

France, Britain extend 'one in, one out' migration deal

AFP | Paris, France

France and Britain have extended a "one-in, one-out" migrant swap deal until the start of October, a French minister said yesterday.

The scheme came into force in September last year and enables the UK to deport some of the migrants who are deemed not to have a right to stay after landing on its shores.

In return, Britain accepts an equal number of migrants from France who are likely to have their asylum claim granted, giving priority to nationalities most vulnerable to smugglers and those with ties to the UK.

"It has been decided with our British partner to extend this agreement until October 1, 2026," France's minister delegate for Europe, Emmanuel Haddad, told a parliamentary committee.

"As of May 1, there had been 606 readmissions t

Trump to attend upcoming NATO summit in Turkey

Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump will attend the NATO summit in Turkey in July, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said yesterday, amid lingering questions about Washington's commitment to the security alliance.

"The President himself will be attending the next NATO meeting of heads of state, where all these points will be made clear," Rubio told the House Foreign Affairs Committee, referring to the July 7-8 conference in Ankara. "We're still in NATO, but NATO needs significant changes."

Rubio described the summit as "probably the most important meeting in NATO's history."

OECD cuts 2026 global growth forecasts over Mideast war fallout

AFP | Paris, France

The war in the Middle East has dented economic growth prospects worldwide, with a more severe shock likely if no effective ceasefire is agreed before 2027, the OECD warned Wednesday.

Global economic growth is now forecast to slip to 2.8% for 2026 if Gulf exports of oil and gas return to pre-conflict levels in the third quarter, the group of 38 industrialised countries said in its quarterly update.

Previously the OECD had forecast full-year global growth of 2.9%.

But if the Mideast war continues into next year, however, global growth could slow to 2.1%, the OECD said -- well below the average annual growth of 3.4% seen from 2013 to 2019, before the Covid pandemic.

"The longer the disruptions last, the larger the economic and social costs become," the group's chief economist Stefano Scarpetta said in the report.

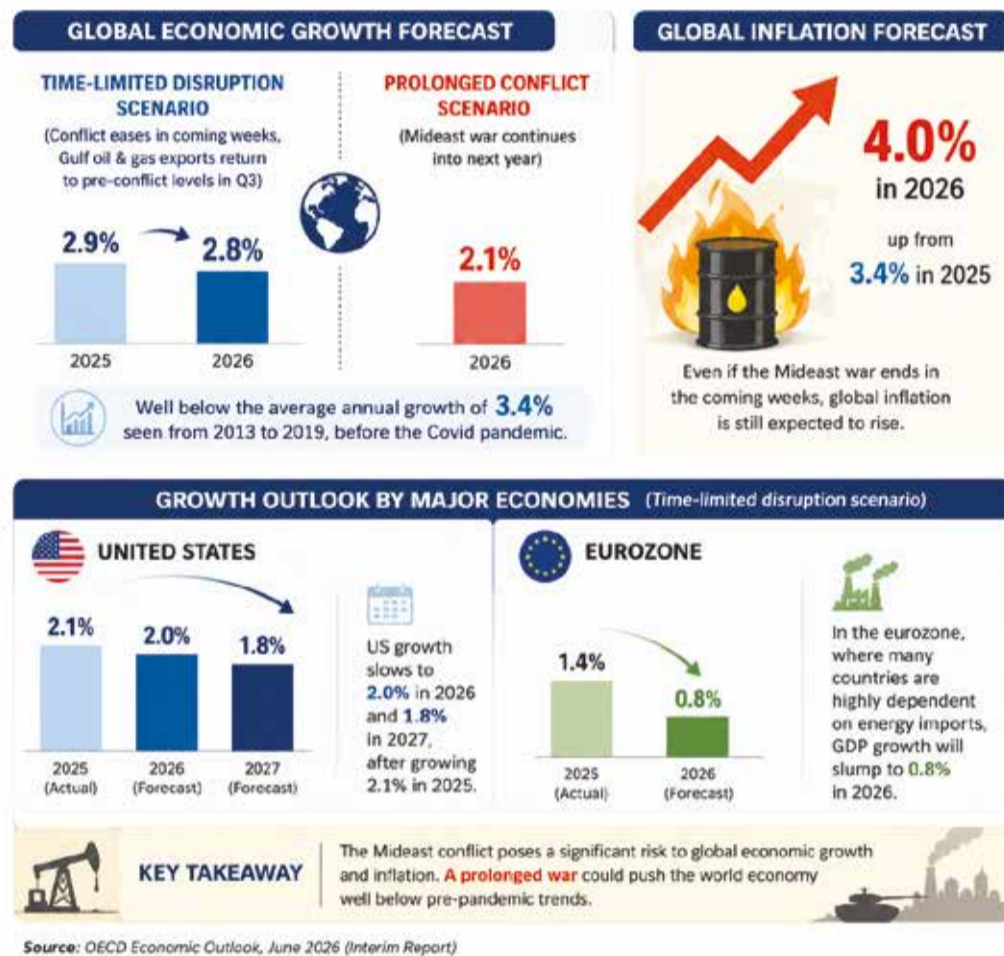
Many countries would risk falling into recession, he noted, and a drop in investment spending -- "including in energy-intensive AI" -- would likely push up unemployment.

Sustained high prices for energy as well as fertiliser and other key products from hydrocarbon production in the Gulf would weigh especially hard on developing countries that have "higher shares of energy and food in household consumption".

Even if the war sparked by US and Israeli strikes on Iran in late February ends in the coming

OECD FORECAST: GLOBAL GROWTH AT RISK

Mideast conflict could drag global economy well below pre-pandemic levels



weeks, the OECD forecast global inflation rising to 4.0% this year from 3.4% in 2025.

In this "time-limited disruption scenario", the group ex-

pects US growth to slow to 2.0% this year and 1.8% in 2027, after growing 2.1% last year.

In the eurozone, where many countries are highly dependent

on energy imports, GDP growth will slump to 0.8% this year after 1.4% last year, assuming a Mideast ceasefire is secured in the coming weeks.

South Korea's ruling party heads for local election sweep

AFP | Seoul, South Korea

South Korea's ruling Democratic Party is poised to dominate local elections held yesterday, leading in all but three

metropolitan races, official data shows.

The Democratic Party was leading in 13 of 16 metropolitan mayoral and gubernatorial races -- including Seoul -- as of early

Thursday with 52 percent of ballots counted, according to data from the National Election Commission.

The elections were widely seen as an early test of Pres-

ident Lee Jae Myung's first year in office. He took over after months of political upheaval triggered by his predecessor's declaration of martial law.

Microsoft unveils AI models in push for independence from OpenAI

Microsoft, the first company to have invested massively in OpenAI

FP | San Francisco, United States

Microsoft on Tuesday unveiled its own cutting-edge artificial intelligence models in San Francisco -- a crucial step toward reducing its dependence on OpenAI, the creator of ChatGPT.

Microsoft, the first company to have invested massively in OpenAI, has for several years been seeking to reduce its reliance on its Sam Altman-led partner.

It renegotiated their alliance last year and retains only a non-exclusive license on its technology until 2032.

But Microsoft chief Satya

Nadella has been saying it for years: he refuses to end up like IBM, the computing giant that backed the rise of Microsoft before being supplanted by the upstart company in the 1980s.

"It's important that we are self-sustaining and are not taking huge dependencies, as this is a very fast-moving, highly fluctuating environment," Sophie Lebrecht, who joined the group's AI team in March, said during a press visit to its Silicon Valley campus.

At its annual developer conference, Microsoft Build, the group unveiled MAI-Thinking-1, its first "reasoning" model -- AI systems that break down problems step-by-step before responding, similar to offerings from OpenAI, Google or Anthropic.

Microsoft says it built the model "from scratch" with "no distillation" of rival models -- a common shortcut that involves copying a competitor's outputs

to train a new system more cheaply and quickly.

The tool, still limited to a select group of customers, arrives roughly a year and a half behind pioneers such as OpenAI and Google.

Microsoft also unveiled other in-house models for generating images, transcribing audio, creating synthetic voices and coding. Joining the broader Silicon Valley craze, the group aims to ride the wave of so-called "agentic" AI, which has moved the technology beyond a simple chatbot to one that acts on your behalf.

From 'virus' to feature

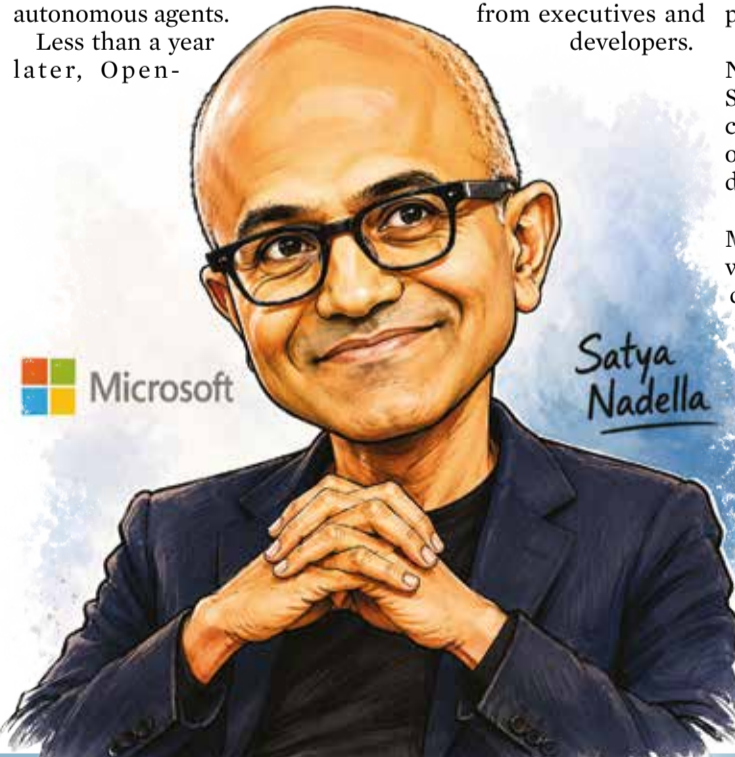
It unveiled Microsoft Scout, an "always-on" assistant -- for preparing meetings, managing schedules and drafting emails -- based on OpenClaw, the open-source software whose global popularity launched this wave in late 2025.

Nadella at the time called it

"a virus," with Silicon Valley alarmed by online security incidents triggered by the autonomous agents.

Less than a year later, Open-

Claw's Austrian creator, Peter Steinberger, took the Microsoft stage on Tuesday to applause from executives and developers.



Germany fails to gain seat on UN Security Council

United Nations, United States

Germany failed yesterday for the first time to secure a seat on the UN Security Council, with Portugal and Austria receiving more votes for the two Western European spots starting in 2027.

The UN Security Council has 15 members: five permanent (the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom) and 10 elected for staggered two-year terms, with seats allocated for different world regions.

In secret ballots cast by the General Assembly for the European seats, Portugal and Austria received 134 and 131 votes respectively, while Germany received 104.

Three die in British navy helicopter crash

London, United Kingdom

Three members of Britain's navy died in a helicopter crash in southwest England yesterday, the Ministry of Defence said in a statement.

The trio were onboard a Merlin Mk4 helicopter during a training exercise just before 4:00 am (0300 GMT) when it came down near Sourton village, in the county of Devon.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer described the deaths as "utterly tragic".

"My thoughts are with the families, friends and loved ones of the three members of the Royal Navy who sadly lost their lives this morning," he said.

Head of the navy General Gwyn Jones said an investigation had been launched into the cause of the crash.

Last month, Google unveiled its own autonomous agent, Gemini Spark, reserved for its premium US subscribers.

Microsoft also announced a Nvidia-powered mini-PC, the Surface RTX Spark Dev Box, capable of running AI models offline, as well as an AI platform dedicated to scientific research.

For bringing AI into the home, Microsoft unveiled its hardware bet: an ecosystem of Android-based devices designed to interact by voice with AI agents, without opening applications as on a computer or smartphone.

On stage, the company showed two prototypes: a desk speaker with a screen that recognizes you by face, displays your tasks for the day and can double as a computer once plugged into a monitor; and a wearable badge for conversing with your AI agent, developed with Qualcomm.