

The Download

What's up in emerging technology



One day your voice will control all your gadgets, and they will control you

Everything you own in the future will be controlled by your voice. That's what this year's CES, the world's largest annual gadget bonanza, has made abundantly clear.

Google and Amazon have been in fierce competition to put their assistants into your TV,... **Read more**

IMAGE CREDIT: JACK DEMPSEY/AP



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China will now officially try to extend its Great Firewall to blockchains

China's crackdown on blockchain technology has taken another step: the country's internet censorship agency has just approved new regulations

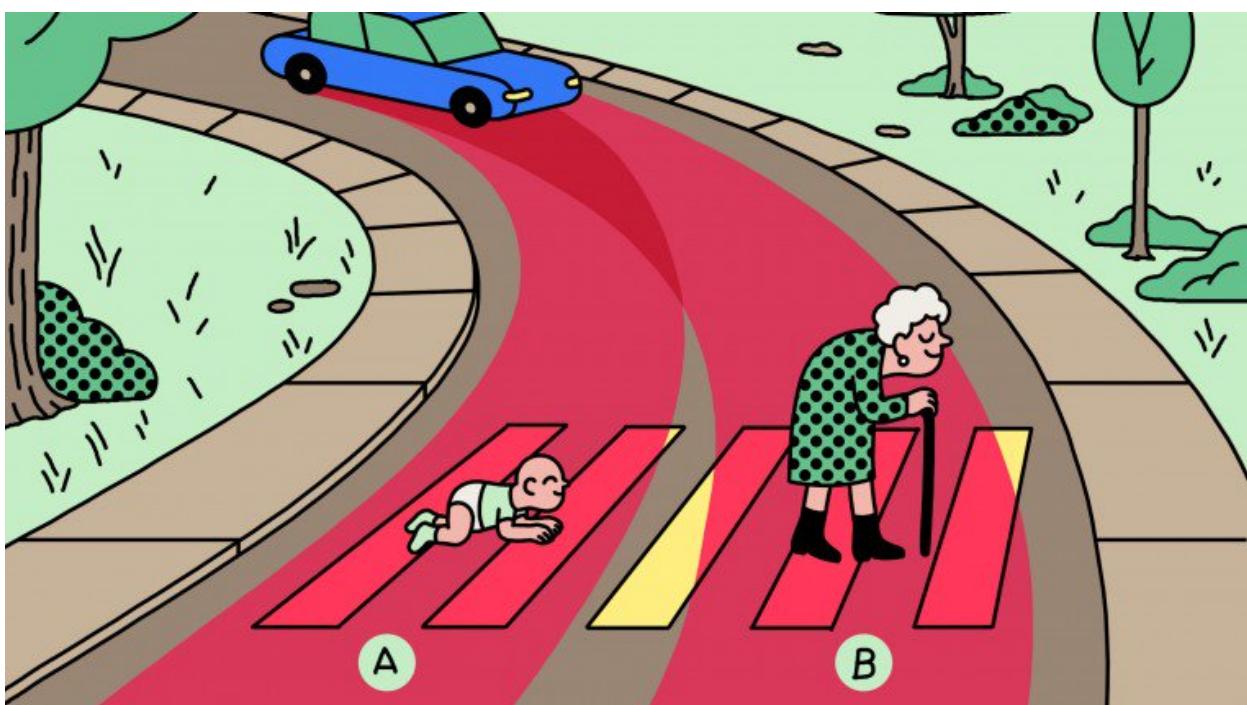
aimed at blockchain companies.

Hand over the data: The Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) will require... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: FLICKR | BRJ INC



Editor's Pick

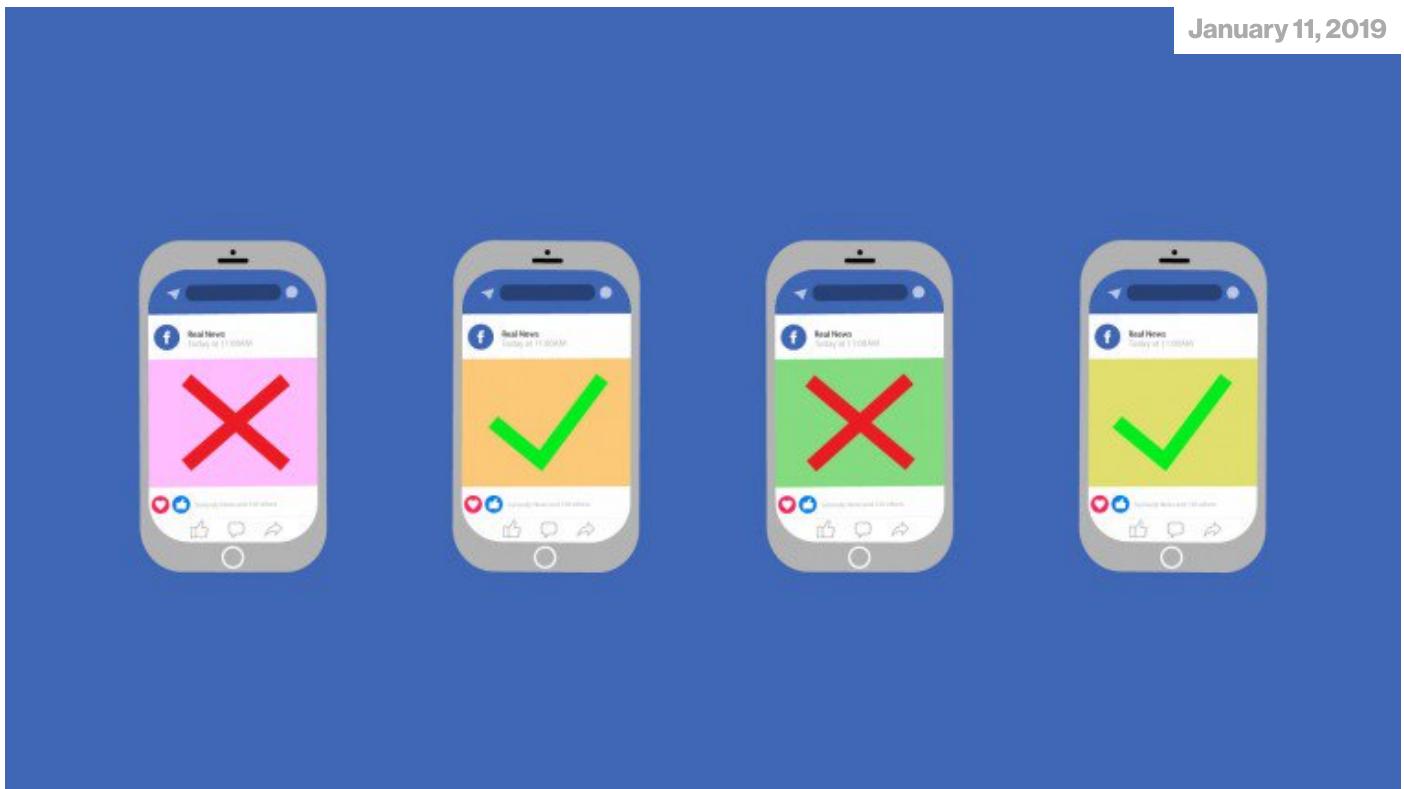


Should a self-driving car kill the baby or the grandma? Depends on where you're from.

In 2014 researchers at the MIT Media Lab designed an experiment called [Moral Machine](#). The idea was to create a game-like platform that would crowdsource people's decisions on how self-driving cars should prioritize lives in different variations of the...

[Read the full story →](#)



Advertisement

January 11, 2019

Facebook has just launched its fact-checking operation in the UK

Facebook has expanded its global third-party fact-checking efforts to the UK.

What's new: Articles, images, and videos posted on Facebook in the UK will now be fact-checked by independent charity [Full Fact](#) as part of an effort to reduce the spread of... [**Read more**](#)

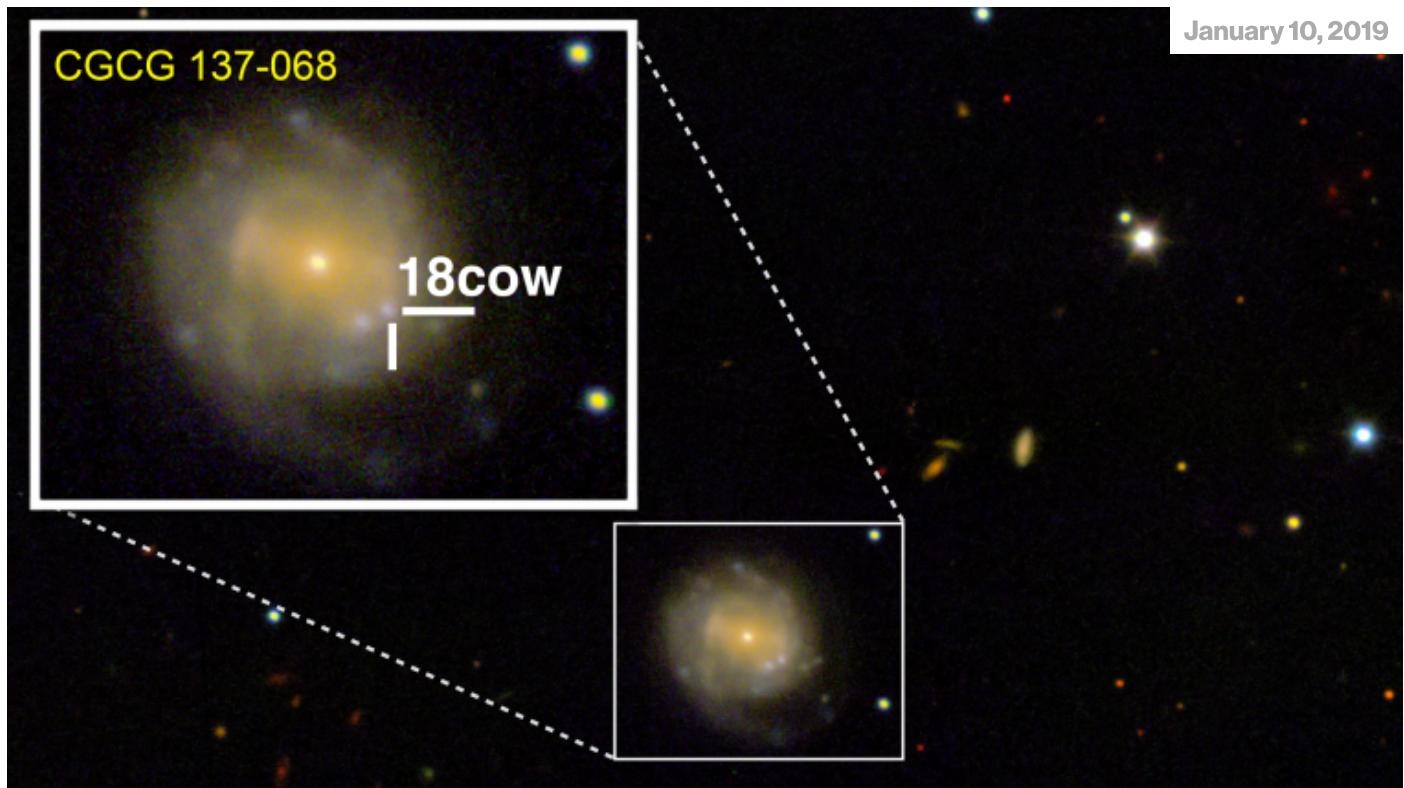
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The moment a star collapsed into a black hole or neutron star has been spotted for the first time

An unusually bright star collapse was caught through a telescope last year—now we might know what it was.

The mystery of the Cow: This past June, an extremely bright object in the sky created an astronomical mystery that was given the name AT2018cow (a.k.a.... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: RAFFAELLA MARGUTTI/NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY



The US government shutdown is almost certainly delaying SpaceX's crucial launch

An [update from NASA](#) this morning confirmed that SpaceX's first test launch of its Dragon crew capsule is going to be pushed back to February.

Kicking the rocket down the road: SpaceX had hinted the launch would be delayed when CEO Elon Musk [retweeted...](#) [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: SPACEX





Congress is about to renew its ban on creating CRISPR babies in the US

In an effort to get critical parts of the US government funded, the House of Representatives is going to vote today on a bill, [H.R. 265](#), that would pay for health inspectors, food stamps, and drug approvals, according to [Politico](#).

It would also would... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: [WIKIMEDIA](#)



Editor's Pick



How acting as Carrie Fisher's puppet made a career for Rogue One's Princess Leia

Ingvild Deila had one of the most talked-about roles in *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, but she was only on screen for about 15 seconds. No one even saw her face. Yet she can now claim on [her IMDB page](#) that she was once Princess Leia.

In reality, she was...

[Read the full story →](#)



January 10, 2019



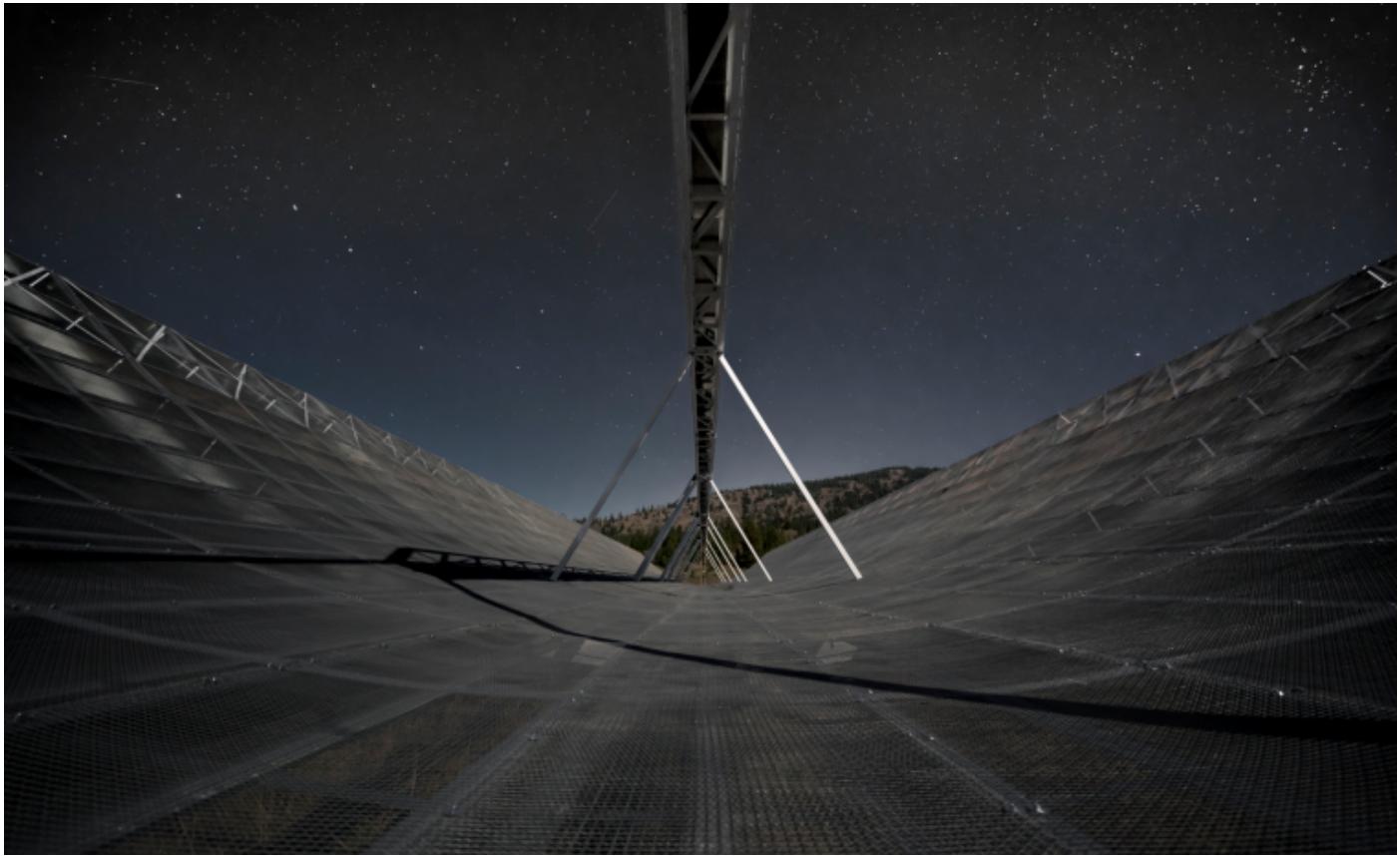
Who's sharing fake news on Facebook? Older Republicans

Very few Americans shared “fake news” on Facebook during the 2016 presidential election campaign, but those who did were disproportionately likely to be over 65, a new study has found.

The findings: The study in Science Advances is one of the first attempts...
Read more

IMAGE CREDIT: PEXABAY





Repeating radio bursts from outside our galaxy have been detected for the second time

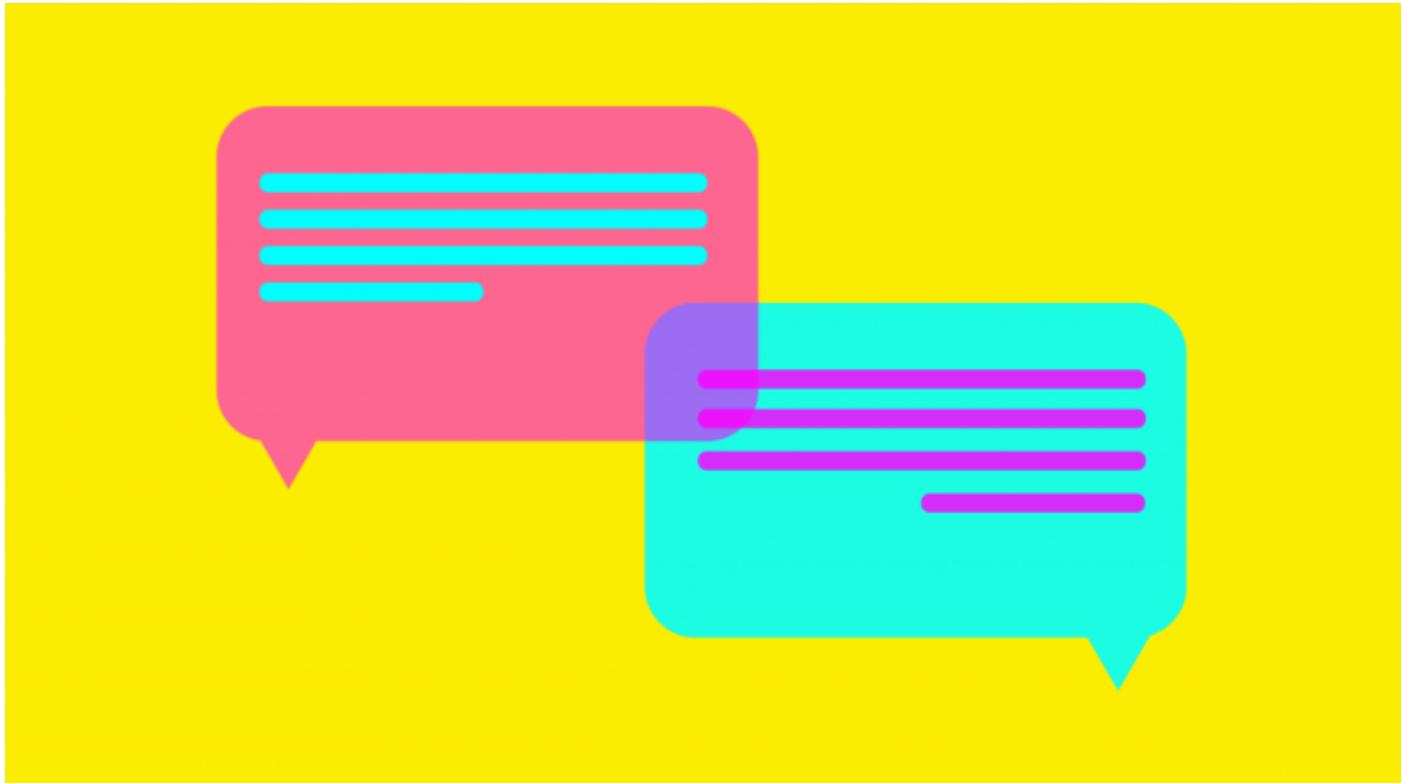
The powerful signal came from about 1.5 billion light-years away, at least twice as close as the first detected repeating burst.

The news: A repeating fast radio burst (FRB) has been detected by [the Canadian Hydrogen Intensity Mapping Experiment \(CHIME\)](#)... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: CHIME



January 9, 2019



Google Assistant now comes with a real-time translator for 27 languages

Google has unveiled a new feature in Google Assistant, called Interpreter Mode, which can translate peoples' conversations in real time.

The details: You don't have to state which language you're speaking, as the software can tell (if it's one of the... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: [MS. TECH](#)



January 8, 2019



The government shutdown has severely weakened cybersecurity in the US

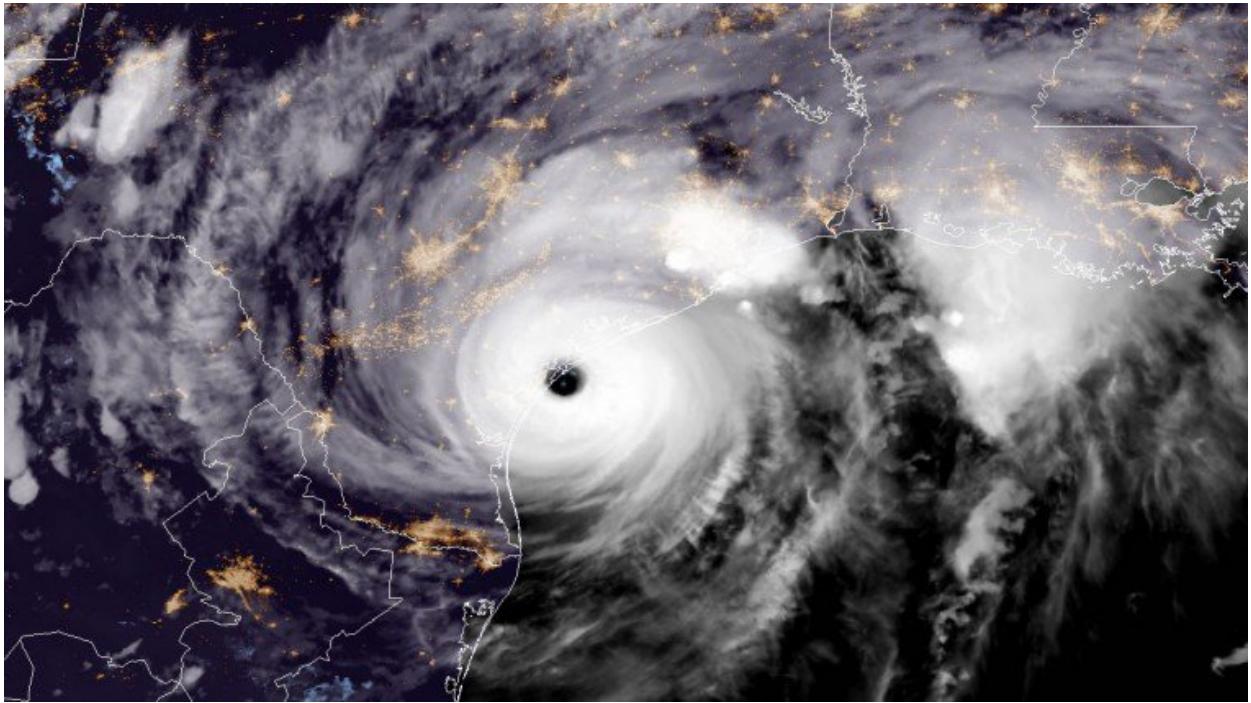
In a stalemate over how best to secure America's southern border, the Trump administration has endangered the integrity of one of the country's even more important frontiers.

17 days and counting: Nearly 45% of employees at the newly established Cybersecurity... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: EVAN VUCCI/AP



Editor's Pick



Designers are reinventing hurricane maps for an era of extreme weather

Take a look at this map from the National Hurricane Center (NHC):

Without being told how to interpret it, what do you think it says?

It looks as if the hurricane will grow into a monster storm that will swallow every space from Washington to Toronto...

Read the full story →





Hackers may have just stolen \$1 million from the Ethereum Classic blockchain in a “51%” attack

An attack on the Ethereum Classic blockchain may have helped hackers steal around \$1.1 million worth of the currency from other users, according to popular cryptocurrency exchange Coinbase.

Ethereum what? Ethereum Classic is the original Ethereum blockchain....
Read more

IMAGE CREDIT: ETC | FLICKR





IBM has just unveiled this cool-looking quantum computer—but will hide it in the cloud

This gleaming monolith from a sci-fi blockbuster is actually the new IBM Q System One quantum computer that is designed to be reliable enough for businesses to use—in the cloud.

The news: At this week's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, IBM took... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: IBM RESEARCH





You can now help IBM's debating AI come up with its speeches

IBM has opened its AI tool Project Debater up to the public for the first time.

The news: The [Project Debater](#) program uses AI software to parse text to construct arguments. It's the basis for a crowdsourced debating platform called [Speech by Crowd](#), being... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: [IBM RESEARCH](#)



January 7, 2019



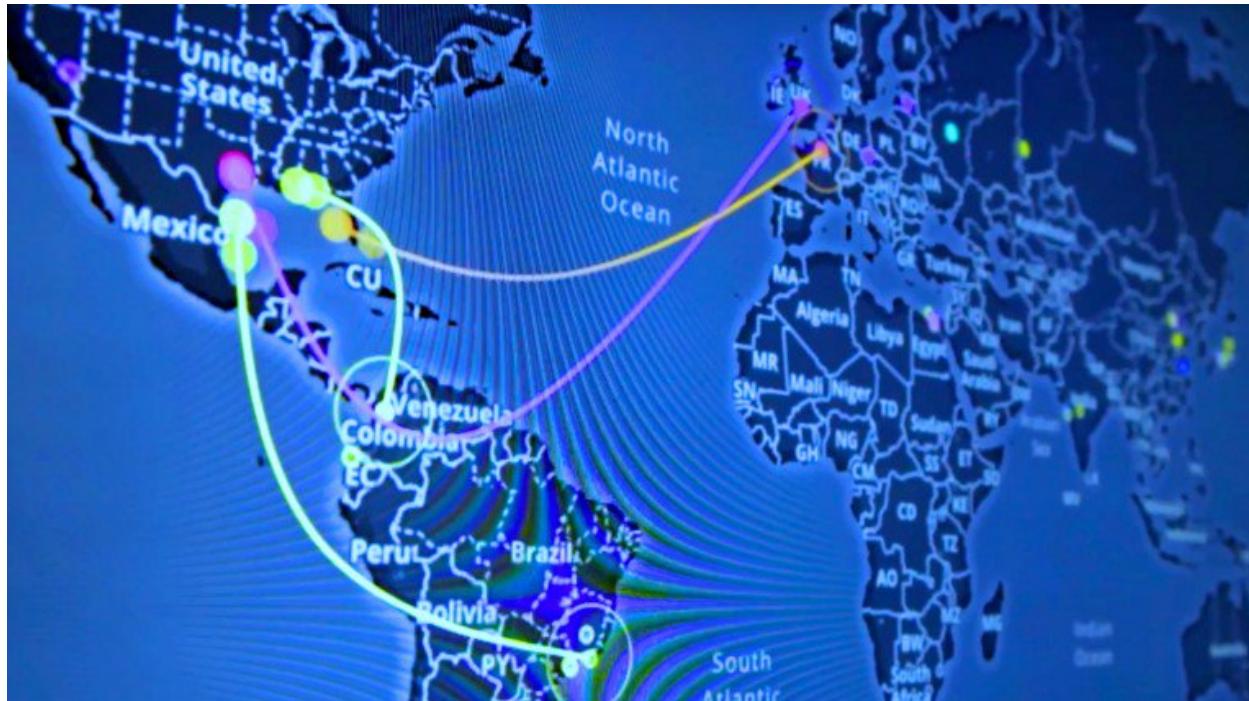
CRISPR might soon create spicy tomatoes by switching on their chili genes

Looking for perfect heat and lots of it? Gene engineers in Brazil think they might be able to create eye-watering tomatoes.

Hot stuff: Even though chili peppers and tomato plants diverged from a common ancestor millions of years ago, tomatoes still possess... **Read more**

IMAGE CREDIT: CELL PRESS



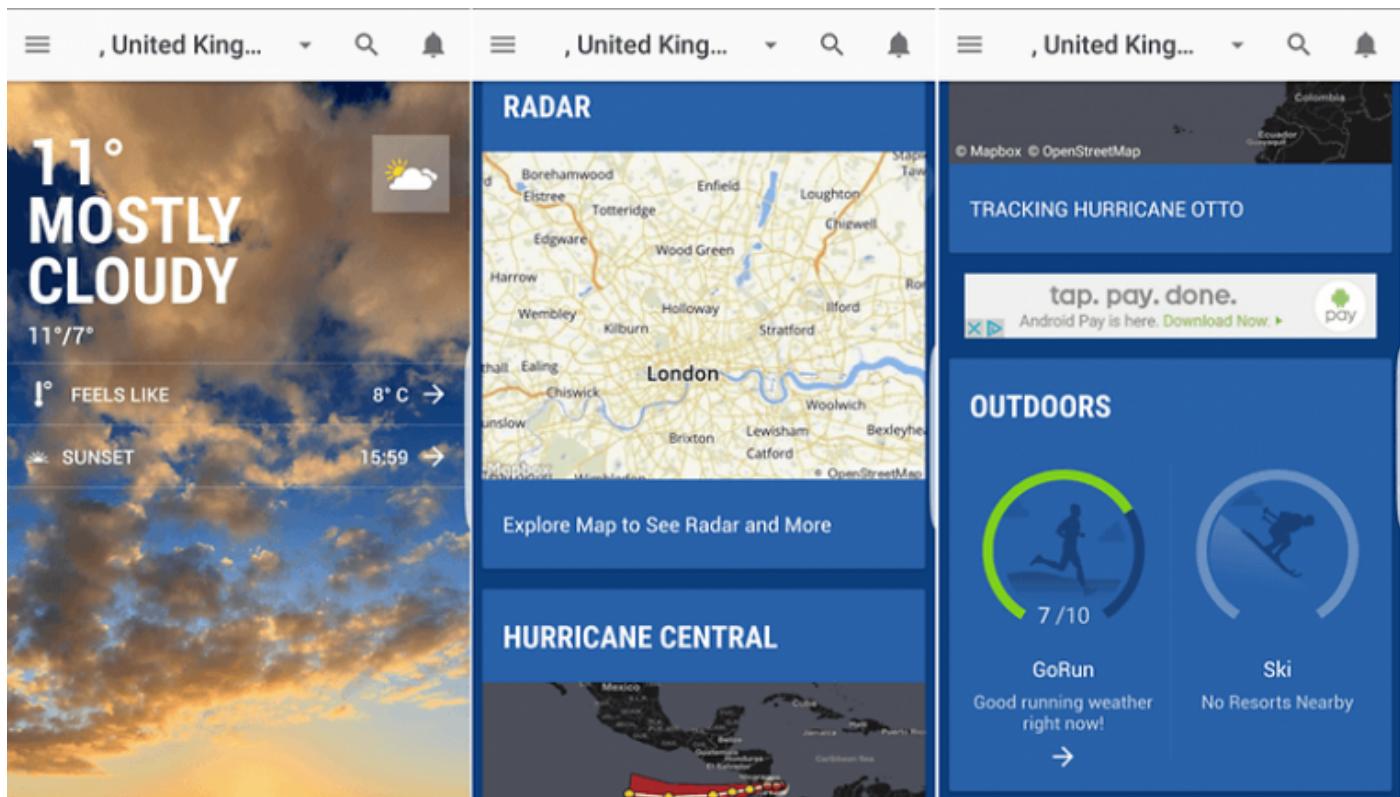
Editor's Pick

A cyber-skills shortage means students are being recruited to fight off hackers

There aren't enough cybersecurity workers out there—and things are getting worse. According to [one estimate](#), by 2021 an estimated 3.5 million cybersecurity jobs will be unfilled. And of the candidates who apply, [fewer than one in four](#) are even qualified. ...

Read the full story →





The Weather Channel app has been accused of tracking users and then selling their data

The city of Los Angeles is suing the Weather Channel, claiming it collects, shares, and sells users' location data without their consent.

The news: [The lawsuit](#), filed at the end of last week, contends that TWC, a subsidiary of IBM, has been tracking and... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: [ANDROIDPIT](#)



January 4, 2019



The future of work still requires people—so stop investing in them at your own peril

Automation may cast a dark shadow over low-skill workers, but a new report suggests there's still hope for humans.

The robots aren't taking over, yet: At least, that's the finding of a [report](#) by the World Bank that looked at data on global industrial... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: [RAWPIXEL | UNSPLASH](#)



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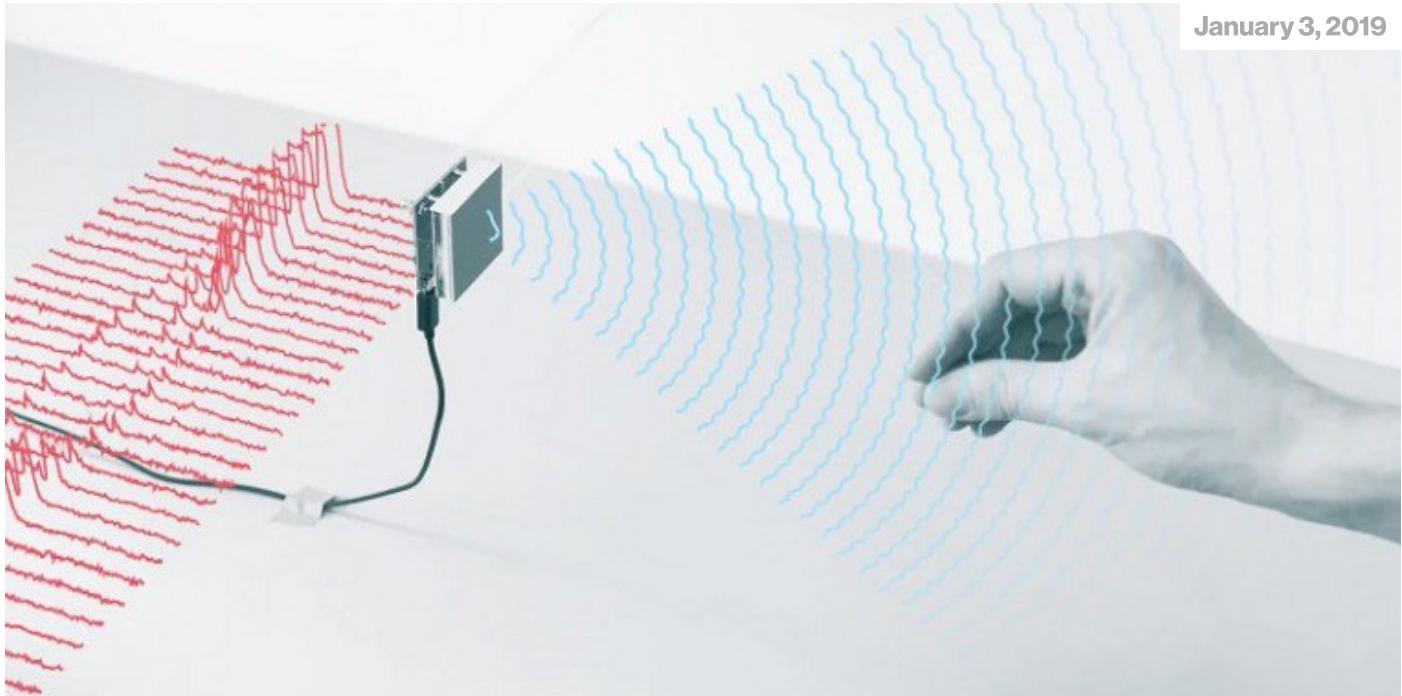
German politicians have had their personal data hacked and then dumped online

The hack has hit hundreds of politicians from all major parties and includes bank details, emails, addresses, private chats, and ID card details.

The news: Public broadcaster RBB said the data was tweeted out by a Twitter account over the weeks before... **[Read more](#)**

IMAGE CREDIT: **FLICKR**





Google's gesture-controlled sensor has been cleared by the FCC

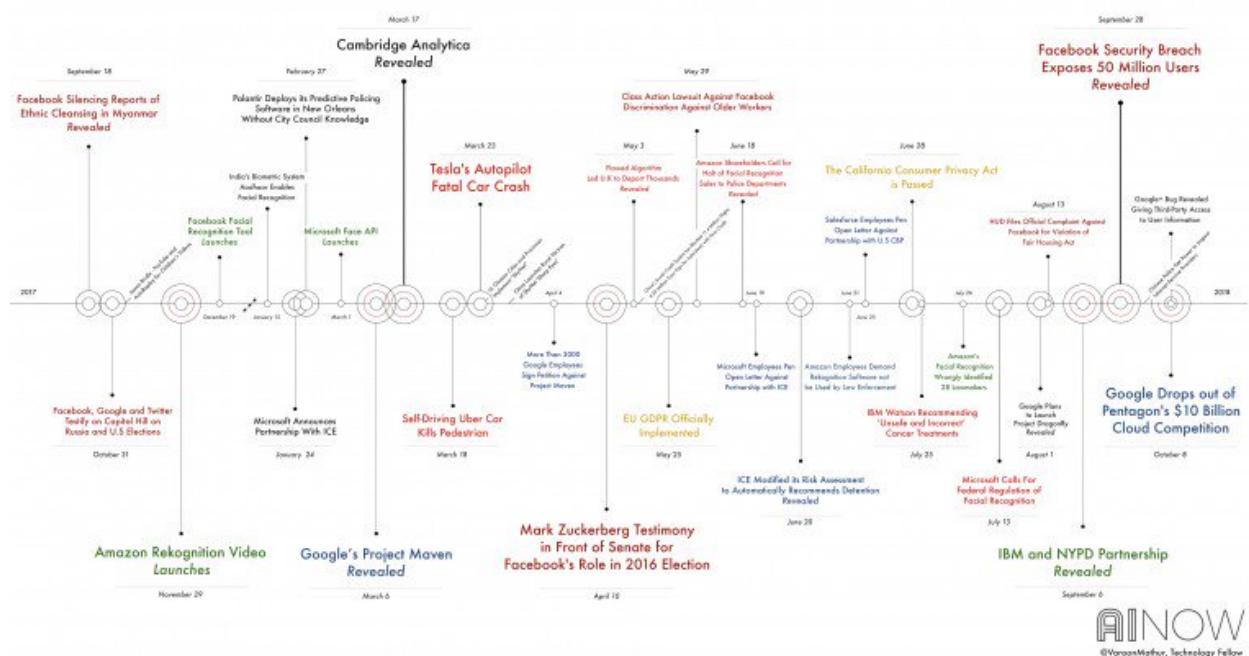
Google has won approval from US regulators to create sensors that can be triggered with hand gestures, dubbed "Project Soli," [Reuters reports](#).

The news: Google started work on Soli in 2015 but hit a roadblock because the sensors were required to operate at... [Read more](#)

SOURCE: [REUTERS](#) IMAGE CREDIT: [GOOGLE](#)



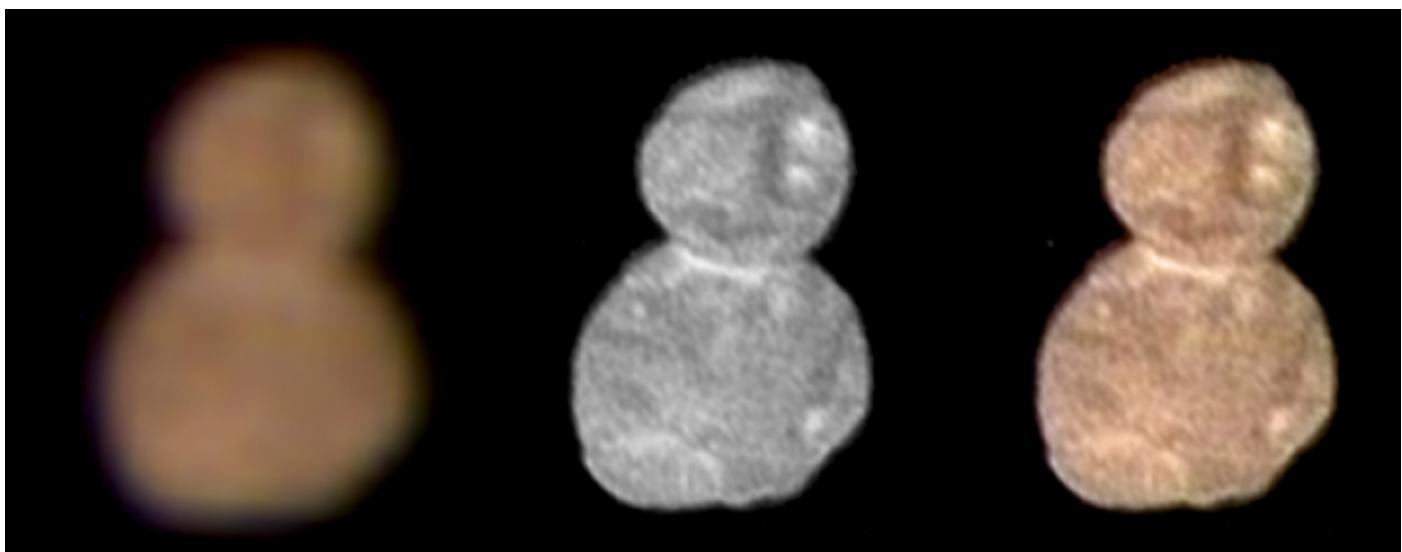
Editor's Pick



Establishing an AI code of ethics will be harder than people think

Over the past six years, the New York City police department has compiled a massive database containing the names and personal details of at least 17,500 individuals it believes to be involved in criminal gangs. The effort has already been criticized...

Read the full story →



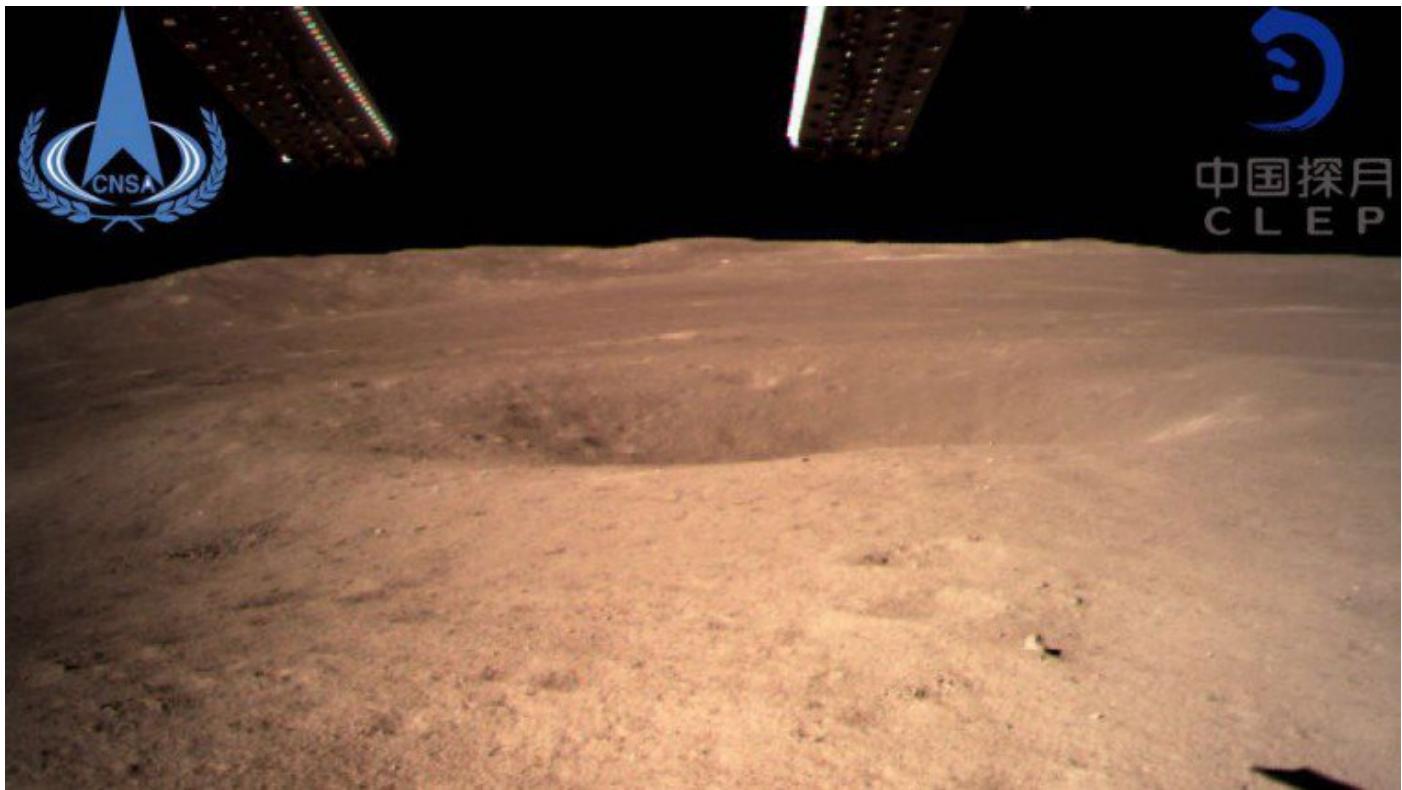
First images of Ultima Thule reveal true shape of the most distant object we've explored

NASA's New Horizons mission has sent back the first detailed images of the most distant object ever explored in the solar system, dubbed Ultima Thule, which lies four billion miles away.

The image: The object, which looks a little like a snowman, is what's...

Read more

IMAGE CREDIT: NASA | JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY APPLIED PHYSICS LABORATORY | SOUTHWEST RESEARCH INSTITUTE



This is the first picture of the moon's far side taken by China's probe after it landed

After Chang'e 4 safely touched down, the lander's cameras sent back this image of the Von Karman crater that its rover will now explore.

The news: Chang'e 4 touched down on the moon's far surface at 10:26 Beijing time (9:26 p.m. US eastern time) last... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: [CNSA](#)



China is about to land a spacecraft on the far side of the moon

Launched on December 8, Chang'e 4 could be nearing the end of its journey to untouched lunar territory.

The news: [China Daily reports](#) the spacecraft entered an elliptical lunar orbit over the weekend, passing as close as 15 kilometers above the moon's... [Read more](#)

SOURCE: [CHINA DAILY](#) IMAGE CREDIT: [MARTY MCGUIRE | UNSPLASH](#)



January 1, 2019



A NASA spacecraft just did a fly-by of the most distant object we've ever visited

NASA's New Horizons space probe came to within 2,200 miles (3,500 kilometers) of Ultima Thule, a space rock that lies four billion miles from Earth—and looks to be shaped a little like a peanut.

The news: The fly-by took place at 12:33 EST today, but... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: BILL INGALLS | NASA | GETTY



Editor's Pick



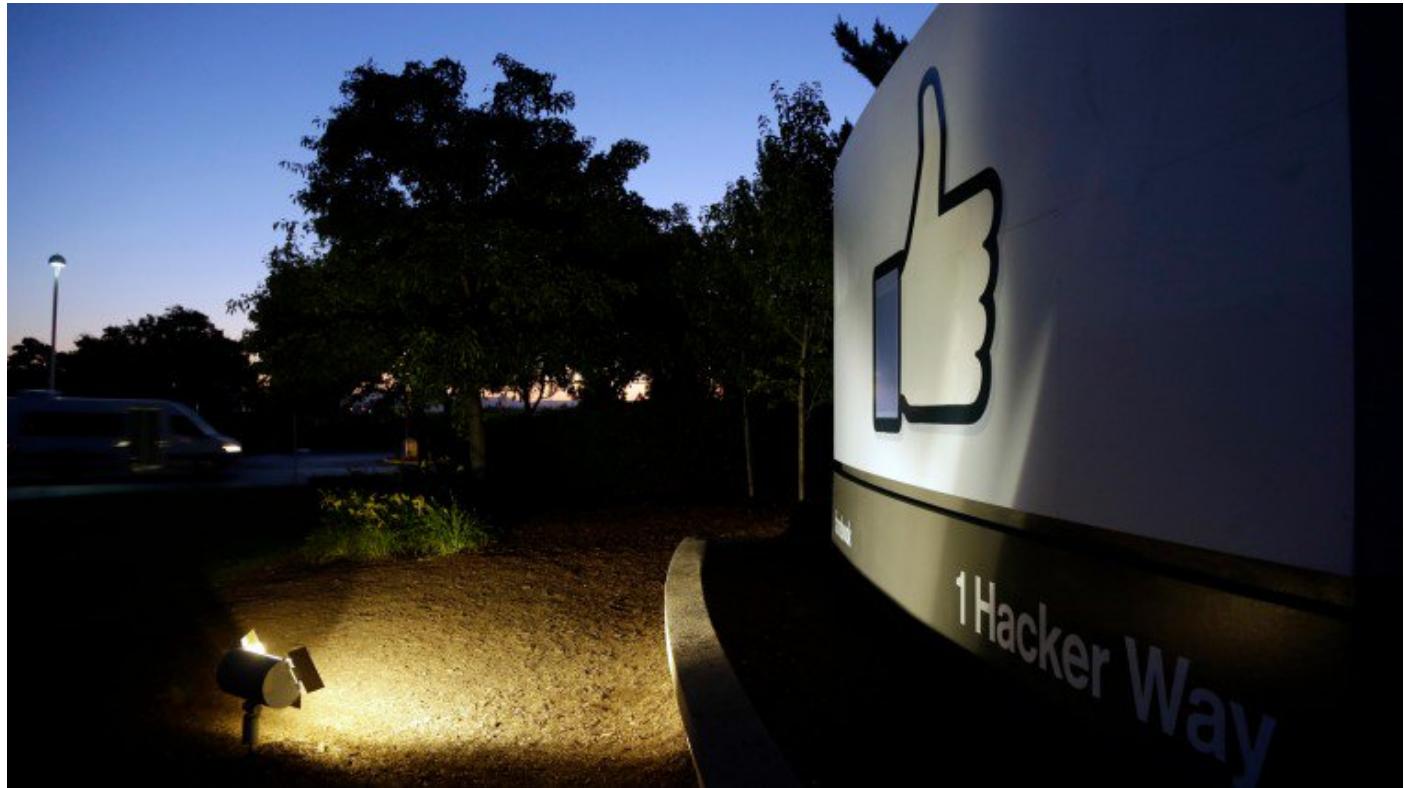
Inside Europe's quest to build an unhackable quantum internet

The fast train from Paris to Rotterdam was an hour late leaving the Gare du Nord. When it finally deposited me in the Dutch city, I discovered that the onward train to Delft had been suspended because of maintenance work on the tracks. It took two circuitous...

[Read the full story →](#)



December 28, 2018



Facebook's leaked moderation rules show why Big Tech can't police hate speech

Society asked Big Tech to shut down hate speech online. We got exactly what we asked for.

The news: The New York Times's Max Fisher [published extracts](#) from more than 1,400 pages of internal Facebook documents, containing rules for the company's global... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: ASSOCIATED PRESS



December 26, 2018



Huawei is the world's fastest-growing smartphone seller despite increasing global scrutiny

China's Huawei, the world's second-largest smartphone maker, announced it sold a record-breaking 200 million units in 2018, despite increasing crackdowns from the US and its allies and a falling smartphone market overall.

The numbers: This represents... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: HUAWEI



December 22, 2018



President Trump has signed a \$1.2 billion law to boost US quantum tech

The new National Quantum Initiative Act will give America a national master plan for advancing quantum technologies.

The news: The US president just signed into law [a bill](#) that commits the government to providing \$1.2 billion to fund activities promoting... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: IBM RESEARCH | FLICKR



December 21, 2018



Facebook might be developing a cryptocurrency that you could send via WhatsApp

Facebook is working on a cryptocurrency that would allow people to send money to each other using its WhatsApp messaging app, according to [Bloomberg](#).

Behind the scenes: We've known for a while that Facebook was working on something related to blockchain... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: PIXABAY.COM



Editor's Pick



Amazon is the invisible backbone behind ICE's immigration crackdown

In June, when the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) began separating migrant children from their parents, several tech companies came under fire for providing the agency with the software that helped them do it.

At the center of the...

[Read the full story →](#)





A space startup was just hit with a \$900,000 fine for illegally launching four tiny satellites

But the *real*/penalty to satellite firm Swarm Technologies will be negative press.

The news: The US Federal Communications Commission [announced](#) yesterday that it's settled an investigation into Swarm, which illegally launched and operated four small satellites... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: ISRO





A man asked for his data from Amazon—and they sent him 1,700 recordings of someone else

An Amazon user in Germany was accidentally sent 1,700 audio recordings of someone he didn't know after he requested his own data file, exercising his rights under the EU's GDPR.

What happened: The man asked for a copy of all the data Amazon holds on him.... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: AMAZON



December 20, 2018



Chinese hackers allegedly stole data of more than 100,000 US Navy personnel

That's one of the stunning allegations against two Chinese government hackers in an indictment issued today by America's Department of Justice (DOJ).

The news: [The indictment](#) accuses the two hackers, Zhu Hua and Zhang Shilong, of working for a group... **[Read more](#)**

IMAGE CREDIT: US NAVY/GENERAL DYNAMICS BATH IRON WORKS VIA GETTY IMAGES





How deep learning helped to map every solar panel in the US

Deep learning has been used to identify 1.47 million solar installations across the United States, exceeding the latest estimate of 1.02 million.

What's new: Solar panels are becoming increasingly popular across the US, but it's proved difficult to pinpoint... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: DEEPSOLAR | STANFORD UNIVERSITY



Editor's Pick



Facebook's ex security boss: Asking Big Tech to police hate speech is “a dangerous path”

Until a few weeks ago, Alex Stamos was Facebook's chief security officer. He led the hunt for Russian political disinformation on the platform after the 2016 US election. Now at Stanford University, he recently announced the creation of the Stanford...

[Read the full story →](#)





Drones have forced London's Gatwick airport to close, leaving thousands of passengers stranded

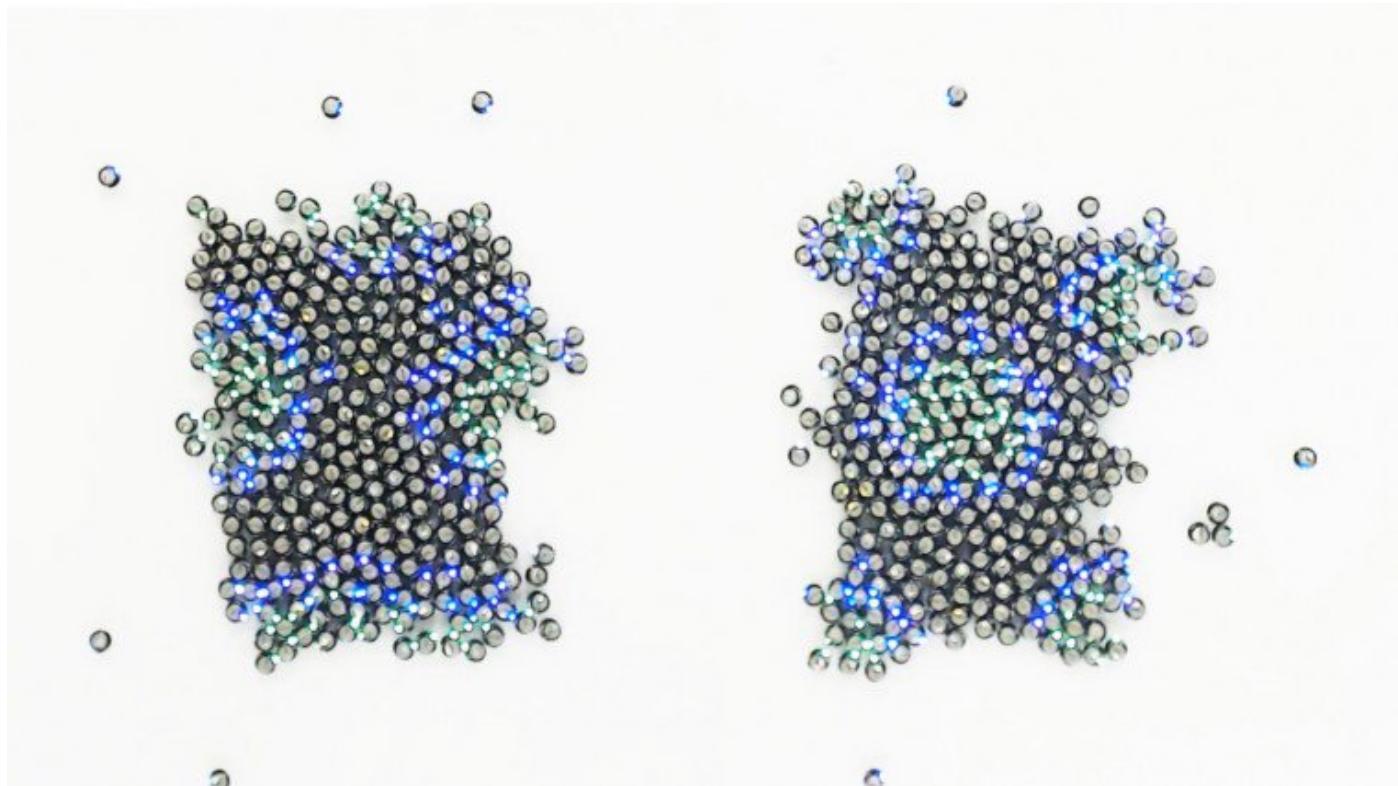
Flights in and out of London's Gatwick airport have been suspended since 9 p.m. yesterday after two drones were sighted near runways.

Disruption: At least 10,000 people have been affected by the closure, including 2,000 whose flights have been grounded,... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: DAN KITWOOD / GETTY



December 19, 2018



An autonomous robot swarm has self-organized by acting like natural cells

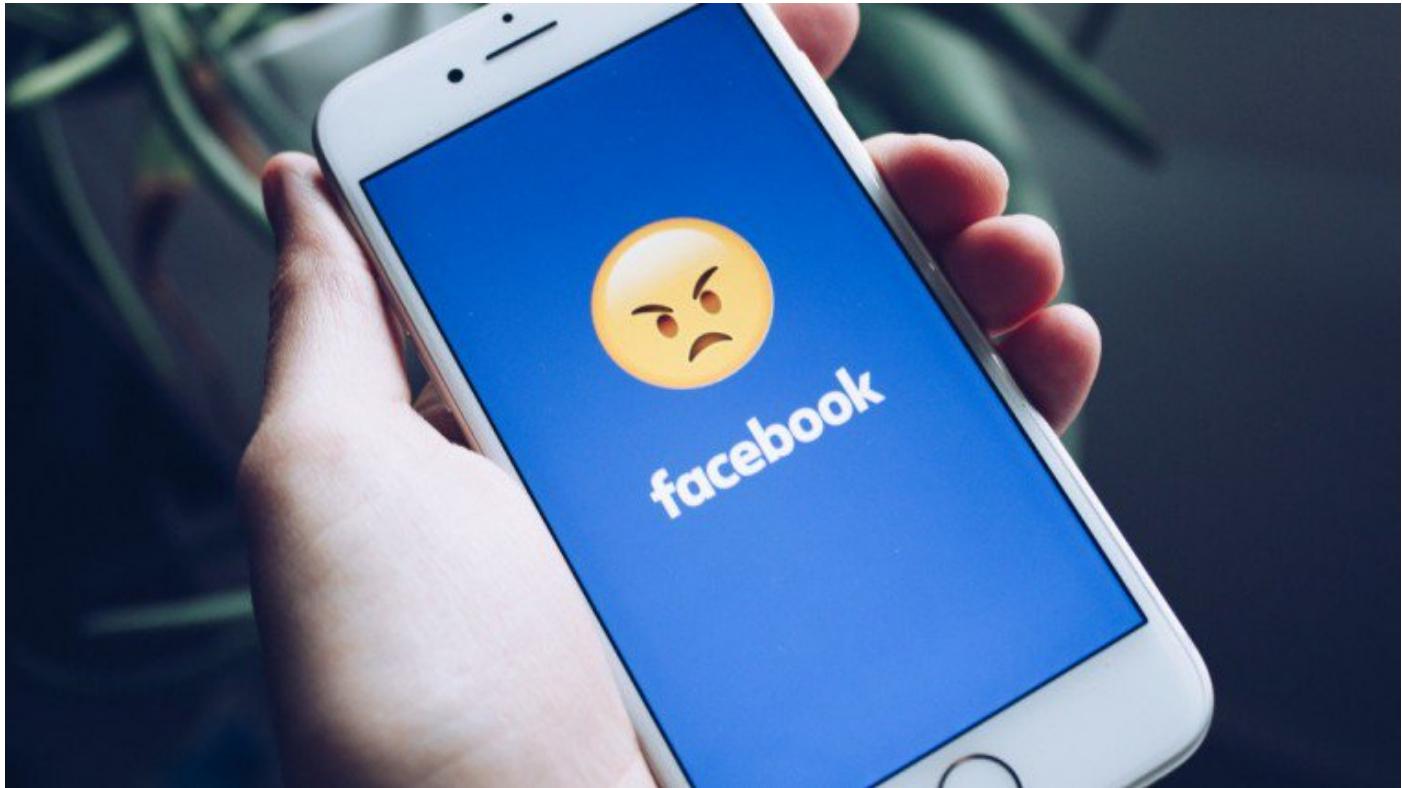
Hundreds of tiny robots have been made to work as a team, inspired by the biological principles of self-organization.

The study: Researchers have managed to get swarms of 300 robots to self-organize without following a preset pattern. The only programming...

Read more

IMAGE CREDIT: SLAVKOV ET AL





Facebook gave more than 150 companies special access to your data

Facebook gave over 150 companies more intrusive access to users' data than previously admitted, exempting them from its usual privacy rules, according to [the New York Times](#).

What's new: Companies like Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, Netflix, Spotify, and Yandex... [Read more](#)

SOURCE: THE NEW YORK TIMES IMAGE CREDIT: SHOP CATALOG



December 18, 2018



US grocery giant Kroger has started making autonomous deliveries

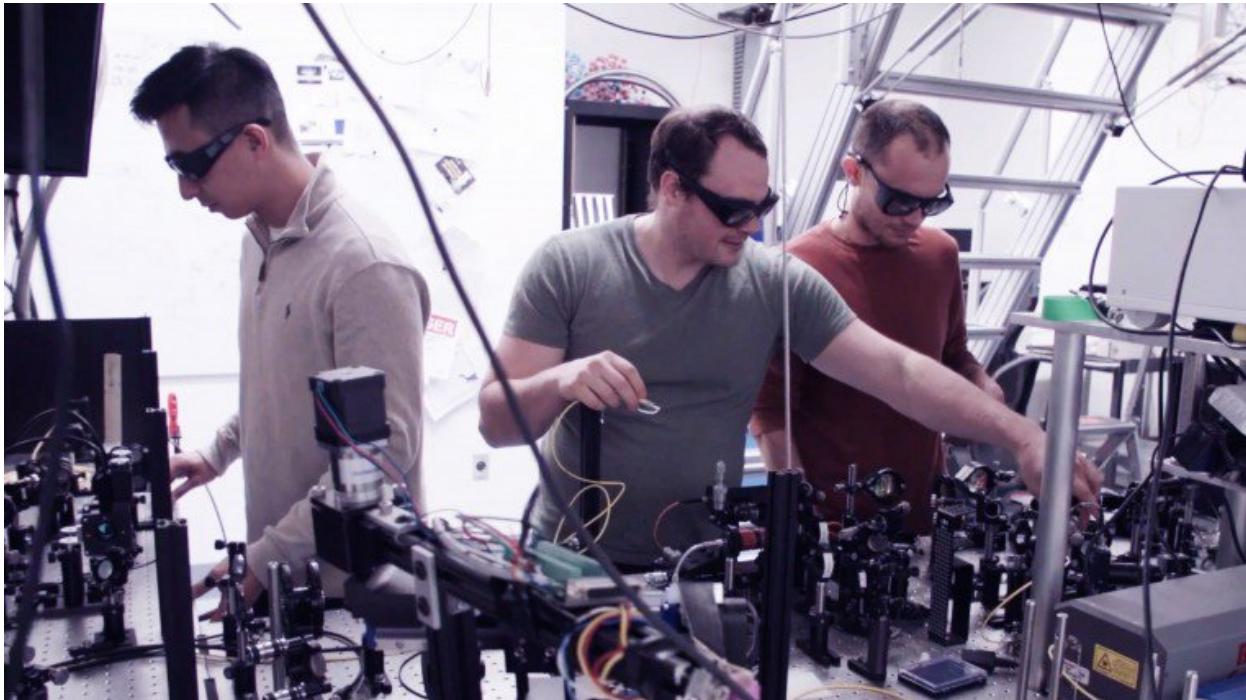
The US grocer is trialing autonomous delivery vehicles in Scottsdale, Arizona with no human supervision.

Some background: Kroger [announced its partnership](#) with robotics company Nuro earlier this year, but at the time, humans were still behind the wheel... **[Read more](#)**

IMAGE CREDIT: NURO



Editor's Pick

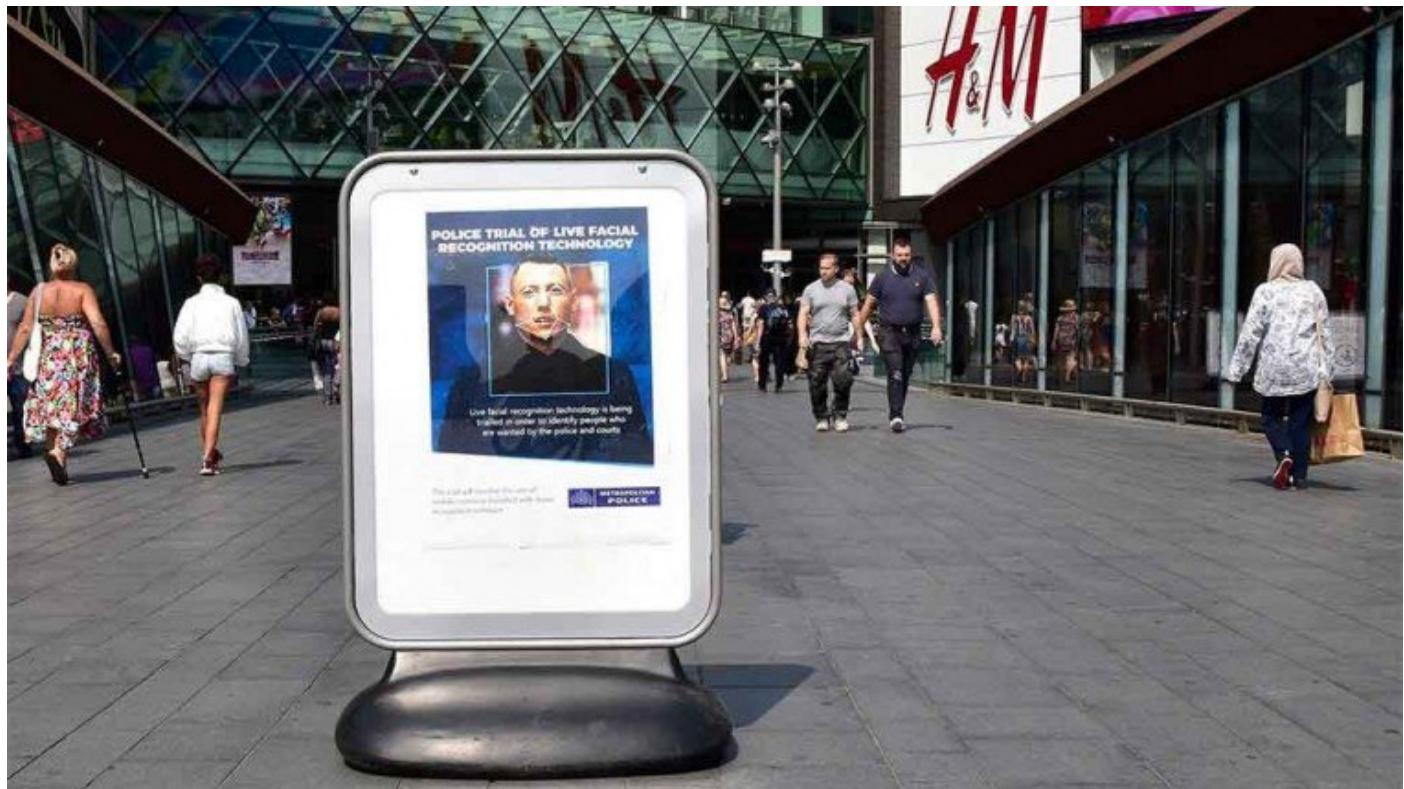


The US is finally getting a hacker-proof quantum network that people can use

A few years ago, Edward Snowden, a contractor working for the US National Security Agency, leaked documents that showed the ways in which intelligence agencies were spying on our data. One of the most striking revelations was that spies had tapped into...

Read the full story →





Police are testing face recognition tech on London's streets this week

London's Metropolitan Police Service is conducting a two-day trial of face recognition this week around several locations in the city.

What's happening: This is the seventh public test by the force, with three more set to take place before the end of... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: LONDON METROPOLITAN POLICE



December 17, 2018



A food delivery robot burst into flames—and now people have made a candlelight vigil for it

A food delivery robot caught fire on the campus of UC Berkeley on Friday, prompting an outpouring of grief online and leading students to set up a candlelit memorial to the “KiwiBot.”

What happened? The “KiwiBot,” one of over 100 robots that deliver food... [Read more](#)



December 16, 2018



The world reaches a deal to advance the Paris climate accord, barely

After two weeks of contentious talks, representatives of nearly 200 nations agreed to a common set of rules for tracking climate emissions and policies on Saturday, salvaging the landmark Paris accord.

Not nearly enough: The deal, reached after late-night... [Read more](#)

SOURCE: NEW YORK TIMES, CNN, THE GUARDIAN IMAGE CREDIT: COP24|FLICKR



December 14, 2018



Facebook's new privacy blunder may have exposed your private photos

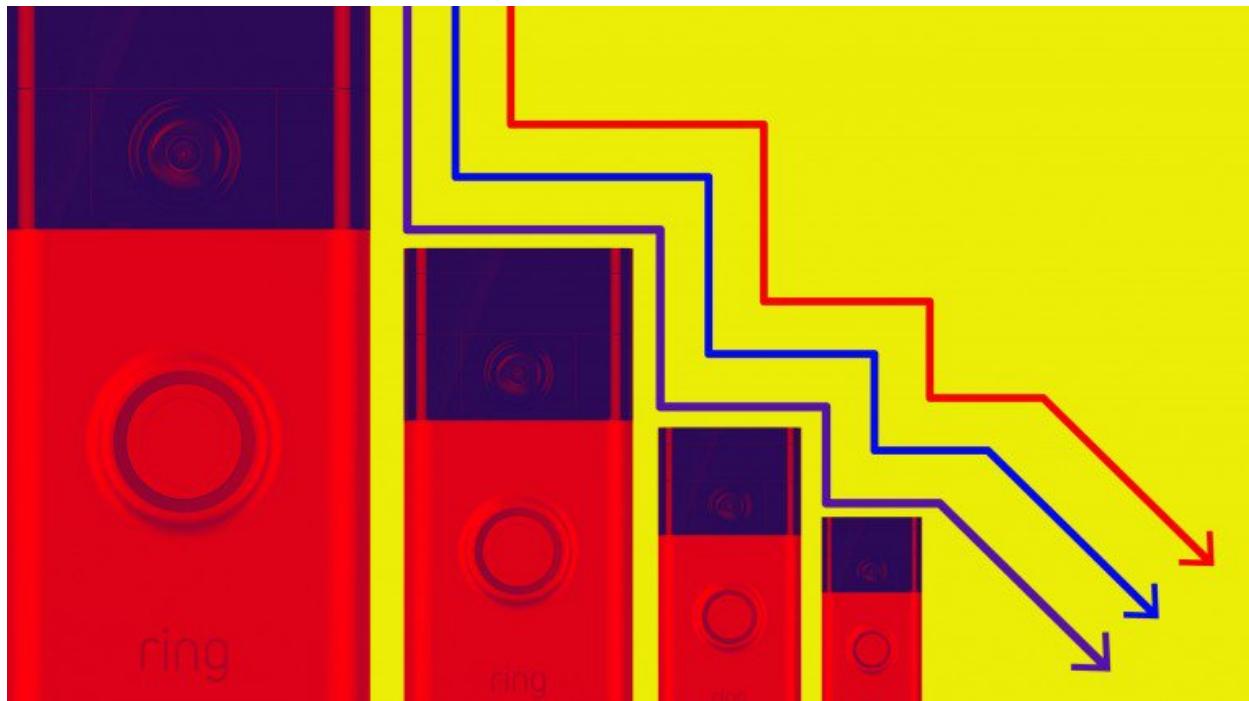
The social network says a bug allowed a huge number of third-party apps to access images that up to 6.8 million users had uploaded to Facebook but not yet posted.

The news: The bug exposed photos users had uploaded between September 13 and September 25... [Read more](#)

IMAGE CREDIT: UNSPLASH



Editor's Pick

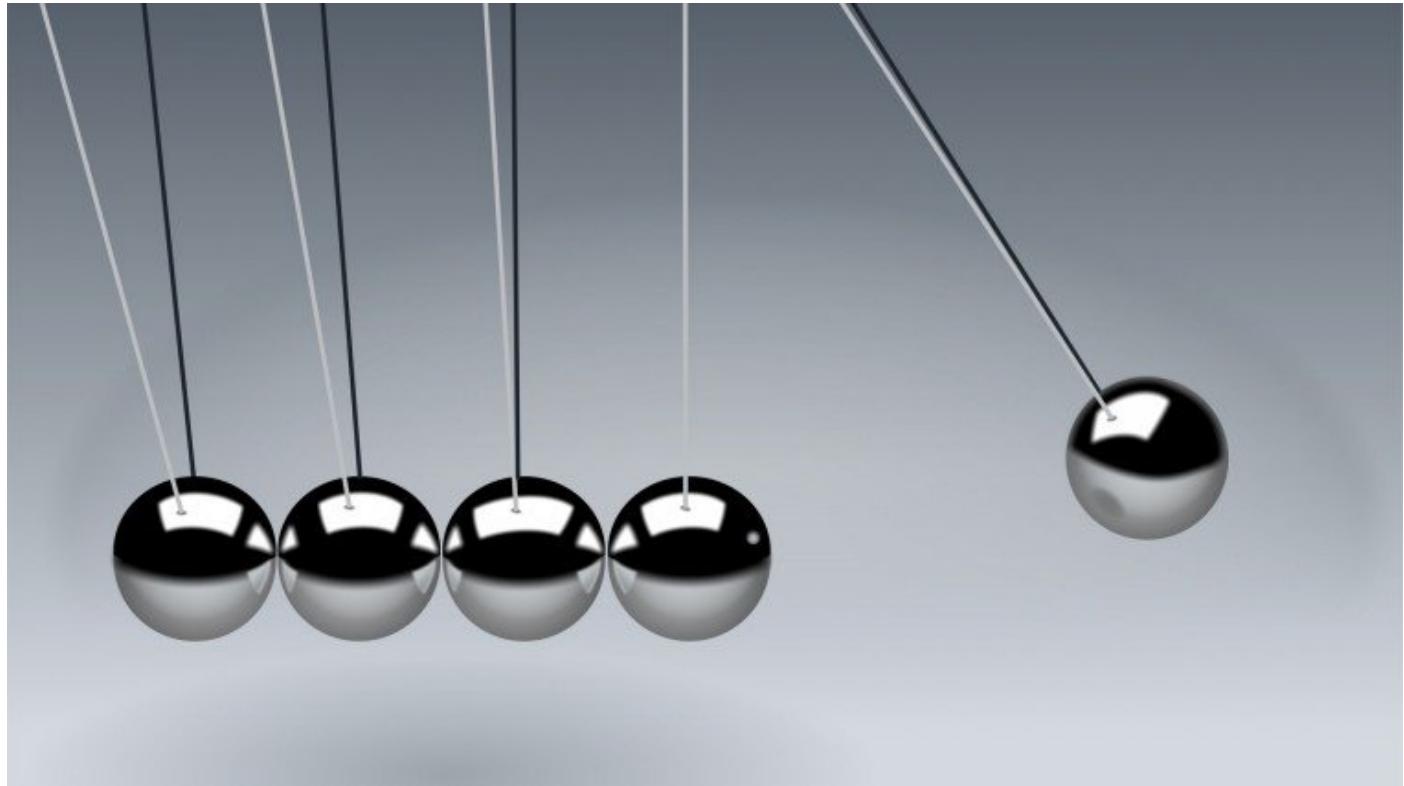


Video doorbell firm Ring says its devices slash crime—but the evidence looks flimsy

When Amazon bought the video doorbell company Ring earlier this year for a reported \$1 billion, it was buying more than a hardware startup. Ring doesn't want to be just another consumer gadget maker: it has the ambitious mission of reducing crime in...

[Read the full story →](#)





One of crypto's most futuristic-sounding projects just came crashing down

The team behind Basis, which had called itself a “a cryptocurrency with an algorithmic central bank,” has announced that it is shutting down the project and returning the capital it raised to investors.

“Stable” but complex: So-called stablecoins are... **[Read more](#)**

IMAGE CREDIT: PIXABAY | PEXELS





Google says it won't sell face recognition for now—but it will be hard to slow its use

Google says it won't offer face recognition through its cloud APIs—that is, until it can come up with policies to prevent misuses of the technology, it [said in a blog post today](#).

Asia specific: Significantly, the decision was announced in a blog post...

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IMAGE CREDIT: IAN WALDIE/GETTY IMAGES



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