



## SECTION 1 – TECH BUZZ

### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



#### **Copilot Arrives on Windows 10**

Microsoft has opened up the opportunity for Windows 10 users to explore the Copilot feature, previously exclusive to Windows 11. The tech giant declared last week its intention to bring Copilot to Windows 10, and now a Release Preview version of the operating system is available for testers, featuring the integrated Copilot.

- In Windows 10, Copilot functions similarly to its Windows 11 counterpart, featuring a button on the right side of the taskbar. This button allows users to access the AI-powered chatbot, facilitating the answering of queries and text generation. While the core functionality aligns between the two versions, there are slight variations due to the absence of certain skills or actions in Windows 10 that are present in Windows 11.
- Users of Windows 10 Home or Pro in the Release Preview channel can currently test Copilot. It is anticipated that in the coming days or weeks, this new feature will be available to all Windows 10 users in supported markets.
- Microsoft, in a statement last week, disclosed its reevaluation of the approach to Windows 10, less than two years before the scheduled end of support for the operating system. The company expressed its commitment to making "additional investments" in Windows 10, hinting at the potential introduction of more AI features in the future.

However, Microsoft clarified that there would be no major updates to Windows 10, emphasizing that the current version, 22H2, is the final iteration.

- Aaron Woodman, vice president of Windows marketing, stressed in a briefing with The Verge that there would be no alterations to the end-of-support date for Windows 10, which remains October 14th, 2025.
- Despite the anticipation surrounding Copilot's arrival on Windows 10, it aligns with Microsoft's strategy, considering the widespread popularity of the operating system compared to the slower adoption of Windows 11.
- Internal Microsoft data, cited in a recent report, revealed that two years after its launch, Windows 11 had been installed on only 400 million devices. In contrast, Windows 10 achieved this milestone within a year of its release and surpassed 600 million devices a few months after its second anniversary.

### **Bard Enhancements Raise Concerns**

Bard, Google's AI chatbot, has undergone significant improvements since its lackluster debut. According to Android Authority, the bot's integration with YouTube has received a noteworthy upgrade, enabling it to analyze individual videos and extract specific information, such as key points or recipe ingredients, without requiring the user to play the video.

- While this enhancement presents a potentially valuable tool, it also raises concerns among content creators about the implications of generative AI.
- To test Bard's capabilities, it was employed on a YouTube video on crafting an Espresso Martini, courtesy of America's Test Kitchen. This particular video often necessitates repeated viewings to recall ingredient quantities accurately. However, with Bard in action, a few prompts were all it took to obtain a comprehensive list of ingredients and step-by-step instructions.
- Bard demonstrated proficiency in summarizing the video accurately, ensuring precise details regarding ingredients, measurements, and instructions. Notably, it even included the initial step of chilling a martini glass by filling it with ice and water. While it suggested shaking the drink for 30 seconds, a deviation from the video's advice, the overall performance was commendable.
- Yet, a complication arises with this newfound convenience. America's Test Kitchen has already published the complete recipe on its website, albeit behind a paywall, a common practice for much of their content.
- Unlike the YouTube video, the recipe is not available in the video description. By relying on Bard for the recipe, it circumvented the need to press play, watch a preroll advertisement, and potentially engage with the channel's recommended videos. While this is advantageous for users, it raises concerns for the content creators.
- Currently, this feature is part of an opt-in Labs experience and requires some effort to obtain the desired information. When requesting the "full recipe" directly from the video, Bard was unable to generate anything. However, by seeking "step-by-step instructions" in a subsequent prompt, it successfully obtained the entire recipe.
- The existing level of friction suggests that America's Test Kitchen's YouTube strategy is not immediately threatened. Nevertheless, envisioning a future where this tool seamlessly

integrates into YouTube prompts a different conversation about how Bard's content extraction might benefit creators.

- Presently, the primary beneficiary appears to be Google. Although this scenario is not novel for generative AI, industry stakeholders, including Google, are yet to address this question adequately. Ultimately, if Google aims to maintain a content-friendly environment for YouTube creators, resolving this issue is imperative.

## **AWS Expands Transcribe Languages**

Amazon Web Services (AWS) expanded the linguistic capabilities of its Amazon Transcribe product, incorporating speech foundation model-based transcription for a total of 100 languages, along with introducing a range of new artificial intelligence (AI) features for its users.

- AWS customers leverage Amazon Transcribe to integrate speech-to-text functionalities into their applications hosted on the AWS Cloud. The recent enhancements, revealed in a blog post by the company, involve the ability of Transcribe to recognize a more extensive array of spoken languages and facilitate call transcriptions.
- The training process for Amazon Transcribe involved exposure to "millions of hours of unlabeled audio data from over 100 languages." The system employs self-supervised algorithms to grasp the nuances of human speech patterns in diverse languages and accents. AWS emphasized its commitment to ensuring equitable representation of languages in the training data, preventing the overrepresentation of commonly spoken languages at the expense of lesser-used ones.
- As of late 2023, Amazon Transcribe expanded its language support to cover 39 languages. According to AWS, the latest version of Transcribe enhances accuracy by 20 to 50 percent compared to its predecessor across various languages. The updated features include automatic punctuation, custom vocabulary, automatic language identification, and custom vocabulary filters. Amazon Transcribe can effectively decipher speech from both audio and video formats, even in noisy environments.
- When contacted by The Verge, AWS did not disclose the specific foundation models employed for Amazon Transcribe.
- The improvements in language recognition extend beyond Amazon Transcribe, positively impacting the accuracy of AWS's Call Analytics platform. This platform, frequently used by contact center customers, now incorporates generative AI models. Amazon Transcribe Call Analytics can succinctly summarize interactions between agents and customers, reducing the need for extensive post-call reporting. Managers can quickly access pertinent information without reviewing the entire transcript.
- While AWS is a key player in the AI-powered transcription services domain, it faces competition from other providers. Otter, for instance, has been delivering AI transcriptions to both consumers and enterprises, introducing a summarization tool in June. Meta also entered the scene, announcing its work on a generative AI-powered translation model recognizing nearly 100 spoken languages.
- Additionally, AWS unveiled enhancements to its Amazon Personalization product. This tool enables clients to deliver product recommendations to customers, similar to how streaming services suggest content based on user activity. The new feature, Content

Generation, is designed to craft titles or email subject lines that thematically align with recommendation lists.

## **AI Chatbot Tech Accessibility**

Major industry players, such as Microsoft with its Bing AI, featuring Copilot, Google with Bard, and OpenAI, showcasing ChatGPT-4, are democratizing AI chatbot technology that was previously confined to research laboratories.

- The functioning of these Large Language Model (LLM) programs is illuminated by OpenAI's GPT-3, which explained that AI employs "a series of autocomplete-like programs to learn language." These programs delve into "the statistical properties of the language" to "make educated guesses based on the words you've typed previously."
- In simpler terms, as articulated by James Vincent, a human observer, these AI tools are expansive autocomplete systems, honed to anticipate the next word in a given sentence. Notably, they lack a pre-programmed database of 'facts' and instead possess the capability to generate statements that sound plausible. This reliance on plausibility, however, introduces a caveat—these systems may inadvertently present false information as truth, as the mere semblance of believability doesn't ensure accuracy in the content generated.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Ayaneo Retro Mini AM01**

Ayaneo, a renowned player in the handheld gaming console market, recently unveiled its much-anticipated release, the Retro Mini PC AM01. The company aims to ship the AM01 before the year's end. The device, though not dominating benchmarking contests, distinguishes itself as an aesthetically pleasing computer.

- Addressing the notable resemblance to Apple's '80s-era Macintosh, Ayaneo openly acknowledges its homage to the iconic device. The AM01 closely emulates the Macintosh, featuring a beige, rectangular design with a black space reminiscent of the old screen, complete with a flag-shaped sticker instead of the iconic apple, skillfully avoiding legal entanglements.
- Internally, the AM01 comes in two configurations. The base model, priced at an early bird rate of \$149 (\$199 for regular buyers), is equipped with an AMD Ryzen 3 3200U processor, eight gigs of RAM, and 256 gigs of storage. The top-tier model, priced at \$379 early or \$459 retail, boasts an AMD Ryzen 7 5700U processor, 32 gigs of RAM, and a terabyte of storage. Notably, all memory is expandable. While competitively priced, there are more powerful mini PCs available at a similar cost, albeit in less attractive enclosures.
- The standout feature of the AM01 lies in its exceptional extensibility. With five USB ports (including one USB-C and four USB-A), HDMI, DisplayPort, a headphone jack, ethernet, Bluetooth, and Wi-Fi, the AM01 provides a wealth of connectivity options. Users can opt for a preloaded Windows 11 version or choose the "bare" option to install Linux, SteamOS, or any preferred operating system. The AM01 is versatile, suitable for use as a computer, retro gaming console, Plex server, and more. Ayaneo even offers the AM01 in a bundle with NuPhy's mechanical keyboards and 8BitDo's wireless controllers.

## GADGETS

### Amazon Echo Frames Upgrade

Amazon's Echo Frames strategy diverges from other "smart glasses" by forgoing visual augmented reality features and focusing on delivering regular-looking glasses with the Alexa voice assistant integrated. If you find this concept appealing, you're in luck—the latest third-generation Echo Frames are now open for preorders on Amazon, accompanied by a tempting \$75 discount.

- The notable improvements in the new Frames extend beyond functionality to embrace form. This iteration is not only lighter but also better balanced compared to its predecessors, offering a range of more stylish and colourful options. This is a substantial upgrade, especially considering that the initial generation of Echo Frames had a rather unassuming resemblance to drugstore reading glasses.
- In addition to the aesthetic enhancements, the third-generation Echo Frames boast a slight extension of battery life, now lasting a total of six hours on a full charge. The newly designed speakers promise up to "three times more bass" than the second-generation Echo Frames. Each set of Echo Frames incorporates a tiny microphone designed to capture the user's voice while minimizing the pickup of surrounding voices, enabling seamless communication with Alexa. This means you can effortlessly command your Echo Frames to play playlists, control Alexa-enabled smart lights, listen to podcasts, make calls, and more.
- While the sticker price for the third-generation frames is \$269.99, early adopters who preorder the prescription-ready version can enjoy a \$75 discount as part of Amazon's "introductory price promotion." The blue light-blocking Echo Frames have a slightly smaller discount, while the sunglasses are available at the full price. Amazon's collaboration with the Carrera brand continues with the third generation of Carrera Echo Frame sunglasses priced at \$389.99, but preorders come with a reduced price of \$314.99.
- The Echo Frames are presented in five distinct styles: blue round, black rectangle, black square, brown cat eye, and grey rectangle. For those opting for the prescription-ready or blue light-filtering versions, the intention is to take them to your optician upon arrival for customization with prescription lenses. This, however, is not applicable to the Echo Frames sunglasses.

## WEB DEVELOPMENT

### Transformers.js Enhancements

Transformers.js, the JavaScript counterpart to the Python Transformers library, has been specifically crafted to execute Transformers models directly within web browsers, eliminating the need for external server processing. In the recent update to version 2.7, enhancements were introduced, with a notable addition being support for text-to-speech (TTS). This update, driven by user demand, has expanded the library's versatility for a range of use cases.

- Text-to-speech (TTS) involves generating natural-sounding speech from text, accommodating multiple spoken languages and speakers. Currently, Transformers.js

exclusively supports TTS with Xenova/speecht5\_tts, a model based on Microsoft's SpeechT5 with ONNX weights. Future updates are in the pipeline, with plans to include support for bark and MMS.

- Developers can utilize the text-to-speech functionality by employing the pipeline function from @xenova/transformers. This entails specifying the 'text-to-speech' task and the desired model ('Xenova/speecht5\_tts'), with the option { quantized: false }. Additionally, a link to a file containing speaker embeddings is provided.
  - Upon application of the TTS model to a given text, the output comprises an audio array and the sampling rate. This array represents the synthesized speech, which can be further processed or played directly in the browser.
  - Transformers.js caters to various use cases, including style transfer, image inpainting, image colorization, and super-resolution. Its adaptability and frequent updates establish it as a valuable asset for developers exploring the convergence of machine learning and web development, making it a dependable tool in the realm of web-based machine learning.
  - Designed to be functionally equivalent to Hugging Face's transformers python library, Transformers.js enables the execution of the same pre-trained models using a very similar API.
  - Encompassing a wide array of tasks and models, Transformers.js spans natural language processing, vision, audio, tabular data, multimodal applications, and reinforcement learning. The library covers tasks ranging from text classification and summarization to image segmentation and object detection, offering versatility for various machine learning applications.
  - The list of supported models is extensive, including architectures such as BERT, GPT-2, T5, and Vision Transformer (ViT), among many others, ensuring users can select the most suitable model for their specific task.
  - The release of Transformers.js has garnered positive feedback from the community. In a Reddit thread initiated earlier this year, a user mentioned replacing openai's embeddings model with Transformers.js and reported satisfactory performance. Another user commented on Hugging Face's efforts to democratize language models, emphasizing the community's benefit from discussions on practical implementations rather than daily model releases.
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## **SECTION 2 – GLOBAL INFO**

### **EUROPE**

#### **UKRAINE**

Ukraine's determination in its confrontation with Russia remains steadfast, as expressed by the country's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba. Despite uncertainties regarding US support and limited progress on the front lines, Kuleba affirmed Ukraine's commitment to the ongoing struggle during discussions with NATO allies in Brussels.

- "We have to persist, we have to continue fighting. Ukraine will not retreat," emphasized Kuleba. He reiterated the nation's unwavering strategic objective of preserving territorial integrity based on internationally recognized borders as of 1991. Stressing the broader implications, he asserted, "The issue here is not just Ukraine's security; it is the security and safety of the entire Euro-Atlantic space."
- Concerns have arisen about the potential consequences of insufficient support from Western allies, particularly at a time when attention is diverted by the Israel-Hamas conflict. There is apprehension that this lack of backing might compel Kyiv to consider compromising with Russian President Vladimir Putin from a position of vulnerability.
- Despite Ukraine's top general acknowledging a challenging stalemate on the battlefield, Western officials maintain their commitment and deny any pressure on Kyiv to engage in negotiations with Moscow. The geopolitical landscape underscores the importance of Ukraine's security not only for the nation itself but for the broader Euro-Atlantic region.

#### **UNITED KINGDOM**

Disagreements between Britain and Greece have arisen over the cancellation of a prime ministerial meeting, amid a diplomatic dispute related to the contested ownership of ancient sculptures exhibited at the British Museum.

- Originally scheduled for Tuesday at 10 Downing Street, the meeting between Rishi Sunak and Kyriakos Mitsotakis was abruptly called off, leading Mitsotakis to express his "displeasure" and curtail his three-day visit to London.
- The focal point of contention revolved around Mitsotakis' remarks in a BBC interview regarding the ownership of the Parthenon Marbles, also known as the Elgin Marbles, which date back 2,500 years.
- These sculptures were removed from the Parthenon temple at the Acropolis in Greece during the early 19th century by the British diplomat Thomas Bruce, the Earl of Elgin. While Athens contends that the marbles were unlawfully taken, the UK asserts their legal acquisition. The sculptures remain a significant attraction for visitors at the London museum.

### **MIDDLE EAST**

#### **Israel-Hamas War**

On the sixth day of the truce between Israel and Hamas, the release of additional hostages in

exchange for Palestinian prisoners has taken place, marking a continuation of efforts towards a more "sustainable" ceasefire. Following a 48-hour extension of the initial four-day truce, 12 hostages were freed from Gaza, and Israel released 30 Palestinians.

- The extended agreement, set to conclude in the next 24 hours, anticipates one more exchange of hostages for prisoners. However, mediators from Qatar express a desire for a more enduring resolution. Majed Al Ansari, the foreign ministry spokesman, emphasized during a news conference in Doha, "Our main focus right now, and our hope, is to reach a sustainable truce that will lead to further negotiations and eventually to an end to this war."
- While acknowledging the current situation, Al Ansari noted the provision in the agreement allowing extensions, contingent on Hamas ensuring the release of at least 10 hostages. This provision facilitated the recent two-day extension, resulting in the release of 10 Israeli hostages from Gaza on Tuesday night, along with two Thais freed outside the agreement's original scope. The mediators remain committed to seeking a lasting solution beyond the immediate exchanges.

## **ASIA**

### **HONG KONG**

The final arguments in Hong Kong's most extensive national security trial commenced on Wednesday, marking over 1,000 days since authorities levied charges against 47 democracy activists.

- These charges were imposed under a law instituted by China with the aim of suppressing dissent. The defendants, a diverse group including democratically elected lawmakers, unionists, and academics, collectively represent the remnants of Hong Kong's opposition, a force that has been significantly stifled following the imposition of a comprehensive national security law by China in 2020.
- Critics argue that this law has eroded civil liberties that were intended to be protected under the 1997 agreement facilitating the handover of the former British colony to China. The government, however, contends that the law is crucial for combating serious offenses like collusion and secession, particularly in the aftermath of the extensive and at times violent pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong in 2019.
- The 47 individuals on trial are charged with "conspiracy to subvert state power" and could potentially face life imprisonment. This case is widely viewed as a litmus test for the prevailing political climate in Hong Kong. The activists are accused of orchestrating, participating in, and supporting an unofficial primary election in July 2020, aimed at coordinating candidates for the city's legislature.



## SECTION 3 – MIXED BAG

### HEALTH

#### **Bharat Biotech Plans For More Vaccine Research**

Bharat Biotech, headquartered in Hyderabad, has recently formalized a collaboration with the University of Sydney Infectious Diseases Institute through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This strategic partnership is geared towards advancing vaccine research initiatives, reinforcing academic-industry alliances, and contributing to the global fight against infectious diseases.

- The primary objective of this collaboration is to cultivate robust sectoral and cross-organizational collaborations with the aim of devising innovative methodologies to address potential future epidemics and infectious diseases. Bharat Biotech, in a released statement, emphasized the goal of leveraging the combined strengths of academia and industry to propel advancements in the field of vaccines and biotherapeutics.
- Krishna Ella, the Executive Chairman of Bharat Biotech, expressed enthusiasm about the collaborative venture, stating, “This agreement reflects our commitment to facilitating collaborative research, fostering innovation, and advancing the science of vaccine technology. We are excited about the opportunities to strengthen our shared vision, harness the educational and research capabilities, and contribute to building a healthier world. Our focus is also on nurturing the talent of young scientists with a passion for innovation.”
- India, as part of its ongoing efforts, continues to channel significant investments into research and development, aiming to establish a comprehensive roadmap for designing and delivering vaccines in preparation for potential future pandemics.
- Jamie Triccas, Deputy Director of the Sydney Infectious Diseases Institute, highlighted the global impact they aspire to achieve through this collaboration. “Positioning Sydney ID on a global scale to drive innovation and showcase our expertise in developing new vaccines and biotherapeutics is crucial. The reputational and societal impacts of creating novel vaccines to eliminate human and animal diseases that are safe, affordable, and effective cannot be overstated. Together with Bharat Biotech International Limited, we aim to make a lasting impact on global health.”
- The partnership between Bharat Biotech and the University of Sydney Infectious Diseases Institute is poised to contribute significantly to the advancement of vaccine technology and the collective global efforts to combat infectious diseases.

### SPACE

#### **AstroSat's Gamma-Ray Burst Discovery**

Since its launch in 2015, the AstroSat satellite by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has identified over 600 gamma-ray bursts. These bursts, signalling the demise of massive stars or the convergence of neutron stars, were pinpointed by the Cadmium Zinc Telluride

Imager (CZTI) aboard AstroSat. AstroSat stands as India's pioneering satellite entirely devoted to astronomical studies.

- Dipankar Bhattacharya, the principal investigator for CZTI, highlighted the significant achievement of detecting the 600th gamma-ray burst. He expressed satisfaction with CZTI's sustained and undiminished performance, even eight years post-launch and beyond its anticipated design lifespan.
- Gaurav Waratkar, heading the gamma-ray burst studies with AstroSat at IIT Bombay, said that these bursts, often referred to as "mini big bangs," represent the most energetic explosions in the universe. In mere seconds, they emit more energy than the Sun does throughout its entire existence.

### **Noteworthy Details about Gamma-Ray Bursts:**

- Gamma-ray bursts are categorized into two types: short and long. Short bursts endure for less than two seconds. Initially, scientists posited that short and long gamma-ray bursts originated from different sources.
- However, recent revelations emerged from a long-duration gamma-ray burst that reached Earth, shedding light on cosmic mysteries. A study published in December of the preceding year challenged the prevailing belief held by astrophysicists for nearly two decades. The assumption that long gamma-ray bursts solely resulted from the collapse of massive stars was overturned. Furthermore, the notion that neutron star mergers exclusively produced short gamma-ray bursts was also debunked.
- Neutron stars form when massive stars deplete their fuel and undergo collapse. The merger of two neutron stars triggers the release of strong gravitational waves, accompanied by electromagnetic waves spanning the entire spectrum, from gamma-rays to radio waves.
- On October 9, 2022, a potent pulse of gamma-ray radiation traversed the solar system, activating gamma-ray detectors on various orbiting satellites and spacecraft. The brightness of this radiation prompted astronomers to investigate the phenomenon using the world's most powerful telescopes. Dubbed GRB 221009A after its discovery date, this cosmic explosion stands as the brightest gamma-ray burst ever documented.
- AstroSat marked its 600th gamma-ray burst detection on November 22, underscoring its enduring contribution to the exploration of celestial phenomena.

## **ORGANIZATION**

### **Interpol's Red Notice Challenges**

As Interpol commemorates its centenary, it grapples with the intricate challenge of apprehending criminals while ensuring that its renowned red notices are not misused to target dissidents. This week, over a thousand police and law enforcement leaders from across the globe are convening at Interpol's general assembly in Vienna, the city of its inception.

- Juergen Stock, Secretary General of the Lyon-based agency, highlighted the organization's growth from 20 member countries in 1923 to 196 today. Emphasizing the significance of Interpol's red notices, Stock stated that it plays a crucial role in eliminating safe havens for criminals, whether in the physical or online realm.

- However, Interpol has faced criticism and scrutiny over the abuse of red notices, prompting the organization to enhance its controls. Acting as a global hub for information exchange, Interpol aids member countries in connecting dots across continents by identifying and locating criminals. The organization's database boasts 125 million police files, receiving around 16 million searches daily.
- Notable successes include the capture of Bosnian Serb wartime leader Radovan Karadzic in 2008 after nearly 13 years on the run and assistance in cracking down on Italy's powerful mafia, the 'Ndrangheta. In May, Interpol initiated an unprecedented campaign to identify 22 murdered women in Belgium, Germany, and The Netherlands, leading to the identification of Rita Roberts, who was killed in 1992.
- Despite these accomplishments, Interpol's red notice system has faced allegations of misuse by member states targeting political dissidents. In response, Stock established a team of approximately 40 experts to vet notices for wanted suspects before publication, conducting thorough compliance checks based on the geopolitical situation.
- Stock emphasized the system's robust mechanism, revealing that in 2022, only 1,465 notices were rejected or cancelled before publication out of a total of approximately 70,000 valid notices. He clarified that cases with predominant political, military, or religious components are taken seriously and excluded from Interpol's scope.
- To address concerns, Stock implemented a new refugee policy to safeguard those granted refugee status. Currently, a few countries, including Russia, are under heightened scrutiny due to their inability to send direct messages to other member countries following the invasion of Ukraine.
- Acknowledging challenges, Stock pointed out the lack of a globally accepted definition of terrorism, leading to potential mistakes. Journalist Mathieu Martiniere, who investigated Interpol with colleague Robert Schmidt, noted improvements but expressed concerns about innocent individuals slipping through the net.
- Interpol faces a major hurdle in terms of a lack of human resources in an underfunded organization. The election of Emirati general Ahmed Naser al-Raisi, currently under investigation in France for complicity in torture, as Interpol's president in 2021 has raised additional concerns.
- Martiniere's recent book delves into Interpol's history, including the period when the Nazis took control of the organization after the annexation of Adolf Hitler's native Austria. The revelation that the names of Interpol's Nazi presidents were omitted from the website to "whitewash history" was described by Stock as an unintentional oversight, which has been rectified.

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