

Trump names tech titans to science advisory council
Washington, United States

President Donald Trump yesterday named some of the biggest names in US technology to his Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, assembling a roster that includes Meta founder Mark Zuckerberg and Google co-founder Sergey Brin.

The council, known as PCAST, will be co-chaired by Trump's AI and crypto adviser David Sacks and Michael Kratsios, a tech investor who previously served as the country's chief technology officer during the president's first term.

The list of appointees includes Oracle chief Larry Ellison and Silicon Valley heavyweight Marc Andreessen, as well as Nvidia boss Jensen Huang and Lisa Su of chipmaker AMD.

"The United States has the opportunity to lead the world in AI. I'm honored to join the president's council and work with other industry leaders to help make this happen," Zuckerberg said in a statement sent to AFP.

The Council, which has existed since president Franklin Roosevelt, is purely advisory: it produces reports and recommendations on topics the president directs it to study.

Hungary says will phase out gas deliveries to Ukraine

● **Orban -- who is facing parliamentary elections next month -- is blocking a European loan of 90 billion euros (\$104 billion) to Ukraine**

AFP | Budapest, Hungary

Hungary's prime minister said yesterday that Budapest would phase out gas deliveries to Ukraine, the latest salvo in the feud between the two countries over a damaged pipeline transporting Russian oil.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, whose country is a major gas supplier to Ukraine, has accused Kyiv of delaying repairs on the pipeline, effectively stopping the flow of Russian oil to Hungary and its neighbour Slovakia.

"To break the oil blockade and guarantee the security of Hungary's energy supply, new measures are now necessary," Orban said in a video posted on Facebook.

"We are gradually halting gas shipments from Hungary to Ukraine and storing the gas



An employee of the Ukrainian SkyFall company conducts a test flight with a PI-Sun interceptor drone at an undisclosed location in Ukraine on March 19, 2026, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

that remains here domestically. Until Ukraine supplies oil, it will receive no gas from Hungary," he added.

Ukraine said Hungary had not yet halted deliveries and that the only impact would be felt by Budapest from the lost revenue from gas sales.

"Ukraine knows where to obtain the required gas volumes even in the event that Hungary stops its supplies," Ukrainian foreign ministry spokesman Georgiy Tykhy told reporters.

Ukrainian officials insist the Druhba (Friendship) pipeline,

which crosses its territory, was damaged by Russian airstrikes on January 27.

Sanctions blocked

Hungary and Slovakia, which have obtained exemptions from the European Union to continue purchasing Russian oil, accuse Kyiv of dragging their feet to repair it.

In retaliation, Orban -- who is facing parliamentary elections next month -- is blocking a European loan of 90 billion euros (\$104 billion) to Ukraine.

Last week, European Com-

mission President Ursula von der Leyen announced that the EU would help reopen the Druhba pipeline. Budapest and Bratislava are also blocking the official adoption of new economic sanctions against Russia, endorsed by other EU countries.

According to analysts at the pro-government Hungarian Economic Research Foundation (Oeconomus), Hungary has become one of Ukraine's main gas suppliers.

Ukraine imported 2.94 billion cubic metres of gas from Hungary in 2025, the top source for Ukrainian imports, accounting for 45.5 percent of all Ukrainian imports, Ukrainian consultancy ExPro said in a report.



Ukraine's total gas consumption in 2025 was 21 billion cubic metres, the Dixi group consultancy said in a report in March, meaning Hungary accounted for 14 percent of Ukraine's total gas use in 2025.

Russia pulls more staff from Iran nuclear plant after reported strike

● **A projectile landed within the plant's compound**

AFP | Moscow, Russia

Russia has evacuated more staff from Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant after a reported strike on the compound Tuesday night, the head of Russia's atomic energy agency said yesterday.

Russia partially constructed the plant and its technicians help operate it.

A projectile landed within the plant's compound late Tuesday



Damage in the Iranian city of Isfahan after a strike on a building linked to Iran's defence sector.



The premises of Iran's Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant. (Courtesy of AIR)

but caused no damage, Iran's atomic energy organisation said, accusing the United States and Israel of attacking the plant.

"Today, at approximately 7:20 Moscow time (0420 GMT), 163 people left Bushehr for the Iranian-Armenian border," Rosatom CEO Alexey Likhachev was quoted as saying by the state RIA news agency.

"Right now, about 300 remain... Some people will stay. I think it will be a few dozen people who will oversee the equipment," he added in comments to reporters, including AFP. Rosatom had already withdrawn 150 people working at the plant, amid the threat of US and Israeli airstrikes.

It was in the process of building two new reactors at the plant when the conflict began.

Brazil unveils first locally made **supersonic fighter jet**

AFP | Gavião Peixoto, Brazil

Brazil yesterday unveiled the first supersonic fighter jet to be produced locally, placing it among a small group of countries able to build such advanced aircraft.

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva christened the F-39E Gripen fighter jet from the Swedish group Saab with champagne during a high-profile ceremony in Gavião Peixoto in the state of Sao Paulo.

The Brazilian presidency said the building of the supersonic jet was "unprecedented in Latin America."

"This project allows us to con-

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (4-L) poses with members of the Air Force in front of a supersonic aircraft during its unveiling ceremony in Gavião Peixoto, Sao Paulo state, Brazil,



solidate our deterrent power by enhancing our capacity to ensure national sovereignty and regional security," Brazil's Defense Minister Jose Mucio said during the ceremony.

Brazil has ordered 36 supersonic fighter jets from Saab, 15 of which will be manufactured at the facilities of the Brazilian aerospace manufacturer Embraer in Gavião Peixoto.

Brasilia opted for the Swedish aircraft over the Rafale from France's Dassault Aviation and the F/A-18 Super Hornet from US company Boeing.

The deal -- awarded in 2014 -- was plagued with corruption allegations. Lula was accused of receiving around one million dollars to help Saab win the tender during his first term in office.

However investigations in Brazil and Sweden were closed

with no evidence of wrongdoing found by Saab, while the case against Lula was dismissed.

Brazil has highlighted the importance of boosting defense capabilities in a turbulent geopolitical landscape.

Lula has criticized the war against Iran waged by the United States and Israel.

He has also denounced Washington's actions in Latin America, saying the US attack on Venezuela to oust president Nicolas Maduro crossed "an unacceptable line."

During an official visit by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa earlier this month, Lula warned both nations were at risk of foreign invasion.

"I don't know if comrade Ramaphosa realizes that if we don't prepare ourselves in terms of defense, one day someone will invade us," said Lula.

Ex-Google chief Matt Brittin made new BBC director-general
London, United Kingdom

The BBC named a former Google executive with no television or journalism experience as its next director-general Wednesday.

The long-expected appointment of Matt Brittin to the high-profile role comes as the under-fire British broadcaster faces drastic shifts in the media landscape and a \$10-billion lawsuit brought by US President Donald Trump.

Brittin, 57, said he was honoured to be appointed at a "moment of real risk, yet also real opportunity".

"Now, more than ever, we need a thriving BBC that works for everyone in a complex, uncertain and fast-changing world," he added.

The British-born executive was president for over a decade of Google's Europe, Middle East and Africa division, which earns around a third of its revenue. He had previously worked as a consultant for McKinsey.

Samir Shah, chairman of the BBC board, said Brittin "brings to the BBC deep experience of leading a high-profile and highly-complex organisation through transformation."

He "is an outstanding leader and has the skills needed to navigate the organisation through the many changes taking place in the media market," Shah added. Brittin's name has been circulating in the UK media for weeks, after the current director-general, Tim Davie resigned in November over the editing of a documentary about Trump.

The Times wrote that appointing a tech executive with no broadcasting experience "has raised some eyebrows". "While his experience in the world of big tech could be an advantage, Mr Brittin will have to quickly demonstrate a commitment to public service broadcasting," opposition lawmaker Caroline Dinenage said.