

## SECTION 1 – TECH BUZZ

### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



#### **Bard vs ChatGPT**

Bard and ChatGPT are two of the most popular large language models available at the time, each having its own set of strengths and weaknesses.

- ChatGPT had a surge in popularity over the previous year, but in the process, it had lost its accuracy and relevance in providing information. Meanwhile, Google had been developing Bard, and although it initially seemed like they were lagging behind, there was a deliberate reason behind it.
- Google chose not to publish an unfinished tool with numerous errors and instead focused on precision and quality. Bard was still under development, with its performance improving over time. The experimental phase allowed developers to make essential changes and improvements, with users providing relevant feedback to help enhance the tool.
- While using Bard, the users noticed new functions regularly. One of the most recent ones was the ability to choose from multiple solutions to the same problem. This feature not only provided users with options to choose the best solution but also contributed to teaching Bard how to solve problems.

- Bard had the added advantage of internet access. Another noteworthy feature was the ability to add references to websites from which Bard retrieved information. This feature facilitated faster searches for relevant information, as Bard could sift through thousands of web pages and present the ones solving the user's problem. Users could also check these references for additional information not included in the processed answer, and use the links as references for creating complex solutions.
- A significant difference between ChatGPT and Bard was their behaviour when faced with a question they couldn't answer. Bard would not provide a response and would return the input, avoiding giving wrong or misleading information. In contrast, ChatGPT would attempt to provide an answer every time, and in cases where it had no information, it might give misleading information rather than stating its inability to answer the question.
- Bard, despite being in the experimental phase, was considered more of a finished product. It boasted standard features such as copying, inserting very long texts, distinguishing between text and code, displaying code with highlighted syntax and well-formatted output, and the ability to play the response as audio. Additionally, it offered functions like sharing, checking the answer, and editing the prompt or response. For the users, this completeness was a significant advantage of using Bard, as almost all functions worked perfectly as expected.
- Another advantage of using Bard is the connection between Bard and all of Google's services, such as Gmail, Google Drive, YouTube, and more, leaving the readers to imagine the possibilities that could arise from this integration.

## **Character.AI**

Google's parent company, Alphabet, is reportedly in discussions to invest substantial funds in Character.AI, a burgeoning artificial intelligence chatbot startup. Founded by Noam Shazeer and Daniel De Freitas, both former Google Brain employees, Character.AI is aiming to secure an investment of 'hundreds of millions of dollars' from the tech giant to advance its mission of training models to effectively meet user demands, as per sources familiar with the matter.

- This potential investment, likely structured as convertible notes according to a third source, is poised to strengthen the existing collaboration between Character.AI and Google. Currently, the startup utilizes Google's cloud services and Tensor Processing Units (TPUs) for model training.
- Character.AI distinguishes itself by offering users the ability to engage in conversations with virtual versions of celebrities like Billie Eilish or anime characters. Additionally, users can create their own chatbots and AI assistants using the platform. While the basic usage is free, a subscription model is available at \$9.99 per month, allowing subscribers to bypass virtual queues for prompt access to chatbots.
- Targeting a demographic primarily aged between 18 to 24 years, Character.AI's chatbots, featuring diverse roles and tones, have attracted around 60% of the website's traffic, according to Similarweb data. This positioning in the market aims to establish the company as a provider of entertaining and personalized AI companions, setting it apart from other AI chatbots like OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Bard.

- The startup, as reported exclusively by Reuters, is concurrently engaged in discussions with venture capital investors to secure equity funding. Sources indicate that this funding round could potentially value Character.AI at over \$5 billion. In March of the same year, the startup successfully raised \$150 million in a funding round led by Andreessen Horowitz, reaching a valuation of \$1 billion.
- Google's interest in Character.AI aligns with its broader strategy of investing in AI startups. This move comes on the heels of a \$2 billion investment in model maker Anthropic, structured as convertible notes, in addition to prior equity investments. Google has a history of investing in or acquiring Israeli companies, exemplified by its engagements with Waze, BreezoMeter, Siemplify, and others.

## **AI Could Predict Future Heart Attacks**

A groundbreaking study conducted by the University of Oxford suggests that artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to forecast an individual's risk of experiencing a heart attack up to a decade in advance, potentially leading to the prevention of numerous fatalities. The research indicates that AI could enhance treatment outcomes for nearly half of the patients.

- Focusing on refining the precision of cardiac CT scans, which are instrumental in identifying arterial blockages or narrowings, the study, funded by the British Heart Foundation (BHF), employed AI technology. Despite around 350,000 individuals in the UK undergoing these scans annually, a considerable number of patients succumb to heart attacks in the future due to the scans failing to detect subtle, undetectable narrowings.
- Examining data from over 40,000 patients who underwent routine cardiac CT scans at eight UK hospitals, the researchers, with a median follow-up period of 2.7 years, identified that those with "significant" artery narrowing were more prone to severe heart attacks. Surprisingly, twice as many patients without significant narrowings also experienced heart attacks, some of which were fatal.
- To address this, the research team developed an AI program trained on information related to changes in fat around inflamed arteries—a potential indicator of heart attack risk. Professor Charalambos Antoniades, chairman of cardiovascular medicine at the BHF and director of the acute multidisciplinary imaging and interventional centre at the University of Oxford, emphasized the significance of the study's findings.
- He stated that patients with chest pain, often sent home after being reassured, could be at a high risk of a heart attack within the next decade, even in the absence of apparent heart artery disease. Providing clinicians with an accurate risk assessment, according to Antoniades, could potentially enhance the treatment trajectory for many heart patients.
- Further testing of the AI tool on 3,393 patients over nearly eight years demonstrated its ability to accurately predict heart attack risk. Subsequently, AI-generated risk scores were presented to medical professionals for 744 patients, leading to alterations in treatment plans for 45% of them.
- Professor Antoniades expressed optimism about the integration of this AI tool into the National Health Service (NHS), anticipating its ability to prevent thousands of avoidable heart attack deaths annually in the UK. Professor Sir Nilesh Samani, medical director at

the BHF, echoed this sentiment, highlighting the vital role that AI-based technology can play in identifying individuals most susceptible to future heart attacks.

- He stressed the urgency of leveraging AI to guide patient treatment and ensuring that the NHS is adequately prepared to support its implementation. The study received support from the National Institute for Health and Care Research Oxford Biomedical Research Centre.

## TECHNOLOGY

### **Nokia Introduces 2030 Technology Strategy**

Nokia, a prominent player in the telecommunications industry, has recently unveiled its "2030 Technology Strategy" with a focus on guiding service providers, enterprises, and industries in navigating the imminent technological transformations.

- This strategic initiative serves as a roadmap for adapting to emerging technologies reshaping our world, identifying trends that will impact networks over the next decade, and aiding organizations in harnessing the potential of these technologies to overcome present and future challenges.
- At the heart of Nokia's 2030 technology strategy lies an emphasis on Artificial Intelligence (AI). However, it encompasses a broader spectrum, including the cloud continuum, metaverse, API economy, Industry 5.0, Internet value system, sustainability, security, and more.
- According to Nokia, the technology landscape in 2030 will undergo significant changes, with digitalization acting as the driving force. AI and cloud technologies are continually reshaping both network business and consumer technology, expanding the influence of AI beyond optimizing industry processes to fundamentally transforming communication methods.
- One pivotal concept introduced in Nokia's Technology Strategy 2030 is Industry 5.0, representing the next evolution beyond the previous industrial revolutions.
- Industry 5.0 aims to create a more sustainable, productive, and accessible future by integrating advanced technologies such as AI, machine learning, automation, extended reality, and the Internet of Things. This approach envisions smart factories where humans and machines collaborate to optimize production processes and enhance efficiency.
- Industry 5.0 goes beyond efficiency and productivity, emphasizing human-centric, resilient, and sustainable pillars applicable across all sectors and organizations. Nokia's Technology Strategy 2030 aligns with Industry 5.0, emphasizing the creation of value through human-machine collaboration and connectivity as the focal point. The strategy aims to facilitate the adoption of emerging technologies, evolving networks to meet future challenges.
- Looking ahead to 2030, Nokia anticipates a surge in network traffic demand due to new technology applications. The network must become more cognitive and automated, addressing specific business and industry requirements to support increased throughput and latency demands. Nokia's Technology Strategy 2030 plays a fundamental role in realizing the full potential of AI, cloud computing, and other emerging trends.

- Another crucial concept outlined in the strategy is the "cloud continuum," representing a novel approach to cloud computing. This approach seeks to deliver a seamless and consistent experience across various cloud environments, including public, private, and hybrid.
- The cloud continuum enables organizations to leverage cloud computing benefits like scalability, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness while ensuring data security and compliance with regulations. This concept aligns with Nokia's commitment to providing a comprehensive and unified cloud experience for its customers.

## VIRTUAL REALITY

### Golden Joystick Awards

The 41st edition of the Golden Joystick Awards, the venerable ceremony celebrating video games, marked a significant return to in-person festivities in London. This event, the first since 2019, showcased the enduring popularity of the awards, which have transitioned from a locally determined affair to an internationally accessible online voting process. Organized by Gamesradar+, the ceremony experienced an unprecedented surge in participation, with millions of votes pouring in.

- A standout triumph of the evening was claimed by Baldur's Gate 3, which clinched a remarkable seven awards. Notably, the coveted Best Gaming Hardware category saw PlayStation VR2 emerge victorious, outshining formidable competitors such as the Turtle Beach Stealth Pro Headset, Alienware 34 AW3423DWF, Nitro Deck, ASUS ROG Strix Scope II 96, Samsung 990 PRO, and Meta Quest 3, which, despite not being nominated, was excluded from contention due to its late release after voting closed.
- In the absence of a dedicated VR hardware category, PlayStation VR2 once again claimed the spotlight by securing the Best VR Game of the Year award. The exclusive title Horizon Call of the Mountain stood out among nominees like C-Smash VRS, Synapse, Vertigo 2 VR, F1 23 VR, and The Light Brigade. Notably, three PSVR 2 exclusives (C-Smash VRS, Synapse) and two PC VR games (Vertigo 2, soon to arrive on PSVR 2, and F1 23 VR) competed alongside The Light Brigade, the sole VR game on the list available for the standalone Meta Quest.
- The prestigious title of Best PlayStation Game of the Year was bestowed upon Resident Evil 4, which will further elevate its status with a forthcoming free VR mode for PlayStation VR2 during the winter.
- In the "Still Playing" category, No Man's Sky emerged triumphant, having received a noteworthy update in August featuring support for foveated rendering. This enhancement significantly elevated the graphics of the VR game, solidifying No Man's Sky VR as a landmark title for PlayStation VR2.

## GADGETS

### M3 MacBook Pro

Introducing Apple's latest consumer-centric MacBook Pro, the 14-inch M3 MacBook Pro, alongside two other new models. Positioned as an entry-level laptop featuring the cutting-edge Apple Silicon, the M3 stands out in a market where consumers, particularly creatives and developers, have diverse needs in terms of power and performance.

- Apple touts some compelling features for the M3 MacBook Pro, including its distinction as the first MacBook with the new M3 chipset, the replacement of the Touch Bar with practical physical keys, and a screen upgrade from 13 to 14 inches. Despite the starting price climbing from \$1299 to \$1599, Apple pitches this as a noteworthy enhancement. However, before diving into the latest macOS laptop, there are critical aspects to consider.
  - Beyond the increased screen size and the new M3 chipset, the overall offering sees minimal changes, prompting the question of whether these enhancements justify the \$300 price hike. With the discontinuation of the 13-inch MacBook Pro, consumers find themselves with limited alternatives.
  - The late-2023 MacBook Pro models boast new cosmetic options, but the Space Black color is not available on the base model, pushing consumers toward pricier options for a new aesthetic. Additionally, Apple has streamlined the I/O options for the entry-level model, reducing the number of Thunderbolt ports from three to two, a move that may be perceived as an attempt to encourage consumers to opt for a higher-priced machine.
  - Apple's decision to equip the entry-level version with a mere 8 GB of RAM raises eyebrows, with the claim that the efficiency of Apple Silicon makes 8 GB on a MacBook equivalent to 16 GB on an Intel-based laptop. This assertion is met with controversy among reviewers, and those seeking 16 GB of RAM must be prepared to spend an additional \$200 for the upgrade.
  - In terms of performance, the M3 offers approximately 10% more power than its predecessor, the M2 chipset. However, users seeking a significant performance boost may have already gravitated towards the M3 Pro and M3 Max options. This prompts the question of how much practical difference the M3 offers over the M2 in day-to-day use.
  - Interestingly, Apple provides a more compelling option for those in need of a "Pro" macOS laptop—the 14-inch MacBook Pro with the M2 Processor. While the M3 and M2 Pro performance are comparable, the M2 runs at a cooler temperature and offers faster, more abundant I/O ports.
  - Although Apple no longer sells this model as new, it is available in the Apple Refurb section, featuring a 14-inch MacBook Pro with the M2 Pro chipset, 16 GB of RAM, and 512 GB of storage for the same \$1599 price as the less capable M3 MacBook Pro.
  - In conclusion, beneath the allure of the new M3 MacBook Pro, consumers may find a more appealing choice in Apple's lineup, specifically the 14-inch MacBook Pro with the M2 Processor.
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## **SECTION 2 – GLOBAL INFO**

### **MIDDLE EAST**

#### **Israel-Hams War**

The European Union has criticized Hamas for using "hospitals and civilians as human shields" in Gaza and has simultaneously called on Israel to exercise "maximum restraint" to safeguard civilians during the ongoing conflict. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell expressed deep concern about the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza in an official statement.

- The condemnation comes amid repeated strikes on Gaza's largest medical facility, Al-Shifa hospital. According to Hamas health officials, one of the strikes destroyed the hospital's cardiac ward on a Sunday. Additionally, Al-Quds hospital is now out of service due to a shortage of generator fuel, as reported by the Palestinian Red Crescent.
- Israel denies intentionally targeting hospitals, asserting that Hamas uses these facilities, or tunnels beneath them, as hideouts—a claim disputed by the Islamist militant group. The EU statement underscored the severe impact of the hostilities on hospitals, emphasizing the grim toll on civilians and medical staff.

### **NORTH AMERICA**

#### **UNITED STATES**

President Joe Biden, keen on highlighting U.S. leadership amid challenges from Beijing and Moscow, is set to lead a significant summit this week, featuring not only allies but also Chinese President Xi Jinping. The gathering will bring together the 20 members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in San Francisco, a concept conceived three decades ago with the belief that robust trade would foster unity across the Pacific Rim.

- However, the optimistic vision of fostering regional cohesion through trade has evolved. The Biden administration, at the APEC summit, is advocating for a limited economic pact while simultaneously escalating sanctions against China, identified as the primary contender to U.S. global dominance.
- Despite the ongoing tensions, both the United States and China express a shared hope for increased stability. With a visit to Washington currently politically impractical and U.S. elections a year away, APEC provides a unique opportunity for President Xi to meet President Biden on American soil. This meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, will mark their first encounter since the G20 summit in Bali a year ago.
- Anticipated to cover a wide range of disputes, the Biden-Xi meeting will likely address issues such as Taiwan. The upcoming elections in two months could potentially escalate tensions with Beijing, which claims sovereignty over the self-ruling democracy and has not ruled out the use of force to achieve its objectives.
- One U.S. official expressed optimism about the meeting, hoping that Xi and Biden would "open up new lines of communication." The desire to re-establish contact between the

two militaries is particularly emphasized, viewed as crucial for effectively managing a potential crisis related to Taiwan.

## **EUROPE**

### **GREECE**

Euclid Tsakalotos, the former Greek finance minister credited with steering the nation through its debt crisis and European Union bailouts, has severed ties with the Syriza party. His decision comes amid accusations that the party's new leader, Stefanos Kasselakis, is embracing "Trumpism practices."

- Syriza underwent a significant leadership shift in September, marked by the unexpected victory of Stefanos Kasselakis. Previously a relatively unknown figure, Kasselakis, a former shipping executive and Goldman Sachs trader, has faced criticism from senior party members who claim he is attempting to shift the traditionally leftist party toward the center-right.
- In a contentious internal election, Kasselakis secured just over 56 percent of the votes cast by Syriza members. This outcome laid bare deep divisions within Greece's foremost opposition party, grappling with internal strife following successive legislative elections in May and June.
- Kasselakis, now at the helm, has called for the expulsion of four prominent party cadres who have been vocal critics of his leadership since his election. He issued a stern warning that if the party's central committee rejected his request, he would initiate a referendum to forcefully implement his decision.
- In response to these developments, Euclid Tsakalotos, along with 44 other party members, submitted a collective resignation letter. This move signifies a significant fracture within Syriza, raising questions about the party's future trajectory and ideological alignment.

## **AFRICA**

### **MADAGASCAR**

Outgoing President Andry Rajoelina of Madagascar exuded confidence in his prospects for the upcoming elections. "I have no doubt that I will emerge victorious, and that too in the first round," asserted the leader, who is vying for re-election on Thursday, relying on both popular support and divine intervention.

- Scheduled for November 16, the presidential elections in the Indian Ocean island nation have been overshadowed by almost daily opposition demonstrations, sparked by controversies surrounding the election's regularity.
- Rajoelina, at 49, made history as Africa's youngest head of state in 2009 when he assumed power through a coup. Following international pressure, he refrained from participating in the 2013 election but successfully reclaimed power in 2018. Despite Madagascar's abundant natural resources, the country remains among the world's poorest.



- In the midst of an arduous campaign, Rajoelina, visibly fatigued after hours of engagement, emphasized his reliance on the people's support, followed by the backing of his wife. Above all, he credited God for guiding and protecting him on this political journey.

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## SECTION 3 – MIXED BAG

### SPACE

#### ISRO Gaganyaan Module Testing

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is set to conduct an experiment within a crew module to ensure its stability upon splashing down in the sea. The incident during the TV-D1 mission on October 21 this year, where the basic crew module turned upside down during recovery in the Bay of Bengal, prompted the need for an uprighting system.

- The TV-D1 mission was a crucial part of the preparations for ISRO's inaugural human spaceflight mission, Gaganyaan, scheduled for 2024-25.
- The upcoming second test mission (TV-D2), slated for the next year, will evaluate multiple systems, including the uprighting system, before progressing to a comprehensive unmanned test flight into space on the LVM3 rocket, an integral part of the Gaganyaan mission, as explained by TV-D1 mission director S Sivakumar.
- Sivakumar elucidated on the uprighting system, highlighting its function to prevent the crew module from being upside down. This system, akin to gaseous balloons (similar to airbags in cars), would restore the upright position if the module were to topple. The TV-D1 mission revealed instability during lateral wind and sea wave disturbances, leading to a near upside-down position.
- To address potential failures, the crew module will incorporate redundancy systems. Sivakumar emphasized the importance of recovery aids, such as beacons working underwater and sea water dye ejecting to mark the landing region.
- The subsequent test mission, targeted for the first quarter of the next year, will simulate the crew module with control systems, crew seat systems, suspension systems, and the uprighting system. Notably, the crew escape system will deploy both low and high altitude escape motors, a departure from the TV-D1 mission, which utilized only high altitude escape motors.
- Despite being the first test of the crew module and crew escape system, the TV D1 mission was considered successful. Sivakumar highlighted the achievement of deploying drogue chutes at the desired angle, a critical aspect in bringing the crew module from a height of 17 km to 2.5 km above the sea surface.

- Sivakumar emphasized the generation of fundamental data, noting that all parachutes and the crew escape system were newly designed for the Gaganyaan mission. The subsequent demonstration flight, scheduled for the following year, will closely simulate the final crew module, incorporating elements such as crew seats, control, and floatation systems.

## **ECONOMY**

### **US-China Summit Dynamics**

The United States and China, as the world's leading economic powerhouses, collectively contribute over 40% of global goods and services. The ongoing economic conflicts between Washington and Beijing, spanning five years, have reverberated globally. The rare high-level summit between Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping this week holds significant global implications.

- Amid a series of crises since 2020, including the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation, rising interest rates, and geopolitical conflicts, the world economy is projected to grow modestly at 3% this year and 2.9% in 2024, according to the International Monetary Fund. Eswar Prasad, a senior professor at Cornell University, emphasizes that the strained relationship between the two largest economies exacerbates the negative impacts of geopolitical shocks.
- The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in San Francisco, featuring 21 Pacific Rim countries representing 40% of the world's population and nearly half of global trade, presents an opportunity to alleviate some economic tensions. The Biden-Xi meeting, a highlight of the summit, marks the first direct communication between the leaders in a year. While the White House downplays expectations of breakthroughs, preventing further deterioration in the economic relationship would already be considered a victory.
- The U.S.-China economic relationship soured in 2018, escalating into a full-blown trade war initiated by President Donald Trump. Allegations of China violating trade commitments led to tariffs on Chinese imports, with subsequent countermeasures from Beijing. The economic friction persisted into the Biden administration, maintaining tariffs and imposing export controls, particularly targeting advanced computer chips.
- Biden's economic policy aims to reduce reliance on Chinese factories, emphasizing partnerships with other Asian nations. However, tensions have risen, with Beijing responding with its trade restrictions and aggressive actions against foreign companies operating in China. Some analysts suggest a "decoupling" of the world's two largest economies, leading to a 24% decrease in Chinese imports to the U.S. through September compared to the same period in 2022.
- This rift forces other nations into a delicate position, having to navigate relationships with both countries. The International Monetary Fund warns that such economic "fragmentation" could subtract \$7.4 trillion from global economic output due to higher trade barriers.
- The Biden administration asserts it is not trying to undermine China's economy, emphasizing a desire for a level playing field and mutually beneficial economic relations.

- As both nations grapple with domestic challenges, such as China's economic strain and international skepticism, there is hope that the summit could pave the way for improved economic cooperation. The complexities of the U.S.-China relationship extend beyond economic matters, with geopolitical and human rights issues adding to the intricacies of their interactions.

## **WATER SCARCITY**

### **South Asia worst in world for water scarcity: UN**

In South Asia, a growing number of children are facing formidable challenges due to severe water scarcity exacerbated by the effects of climate change, surpassing any other region globally, according to the United Nations.

- The UN children's agency revealed that an alarming 347 million children under the age of 18 in South Asia are exposed to high or extremely high water scarcity, marking the highest figure among all global regions.
  - This region, comprising Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, is home to over a quarter of the world's children. The UN, in its report, highlighted that climate change is disrupting weather patterns and rainfall, resulting in unpredictable water availability. The report pointed to issues such as poor water quality, insufficient water supply, and mismanagement, including over-pumping of aquifers. Concurrently, climate change is reducing the replenishment of water sources.
  - UNICEF emphasized the far-reaching consequences of water scarcity, stating, "When village wells go dry, homes, health centers, and schools are all affected." The organization also highlighted the escalating threat for children in South Asia due to the increasingly unpredictable climate.
  - During the UN COP28 climate conference in December in Dubai, UNICEF announced its intention to urge leaders to "secure a livable planet." Sanjay Wijesekera, UNICEF chief for South Asia, underscored the gravity of the situation, stating, "Safe water is a basic human right. Yet millions of children in South Asia don't have enough to drink in a region plagued by floods, droughts, and other extreme weather events, triggered increasingly by climate change."
  - In the previous year, South Asia witnessed 45 million children lacking access to basic drinking water services, surpassing all other regions. Despite this, UNICEF expressed optimism, noting that services are rapidly expanding, with the goal of halving the number of children without access to basic drinking water services by 2030.
  - Following South Asia in the report was Eastern and Southern Africa, where 130 million children face the risk of severe water scarcity. The findings underscore the urgent need for global attention and concerted efforts to address the impact of climate change on water resources, particularly for vulnerable populations such as children in these regions.
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