

SECTION 1 – TECH BUZZ

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



Robocalls In Different Languages With AI

New York City Mayor Eric Adams has ignited a debate surrounding the ethical implications of using artificial intelligence (AI) for political communication. Adams revealed that he has been employing AI-generated robocalls featuring his voice speaking various languages, including Mandarin and Yiddish, to promote city hiring events. Notably, Adams does not speak these languages fluently, raising concerns about the transparency of this approach.

- Adams defended the initiative, emphasizing its aim to directly engage with the diverse populace of New York. He stated that people often express surprise at his multilingual abilities, attributing it to the robocalls. However, critics, including the Surveillance Technology Oversight Project, condemned this use of AI as a form of deepfake technology. They labelled it as misleading and unethical, likening it to the creation of manipulated videos and audios, thus challenging the very essence of truthful communication in politics.
- The controversy surrounding Adams' robocalls underscores the broader ethical quandaries posed by the rapid advancement of AI technology. Regulators and watchdog groups struggle to establish guidelines that can ethically and legally govern the use of AI, especially when it comes to deepfake videos and audios that can convincingly portray individuals saying or doing things they never actually did.

- In response to the growing concerns, several technology companies have showcased AI tools designed to synthetically translate speech into different languages while preserving the speaker's original voice. Spotify, for instance, introduced a feature allowing podcasts to be translated into multiple languages using AI. Another startup, ElevenLabs, unveiled a voice translation tool capable of converting spoken content into various languages while retaining the original speaker's voice.
- Adams' office confirmed their use of ElevenLabs' tool for the multilingual robocalls, ensuring accuracy by having native speakers review the recordings before dissemination. The calls were made in languages such as Spanish, Yiddish, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Haitian Creole. The same technology was also utilized to promote concerts organized by the Adams administration.
- Amid this controversy, policymakers and major tech companies are working towards implementing regulations to curb the spread of AI-generated political misinformation. Google has taken steps to label deceptive AI-generated political ads, and a bipartisan bill in the U.S. Senate aims to ban "materially deceptive" deepfakes concerning federal candidates, with exceptions for parody and satire.
- As the ethical debate rages on, Mayor Adams continues to defend his use of AI, emphasizing his commitment to reaching out to New Yorkers in the languages they understand. However, the broader question of how AI technologies should be ethically employed in political communication remains unanswered, leaving regulators, tech companies, and society at large to grapple with these complex challenges.

Chinese tech giant Baidu unveils its latest version

Chinese tech giant Baidu unveiled the latest version of its AI chatbot, ERNIE, asserting that it matches the capabilities of OpenAI's ChatGPT. Baidu led the charge among Chinese tech companies in introducing generative artificial intelligence apps. These apps are trained on vast datasets and user interactions, enabling them to respond to questions, even complex ones, in a human-like manner.

- ERNIE, released to the public in August, represented a significant milestone for China's tech sector, which aims to compete with global players like Microsoft and OpenAI. The company emphasized the need to stay within strict government controls while advancing technological innovation. During a presentation, Robin Li, Baidu's founder and CEO, claimed that ERNIE's abilities in comprehension, creation, logic, and memory were on par with GPT-4, OpenAI's latest model.
- Li demonstrated ERNIE's capabilities by challenging it with puzzles and requesting it to outline a martial arts novel. The audience witnessed ERNIE's real-time composition on a giant screen, where new characters were gradually created. Despite its impressive performance, the latest version of ERNIE is currently accessible only to select developers and not to the general public.
- Following the success of OpenAI's ChatGPT, Chinese tech companies increased their investments in AI technology, leading to a global AI frenzy. However, China's tightly controlled internet environment necessitated strict government guidelines for the development and use of generative AI. According to these regulations, content generated

by such technology must align with core socialist values and avoid elements that challenge state power.

- These restrictions limit ERNIE from addressing sensitive topics, including China's leadership and the 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protests. In previous tests, ERNIE would redirect discussions when asked about topics such as Tiananmen and Taiwan, reflecting the stringent controls imposed by Chinese authorities.

Tech giants Foxconn, Nvidia announce they are building 'AI factories'

In a strategic alliance announced on Wednesday, Taiwanese technology giant Foxconn and leading US hardware company Nvidia revealed their plans to collaborate in the creation of cutting-edge "AI factories."

- These advanced data processing centers are poised to revolutionize the manufacturing landscape, particularly in the production of next-generation products like electric cars.
- Foxconn, officially known as Hon Hai Technology Group, stands as the world's largest contract electronics manufacturer, pivotal in assembling devices for renowned global brands such as Apple's iPhone. However, the company is looking to expand its horizons beyond electronics assembly. In recent years, it has showcased its ambitions by delving into the competitive and swiftly expanding electric vehicle market, unveiling concept cars during its annual "Hon Hai Tech Day."
- At this year's event, Foxconn's chairman Young Liu joined forces with Nvidia's CEO Jensen Huang to introduce a groundbreaking concept—a new breed of data centers designed to power a wide array of applications. Nvidia, headquartered in Silicon Valley, gained prominence through its development of graphics processing units (GPUs), originally the backbone of modern video games. Over time, these GPUs have evolved into a fundamental component fuelling the rapid advancement of generative artificial intelligence.
- Liu and Huang shared the stage to announce their collaborative mission, emphasizing their commitment to propelling the entire industry into the new era of artificial intelligence. The envisioned "AI factories" are set to encompass various elements, including the digitalization of manufacturing and inspection workflows, the development of AI-driven electric vehicle and robotics platforms, and the expansion of language-based generative AI services, according to Nvidia.
- Huang expressed confidence in Foxconn's capabilities, stating that the company possesses the expertise and scale necessary to establish AI factories on a global scale. If successful, Foxconn's clients could leverage these systems to provide generative AI services and employ simulation techniques to train autonomous machines like industrial robots and self-driving cars.
- This groundbreaking partnership was unveiled shortly after the United States introduced stricter restrictions on the export of cutting-edge chips to China—a move aimed at impeding Beijing's progress in advanced technology, perceived as a national security concern by the US government. This development would impact Nvidia's chip supplies to China, a crucial supplier base for many contract electronics manufacturers, including

Foxconn. Consequently, Nvidia's stock prices experienced a significant decline on Wall Street.

- In response to the new regulations from the US Department of Commerce, Nvidia indicated that the company might need to reevaluate certain operations in light of these changes, reflecting the complex landscape of international technology collaborations in the face of evolving geopolitical challenges.

GADGETS

Apple launches Pencil with USB-C port

Apple has unveiled the Apple Pencil (USB-C) for iPads, a new accessory set to hit the Indian market in November at a price of Rs 7,900.

- Designed specifically for iPads with a USB Type-C port, including the 10th generation iPad, sixth generation iPad mini, fourth-generation iPad Air or later, third-generation or later 12.9-inch iPad Pro, and all models of the 11-inch iPad Pro, the Apple Pencil (USB-C) offers users enhanced functionality and precision.
- In contrast to its predecessor, the first-generation Pencil, the Apple Pencil (USB-C) features a magnet on its side, allowing it to securely attach to iPads for convenient storage. However, it's important to note that unlike the second-generation Pencil, this version does not support wireless pairing and charging. Instead, users will need to connect the Apple Pencil (USB-C) using a USB-C cable for charging and pairing purposes. When magnetically attached to the iPad, the Pencil automatically enters sleep mode, conserving battery life.
- The Apple Pencil (USB-C) retains Apple's renowned precision touch, low latency input, and tilt sensitivity features, providing a seamless and responsive writing or drawing experience. Additionally, it supports the hover function on the iPad Pro, akin to the second-generation Apple Pencil. However, there are some limitations to this model: it lacks pressure sensitivity, wireless pairing and charging capabilities, as well as the double-tap feature for changing tools, all of which are available in the higher-end Apple Pencil (second-generation).
- Education institutions in India will enjoy a discounted price of Rs 6,900 for the Apple Pencil (USB-C), making it more accessible for students and educators. Starting early November, customers can purchase the Apple Pencil (USB-C) from the official Apple India online store and Apple retail outlets across the country. With its advanced features and compatibility with various iPad models, the Apple Pencil (USB-C) is poised to enhance the creative and productive capabilities of iPad users in India.

PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES

Disabling JavaScript: Pros & Cons

JavaScript stands as a cornerstone in web development, empowering interactive user experiences and dynamic web pages. Nevertheless, users occasionally consider disabling JavaScript in their

browsers. In this article, we will delve into the advantages and disadvantages of deactivating JavaScript, providing insights into when and why this choice might be appropriate.

Advantages of Disabling JavaScript

- **Improved Security:** Disabling JavaScript enhances security by mitigating risks associated with vulnerabilities like cross-site scripting (XSS) and malicious code execution. This step is crucial when exploring less reputable websites or when seeking an added layer of online protection.
- **Enhanced Privacy:** JavaScript enables websites to collect extensive data about your online activities, including mouse movements and keystrokes. By disabling JavaScript, you can safeguard your privacy and limit the extent to which websites monitor your behaviour.
- **Faster Page Loading:** JavaScript-heavy websites often experience slower loading times due to complex libraries and frameworks. Deactivating JavaScript can significantly speed up loading times, especially on slower internet connections or aging devices.
- **Reduced Resource Consumption:** JavaScript can strain resources, particularly on older devices. Disabling it can decrease CPU and memory usage, potentially prolonging your hardware's lifespan and enhancing overall device performance.
- **Improved Accessibility:** Some websites heavily rely on JavaScript, hindering accessibility for individuals with disabilities using assistive technologies. Disabling JavaScript ensures web content is accessible to everyone, regardless of their abilities.

Disadvantages of Disabling JavaScript

- **Limited Functionality:** The primary drawback is the loss of interactive features like forms, image sliders, and dynamic content loading. Without JavaScript, some websites may become partially or entirely unusable.
- **Poor User Experience:** Interactive elements such as pop-up notifications and real-time updates rely on JavaScript. Disabling it can result in a less engaging and enjoyable user experience, making web pages appear static.
- **Compatibility Issues:** Some websites lack basic versions for users without JavaScript, causing frustration and inconvenience when encountering incompatible sites.
- **Difficulty with Online Services:** Many online services and applications require JavaScript for their full functionality. Disabling it can limit your ability to use these services effectively, potentially missing out on essential features.
- **Increased Effort in Managing Content:** Certain content like videos and interactive maps may not function without JavaScript, necessitating manual enabling on a per-site basis, which can be cumbersome.

When to Disable JavaScript

- **Security and Privacy Concerns:** For enhanced online security or when visiting untrusted websites.
- **Slow Internet or Older Device:** To improve browsing speed and performance on slower connections or outdated devices.

- **Accessibility Needs:** For a more predictable and accessible browsing experience, especially for users reliant on screen readers.

When to Keep JavaScript Enabled

- **Daily Browsing:** JavaScript is essential for accessing modern websites' full features during regular web browsing.
- **Online Services:** To maintain productivity when using cloud-based services, email clients, or web applications.
- **Interactive and Multimedia Content:** Enabling JavaScript is necessary for enjoying multimedia content like videos and interactive maps.

Conclusion: Disabling JavaScript offers heightened security and improved speed but at the cost of limited functionality and potentially impaired user experiences. The decision should align with your specific needs. Balancing these factors can be achieved by using browser extensions or settings that enable or disable JavaScript selectively, allowing you to enjoy both a secure experience when necessary and full functionality for daily web activities.

ROBOTICS

Sarcos Guardian Sea Class Robotic System

Sarcos Technology and Robotics Corporation has achieved a significant milestone in the realm of advanced robotic systems with the sale of two Guardian Sea Class robotic systems and a comprehensive support package to Atlantia Marine. This transaction, completed in the third quarter of 2023, highlights Sarcos' expertise in developing cutting-edge robotic solutions.

- The Guardian Sea Class is a standout teleoperated system equipped with dual-armed manipulation capabilities, featuring six-function dexterity per arm. Notably, it can operate effectively at depths of up to one kilometer (1,000 meters).
- When integrated seamlessly with VideoRay's Defender Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV), known for its exceptional power and maneuverability, the combined system is poised to enable operations even in challenging conditions with currents of up to four knots. By leveraging the Guardian Sea Class, the need for divers to undertake hazardous underwater tasks is significantly reduced, ensuring safer and more efficient operations.
- Charlie Foll, the Chief Executive Officer of Atlantia Marine, expressed enthusiasm about the integrated Sarcos and VideoRay underwater system. Foll emphasized the company's commitment to delivering top-tier subsea offshore inspection services using high-quality equipment. The Guardian Sea Class, with its advanced capabilities, perfectly aligns with Atlantia Marine's dedication to providing exceptional service while prioritizing the safety of their employees.
- A notable feature of the Guardian Sea Class system is its electronic drive, which eliminates the additional weight, size, and cost associated with hydraulic power units. This design choice not only reduces maintenance expenses but also minimizes the risk of system downtime.
- Moreover, when paired with VideoRay's Defender ROV, the Guardian Sea Class enhances the ROV's existing capabilities, offering unmatched flexibility and

upgradeability. This synergy enables the performance of a diverse range of intricate tasks using handheld tools and sensors, further enhancing its utility and adaptability.

- Matt Vogt, Chief Revenue Officer at Sarcos, emphasized the importance of this sale to Atlantas, highlighting Sarcos' ability to introduce complex robotic systems to the market.
- He underscored the pivotal role played by the Guardian Sea Class in challenging underwater environments, where its advanced capabilities prove instrumental. Vogt also stressed the company's commitment to delivering solutions that not only meet critical industrial needs but also prioritize the safety and well-being of human capital.
- In summary, Sarcos Technology and Robotics Corporation continues to lead the way in innovative, safe, and efficient robotics solutions. The Guardian Sea Class system stands as a testament to their dedication to excellence and technological advancement in the field of robotics.

SECTION 2 – GLOBAL INFO

ASIA

CHINA

Chinese President Xi Jinping warmly welcomed Russian leader Vladimir Putin on Wednesday, highlighting their strong friendship and the deepening political and economic connections between their nations. The meeting took place at Beijing's Great Hall of the People during a significant forum, marking Putin's first visit to a major global power since Russia's intervention in Ukraine.

- According to the Xinhua news agency, President Xi praised the continuous deepening of political trust between China and Russia, emphasizing their close and effective strategic coordination. Xi recalled their extensive history of collaboration, mentioning that they had met 42 times over the past decade, building a robust working relationship and a profound friendship.
- Putin, described as an "old friend" by Xi, was the honoured guest at a summit hosted by the Chinese President in Beijing, celebrating the Belt and Road Initiative—a vast trade and infrastructure project aimed at enhancing regional and international connectivity.
- Despite global attention being on the Israel-Gaza conflict, both leaders refrained from making public comments on the ongoing war, which had been raging for more than 10 days. The focus of their discussions remained on strengthening the bonds between China and Russia, reflecting their enduring alliance in the face of international developments.

SOUTH AMERICA

VENEZUELA

In a recent series of discussions mediated by Norway, the Venezuelan government and opposition have reached a significant agreement. According to the accord signed in Barbados, both parties have committed to holding presidential elections in the latter half of the upcoming year, with the presence of international observers.

- The agreement specifies the invitation of "technical election observer missions," which will include representatives from renowned organizations such as the European Union, United Nations, African Union, and Inter-American Union of Electoral Organizations.
- The finalized election date will be determined by Venezuela's National Electoral Council, as outlined in the signed agreement. These talks, which resumed after nearly a year-long suspension, aim to find solutions to the country's deep-rooted political and economic crisis.
- Jorge Rodriguez, the head of the government delegation, expressed optimism about this development, stating, "This marks the initial phase of a much broader agreement." Similarly, Gerardo Blyde, representing the opposition, hailed the agreement as a "substantial step" in the right direction.

AFRICA

LIBERIA

Liberia is bracing for a rematch of the 2017 presidential runoff, as the official provisional results released on Tuesday show a tight race between the incumbent, George Weah, and his opponent, Joseph Boakai.

- With votes counted from over 98 percent of polling stations, Weah, a former international football star seeking a second term, secured 43.79 percent of the votes. Boakai, at the age of 78, closely followed with 43.49 percent, as reported by the national electoral commission.
- None of the other 18 presidential candidates managed to surpass three percent in the initial round of voting held on October 10 in this West African nation.
- The figures posted on the commission's official website reveal that neither Weah nor Boakai, who served as vice president from 2006 to 2018, garnered enough votes for an outright majority in the first round.
- Consequently, a runoff election is slated to take place two weeks after the official results are announced. However, this schedule could potentially be postponed due to potential appeals and legal challenges.
- The closely contested race has set the stage for a closely watched and highly anticipated electoral showdown in Liberia.

MIDDLE EAST

Turkey-Syria-Iraq

Turkey's parliament has granted the military an extension of its authority to conduct cross-border operations in Syria and Iraq for an additional two years. Initially sanctioned in 2013 to support the global efforts against the Islamic State (IS) group, these operations have been routinely renewed on a yearly basis.

- However, in 2021, the authorization was extended for the first time for a period of two years, providing President Recep Tayyip Erdogan with an extended timeframe to pursue military campaigns against Kurdish militias in the unstable region.
 - The motion, signed by President Erdogan, underlined the critical importance of safeguarding Turkey's national security by taking necessary actions in accordance with international law to counter various risks, threats, and activities that might jeopardize the nation's safety.
 - Additionally, the motion expressed Turkey's willingness to accept the deployment of foreign troops on its soil, under specific circumstances determined by the president, with the primary objective of combating terrorist groups.
 - This particular provision faced strong opposition from the leading opposition party, CHP, which staunchly advocates against foreign military presence on Turkish territory, emphasizing the slogan "no foreign boots" on Turkish soil as a core tenet of their campaign.
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SECTION 3 – MIXED BAG

SPACE

Indian Space Program Vision

India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has unveiled ambitious plans for the country's space program, aiming to send a man to the Moon and establish a space station by 2040. This announcement comes on the heels of a crucial test flight scheduled for its inaugural crewed space mission.

- Modi urged space agency officials to build upon the successes of India's space initiatives and strive for new goals, including the establishment of the 'Bharatiya Antariksha Station' (Indian Space Station) by 2035 and sending the first Indian astronaut to the Moon by 2040.
- In a statement released, Modi emphasized the need for meticulous planning, calling for a series of missions to the Moon. India, known for its cost-effective space endeavours, achieved a significant milestone by landing a craft near the unexplored lunar south pole in August. Additionally, the country successfully launched a spacecraft to study the outer layers of the Sun just a month later.

- India's space agency, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), has a history of groundbreaking achievements. In 2014, India became the first Asian nation to place a satellite into orbit around Mars, showcasing its technological prowess. Notably, ISRO launched 104 satellites in a single mission in 2017, demonstrating its capabilities on the global stage.
- Currently, India's primary focus is on its first manned space mission, Gaganyaan, also known as "Skycraft." Expected to take place next year, this three-day mission aims to send a three-member crew into Earth's orbit at an estimated cost of \$1.08 billion. India also has collaborative projects on the horizon, including a joint lunar probe with Japan, a Mars landing mission, and an orbital expedition to Venus within the next two years.
- India's ability to achieve significant milestones at a fraction of the cost of established spacefaring nations can be attributed to several factors. The country leverages existing technology, adapting it to its needs, and benefits from a pool of highly skilled engineers who work at a fraction of the cost of their global counterparts.
- Currently constituting just two percent of the \$386 billion global space economy, India aims to increase its share to nine percent by 2030. With Modi's ambitious vision and ISRO's track record of success, India's space program appears poised for even greater accomplishments in the years to come.

HEALTH

Asthma Awareness Campaign In United Kingdom

A new initiative has been launched across schools in the United Kingdom by Asthma + Lung UK Scotland, challenging the misconception of "mild" asthma by emphasizing the importance of immediate action, including dialing 999, if symptoms worsen.

- The campaign aims to educate caregivers and teachers about recognizing the initial signs of an asthma attack, a condition affecting approximately 71,000 children in Scotland. Despite common misunderstandings, asthma, even in its seemingly mild form, can escalate into a life-threatening situation.
- Asthma + Lung UK Scotland has developed a poster outlining five crucial steps to be taken during an asthma attack. The symptoms, including coughing, wheezing, breathlessness, and a tight chest, indicate the child's airways are sensitive and inflamed, making them react to various triggers like colds, pollen, dust mites, pollution, and stress.
- To facilitate communication between parents and school staff, an asthma card has been designed for parents to update the school about their child's triggers and required medications. Joseph Carter, the head of Asthma + Lung UK Scotland, emphasized that caregivers, including teachers, need to be aware of each child's unique triggers and symptoms. If a child experiences an asthma attack, it is vital to keep them calm and sitting upright. They should take one puff of their reliever inhaler (usually blue) with a spacer every 30 to 60 seconds, up to 10 puffs. If the situation does not improve or if there is no reliever inhaler available, caregivers are encouraged to call 999 for an ambulance. The campaign poster displays these steps, serving as a quick reference guide during emergencies.

- Rhea Kershaw, acting deputy head at Melrose Primary School in the Scottish Borders, emphasized the importance of adults recognizing the signs of an asthma attack, especially since several children in the school have asthma.
- She stressed the simplicity and clarity of the campaign poster, making it easier for adults to understand the necessary steps during an emergency. Additionally, she highlighted the significance of parents filling in the school asthma card to ensure the school is fully aware of each child's triggers and required medications.
- Public Health Minister Jenny Minto praised the campaign, emphasizing the importance of awareness and immediate action during an asthma attack. Many people might not recognize the warning signs or know what to do in such situations, making this initiative vital in saving lives.
- The campaign's holistic approach, involving both parents and teachers, aims to create a safer environment for children with asthma in schools, dispelling the myth of "mild" asthma and ensuring timely and appropriate care for affected children.

TOURISM

Exploring Zeljava Airbase

Resembling a setting straight out of a James Bond movie, the immense Zeljava airbase was carved into a mountain straddling the border between Bosnia and Croatia, created to withstand a nuclear attack. For years, this colossal underground complex remained dormant, occasionally explored by daring tourists intrigued by its decaying interiors.

- Concealed in the 1960s during Yugoslavia's existence—a socialist federation balancing between Moscow and Washington in the Cold War—it boasted self-sufficient amenities, including power, water purification, and ventilation systems.
- At its zenith, the base could house nearly 60 MiG-21 aircraft and featured extensive tunnels housing command centers, offices, and dorms. Massive 100-ton retractable concrete doors marked its entrances, remnants of which still stand, bearing witness to its former glory.
- Mirsad Fazlic, a former pilot who served at the base in the 1980s, reminisced, "All the systems were state-of-the-art at that time. It was the best in military and civilian technology." However, during the 1990s Yugoslav wars, the base suffered destruction from explosives deployed by the remnants of the Yugoslav army. The facility lay largely abandoned, attracting adventurous tourists keen on exploring relics from the communist era.
- Everything changed in 2016 with the release of a Slovenian mockumentary titled "Houston, We Have a Problem!" featuring the base. Since then, locals estimate that over 150,000 people visit the state-owned complex annually. Ante Kovac, the area's mayor, envisions Zeljava becoming a major attraction, drawing in tourists, potentially extending their stays after visiting the nearby Plitvice Lakes National Park.
- The vastness of the base has led officials to consider various possibilities, from hosting car races to accommodating data centers or serving as a venue for parties or even a Cold War museum. Presently, visitors navigate the humid, pitch-black tunnels with flashlights,

marvelling at the untouched engineering brilliance. Angelo Virag, a photographer from Zagreb, praised the "absolute ingenuity of engineering," while others like Mario Garbin from Perth admired its "raw, authentic nature" untouched for three decades.

- For Hamdija Mesic, an aviation enthusiast from Bihac, reopening the two runways in Bosnia would be a dream come true, as he expressed, "Such a huge facility abandoned to the ravages of time cannot be found anywhere else in the world."
- However, not everyone is eager to see the base transformed into a typical tourist spot. Maria Moreno, a 33-year-old interior designer from Spain, appreciated its mystery, stating, "You don't have signs where you have to go and what to see, it's more like a discovery place. This is why I liked it." In her eyes, turning it into a structured attraction might diminish its unique charm.

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