to 'whims of a few billionaires'

UN chief tells global AI summit in India

AFP, New Delhi

UN chief Antonio Guterres yesterday warned technology leaders of the risks of artificial intelligence, saying its future cannot be left to "the whims of a few billionaires".

Speaking at a global AI summit in India, the UN chief called on tech tycoons to support a \$3 billion global fund to ensure open access to the fast-advancing technology for all. "AI must belong to everyone," he said.

"The future of AI cannot be decided by a handful of countries -- or left to the whims of a few billionaires," he added, warning the world risked deepening inequality unless urgent steps were taken.

"Done right, AI can...



accelerate breakthroughs in medicine, expand learning opportunities, strengthen food security, bolster climate action and disaster preparedness and improve access to vital public services," he said.

"But it can also deepen inequality, amplify bias and fuel harm."

The UN has set up an AI scientific advisory body to help countries make decisions about the revolutionary technology.

Guterres warned that people must be protected from exploitation, and that "no child should be a test subject for unregulated AI".

He pressed for global guardrails to ensure oversight and accountability, and the creation of "Global Fund on AI" to build basic capacity.

"Our target is \$3 billion," he told the conference, which includes national leaders as well as tech CEOs, including Sam Altman of OpenAI and Google's Sundar Pichai.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Members of the Iranian Army take part in a joint naval exercise with Russia in southern Iran, in this handout image released yesterday. Germany's military has "temporarily" moved some troops out of Erbil in northern Iraq because of escalating tensions in the Middle East.

GAZA STRIP, WEST BANK

Israeli actions raising 'ethnic cleansing' fears

Says UN report; Trump kicks off his 'Board of Peace'

AGENCIES

Israel's increased attacks and forcible transfers of Palestinians "raise concerns over ethnic cleansing" in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the United Nations said yesterday.

The UN human rights office said the cumulative impact of Israel's military conduct during the offensive in Gaza, plus its blockade of the territory, had inflicted living conditions "increasingly incompatible with Palestinians' continued existence as a group in Gaza".

"Intensified attacks, the methodical destruction of entire neighbourhoods and the denial of humanitarian assistance appeared to aim at a permanent demographic shift in Gaza", the office said in a report.

The report looked at November 1, 2024 to October 31, 2025.

Meanwhile, Hamas is cementing its hold over Gaza



by placing loyalists in key government roles, collecting taxes and paying salaries, according to an Israeli military assessment seen by Reuters and sources in the Palestinian enclave.

Hamas' continuing influence over key Gaza power structures has fuelled widespread scepticism about the prospects of US President Donald Trump's peace plan, which requires the group to give up its weapons in exchange for an Israeli military withdrawal from the territory.

Trump's international Board of

Peace, which is meant to supervise Gaza's transitional governance, was due to hold its inaugural meeting in Washington yesterday.

Instead of his cabinet officials, however, he will be joined by representatives from countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Hungary and even Belarus, which is a member of the board despite being under US and European sanctions for supporting Russia's war against Ukraine. However, several key allies are still staying away from membership.

The United States says that the plan has now entered its second phase with a focus on disarming Hamas.

At the "Board of Peace" meeting, Trump is expected to detail pledges of more than \$5 billion for Gaza, where the vast majority of buildings lie in rubble and the property-mogul-turned-president has improbably suggested developing resorts.

Russia 'always' stands by Cuba: Putin Slams US sanctions

AFP, Moscow

Moscow will "always" stand by Cuba, Russian President Vladimir Putin told Havana's Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez in Moscow on Wednesday, reiterating support for the Caribbean island struggling against sweeping US sanctions.

Rodriguez travelled to traditional ally Russia seeking help as his country reels from a severe fuel crisis, intensified by Washington's de facto oil blockade.

US President Donald Trump cut off key supplies of Venezuelan oil to Cuba after ousting Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro and has threatened sanctions on states that sell oil to Havana.

"We have always stood by Cuba in its struggle for independence and the right to follow its own path," said Putin, receiving Rodriguez in the Kremlin.

Do not give away Diego Garcia

Trump tells UK in fresh attack on Chagos deal

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that British Prime Minister Keir Starmer was making a big mistake by entering into a lease on the Indian Ocean Chagos archipelago that hosts the US-UK Diego Garcia air base.

Under a 2025 agreement, Britain will transfer sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius while retaining control of the strategically important Diego Garcia base under a 99-year lease.

"DO NOT GIVE AWAY DIEGO GARCIA!" Trump wrote in a post on Truth Social, saying the base could be called upon in any future military operation to "eradicate a potential attack" from Iran.

"I have been telling Prime Minister Keir Starmer, of the United Kingdom, that Leases are no good when it comes to Countries, and that he is making a big mistake by entering a 100 Year Lease with whoever it is that is 'claiming' Right, Title, and Interest to Diego Garcia," he added.

Responding to Trump's latest remarks, a British foreign office spokesperson said the deal was "crucial to the security of the UK and our key allies".

"The agreement we have reached is the only way to guarantee the long-term future of this vital military base," the statement added.

Trump's comments mark the latest in an Anglo-American diplomatic rollercoaster over the deal.

2024 INSURRECTION

Ex-South Korea president Yoon gets life in prison

REUTERS, Seoul

A South Korean court sentenced former president Yoon Suk Yeol to life in prison yesterday, after finding him guilty of masterminding an insurrection linked to his December 2024 attempt to impose martial law.

Prosecutors had sought the death penalty in the case, closely watched in a deeply divided country. It is the most consequential of a series of trials for the ousted leader, whose bid triggered a national political crisis and tested democratic resilience.

Yoon conspired with his then-defence minister, Kim Yong-hyun, to subvert the constitutional order by deploying troops to parliament, intending to paralyse its functions, Judge Jee Kuyoun told a packed courtroom.

"It is the court's judgment that sending armed troops to parliament ... and using equipment to try to make arrests all constitute acts of insurrection," he said, speaking for the panel of three judges.

Yoon led a number of officials and troops in criminal activities on December 3, 2024, Jee said.



It's not extortion, it's agreed upon

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mutual agreement, sometimes influenced by powerful owners or political groups.

"The workers' organisation of the party in power usually has dominance. But we cannot view those as extortion because they are doing it on the basis of mutual understanding," Rabiul said.

Slamming the minister's remarks, Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said, "His interpretation of extortion is directly contradictory to the pledges against corruption strongly announced by nearly every minister, including himself, the ruling party's election manifesto, as well as the head of the government's address to the nation less than 48 hours earlier."

He said irrespective of the way the minister has tried to defend extortion, he has clearly failed to consider that he is also justifying the passing of burden of such extortion and collusive corruption on the people.

"Unless the government wants this to be taken as a blatant example of how the ruling party may turn its anti-corruption pledges into eyewash, the minister must withdraw his statement immediately, and he should be held to account."

"It also confirms that a topmost

priority of the ruling party is to urgently determine how it can reform and cleanse itself in order to prevent normalisation of corruption from which people who voted them to power have suffered for too long."

Prof Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network

spent on welfare, which proves that it is not a competitive and transparent welfare fund, rather a reflection of political and organisational power, he added.

Prof Raihan also observed that when informal additional payments effectively become

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Iftekharuzzaman, TIB executive director



on Economic Modeling (Sanem), said the minister's statement is deeply questionable. "The reality is that the payment of such kind in the sector is often not voluntary but a result of structural pressure, organisational dominance, and power-related influence."

Even the minister himself admitted that the labour wing of the ruling party maintains dominance and that there is debate regarding how much of the collected money is actually

mandatory for entering, operating, or conducting business in a sector, it is not negotiation, but a systemic institutional failure.

Consequently, transport costs rise, which ultimately puts a burden on both goods and passengers, damaging overall economic efficiency. Even more alarming is that if the government hints at legitimising or accepting such informal collections, it weakens the foundations of the rule of law and accountability, he added.

Former UK prince Andrew

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"We understand the significant public interest in this case, and we will provide updates at the appropriate time."

The former prince, the second son of the late Queen Elizabeth, who is in police custody, has always denied any wrongdoing in relation to Epstein, and said he regrets their friendship.

But he has not responded to requests for comment since the latest

mass release of documents by the US government. Mountbatten-Windsor's office did not respond to a request for comment.

He becomes the first senior royal to have been arrested in this manner, and presents his elder brother with the biggest scandal of his reign.

"I have learned with the deepest concern the news about Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor and suspicion

of misconduct in public office," King Charles said in a statement, adding the authorities had the royals' "full and wholehearted support and cooperation".

"Let me state clearly: the law must take its course. As this process continues, it would not be right for me to comment further on this matter. Meanwhile, my family and I will continue in our duty and service to you all."

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Climate Change Trust
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Old Ban Bhaban, 101, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212.

Memo No-22.06.0000.120.14.093.2026-

Date: 16/02/2026

Invitation for e-GP Tender Notice (OTM)

Tender is invited under "Improving public health of coastal communities through supplying safe drinking water by smart water quality monitoring and purification systems to address the impact of climate change" in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of Goods and related service under following Tender ID:

Tender ID	Package Description	Publication Date and Time	Last selling Date and Time	Closing/Opening date and time
1217467	Wroks, Artificial Intelligence (AI) & IoT Sensors based Community, Level (4 nos) & Household Level (20 nos) water purification system with solar power and re-excavation of (4 nos) Pond at Kayra, Khulna & patharghata, Barguna.	16/02/2026 9:00 AM	15/03/2026 16:00	16/03/2026 15:00

There are online Tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender please register on e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP system portal and from e-GP (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Md. Mostafa Kamal)
Assistant Director (Mitigation)
Bangladesh Climate Change Trust
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Old Ban Bhaban, 101, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212.