

INFOTAINMENT EDGETM

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SECTION 1 – TECH BUZZ

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



Samsung Gauss AI Unveiled

Samsung Electronics revealed its latest software and services updates, featuring the introduction of its new generative artificial intelligence (AI) model, Samsung Gauss, at the annual Samsung Developer Conference (SDC) Korea 2023 in Seoul.

- The South Korean tech giant showcased Samsung Gauss and its three sub-models, namely Gauss Language, Gauss Code, and Gauss Image, with intentions to seamlessly integrate them into products to enhance the overall consumer experience.
- Unveiled during the company's recent AI event, Samsung Gauss is designed to boost the work efficiency of users by simplifying tasks such as composing emails, summarizing documents, and translating content, according to reports from Yonhap news agency.
- Anticipated to be incorporated into upcoming Samsung smartphones and tablets, including the Galaxy S24, Samsung Gauss goes beyond mere language understanding and generation. Lee Joo-hyung from Samsung Research's Global AI Center, highlighted in a keynote speech that Samsung Gauss aims to optimize user-device interaction, offering a more intuitive and natural user experience.

- "With this technology, we expect users to have a more convenient and personalized experience and to engage in more creative activities with our devices," he added.
- In addition to Samsung Gauss, the conference showcased advanced research technologies and customer experience enhancements. These included data intelligence based on knowledge graphs, features for the mobile Galaxy UI, the evolution of the Tizen platform, and improved connectivity experiences for Tizen-based screen products.
- The two-day event also addressed topics such as the implications of AI on software security, as well as Samsung's open-source initiatives for technological innovation. Since its inception in 2014, the SDC has been an annual gathering for developers, content creators, and designers, providing a platform for discussions on future technologies and services. Samsung has consistently used the event to unveil upcoming technologies and present its software visions.

AI Chip Revolution To Boost Workload Processing

Revolutionary advancements in AI may soon be propelled by cutting-edge chip designs, employing innovative methods to efficiently handle generative workloads. Siddharth Kotwal, the global head of Nvidia practice at Quantiphi, emphasizes the critical importance of keeping pace with the evolving demands of AI and machine learning (AI/ML) workloads in both hardware and software realms.

- He underscores the potential of developing workload-specific AI accelerators and GPUs tailored to the unique requirements of enterprises.
- While general-purpose microprocessors like those from Intel and AMD offer high
 performance across diverse applications, Ben Lee, a professor at the University of
 Pennsylvania, suggests that custom chips designed for specific domains, such as AI, can
 deliver significantly enhanced performance and energy efficiency. Lee outlines two key
 optimization strategies: efficient data movement within the processor and the creation of
 large custom instructions, potentially improving performance and energy efficiency by
 two orders of magnitude.
- A promising avenue of research is processing-in-memory (PIM), where emerging memory technologies integrate with analog computation. Lee explains that PIM combines programmable resistors with memory technology to execute machine learning computations within the data, eliminating the need for extensive data transfers to the processor. This approach enhances efficiency by embedding computation within the data.
- Siddharth Kotwal predicts a growing demand for Edge GPUs, particularly for edge inference, with companies like Nvidia, Arm, Qualcomm, and others in the System on Chip (SoC) or mobile domains likely to play a crucial role.
- Researchers at the University of Southern California have developed a method to minimize interference for AI tasks, boasting unprecedented information density and potentially transforming mobile devices by significantly boosting their capabilities.
- Robert Daigle, Lenovo's director of Global AI, envisions the efficiency and costeffectiveness of new NPUs, ASICs, and FPGAs designed for AI workloads. He anticipates a trend towards AI accelerators becoming more specialized for specific use cases, such as Computer Vision Inference and Generative AI Inference and training.

- The latest chip designs also prioritize sustainability by integrating capabilities for operation in liquid-cooled environments. Daigle emphasizes the importance of minimizing energy consumption and enhancing heat dispersion in this design evolution.
- The trajectory of AI accelerators is diversifying into two paths: discrete, purpose-built
 accelerators and AI cores integrated into multipurpose silicon like CPUs. Daigle
 highlights the convergence of advanced silicon, innovative liquid cooling techniques, and
 streamlined AI code as a potent combination to amplify the potential of new AI models
 and solutions.
- In the realm of computer vision, researchers at Tsinghua University in China have introduced an analog photoelectric chip that seamlessly integrates optical and electronic computing for rapid and energy-efficient computer vision processing. The ACCEL chip, as they call it, maximizes the benefits of light and electricity under all-analog signals, aiming to overcome the challenges associated with analog-to-digital conversion and enhance power consumption and processing speed.

Goals & Strategies In AI Deployments

When organizations assess emerging technologies like generative AI, a common pitfall is fixating on the technology's capabilities rather than its alignment with overall business goals and strategies.

- It's easy to be swayed by the allure of generative AI, with its promises of natural language interactions and the ability to undertake high-value tasks like content creation and improved human interactions.
- However, the mistake lies in not considering the specific use cases that address the company's existing challenges and opportunities.
- While the technical capabilities of generative AI are impressive, they alone cannot magically enhance organizational effectiveness and efficiency. To truly derive value from technology implementations, including generative AI, companies must prioritize their business strategy's core elements and identify areas where technology can provide a strategic advantage. Inevitably, AI and generative AI become integral to the solution.
- Start by clearly defining organizational objectives, priorities, and desired outcomes related to financial commitments. Assess whether cost reduction, revenue increase, or customer retention are top priorities.
- These questions set the foundation before delving into potential AI use cases. By aligning technology initiatives with strategic goals, companies establish relevant scope and clear success measures, garnering organizational buy-in and facilitating change management.
- Generative AI's promise is vast, but realizing its potential requires a strategic approach. Once objectives and priorities are clear, organizations can evaluate how and where to deploy AI for maximum impact. The principle to remember is that technology empowers strategy, not the other way around. This mindset is crucial when integrating emerging technologies like generative AI into business operations.
- After committing to a strategic approach, the next step is translating high-level business outcomes into specific use cases. Too often, companies pursue AI solutions without thoroughly analyzing their current business processes and identifying where AI can have

- the most significant impact. Asking probing questions across revenue sources, cost centers, customer pain points, and core capabilities is essential.
- Avoid the trap of adopting AI solely because it's popular. Focus on the most significant opportunities where AI can add value, aligning capabilities with organizational needs.
 Prioritize customer experience, examining touchpoints and interactions, mapping the customer journey to identify pain points. The goal is not automation for its own sake but enhancing human capabilities and decision-making.
- This internal analysis helps create an AI roadmap tailored to the organization, grounded in real potential value. Explore relevant AI methods like machine learning, natural language processing, and computer vision to address identified needs. The technology supports and enables the strategy rather than driving it.
- The key message is clear: understand business objectives and needs first before exploring how AI, including generative AI, can address them. Avoid succumbing to hype and stay focused on creating strategic advantages based on unique organizational goals and constraints. This pragmatic approach is the linchpin for realizing AI's full value.
- With a clear understanding of business objectives, organizations can proceed to evaluate AI capabilities in the context of those goals. It's crucial to maintain a realistic and nuanced perspective on what current AI technologies can and cannot achieve before determining their applicability.
- While AI has made impressive strides in areas like computer vision and natural language
 processing, it also has limitations, such as the need for massive training datasets and
 susceptibility to bias. When assessing AI's ability to achieve a business goal, factors like
 data availability, model accuracy, interpretability, security, compliance, impact on
 stakeholders, technical infrastructure, and maintainability must be considered.
- The core message is to approach AI with realistic expectations, evaluating its capabilities within the framework of specific goals and constraints. Avoid over-hyping or dismissing potential value, adopting a pragmatic and nuanced perspective. This approach enables organizations to leverage AI where it can truly drive strategic impact, avoiding disillusionment and maximizing the technology's potential.

TECHNOLOGY

WhatsApp Voice Chat Feature

WhatsApp is introducing a new voice chat feature aimed at enhancing the group calling experience on its messaging platform. Currently, group calls on WhatsApp can be intrusive, as they ring all members' devices simultaneously, which may not be ideal, especially when participants are in different time zones.

- The new voice chat feature is designed to provide a more seamless experience, allowing group members engaged in a conversation to multitask within the messaging app, similar to group call features found on platforms like Slack and Discord.
- The rollout of voice chats on Android was announced via X (formerly known as Twitter) by WhatsApp on Monday. This feature is available to users who have updated to the latest versions of WhatsApp for Android and iOS, obtainable from the Google Play store

- and the App Store, respectively. Once enabled for a group, members will notice an option to initiate a voice chat instead of using the traditional group call button.
- To start a voice chat, users press the new waveform icon located at the top right corner of the screen in a group chat. When initiated, group members receive a push notification, inviting them to join the conversation. Profiles of participants are visible to everyone in the group, even those not partaking in the voice chat. Additionally, users can perform other tasks on WhatsApp, such as texting other group members not involved in the call.
- The new feature permits users to exit and rejoin the voice chat multiple times, and the chat concludes when all participants leave. Alternatively, it automatically terminates if no participants join within an hour or if only one person remains in the chat.
- According to WhatsApp's announcement, the voice chat feature will initially be available
 for larger groups with more than 32 members. As per the platform's FAQs, the feature
 will be accessible to users in groups ranging from 33 to 128 participants. It's important to
 note that the feature is only accessible on a user's primary device, and linked devices are
 not supported.

SUPERCOMPUTERS

AI Supercomputers Phase 2

Cerebras Systems and Core42 are embarking on the second phase of constructing Condor Galaxy 2, heralded as the world's most extensive interconnected AI supercomputers. Collaborating to accelerate generative AI, Cerebras and Core42, a subsidiary of the UAE-based G42 technology holding group in Abu Dhabi, are pushing the boundaries of AI compute capacity.

- The Condor Galaxy network, consisting of nine interconnected supercomputers, is poised to achieve an astounding 36 exaFLOPs AI compute capacity. Following the successful completion of Condor Galaxy 1, the partners are now initiating Condor Galaxy 2 (CG-2).
- This second phase, aiming for four exaFLOPs and integrating 54 million AI-optimized compute cores, will elevate the Condor Galaxy network to a total of eight exaFLOPs and 108 million cores upon completion. The expansion reflects Cerebras and Core42's dedication to establishing a constellation of AI supercomputers with unparalleled compute power.
- Distinguishing itself from conventional CPU production, Cerebras employs entire silicon
 wafers to print its cores, each wafer equivalent to the size of a pizza. This unique
 approach results in wafers housing the equivalent of hundreds of chips, each featuring
 numerous cores. The culmination of this process yields a single supercomputer with an
 impressive 54 million cores.
- Talal Alkaissi, Chief Product and Global Partnerships Officer at Core42, emphasized their commitment to building the world's largest and fastest AI supercomputers through the strategic partnership with Cerebras Systems. Core42's expertise in handling extensive datasets across healthcare, energy, and climate studies aligns with their goal of democratizing AI and providing easy access to leading AI compute capabilities. This

- collaboration enables the training of cutting-edge foundational models, advancing critical research across diverse domains.
- Andrew Feldman, CEO of Cerebras, highlighted the success of their partnership with Core42, resulting in a doubling of compute capacity in Condor Galaxy-1 and a 50% improvement in training performance through software updates. He expressed their commitment to pushing the industry forward by creating a generative ad model in the Arabic language for the 400 million Arabic speakers.

DATA SCIENCE

Essential Considerations For Integrating Data Science

In our current era, where data holds significant importance, businesses are increasingly acknowledging the pivotal role of data science in gaining insights, making informed decisions, and maintaining a competitive edge.

- However, successful implementation of data science within a business necessitates
 meticulous planning, coordination, and a clear understanding of its objectives. Let's look
 into essential considerations for integrating data science into a business environment and
 optimizing its advantages.
- **Define Business Goals**: Clearly articulate the desired outcomes of implementing data science. Whether the aim is to enhance customer satisfaction, boost sales, or reduce costs, establishing specific goals is crucial. Once objectives are identified, businesses can proceed to pinpoint the pertinent data required for collection and analysis.
- Establish a Data Team: Building a dedicated data team is imperative for businesses without an existing infrastructure. This team assumes responsibility for collecting, cleaning, analyzing, and visualizing data. The option to either hire in-house data scientists or outsource the tasks to a third-party provider depends on the business's specific requirements and resources.
- **Invest in Appropriate Tools and Technology**: The field of data science relies on a diverse set of tools and technologies, encompassing data warehouses, data mining tools, and visualization tools. Investing in tools aligned with the unique needs of the business is paramount for effective data science implementation.
- Cultivate a Data Culture: The effectiveness of data science is heightened when ingrained into the culture of the business. This entails ensuring that every member of the organization comprehends the significance of data and its potential for enhancing decision-making processes.
- Adopt a Gradual Approach: Instead of attempting to implement data science enterprise-wide in one go, it is advisable to commence with a small-scale pilot project. This allows for a phased implementation, enabling the business to learn, adapt, and achieve success before scaling up the integration across the entire organization.

SECTION 2 – GLOBAL INFO

EUROPE

SPAIN

Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, a member of the Socialist party, is facing mounting criticism on multiple fronts, exacerbating political tensions within the country. While his decision to grant pardons to Catalan separatists has sparked nationwide protests, another contentious issue revolves around the distribution of spending and revenue among Spain's regions, leading to clashes with opposition parties.

- The controversy stems from Sanchez's strategy to secure support from Catalan factions for his government in parliament. Despite the widespread disapproval of his plan to grant amnesty to Catalan separatists involved in the failed 2017 secession attempt, Sanchez has engaged in negotiations with the Catalan groups to ensure a parliamentary majority.
- In a significant concession to the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC), Sanchez agreed to forgive Catalonia's outstanding debt of 15 billion euros (\$16 billion) to the national government, originating from the 2008 financial crisis. While the Socialists have pledged to extend similar agreements to other regions that participated in the same financial scheme, this move has not been well-received by various regional governments, even those governed by left-leaning parties.
- The agreement reached with Junts per Catalunya, the second-largest independence group, further adds to the controversy. The pact includes provisions favoring the return of companies, such as Caixabank and Naturgy, to Catalonia. These companies had relocated their headquarters following the 2017 secession crisis.
- Sanchez's attempts to navigate the complex political landscape by striking deals with Catalan separatists have triggered discontent both at the national and regional levels. As protests continue and opposition parties voice their concerns, the Prime Minister finds himself entangled in a delicate balancing act that has wider implications for Spain's political stability.

NORTH AMERICA

UNITED STATES

President Joe Biden's administration has indicated a delay in unveiling a draft of an Asia trade pact, originally scheduled for announcement at a summit in San Francisco. This decision comes in the wake of domestic criticism.

- Biden, hosting 20 members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in San Francisco, was anticipated to disclose substantial advancements in a burgeoning trade agreement while engaging with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the summit's sidelines.
- However, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen highlighted that there is still unfinished business, particularly in the most contentious aspect of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) — the trade component.

- Yellen conveyed to reporters that while there has been significant progress, it is not yet complete and is likely to necessitate further attention. She shared insights after leading discussions among APEC foreign ministers.
- Yellen emphasized the notable strides made in crucial areas important to the United States, such as supply chains, the environment, and sustainable finance. Although progress has been achieved in the realm of trade, it appears to be incomplete. The IPEF, termed the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity, deviates significantly from a conventional trade deal, as it does not provide trade access.

SOUTH AFRICA

VENEZUELA

Caracas strongly criticized the European Union's decision to renew sanctions against Venezuela for another six months, asserting that this action hinders the bloc's involvement in Venezuelan "political processes" leading up to next year's elections.

- Since November 2017, the EU has maintained sanctions on Venezuela, encompassing measures such as an arms embargo, travel restrictions, and asset freezes targeting numerous officials. These sanctions are subject to an annual review.
- In a recent statement, the European Council disclosed its choice to extend the restrictive
 measures for only six months, departing from the usual one-year renewal period, with the
 new expiration date set for May 14, 2024. Reacting to this decision, the foreign ministry
 in Caracas condemned the move as "arrogant and illegal," accusing the EU of
 unwarranted interference in its internal affairs.
- Caracas is currently facing scrutiny from the International Criminal Court in The Hague, which is investigating alleged crimes against humanity related to the government's response to protests in 2017 against President Nicolas Maduro. Notably, Maduro's subsequent re-election in 2018 went unrecognized by several countries, including members of the EU.
- Despite these tensions, a recent development saw Maduro's government and the opposition reaching an agreement to hold elections in the coming year and permitting observers, including those from the EU. This announcement prompted the United States to ease some of its sanctions on Venezuela, particularly in the oil and gas sector.

ASIA

CAMBODIA

Amnesty International has accused Cambodia of violating international law by displacing 10,000 families from the vicinity of the Angkor Wat temple complex. Over the past year, Phnom Penh has intensified the relocation of families residing within the expansive UNESCO world heritage site to a new community situated 25 kilometers (15 miles) away, built on former rice paddies.

• While Cambodian officials have consistently asserted that these relocations are voluntary, Amnesty International, in a report, claims that many families are facing both "direct and subtle threats" to compel them to move. Montse Ferrer of Amnesty emphasized the

- urgent need for Cambodia to halt forced evictions and cease violating international human rights law.
- In response to the allegations, Cambodian government spokesman Pen Bona dismissed the report, stating that the relocation of villagers adhered to UNESCO guidelines and was carried out on a "voluntary" basis. UNESCO, on the other hand, expressed deep concern about the report. This development coincides with the eve of a regular intergovernmental conference on Angkor at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris.

SECTION 3 – MIXED BAG

HEALTH

Viral Rebound In COVID-19

A recent observational study conducted across multiple healthcare centers investigated the occurrence of virologic rebound in patients undergoing treatment for acute COVID-19. The study, published in the Annals of Internal Medicine, revealed that approximately 20 percent of individuals treated with nirmatrelvir-ritonavir (N-R) experienced virologic rebound, in contrast to about 2 percent among those who did not receive this treatment.

- N-R, an oral antiviral widely utilized in the United States to mitigate hospitalization and
 mortality rates in individuals with mild to moderate COVID-19, has been subject to
 reports of a clinical and virologic rebound phenomenon shortly after its integration into
 clinical practice. However, conflicting data regarding the frequency of this phenomenon
 have been reported.
- Researchers from Massachusetts General Hospital and Brigham and Women's Hospital conducted a study involving 127 patients with acute COVID-19, comparing the incidence of virologic rebound in those treated with N-R (n=72) and those without treatment (n=55). The study's primary outcome was the occurrence of viral rebound within three weeks of an initial positive test, defined as either a positive SARS-CoV-2 viral culture following a prior negative culture or sustained elevated viral load after a prior decline.
- Through diligent monitoring using both PCR and viral culture during the acute stages of COVID-19, the data indicated that virologic rebound with replication-competent prolonged viral shedding transpired in approximately 1 in 5 individuals receiving N-R, while only 1 untreated patient experienced virologic rebound.
- Those who experienced rebound shed live virus for a median of 14 days, compared to less than 5 days in those who did not. A regression model demonstrated a trend towards higher rates of virologic rebound with earlier initiation of N-R after the date of diagnosis and after the onset of symptoms.
- Additionally, researchers observed that individuals taking N-R, in comparison to untreated individuals, were older, had received more COVID-19 vaccinations, and were more frequently immunosuppressed.

• The study authors suggest that these findings should be considered when assessing the benefits and risks of N-R treatment in patients with a low risk of severe disease. However, for patients at moderate to high risk for severe COVID-19, the well-established clinical benefits associated with N-R use remain.

SPACE

NASA Pauses Mars Commands

NASA currently has a formidable fleet of robotic explorers, including the Curiosity and Perseverance rovers, the Ingenuity Mars Helicopter, and the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, actively operating on or around the red planet. However, the space agency has recently declared a temporary halt in sending commands to these probes until Saturday, November 25, due to the unique alignment of Mars, Earth, and the Sun.

- This pause in communication is a precautionary measure taken during the Mars solar
 conjunction, a celestial event occurring every two years when the Sun is positioned
 between Earth and Mars. During this period, the Sun emits hot, ionized gas from its
 corona, creating a potential risk of corrupting radio signals transmitted from Earth to
 Mars. Such signal interference could lead to unexpected behaviour from the spacecraft on
 Mars.
- Between November 11 and November 25, although direct commands will be on hold, the
 robotic missions will remain active in monitoring surface conditions, weather, and
 radiation. While the Perseverance and Curiosity rovers will stay stationary, they will
 diligently collect data. The grounded Ingenuity helicopter, despite its immobility, will
 utilize its colour camera to observe the movement of sand. Simultaneously, the Mars
 Reconnaissance and Odyssey orbiters will continue capturing images of the planet's
 surface from their orbital positions.
- Despite the communication pause, NASA will still receive health updates from all the spacecraft during the conjunction, except for two days when Mars will be entirely concealed behind the Sun's disk. Once the hiatus concludes, all the accumulated scientific data collected by the missions will be transmitted back to Earth. This wealth of information will enable scientists to resume their studies and further unravel the mysteries of the Martian landscape.

ENVIRONMENT

UN Plastic Treaty Talks

Global efforts to address the pervasive issue of plastic pollution, which is infiltrating ecosystems and human bodies, resumed on Monday as nations engaged in renewed negotiations for a UN treaty. Last year, 175 countries committed to reaching a binding agreement by 2024 to combat the extensive plastic pollution found in oceans, mountains, and even within blood and breast milk.

• While negotiators have convened twice before, the current week-long talks in Kenya mark the initial discussions to delve into the substantive details of the treaty. Tensions have arisen regarding the specific provisions the treaty should encompass. The UN

- Environment Programme (UNEP) headquarters in Nairobi hosted the high-stakes talks, where participating nations were urged to seek common ground for the benefit of the planet.
- Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, the executive secretary of the treaty negotiating committee, emphasized the urgent need for action, stating, "Nature is suffocating, gasping for breath. All ecosystems... are under threat from plastic pollution." The fate of the environment, she noted, rests in the hands of nations, asserting that they possess the power to rectify the destructive course currently underway.
- Prior to the talks, 60 nations with "high ambition" advocated for binding rules to curtail the use and production of plastic, a proposal supported by numerous environmental groups. This proposal is among the options outlined in a treaty draft published in September, guiding the deliberations in Nairobi. Over 2,000 delegates, including representatives from oil and gas companies, environmental organizations, and civil society groups, are participating.
- The talks occur just ahead of crucial climate discussions in the United Arab Emirates, anticipated to be dominated by debates on the future of fossil fuels. Countries with significant petrochemical industries have generally favoured recycling and improved waste management over the caps on new plastic or product bans advocated by some parties.
- Inger Andersen, UNEP executive director, emphasized the necessity of addressing the entire life cycle of plastics in the treaty, from production to use and disposal. She asserted, "We cannot recycle our way out of this mess."
- Environmental groups in Nairobi accused a "low ambition coalition," primarily
 comprising oil-producing nations such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain, of obstructing
 the talks. The International Council of Chemical Associations, a global industry body
 with members like Dow and ExxonMobil, supported a legally binding agreement focused
 on ending plastic pollution rather than plastic production.
- The alarming increase in plastic production, doubling in the past 20 years and reaching 460 million tonnes in 2019, according to the OECD, has raised concerns. Despite heightened awareness, current trends suggest that production could triple by 2060 without intervention. Approximately two-thirds of plastic waste is discarded after minimal use, with less than 10 percent being recycled, leading to millions of tonnes being improperly disposed of in the environment.
- Kenyan President William Ruto emphasized the severity of the issue, stating, "This kind of polluting our environment is unacceptable and is essentially an existential threat to life, to humanity and everything in between."
- The Nairobi meeting is the third of five sessions aiming to conclude negotiations next year, with the treaty slated for adoption by mid-2025. Campaigners stressed the importance of significant progress in Nairobi, warning against time-consuming debates on procedural matters that hindered previous talks in Paris.

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