



## SECTION 1 – TECH BUZZ

### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



#### AI Revolutionizes Ad Testing

The practice of advertising testing has long been a staple in the toolkit of marketers seeking to understand consumer responses to ads. Typically, this involves employing standard survey methods where respondents are questioned about their ad recall, preferences, and potential future purchase intentions before the ad is officially launched.

- However, traditional ad testing methods have their limitations, primarily due to their declarative, survey-based nature. There is a growing need for an alternative approach that not only provides valuable insights but also drives sales and establishes a sustainable competitive advantage.
- In response to this challenge, Mars, a company with a rich tradition as a family-owned business, developed its own innovative method for assessing ad effectiveness. This method combines consumer behavioural data with the power of artificial intelligence (AI).
- Mars utilized a variety of behavioural data, including eye-tracking, facial expressions, skin conductivity, EEG, and more. These data points were then analysed using sophisticated AI algorithms, which allowed the company to establish meaningful connections between these behavioural benchmarks and actual sales success. The result

was an impressive 85% accuracy in predicting whether ads were likely to convert into sales.

- Mars' unique approach to ad testing, known as Agile Creative Expertise (ACE), is powered by AI and places a strong emphasis on analysing the emotional responses of a test audience as they watch a video ad. Traditional metrics such as skip and click-through rates are also taken into account. Mars partnered with individuals who consented to be tracked and compensated for their participation, ensuring ethical data collection practices.
- To validate ACE's credibility, Mars correlated the ACE ratings with sales predictability. Content was rated on a scale from 1-Star (no impact on sales) to 4-Star (more than 15% impact on sales and in the top quintile of all content in the category). ACE significantly outperformed previous methods, with over 70% of the content rated 3- or 4-Stars after its implementation.
- Mars' extensive validation process involved testing ACE on more than 4,000 ads, confirming its ability to accurately predict sales responses. This innovative approach proved not only more predictive of in-market success but also faster and more cost-effective compared to traditional methodologies.
- Despite exploring other technology-based solutions, Mars found that ACE's non-invasive approach provided superior insights into consumers' attention and engagement.
- Since its launch in 2020, ACE has been widely adopted within Mars. Over the span of 20 months, the company completed more than 1,000 projects in over 25 countries. This widespread adoption helped Mars enhance the effectiveness of its digital advertisements on various platforms, resulting in an impressive additional \$30 million in sales.
- Looking to the future, Mars firmly believes in the continued evolution and value of AI in ad testing. By harnessing AI-driven tools that mimic real consumer behaviours, such as eye-tracking, and by utilizing AI to determine attention patterns, marketers can optimize ads more effectively.
- The potential even exists for AI to autonomously make real-time optimizations, marking an exciting prospect for the future of advertising research.
- In conclusion, while AI undoubtedly plays a significant role in the realm of ad testing, Mars recognizes the enduring importance of human input. Advertising is, after all, a blend of science and art.
- Consumer perspectives and insights will always remain crucial, and Mars is committed to creating adverts and digital content that resonate deeply with audiences, bridging the gap between technology and human connection in the ever-evolving world of advertising.

## **AI Helps Neuroscientists Understand Depression Better**

AI is revolutionizing the field of neuroscience, providing invaluable insights into the complexities of conditions like depression. A recent study showcased the integration of explainable AI algorithms, allowing researchers to comprehend AI decision-making processes.

- These algorithms unveiled distinct brain patterns differentiating a "depressed" brain from a "recovered" one. According to Erin Solovey, an associate professor at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, the intersection of AI and brain research is mutually influential,

with AI methodologies uncovering intricate patterns within vast datasets, previously inaccessible.

- In a collaborative effort by Emory University, Georgia Institute of Technology, and the Icahn School of Medicine, researchers explored brain activity in patients undergoing deep brain stimulation (DBS), a groundbreaking treatment utilizing brain-stimulating electrodes.
- By analysing data from these electrodes, the team identified a unique brain activity pattern indicative of recovery, serving as a biomarker for disease improvement. This method, akin to a brain pacemaker, employs electrical pulses to mitigate depression symptoms, a technique still in its nascent stages for depression treatment.
- The AI tools not only detected shifts in brain activity correlating with recovery but also identified changes in facial expressions, surpassing the accuracy of existing clinical scales.
- This study forms part of a broader trend where AI is enhancing our understanding of the brain's mechanisms. The parallels between neural language processing and large language models, like GPT, are noteworthy. Both systems predict subsequent words based on input, a principle elucidated with AI assistance.
- Additionally, AI aids in reconstructing high-resolution images from brain activity, enabling remarkable feats such as "mind-reading." The brain, often regarded as a "black box" due to limited understanding, finds its counterpart in AI systems, providing scientists with a manipulable model to simulate intricate brain functions.
- Unlike human brains, AI systems can be ethically manipulated, allowing researchers to explore diverse training goals and data, enabling comparisons with the human brain and identifying similarities and disparities.
- Looking ahead, advancements in hardware are enabling non-intrusive real-world sensing of brain signals, enhancing our ability to monitor cognitive processes in real-time.
- These developments hold promise for AI tools capable of monitoring health, boosting well-being, and augmenting human performance.
- The synergy between AI and neuroscience propels both fields forward, unlocking unprecedented possibilities in understanding and addressing complex brain-related conditions.

## **Google-Cambridge AI Partnership**

Google and the University of Cambridge have entered into a collaborative research partnership, marked by a significant grant from the tech giant. This long-term agreement aims to foster cooperation between Google's researchers and Cambridge scientists in the responsible development of artificial intelligence (AI) for the benefit of society.

- Google has become the inaugural funding partner for Cambridge's Centre for Human-Inspired Artificial Intelligence, a research hub delving into various areas such as responsible AI, robotics, human-machine interaction, healthcare, economic sustainability, and climate change. This partnership stands as a testament to the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration between academia and industry in driving AI innovation.

- The collaboration holds particular significance as the UK gears up to host an AI safety summit. This event, slated for the next month, will bring together governments, researchers, and tech giants to discuss the potential opportunities and concerns surrounding AI technology.
- Commenting on this partnership, Technology Secretary Michelle Donelan emphasized the vast opportunities presented by AI, from economic growth and job creation to improving the quality and longevity of people's lives.
- She underscored the need for collaborative efforts between business and academia to ensure the safe and responsible development of AI technologies. Donelan praised the Google-Cambridge partnership, highlighting its role in promoting innovation fundamental to this critical technology.
- Google's EMEA President, Matt Brittin, acknowledged AI's immense potential in enhancing lives globally, whether by simplifying daily tasks or addressing significant societal challenges.
- He stressed the importance of collaborative initiatives with leading academic institutions like Cambridge to conduct bold, responsible AI research tailored to meet the needs of people in the UK and beyond. Brittin reaffirmed Google's commitment to the UK as a global leader in AI and technology.
- Professor Anna Korhonen, the Director of the University of Cambridge Centre for Human-Inspired Artificial Intelligence, expressed the center's dedication to prioritizing people in the development of new AI technologies.
- She emphasized Google's pivotal role as the first funding partner, enabling the center to engage in groundbreaking interdisciplinary research. Professor Korhonen highlighted the ongoing importance of such partnerships between academia and industry, emphasizing their crucial role in the successful evolution of human-inspired AI.

## **VIRTUAL REALITY**

### **VR Eases Cancer Pain**

A recent study conducted by researchers from Queen's University Belfast suggests that virtual reality (VR) could be a promising solution to alleviate pain and distress among cancer patients. The study also indicates that VR might offer benefits to individuals dealing with various long-term conditions.

- The researchers delved into existing studies spanning the years 1993 to 2023, exploring the application of VR in aiding patients with chronic illnesses. VR allows individuals to immerse themselves in a digital world, detaching from their physical surroundings. This immersion is achieved through various tools, including head-mounted devices that create a 360-degree digital environment, enhancing the user's sense of presence in the virtual realm.
- These studies examined different types of immersive VR interventions, both environment-based and game-based. Some interventions aimed to relax patients before medical treatments, incorporating elements of nature walks and mindfulness meditation.

Others focused on equipping patients with specific skills or behaviours to help them better manage their conditions.

- The findings revealed that immersive VR experiences had positive effects on anticipatory anxiety symptoms and pain among cancer patients. Moreover, the research demonstrated that these "relaxing and engaging immersive VR interventions" were not only acceptable but also feasible for individuals dealing with cancer, dementia, cardiovascular disease, kidney disease, and multiple sclerosis.
- The authors of the study noted in the BMJ Supportive and Palliative Care journal that VR interventions have the potential to enhance both physical and psychological well-being among patients. The research strongly suggests that VR interventions could be effective in reducing pain and distress, especially in the context of cancer.
- In essence, this study underscores the potential of virtual reality as a valuable therapeutic tool, offering relief and support to individuals grappling with the challenges of chronic illnesses, particularly cancer.

## TECHNOLOGY

### **Big data plays key role in transforming Education**

The landscape of education is undergoing a profound transformation, with technology at the forefront of change. Traditional teaching methods, scientific research, campus management, and school services are evolving rapidly. We've moved beyond blackboards to multimedia tools, from fixed locations to flexible, anytime, anywhere learning, and from one-way lectures to student-centric interactions.

- Scientific research now relies heavily on complex computing tasks, utilizing high-performance computing, data analytics, big data, and artificial intelligence.
- Big data plays a pivotal role in refined management and decision-making, enabling administrators to access real-time information for improved services. Moreover, there's a shift towards centralized, one-stop campus services to enhance the experiences of both faculty and students.
- In response to these shifts, the industry is actively exploring the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in education. Technologies like knowledge graphs and big data enable personalized learning, while 5G and cloud computing facilitate accessible hybrid learning. However, challenges such as scattered construction, data silos, and outdated ICT infrastructure hinder progress, demanding innovative solutions from industry stakeholders.
- As a leading global ICT solutions provider, Huawei advocates for people-oriented education, striving to integrate technologies such as cloud computing, big data, and artificial intelligence into the entire education process. Huawei's Intelligent Education Solution utilizes advanced ICTs to provide intelligent interactions, connections, platforms, and applications, supporting digital transformation in teaching, research, management, and services.
- In this digital transformation journey, education administrators play a crucial role. Centralized planning and high-level guidelines, as outlined in national policies like

China's Mid- and Long-Term Development Plan for Education Informatization (2021-35) and the 14th Five-Year Plan for Education Informatization, are vital.

- These policies set differentiated informatization goals for various education levels, fostering the setup of the informatization environment, including networks, cloud platforms, content, and standards. For basic education, schools often lack strong ICT capabilities, necessitating support from education management departments for common ICT infrastructure construction.
- Huawei proposes the concept of a "digital education community" to create a comprehensive education resource connection and collaboration. This concept leverages advanced cloud, network, edge, and device technologies to facilitate full-cycle operation and continuous evolution.
- Huawei's "Five Ones" intelligent education technical architecture includes one screen, one network, one cloud, one platform, and one portal. The "one screen" concept represents various display terminals crucial for human-machine interaction, while "one network" integrates wired, wireless, office, and IoT networks to create a secure, stable, and intelligent network.
- The "one cloud" approach centralizes standards and services for smart learning, teaching, research, evaluation, management, and campus, enhancing teaching and learning quality. "One platform" breaks data silos, enabling agile innovation of education services, and the campus intelligent operation center and super app function as a unified portal for centralized operation and management.
- Huawei's expertise in ICT has enabled it to serve education ministries, universities, and research institutes globally. By partnering with industry leaders, Huawei continues to integrate big data, artificial intelligence, and cloud technologies into education, driving high-quality education development through digital transformation.

## ROBOTICS

### KEENON Unveils Innovative Robots

KEENON Robotics, a renowned global innovator in commercial service robotics, has introduced four groundbreaking products at HostMilano in Italy, a premier event in the hospitality sector held from October 13th to 17th. This launch event signifies a significant achievement for the emerging brand, which has been rapidly gaining ground in the European market.

- HostMilano, a prestigious event in the hospitality industry, serves as a prominent platform for leaders and innovators to showcase the latest trends. At Booth No. A63 B66 Pavilion 11P, KEENON unveiled its cutting-edge robotic solutions to the European market. The event included live-streamed product demonstrations for the public and exclusive activities such as a Partner Meeting and Exclusive Aperitivo on the 16th.
- KEENON's robots stand out due to their self-developed, fully autonomous positioning and navigation system, coupled with highly sensitive perception and obstacle avoidance technologies. Additionally, they feature an auto-charging function, making them adaptable in complex real-world scenarios, ensuring safe, reliable, and efficient services. The newly launched products are as follows:

- **DINERBOT T10:** This robot boasts advanced sensor fusion, a movable head with customizable accessories, multi-modal interactions through voice, touch, and vision, and a large 23.8-inch screen display for advertisements.
  - **DINERBOT T9 Pro:** Designed for casual dining situations, this "grab-and-go" delivery robot facilitates seamless food pickup services from waiters to customers, enhancing efficiency.
  - **DINERBOT T3:** Tailored for private dining rooms, this robot addresses the demand for reliable robot-assisted deliveries over long distances and heightened privacy requirements.
  - **KLEENBOT C30:** Marking KEENON's entry into the cleaning robot market, this product offers professional cleaning, portability, agility, and cloud-based management capabilities.
  - Mr. Jim Huang, General Manager, EMEA at KEENON Robotics, discussed the company's growth strategy during the event. He stated, "Since 2022, we have established two subsidiaries in the region to offer localized services within key markets and build local business partnerships. Over the past year, we have experienced remarkable growth in the European and Middle Eastern markets, earning widespread recognition from our partners. A recent report by IDC highlighted KEENON's successes, citing its 60.4% market share in China's catering industry."
  - Looking ahead, KEENON Robotics is dedicated to further growth by nurturing local markets in the EMEA region, developing innovative technologies, fostering partnerships, and utilizing intelligent technology to cater to an increasingly diverse range of customer needs.
  - About KEENON Robotics: KEENON Robotics, a global leader in commercial service robots and solutions, has been a frontrunner in the advanced service robot market since 2010. The company operates in over 60 countries, serving various sectors and 600 cities worldwide. By harnessing cutting-edge technologies in robotics and cloud computing, KEENON Robotics is trusted by businesses globally. The company is committed to creating value, driving innovation, and contributing to the growth of the industry.
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## SECTION 2 – GLOBAL INFO

### EUROPE

#### POLAND

After years of strained relations due to concerns about Warsaw's perceived democratic decline, the European Union celebrated the apparent triumph of Poland's pro-EU opposition in a recent weekend election. Manfred Weber, the leader of the European People's Party, the largest group in the European Parliament, enthusiastically declared, "Poland is back," in Strasbourg.

- This statement was met with applause, reflecting the collective sigh of relief within EU institutions as they anticipated a shift in the political landscape of the bloc's sixth-largest economy.
- This shift marked a departure from the nationalist-populist stance upheld by the outgoing government, which had openly challenged Brussels on several occasions.
- While the vote counting was still underway in Poland, the European Commission, in its capacity as the executive body of the EU, struck a more cautious tone.
- With over 80 percent of the votes counted, the nationalist Law and Justice Party (PiS) emerged as the leading party after the election, albeit without a majority, securing 37 percent of the votes.
- On the other side, the opposition parties, led by prominent figure Donald Tusk, a former European Council president, appeared poised for victory, collectively receiving 52 percent of the votes.
- The prospect of a pro-EU government in Poland was met with optimism in Brussels and other EU capitals, signalling a potential shift towards a more cooperative and collaborative approach within the bloc.
- The victory of the opposition parties, with their clear commitment to European integration, hinted at a renewed sense of unity and alignment with the broader European project. EU officials and leaders cautiously welcomed this development, hoping for a positive and constructive partnership with the newly elected administration in Poland.

## ASIA

### CHINA

Russian President Vladimir Putin landed in China on Tuesday to meet his close ally, President Xi Jinping, aiming to strengthen their relationship amid the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict.

- China is currently hosting representatives from 130 countries for a summit on President Xi's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), focusing on trade and infrastructure development.
- Putin's presence at the summit is significant, marking his first major international visit since his regime faced international isolation due to the Ukraine invasion. On Wednesday, he is scheduled to hold discussions with President Xi on the sidelines of the forum.
- The talks are expected to cover various international and regional matters, although specific details were not provided in the Kremlin's statement.

## MIDDLE EAST

### ISRAEL

US President Joe Biden is set to express solidarity with Israel during his upcoming visit, announced Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

- The decision follows recent Hamas attacks, prompting intensive discussions between Blinken and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

- The talks were interrupted by air sirens, leading the officials to seek shelter in a bunker, underscoring the gravity of the situation.
- During his visit, President Biden aims to reaffirm the unwavering support of the United States for Israel and its unequivocal commitment to Israel's security.
- Blinken emphasized Israel's right and responsibility to defend its citizens from terrorist organizations like Hamas and prevent future attacks.

## **SOUTH AMERICA**

### **VENEZUELA**

Venezuela's government and opposition have announced their decision to resume talks aimed at resolving the nation's political and economic turmoil, marking the end of a nearly year-long hiatus.

- In a joint statement released on Monday, both parties confirmed that the negotiations, facilitated by Norway, would recommence on Tuesday in Bridgetown, Barbados.
- Notably, these discussions will include the participation of the United States, a nation that has become a destination for millions of Venezuelans seeking refuge from economic hardships in their homeland.
- During his weekly television address, President Nicolas Maduro expressed optimism about the impending talks, stating that his government was on the brink of initiating a new round of agreements with the opposition.
- He emphasized the potential benefits of these agreements for the country, underscoring their significance for maintaining peace and the upcoming elections.
- The opposition, supported by several countries, including the United States, had refused to acknowledge Maduro's 2018 re-election, a vote widely criticized for its alleged fraudulence.
- In response, Washington had escalated sanctions against Caracas, initially imposed in 2015 due to the harsh suppression of anti-government protests.
- Now, with the resumption of talks, there is a glimmer of hope for a resolution to the longstanding political and economic crisis plaguing Venezuela.

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## **SECTION 3 – MIXED BAG**

### **ASTRONOMY**

#### **Chaco Canyon Solar Eclipse**

Solar eclipses, events that span ages but occasionally reverberate across millennia, granted a rare spectacle on Saturday, October 14 at precisely 10:34 a.m. MDT (Mountain Daylight Time (MDT) is a North American time zone).

- During this moment, a captivating "ring of fire" graced the sky above Chaco Culture National Park in New Mexico for a duration of 4 minutes and 48 seconds. This celestial

marvel unfolded above the ancient kiva and great houses of the Puebloan people, who revered Chaco Canyon as a significant center between AD 850 and 1250.

- In this remarkable setting adorned with solstice, equinox, and lunar cycle markers, Chaco Canyon stands testament to ancient sun-watching traditions that persist to this day.
- On that memorable morning, as the clock ticked towards 6 a.m., the dark dirt road leading to this remote site flickered with red taillights. With only 150 parking spots available, a race against time ensued, urging enthusiasts to secure a spot near the archaeological sites by 9:12 a.m.
- Despite the challenges of navigating the rugged road 7950, weather-worn by recent heavy rains, the journey seemed to erase the traces of the 21st century. Along the way, a welcoming committee of elk greeted visitors, followed by park rangers distributing precious car parking permits.
- By 8 a.m., enthusiasts found themselves parked beside Casa Rinconada, home to the grandest kiva house of them all.
- This celestial spectacle wasn't the first of its kind in Chaco Canyon. The last annular eclipse in the U.S., witnessed in 2012, left an indelible mark on the canyon.
- Yet, centuries ago, when the ancestral Puebloan civilization thrived, several eclipses graced these skies. One such event, possibly recorded in stone, came to light in 1992. The "Rock of the Sun" petroglyph, nestled on a boulder adorned with other ancient images, seemed to capture the essence of a total solar eclipse, with intricate loops surrounding a round object reminiscent of the solar corona during an eclipse.
- This petroglyph, believed to depict the eclipse of July 11, 1097, lasting 5 minutes and 1 second, mirrors a time of heightened solar activity, as scientists suggest, when massive solar loops and prominences could have been visible.
- Totality revisited Chaco in 1194 and 1259, periods when the region is thought to have been abandoned.
- Cherilynn Morrow, director of the Public Engagement program within NASA's PUNCH mission, shared her awe at the recent "ring of fire" event.
- Close to the "Rock of the Sun," as the eclipse unfolded above Fajada Butte, where dagger-shaped sunlight beams grace the equinoxes and solstices, Morrow marveled at the celestial alignment.
- The eclipse was not merely a cosmic event; it was a celebration, a union of the sun and the moon that uplifted spirits.
- As the partial eclipse progressed, the canyon experienced a dramatic transformation. Light levels dwindled, and temperatures dropped significantly.
- A mysterious grayish hue enveloped the surroundings, softening the edges of the canyon and its ancient structures. In this eerie twilight, Chaco Canyon revealed an unparalleled dramatic grandeur.
- Beside the great kiva at Casa Rinconada, a group of around 15 eclipse-chasers, lucky to secure a viewing spot, stood mesmerized. The "ring of fire" cast its enchantment upon them. Baily's beads, a phenomenon seen on the edges of the sun during an eclipse, made a brief appearance, adding to the celestial spectacle.

- One observer ingeniously projected a "smiley face" crescent sun onto the ancient kiva walls using his camera. Meanwhile, a majestic bull elk traversed the canyon, adding a touch of wildlife to the cosmic drama.
- As the ring emerged, echoing cheers reverberated across the canyon, capturing the awe and wonder of the spectators.
- Casa Rinconada, an archaeoastronomer's paradise, was the epicenter of this celestial wonder. The eclipse graced a mesa upon which the Ancestral Puebloans had seemingly marked the sunrise points throughout the year.
- "It's a very sacred place for the descendants of the ancestral Puebloans and people who made Chaco an ancient sun-watching place of an extraordinary nature," expressed Morrow.
- "The kiva is so amazingly aligned to modern precision north, south, east, and west," she added, emphasizing the enduring connection between the ancient people and the celestial wonders that grace Chaco Canyon.

## OLYMPICS

### IOC to explore Olympic eSports Games

The President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Thomas Bach, has revealed plans to explore the creation of Olympic eSports Games.

- Speaking at the opening ceremony of the 141st IOC session in Mumbai, Bach stated that he had tasked the newly formed IOC eSports Commission with studying the feasibility of this initiative.
- He pointed out the massive global appeal of eSports, with an estimated three billion people engaging in gaming activities worldwide.
- Of these, over 500 million individuals express a specific interest in eSports, encompassing virtual sports and sport simulations. Importantly, the majority of these enthusiasts are under the age of 34.
- Bach highlighted the IOC's previous forays into the eSports realm, mentioning the successful pilot venture, the Olympic virtual series, initiated in 2021. Following this, the IOC launched the Olympic eSports week in Singapore earlier in the year, where a holistic approach successfully bridged the gap between the Olympic and eSports communities.
- The event, which included qualifiers, drew over 500,000 unique participants and generated more than six million views of live action across various channels.
- Notably, 75 percent of these views came from individuals aged 13 to 34. Bach emphasized that while this was a promising start, there was still much ground to cover, akin to any sports competition where the true challenge lies ahead.
- Bach also touched upon the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in sports, acknowledging its potential to revolutionize athlete training by providing personalized coaching and support.
- He raised important questions about the integration of AI in different sports, pondering its effects on traditional elements such as human judgment and touch.

- Bach acknowledged the evolving landscape of sports technology and emphasized the need for the sporting world to adapt proactively. He warned that failure to do so might lead to overwhelming challenges from technological and commercial interests, likening it to a tsunami.
- However, Bach's announcement about the potential eSports Games was overshadowed by a subsequent speech from Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Modi confirmed India's bid to host the 2036 Summer Olympics, a significant move that could make India the fourth Asian nation to host the Games, adding an extra layer of excitement to the future of international sports.

## OFFBEAT

### How a Bronze Age rock became a 'treasure map' for researchers

A remarkable archaeological find in north-western France has ignited excitement among researchers, who are now calling it a valuable "treasure map." The Saint-Belec slab, adorned with mysterious markings, had remained largely unstudied for an astonishing 4,000 years until 2021 when it piqued the interest of archaeologists eager to unlock its secrets.

- Considered Europe's oldest map, this artifact has become a vital tool in the quest to locate ancient sites in the region.
- Traditionally, archaeologists rely on high-tech tools like radar equipment, aerial photography, or accidental discoveries during construction projects to unearth ancient sites.
- However, the Saint-Belec slab, with its intriguing etchings, is leading researchers down a different path. "Using the map to try to find archaeological sites is a great approach. We never work like that," exclaimed Yvan Pailler, a professor at the University of Western Brittany.
- The slab covers an area approximately 30 by 21 kilometers, and archaeologists, led by Pailler and his colleague Clement Nicolas from the CNRS research institute, are meticulously deciphering its markings.
- This exhaustive process involves surveying the entire territory and cross-referencing the slab's engravings. According to Nicolas, this ambitious task could take up to 15 years to complete.
- Nicolas and Pailler, along with other experts, rediscovered the slab in 2014, nearly a century after it was initially uncovered in 1900 by a local historian who didn't grasp its significance. The researchers embarked on a journey to decode the slab's symbols.
- They quickly identified features like rivers and mountains in the coarse engravings, aligning with the geography of Roudouallec in the Brittany region. By comparing the slab with modern maps, they achieved an 80 percent match, a promising starting point.
- The slab is riddled with tiny hollows, leading researchers to speculate that these could indicate burial mounds, dwellings, or geological formations. Deciphering these enigmatic hollows could potentially lead to numerous significant discoveries.
- However, to gain a better understanding of the slab's context, the archaeologists conducted extensive excavations at the site where it was first found. This location turned

out to be one of the largest Bronze Age burial sites in Brittany. "We are trying to better contextualize the discovery, to have a way to date the slab," explained Pailler.

- Intriguingly, the recent dig yielded previously unknown fragments from the slab. These pieces, which had been broken off and repurposed as tomb walls, hinted at the shifting power dynamics of Bronze Age settlements.
- It is believed that the area depicted on the map might correspond to an ancient kingdom, possibly one that collapsed due to revolts and rebellions. Nicolas speculated, "The engraved slab no longer made sense and was doomed by being broken up and used as building material."
- In essence, the Saint-Belec slab, once forgotten and unappreciated, has now emerged as a captivating archaeological puzzle, guiding researchers on a fascinating journey through time and offering the promise of unearthing ancient secrets buried beneath the French soil.

## FINANCE

### **Rolls-Royce, maker of plane engines, to axe up to 2,500 jobs**

Rolls-Royce, the renowned British aircraft engine manufacturer, announced on Tuesday its decision to reduce its global workforce by up to 2,500 employees, constituting approximately six percent of its staff.

- The company revealed plans for a more efficient and simplified organizational structure, which will involve eliminating 2,000 to 2,500 positions worldwide.
- CEO Tufan Erginbilgic, who initiated the restructuring efforts earlier this year, emphasized the goal of creating a Rolls-Royce that is well-equipped for the future.
- He stated that the company is focusing on building a more streamlined and effective organization that can better serve its customers, partners, and shareholders.
- The restructuring initiative aims to bolster Rolls-Royce's capabilities in critical areas such as procurement and supply chain management. These enhancements will be aligned with the company's existing engineering and technical expertise.
- The company's leadership believes that this strategic move will enable Rolls-Royce to adapt to evolving market demands and enhance its overall performance.
- This decision follows the footsteps of former CEO Warren East, who, in response to the severe impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the aviation industry, implemented a significant restructuring program in 2020. Under East's leadership, Rolls-Royce eliminated over 9,000 jobs and initiated a substantial divestment program.
- Despite the challenging circumstances, Rolls-Royce experienced a remarkable turnaround under its new CEO. In August, the company reported a net profit of £1.2 billion (\$1.5 billion) for the first half of the year, a stark contrast to the £1.6 billion loss after tax recorded in the previous year.
- Tufan Erginbilgic, a British and Turkish national, brings with him over two decades of experience from his tenure at the energy giant BP.

- With his leadership and the ongoing restructuring efforts, Rolls-Royce aims to build a more agile, resilient, and customer-focused organization prepared for the future challenges of the aerospace industry.

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