

SECTION 1 – TECH BUZZ

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



AI Future: SoftBank CEO's Vision

SoftBank CEO Masayoshi Son declared his belief that artificial intelligence (AI) will surpass human intelligence within the next ten years, emphasizing the urgent need for Japanese companies to adopt this technology or risk being left behind.

- Speaking at a corporate conference in Tokyo, Son stated that "artificial general intelligence will surpass the total intelligence of humankind by 10 times in 10 years."
- He highlighted the wide-ranging impact of AI across various industries such as transportation, pharmaceuticals, finance, manufacturing, and logistics. Son emphasized that companies and individuals embracing AI will emerge as leaders in the coming decades.
- As the founder of SoftBank and a prominent figure in Japan's business landscape, Son has a track record of successful technology investments.
- Having recognized the potential of the internet early on, he is now focusing on investments in AI-related companies.
- Expressing his desire to be on the side of progress, Son urged Japanese companies to embrace his vision of a future led by AI, cautioning against being left behind like obsolete high street shops.

- He encouraged the youth of Japan to awaken to the possibilities offered by AI technology.
- Son's vision aligns with the global perspective on AI. At the Hiroshima summit, Group of Seven leaders committed to promoting reliable AI, and Japan's government is actively engaging in international efforts to establish rules ensuring the responsible use of AI.
- Prime Minister Fumio Kishida acknowledged the potential of generative AI to enhance society's convenience but emphasized the need to address concerns related to disinformation, privacy, and copyright risks.
- Son urged Japan not to repeat past mistakes made during the internet age, emphasizing that some companies' hesitancy to adopt AI should not be driven by fears of data leaks or other potential risks.
- SoftBank, under Son's leadership, recently expanded its Nasdaq listing of its chip subsidiary, Arm Holding Plc, acquired in 2016. Son highlighted the strategic importance of this British unit in the development of AI technology, underlining its significance in SoftBank's AI initiatives.

Genpact Boosts GenAI Investments

Genpact is intensifying its dedication to Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), as stated by NV 'Tiger' Tyagarajan, the CEO of Genpact. Although clients continue to prioritize cost reduction and digital transformation, they are increasingly relying on Genpact to expedite their data journey.

- Genpact, listed on the New York Stock Exchange, boasts a workforce of over 115,000 employees, primarily located in India. In a recent interview with Ayushman Baruah of Business Standard, Tyagarajan discussed Genpact's investments in GenAI, acquisition strategies, and the evolving technology expenditure landscape.
- Genpact plans to invest \$600 million in AI over the next three years. This substantial investment will be distributed across three key areas. The first area is research and development (R&D) spending to develop innovative solutions.
- The second area involves capital allocation for strategic acquisitions. Genpact has a track record of acquiring companies deeply rooted in AI technologies, such as Rage Frameworks and Enquero. The third area of investment is training, as it is crucial to equip their workforce with the necessary skills to leverage AI effectively.
- Regarding the application of GenAI, Genpact employs it both for clients and internally. The company initiated its AI journey in 2015, focusing on AI, machine learning, and large language models. GenAI, including GPT 3.5 and 4.0, has been incorporated into their solutions.
- For instance, Genpact utilized GenAI to enhance efficiency in a competitive analysis project for an automotive client. By leveraging GenAI, the team could synthesize data and produce daily reports instead of weekly ones, covering 100 models of cars across 100 markets.
- Internally, Genpact is exploring various use cases, particularly in accelerating employee training. By using GenAI as a co-pilot, the training period for complex processes has

significantly reduced, enabling employees to start handling transactions within a matter of weeks.

- When it comes to mergers and acquisitions (M&A), Genpact's strategy revolves around industry focus areas, geographic markets, and services. Acquisitions are tailored to enhance capabilities in these specified domains. For instance, acquisitions like Barkawi Management Consultants in 2018 and Enquero have bolstered Genpact's expertise in areas such as supply chain management, sales, commercial services, and financial crimes & risk.
- In light of the global economic slowdown, there is a noticeable reduction in technology budgets across sectors, including Banking, Financial Services, and Insurance (BFSI). Clients are becoming increasingly discerning, demanding immediate and tangible benefits from technology investments. Genpact acknowledges this trend and emphasizes the need to demonstrate immediate value, especially in sectors like banking and consumer goods where discretionary spending has declined.

AI Revolutionizes Tiger Conservation

The tiger populations in the jungles of India and Nepal are experiencing a resurgence, but this positive trend has brought about new challenges. As these magnificent predators venture closer to villages, conservationists are in a race to mitigate potential conflicts. Artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a powerful tool in this endeavour.

- Researchers from Clemson University in South Carolina, along with several NGOs, recently published groundbreaking research on the use of AI-enabled cameras in tiger conservation efforts. These tiny devices were strategically placed around enclosures in India and Nepal to protect both villagers and tigers from poachers. The system, known as TrailGuard, utilizes AI algorithms to distinguish between tigers and other species, instantly relaying images to park rangers or nearby villagers.
- Eric Dinerstein, a key contributor to the research, emphasized the importance of coexistence between humans and wildlife. He stated that technology offers an affordable and efficient means to achieve this goal. The researchers reported TrailGuard's immediate effectiveness, citing instances where it detected a tiger just 300 meters from a village and identified a team of poachers. The system's ability to minimize false alarms, such as triggered traps caused by passing boars or falling leaves, is a significant achievement.
- The use of AI in wildlife conservation is not limited to tiger populations. In Gabon, researchers are employing AI to sift through camera trap images and develop warning systems for elephants.
- Meanwhile, teams in the Amazon are testing equipment capable of detecting deforestation-related activities, such as chainsaws and tractors. Additionally, Google collaborated with researchers and NGOs in the Wildlife Insights project, which automated species identification and labelling from millions of camera trap images, reducing the laborious workload for researchers.
- Conservationists like Dinerstein, who leads the tech team at the Resolve NGO, are optimistic about the role of technology in achieving their goals. Their overarching

objective is to designate 30 percent of the Earth's land and oceans as protected zones by 2030, with a long-term goal of increasing this figure to 50 percent.

- To accomplish this, an early warning system, like TrailGuard, is deemed critical. Despite the promising potential of AI, experts like Jonathan Palmer from the Wildlife Conservation Society emphasize the need for external verification of AI-generated species identifications.
- The debate continues about the most effective deployment of AI – whether it is best utilized in cameras at the scene or afterward on servers or laptops.
- Dinerstein remains focused on expanding the use of TrailGuard, targeting even larger animals like elephants. These majestic creatures often venture outside parks, causing significant conflicts by destroying crops, disrupting villages, and even leading to train accidents. Preventing such conflicts, Dinerstein believes, presents a tremendous opportunity through the application of AI technology.

VIRTUAL REALITY

Acropolis Augmented Reality Tour Experience

This holiday season, tourists visiting the Acropolis can witness the resolution of one of the world's most contentious debates on cultural heritage, all with the help of a smartphone. Thanks to an app supported by Greece's Culture Ministry, visitors can now explore the ancient Greek site with a digital overlay showcasing its original appearance.

- This innovative technology not only allows tourists to zoom in and out but also reveals fascinating details, such as the vivid colours that once adorned many of the sculptures and the presence of a shallow pool of water beneath the statue of goddess Athena in the Parthenon's main chamber.
- One of the app's significant features is the ability to virtually reunite the Parthenon's marble sculptures, which were removed more than two centuries ago and are currently displayed in the British Museum in London.
- By pointing their phones at the Parthenon temple, visitors can see these sculptures back in their original positions, offering a glimpse into the site's ancient splendor. For tourists like Shriya Parsotam Chitnavis from London, this immersive experience adds a new layer of appreciation for the Acropolis, making the visit more engaging and visually appealing.
- The app, named "Chronos" after the mythological king of the Titans and the Greek word for "time," utilizes augmented reality to superimpose the ancient site's impressions onto the screen, synchronizing seamlessly with the real-world view as visitors move around.
- This technology not only enhances the visitor experience but also addresses the challenges of overcrowding and long waiting times, offering an alternative way to explore the iconic monuments.
- Tourism plays a vital role in the Greek economy, and despite challenges like wildfires and the COVID-19 pandemic, the industry has shown remarkable resilience. The app not only provides a unique experience for tourists but also aligns with Greece's efforts to promote its cities as year-round destinations.

- The country's Ministry of Culture and national tourism authority, while late to embrace technology, are now enthusiastic advocates, recognizing its potential to enhance accessibility to Greece's ancient treasures.
- Developed by Greek telecoms provider Cosmote, the Chronos app is part of a growing trend in augmented and virtual reality technologies. As these technologies continue to advance, tourists can expect even more integrated and immersive experiences, including enhanced sharing options on tours and the overlaying of archival photos and videos.
- With ongoing developments in AR and VR, the future promises exciting and enriching experiences for visitors, bridging the gap between the ancient past and the digital age.

TECHNOLOGY

Exascale Computer Revolutionizes Research

Scotland's capital Edinburgh is set to become the home of a cutting-edge computer system poised to revolutionize fields such as medicine, clean energy, and artificial intelligence.

- The recently unveiled national exascale computer facility boasts remarkable capabilities, promising to expedite intricate tasks with unprecedented speed and accuracy.
- This technological marvel, hosted at the University of Edinburgh, equips researchers with the tools to expedite their work and delve into ambitious scientific ventures.
- Anticipated to drive significant progress in areas like nuclear fusion for generating clean, low-carbon energy, the supercomputer represents a significant leap forward in computational capabilities. By supporting research into AI safety and development, it paves the way for advancements that could shape the future of artificial intelligence.
- Science, Innovation, and Technology Secretary Michelle Donelan underscored the importance of enhancing the UK's scientific and technological prowess.
- She highlighted the government's £900 million investment in bolstering the country's computing capacity, emphasizing the potential of this exascale computer in enabling groundbreaking research on AI safety, life-saving drugs, and environmentally friendly energy solutions.
- The exascale system in Edinburgh eclipses current leading supercomputers, such as ARCHER2, being 50 times more powerful. This substantial boost in computing power is poised to create employment opportunities in the city, enhancing its economic landscape.
- UK Research and Innovation chief executive Dame Ottoline Leyser emphasized the critical role of state-of-the-art computing infrastructure in driving progress across various domains, from drug design to energy security and climate modeling.
- She highlighted the exascale system's potential to keep the UK at the forefront of emerging technologies and foster collaborative efforts that lead to groundbreaking insights.
- Scotland Secretary Alister Jack lauded the new exascale system, supported by the UK Government, for propelling Scotland to the forefront of scientific innovation.
- Recognizing the vital work accomplished by its predecessor, ARCHER2, Jack emphasized the system's dual impact: advancing AI safety research and stimulating economic growth by generating high-skilled jobs in Edinburgh.

- Overall, this exascale computer facility stands as a testament to the UK's commitment to scientific excellence, innovation, and driving positive change on a global scale.

GADGETS

Vivo Funtouch OS 14

Vivo has unveiled the latest version of its operating system, Funtouch OS 14, for international users. This Android-based system incorporates the features introduced in Android 14 but adds a unique touch from Vivo to enhance the user experience.

- Funtouch OS 14 focuses on improving various aspects, including memory management, multitasking capabilities, personalization, privacy, and security. It also introduces new video editing tools to enhance creativity and flexibility for users.
- One of the key features of Funtouch OS 14 is Smooth Envision, an innovative approach that enhances the overall OS experience. By optimizing RAM usage and reducing the number of persistent processes, Funtouch OS 14 improves system performance, responsiveness, and multitasking capabilities.
- The enhanced RAM Saver feature provides up to 600 MB of additional RAM space on devices with 8 GB RAM or more, making multitasking effortless. Additionally, the new App Retainer feature ensures that whitelisted apps are always restored to their last interface, allowing users to seamlessly continue their tasks.
- Visually, Funtouch OS 14 introduces Motion Blur on select smartphone models, using advanced algorithms to simulate motion blur when opening and closing apps on the home screen. This enhancement results in 18.7% smoother visual transitions on displays with a 60 Hz refresh rate.
- Funtouch OS 14 also elevates multitasking with an upgraded small window feature, allowing users to keep up to 12 small windows active in the background. The OS supports side-swipe suspension, providing users with greater control. In scenarios where users want to focus on one app while monitoring another, a new non-interactive mini small window mode has been introduced for convenience.
- Personalization options have been expanded in Funtouch OS 14, allowing users to customize the lock screen clock style, choose from various clock layout styles and font styles, and select from new always-on display styles and minimalist themes. The introduction of the MY color palette, based on Material You design, offers a simple and elegant monochrome theme with a variety of colours to choose from.
- Moreover, Funtouch OS 14 enhances video editing capabilities, enabling users to export videos in their original quality with customizable settings, including resolutions up to 4K at 60FPS. The OS also provides 25 filters for easy video editing, along with improved album browsing and viewing features, such as adjustable video playback speed, loop playback, full-screen playback, and screenshot options.
- In terms of privacy and security, Funtouch OS 14 introduces Smart Mirroring, allowing users to share their screens without worrying about revealing personal information through notifications. Hidden photos are now protected with an additional password verification step.

- Funtouch OS 14 will be available for download starting from mid-October on vivo X90 Pro and iQOO 11 smartphones. Vivo, as a technology company, is committed to creating innovative products and intelligent services, connecting humans with the digital world. The company's core values include user-orientation, design-driven value, continuous learning, and team spirit, with a mission to create value for society. With a global presence in more than 60 countries and regions, Vivo is loved by over 500 million users worldwide.
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SECTION 2 – GLOBAL AFFAIRS

MIDDLE EAST

ISRAEL

In a shocking turn of events, fierce clashes between Israeli forces and the Palestinian militant group Hamas continued unabated on Sunday, resulting in a devastating loss of life on both sides. The conflict, which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described as a "long and difficult war," was triggered by a surprise attack on Israel.

- Hamas initiated a massive onslaught on Saturday, launching a barrage of rockets and carrying out ground, air, and sea offensives. Israel's military reported that the attack had claimed the lives of more than 200 Israelis and left 1,000 others injured, marking one of the deadliest escalations in decades.
- Meanwhile, intense Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza Strip resulted in a Palestinian death toll of at least 232, with nearly 1,700 individuals sustaining injuries, according to Gaza officials.
- Throughout Sunday morning, intense gun battles persisted between Israeli forces and hundreds of Hamas fighters across 22 locations in Israel. Disturbingly, at least two of these locations involved hostage situations, adding to the gravity of the situation. The conflict's impact extended beyond Israel's borders when the Israeli army retaliated with artillery fire in southern Lebanon following an unidentified shot from the area, although specific details were not provided.
- Netanyahu, expressing the somber reality of the situation, remarked, "We are thrust into a prolonged and challenging war imposed upon us by a merciless attack from Hamas." The conflict, marked by its ferocity and tragic consequences, continued to unfold, leaving communities on both sides grappling with the devastating toll of violence.

EUROPE

RUSSIA

Russia, which was previously removed from the UN Human Rights Council due to its invasion of Ukraine, is attempting a comeback on Tuesday, a move that will test its international standing.

The UN General Assembly is set to vote on that day to elect 15 new members to the Geneva-based UN body, serving from 2024 to 2026.

- Traditionally, the council's 47 members are allocated by region, and large regional groups usually nominate their candidates, which are then approved by the General Assembly. However, this year, two regions face a challenge with more candidates than available seats: Latin America (Brazil, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Peru competing for three seats) and Eastern Europe (Albania, Bulgaria, and Russia vying for two seats).
- Moscow's bid has raised doubts, especially given the recent Russian missile attack on the Ukrainian village of Groza, resulting in over 50 casualties. The international community has expressed concerns about Russia's candidacy in light of this event.
- A spokesperson from the State Department, speaking anonymously, expressed hope that UN members would firmly reject Russia's candidacy, considering it preposterous in the current circumstances. The upcoming vote will not only determine the new members of the Human Rights Council but also serve as a significant indicator of international support for Russia's position in the global arena.

GERMANY

Germans voted in two key state polls on Sunday in a test for Chancellor Olaf Scholz's fractious coalition halfway through its term, while the resurgent far right might have gotten another boost.

- Almost 14 million people were eligible to cast ballots on Sunday in southern Bavaria, the country's biggest state, and western Hesse, with a surge in immigration and economic woes among key topics.
- With the voter base making up almost one in five of Germany's electorate, and both states qualifying as economic heavyweights among the country's 16 regions, the polls were seen as a crucial indicator of the population's mood.
- After forming a three-party coalition two years ago, Scholz had to contend with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the ensuing energy crisis, which plunged Germany into recession.
- Adding to its problems, the chancellor's coalition-comprising his centre-left SPD, the Greens, and the pro-business FDP-had been consumed by bitter infighting on issues ranging from climate laws to spending cuts.
- "The parties that formed the federal government were in a bad starting position here," Arndt Leininger, a political expert from the Chemnitz University of Technology, said.

NORTH AMERICA

UNITED STATES

New York City Mayor Eric Adams concluded his recent journey to Latin America with a significant appeal on Saturday, advocating for the "right to work" for migrants in the United States.

- His remarks were delivered in Necocli, a town in northern Colombia, where thousands of migrants embark on the challenging journey through the roadless Darien jungle into Panama, aiming to reach the U.S.

- Standing on a dock where migrants board boats bound for the jungle, Adams emphasized the need for regional collaboration to address the immigration crisis affecting the Americas, including cities like New York. He urged nations in the area to unite in finding viable solutions. Adams specifically called upon the U.S. government to establish legal pathways for migrants and asylum seekers to work in the country.
 - In Necocli, Adams praised Colombia's approach to assimilating individuals into their society, highlighting the significance of allowing people the opportunity to work. Addressing reporters, he stated, "Nothing is more humane and more quintessentially American than the right to work, and we firmly believe that this right should be extended."
 - New York City has been grappling with the challenge of providing emergency housing for the tens of thousands of migrants who have arrived this year. Adams, along with other city leaders, has been urging the federal government to expedite work authorizations for those migrants already residing in the city.
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SECTION 3 – MIXED BAG

MENTAL HEALTH

AI Therapy Debate Continues

Recently, a manager at the artificial intelligence company OpenAI sparked controversy by sharing her emotional conversation with the viral chatbot, ChatGPT. Lilian Weng's post on social media, where she contemplated the experience as a form of therapy, received backlash for allegedly trivializing mental health struggles. However, her perspective might find support in a recent study published in the Nature Machine Intelligence journal.

- Researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Arizona State University conducted a study involving over 300 participants interacting with mental health AI programs. The participants were informed differently about the chatbot: some were told it was empathetic, others manipulative, and a third group was told it was neutral. The study revealed that those who believed they were talking to a caring chatbot were more likely to trust their virtual therapists.
- According to Pat Pataranutaporn, a co-author of the study, "From this study, we see that to some extent, the AI is the AI of the beholder." The findings suggest that people's perceptions of AI significantly influence their trust in AI-driven therapeutic interactions.
- In recent years, AI-powered applications providing therapy, companionship, and mental health support have become a burgeoning industry. However, these developments have sparked concerns among critics. One major worry is that AI might replace human workers instead of complementing their efforts, especially in sensitive fields like mental health.

- Cher Scarlett, an activist and programmer, emphasized the importance of human involvement in therapy, stating, "Therapy is for mental well-being and it's hard work." Some individuals have expressed dissatisfaction with AI companions like Replika, citing issues of inappropriate behaviour and lack of empathy.
- The MIT/Arizona study shed light on the challenges of using chatbots for therapy. Participants likened the experience to "talking to a brick wall," highlighting the limitations of simulated empathy. Rob Morris, co-founder of the nonprofit organization Koko, shared similar concerns, noting that automated responses felt "weird" and "empty."
- Despite the criticisms, the concept of chatbots providing therapy traces back to the 1960s when ELIZA, the first chatbot, was developed to simulate psychotherapy. The MIT/Arizona researchers utilized both ELIZA and GPT-3 in their study, finding that positive priming influenced participants' perceptions of these chatbots.
- David Shaw from Basel University, who was not involved in the study, remarked that participants might not have been explicitly informed that chatbots sometimes provide inaccurate information. This lack of awareness might contribute to misplaced trust in AI systems.
- The study's authors emphasized the importance of shaping public narratives around AI. They argued that the way AI is presented to society significantly impacts how people experience it. To manage expectations effectively, it might be necessary to create more realistic or even negative priming for users interacting with AI.
- In conclusion, the debate surrounding AI-driven therapy continues, with the need for a nuanced understanding of its limitations and potential benefits. As technology advances, it is crucial to maintain a balanced perspective, ensuring that AI complements rather than replaces the human touch in fields as delicate as mental health support.

SPACE

Spanish Rocket Success

A Spanish aerospace company marked a significant achievement by successfully launching the nation's inaugural private rocket, a move that propels Spain into the league of space-faring countries. PLD Space, the company behind the venture, initiated the launch of the compact MIURA1 rocket at 02:19 am (0019 GMT) from a military facility in Andalusia, located in the southern region of Spain.

- The launch, deemed a triumph by PLD Space, met all its technical goals as the rocket ascended to an altitude of 46 kilometers (29 miles) above the Gulf of Cadiz. After a five-minute journey, the rocket safely landed in the Atlantic Ocean, where a recovery team from PLD Space was dispatched to retrieve it.
- Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez lauded the event as a "milestone" in a social media post, acknowledging the accomplishment of launching Miura 1, the first entirely Spanish-built rocket. He praised PLD Space, emphasizing that this achievement showcased Spain's prowess in research, development, and innovation in the field of space transportation.

- The launch of the 12-meter (39-foot) rocket faced delays earlier in the year due to adverse weather conditions in May and technical issues related to its umbilical cables in June.
- Despite these setbacks, the successful launch of MIURA1 represents the initial phase in the creation of MIURA5, a larger two-stage mini-launch vehicle standing at 35 meters high.
- MIURA5, set to debut in 2025, aims to deploy satellites weighing less than 500 kilograms (1,100 pounds) into orbit. Approximately 70 percent of the components designed for MIURA1 will be utilized in MIURA5, according to PLD Space.
- Under an agreement with the French National Centre for Space Studies, the mini-launcher will operate from the Kourou Space Centre in French Guiana, expanding its reach beyond national borders.
- PLD Space, established in 2011 by two Spanish academics, stands among several European startups engaged in the development of mini-satellite launchers.
- These compact rockets, unlike their larger counterparts like SpaceX's Falcon 9 or ArianeGroup's Ariane 6, offer versatility in launching single satellites and enable faster deployment, catering to the growing demand for launching micro-satellites into orbit.

NOBEL PRIZE

2023 WINNERS

The laureates of the 2023 Nobel Prize represent an impressive array of disciplines, each distinguished by their exceptional contributions to humanity. Their groundbreaking work has not only deepened our understanding of the world but has also paved the way for solving some of our most urgent global challenges.

- Established by the visionary Swedish industrialist and inventor Alfred Nobel, the Nobel Prize stands as the world's most esteemed recognition, celebrating remarkable achievements in physics, chemistry, medicine, literature, peace, and economics. Annually awarded by the Nobel Foundation, the 2023 prize amounts to 11.0 million Swedish kronor (SEK) per full Nobel Prize recipient.
- In the field of Physiology or Medicine, Katalin Karikó and Drew Weissman have been honoured for their pioneering research in mRNA vaccines, a groundbreaking advancement with far-reaching implications for healthcare and disease prevention.
- The Physics category recognizes Pierre Agostini, Ferenc Krausz, and Anne L'Huillier for their experimental techniques generating attosecond pulses of light. Their methods have revolutionized the study of electron dynamics in matter, offering unprecedented insights into the fundamental processes of the physical world.
- The Chemistry laureates, Mounji G. Bawendi, Louis E. Brus, and Alexei I. Ekimov, have been acknowledged for their discovery and synthesis of quantum dots, opening new horizons in nanotechnology and materials science.
- In Literature, Jon Fosse has been lauded for his innovative plays and prose, offering a voice to the unspoken and enriching the literary landscape with his unique perspective.

- The Peace Prize has been awarded to Narges Mohammadi, recognizing her courageous fight against the oppression of women in Iran and her relentless advocacy for human rights and freedom for all. Her unwavering commitment to justice and equality has inspired change and hope in the face of adversity.
- The 2023 Nobel Prize laureates, hailing from diverse backgrounds and fields, stand as a testament to the power of human intellect and determination in shaping a better future for all.

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