

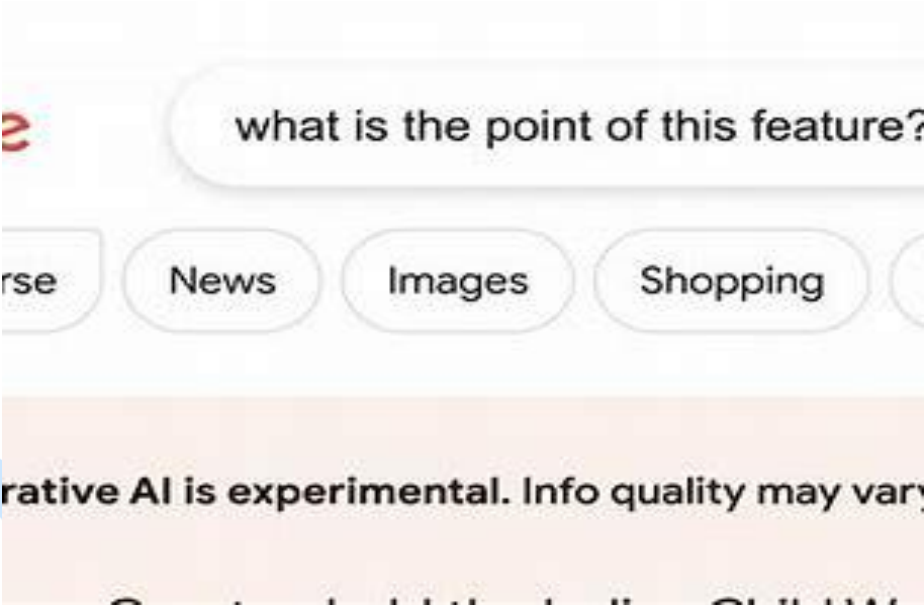
News at your desk – 19th Aug

Bytes & Insights

Google brings AI answers in Search to India, other countries

Updated - August 16, 2024 09:08 am IST
Published - August 16, 2024 08:25 am IST - SAN FRANCISCO
Reuters

Google parent Alphabet said on Thursday it was expanding its AI-generated summaries for search queries to six new countries, just two months after it rolled back some capabilities following a problem-riddled launch. The search giant made AI Overviews - which are displayed atop a search results page before traditional links to the Web - available to all U.S. users in May after spending one year trialling a limited earlier version.



Former Google CEO Eric Schmidt blames remote work for falling behind against OpenAI, apologises



He added that AI startups like OpenAI and Anthropic had raced ahead because the people there “work like hell”

Published - August 16, 2024 11:01 am IST
The Hindu Bureau

Former Google CEO Eric Schmidt apologised for the comments he made during a meet at Stanford, saying that Google had lagged behind in AI because of the company’s remote work policy. The recording of his lecture which had been posted by the University’s official YouTube channel was taken down on August 15 after garnering over 40, 000 views in a day. “Google decided that work-life balance and going home early and working from home was more important than winning,” Schmidt said. “I’m sorry to be so blunt [...] But the fact of the matter is, if you all leave the university and go found a company, you’re not gonna let people work from home and only come in one day a week if you want to compete against the other startups,” he said.

ISRO successfully launches EOS-08 Earth Observation Satellite

The SSLV-D3, in its third and final development flight, lifted off from the first launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at 9.17 a.m.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Friday (August 16) launched the EOS-08 Earth Observation Satellite onboard the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV)-D3 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. The SSLV-D3, in its third and final development flight, lifted off from the first launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at 9.17 am.

Updated - August 16, 2024 07:19 pm IST
Published - August 16, 2024 09:18 am IST - Bengaluru
Hemanth C.S.

Breaking up Google an option being considered by U.S.: Report



Federal antitrust regulators have sued Meta Platforms, Amazon.com and Apple in the past four years, claiming the companies illegally maintained monopolies

Published - August 14, 2024 09:55 am IST
Reuters

The U.S. Department of Justice is considering options that include breaking up Alphabet's Google, a week after a judge ruled the tech giant illegally monopolized the online search market, Bloomberg News reported on Tuesday. Shares of the California-based company were down 1.4% in extended trading.

Ola announces Krutrim AI integration in electric scooters, unveils AI chip-making plans



The Ola Sankalp 2024 event was packed with new product announcements, including the release of two new AI apps.

Ola founder Bhavesh Aggarwal has said that its AI virtual assistant Krutrim will be integrated into Ola Electric scooters as part of the MoveOS5 operating system, which will be released in beta by the end of October (Diwali). The AI upgrade was officially announced at Sankalp 2024, Ola's annual community event, held at the Ola Campus in Bengaluru on Thursday, August 15. The event was packed with several new product launches and updates covering electric vehicles, AI, cloud services, and more. Aggarwal also announced the release of Krutim's AI Customer Care app, which can be used by developers to automate their customer care services. It is available in 22 Indian languages and can be onboarded by enterprises in a day. Ola Electric and Ola Cabs are already live with the AI Customer Care app so if you're calling Ola customer service, you might be talking to an AI agent right now, Aggarwal said.

Instagram testing new feature to let users keep friends updated on their location

A similar feature has been available on Snapchat since 2017.

Instagram is reportedly working on allowing users to share real-time updates with their friends on a map. The new feature, which has been in the pipeline since February, is being rolled out for testing in a few small markets, according to a report by The Verge. With this feature, Instagram users can share text or video updates that will be pinned to the locations from where these updates are posted. However, they can only be viewed by users who you follow back or have added to your Close Friends. Similar notes uploaded

by your friends will appear alongside each other on the same map. The feature will not be enabled by default for all Instagram users. A similar feature has been available on Snapchat since 2017. But the key difference between the two is that Snap Maps lets users make their map updates public for everyone to see, whereas Instagram seems like it does not want to take that chance. "As always, we are building this feature with safety in mind," a Meta spokesperson was quoted as saying in the report. It is not yet clear for how long the updates shared on the map will remain there.

Instagram posts can now have up to 20 photos and videos
Instagram is expanding the number of photos and videos that can be added to a single post

Signal messenger blocked in Russia, says Roskomnadzor

Russia's state communications watchdog Roskomnadzor blocked the encrypted messaging app Signal, citing violations of anti-terrorism laws.



Russia's state communications watchdog Roskomnadzor said that Signal, an encrypted messaging app, had been blocked in the Mikhail Klimarev, author of the Telegram channel "For Telecom", told Reuters. It was also impossible to register a new account on Signal without a VPN, three people from Moscow and the Krasnodar region told

country for violating laws linked to anti-terrorist operations, Interfax news agency reported on Friday.

"Access to the Signal messaging app is blocked in connection with violation of the requirements of Russian legislation which must be complied with to prevent the use of messaging apps for terrorist and extremist aims," Interfax quoted the agency as saying.

Prior to Roskomnadzor's announcement that it had taken action, hundreds of Signal users reported glitches with the messenger app, a secure communications tool used by up to a million Russians to encrypt messages and conversations. Internet service monitoring sites showed more than 1,500 complaints about Signal, mostly from users in Moscow and St Petersburg. Users reported, however, that it was working normally when accessed via a VPN or used in the built-in censorship bypass mode. "This indicates precisely a blocking of the messenger in Russia and not a technical problem on the Signal side,"

Reuters. When entering a mobile number, the service displayed the message "Server Error". Klimarev said it was the first attempt to block Signal in Russia.

Meeting Anushka, a low-budget humanoid robot built with parts from a dump yard



Anushka is the latest example of the enduring frugal innovation seen in Indian engineering colleges like KIET.

When most science fiction enthusiasts think of humanoid robots, they often imagine something from an Isaac Asimov novel or a chillingly life-like creation like Dolores from the television series Westworld. With the emergence of generative AI as well as existing social robots like Sophia developed by Hanson Robotics, a future with fully-realised robots doesn’t seem distant. But the journey towards this reality can be equally thrilling. That is why it was hard for me to turn down an opportunity to interact with a humanoid robot created in a modest lab on an engineering college campus tucked away in India’s heartland. I was both excited and sceptical about meeting with Anushka, the humanoid robot built by a team of students and professors at the Krishna Institute of Engineering and Technology (KIET) in Uttar Pradesh’s Ghaziabad. The current version of Anushka has primarily been designed to greet visitors and provide relevant information to what she is asked. But her creators envision Anushka to be more than a robot receptionist, with potential use cases in healthcare and consultancy.

When she was first unveiled in March 2024, Anushka made a bit of a splash in the media for apparently being the first humanoid robot with autonomous movement to be developed in north India. The claim that she was designed keeping in mind Vedic principles also managed to raise a few eyebrows.

Entering the lab, I found Anushka tethered to a monitor next to a table cluttered with microcontrollers and 3D-printed parts. Dr

Manoj Goel, joint director of KIET, revealed that the robot was developed on a budget of Rs 2 lakh, a fraction of the Rs 7-8 crore typically needed to build humanoid robots. Some components were even sourced from a local dump yard, he told me.

Anushka’s face features 3D-printed elements, while the flexible silicone skin was crafted by Madame Tussauds in India. Notably, her facial features were modelled after a late French princess and further enhanced using generative AI. The entire project took roughly one-and-a-half years to be completed.

The master-slave configuration

The underlying technology that allows Anushka to pantomime human gestures employs a master-slave architecture, where an i7 processor acts as the brain, commanding a network of microcontrollers and servo motors to control the movements of her hands, neck, jaws, eyes etc.



Anushka uses natural language processing (NLP) to answer queries accurately. Voice commands from a person, captured by a microphone placed discreetly behind her necklace, are converted into digital signals. A programme written in Python language uses NLP to turn them into meaningful data, which is processed by the robot, who then fetches the required data from a database containing 500 terabytes of information that has been acquired from OpenAI, the startup behind AI chatbot ChatGPT. Artificial intelligence comes in when Anushka decides what data has to be selected from OpenAI’s vast Python library, matching words with specific data and making decisions on how to reciprocate. The team said that the humanoid has been programmed in an “optimistic manner”; this reflected in her answers on the adverse effects of war.

OpenAI Says It Disrupted an Iranian Misinformation Campaign

Aug. 16, 2024Updated 2:20 p.m. ET

OpenAI said on Friday that it had discovered and disrupted an Iranian influence campaign that used the company’s generative artificial intelligence technologies to spread misinformation online, including content related to the U.S. presidential election. The San Francisco A.I. company said it had banned several accounts linked to the campaign from its online services. The Iranian effort, OpenAI added, did not seem to reach a sizable audience. “The operation doesn’t appear to have benefited from meaningfully increased audience engagement because of the use of A.I.,” said Ben Nimmo, a principal investigator for OpenAI who has spent years tracking covert influence campaigns from positions at companies including OpenAI and Meta. “We did not see signs that it was getting substantial engagement from real people at all.”

The popularity of generative A.I. like OpenAI’s online chatbot, ChatGPT, has raised questions about how such technologies might contribute to online disinformation, especially in a year when there are major elections across the globe.

In May, OpenAI released a first-of-its-kind report showing that it had identified and disrupted five other online campaigns that used its technologies to deceptively manipulate public opinion and influence geopolitics. Those efforts were run by state actors and private companies in Russia, China and Israel as well as Iran. These covert operations used OpenAI’s technology to generate social media posts, translate and edit articles, write headlines and debug computer programs, typically to win support for political campaigns or to swing public opinion in geopolitical conflicts.

This week, OpenAI identified several ChatGPT accounts that were using its chatbot to generate text and images for a covert Iranian campaign that the company called Storm-2035. The company said the campaign had used ChatGPT to generate content related to a variety of topics, including commentary on candidates in the U.S. presidential election. In some cases, the commentary seemed progressive. In other cases, it seemed conservative. It also dealt with hot-button topics ranging from the war in Gaza to Scottish independence. The campaign, OpenAI said, used its technologies to generate articles and shorter comments posted on websites and on social media. In some cases, the campaign used ChatGPT to rewrite comments posted by other social media users. OpenAI added that a majority of the campaign’s social media posts had received few or no likes, shares or comments, and that it had found little evidence that web articles produced by the campaigns were shared across social media.

California A.I. Bill Is Amended; Vote Is Expected by End of August

Silicon Valley companies still worry that state lawmakers are jumping the gun on regulating a still-unproven technology.

California lawmakers have amended a bill that would create new restrictions for artificial intelligence, paving the way for first-of-their-kind safety rules that could set new standards for how tech companies develop their systems. The State Assembly’s Appropriations Committee voted on Thursday to endorse an amended version of the bill, S.B. 1047, which would require companies to test the safety of powerful A.I. technologies before releasing them to the public. California’s attorney general would be able to sue companies if their technologies caused serious harm, such as mass property damage or human casualties. The bill has sparked fierce debate in the tech industry, with Silicon Valley giants, academics and investors taking sides on whether to regulate a nascent technology that has been hyped for both its benefits and its dangers.

Musk’s AI chatbot Grok generates deepfakes of PM Modi and other illegal images

Elon Musk’s AI chatbot Grok can be used to generate images of assault, school shootouts, children’s TV characters going on killing sprees, and more, per general users and journalists

Senator Scott Wiener, the author of the bill, made several concessions in an effort to appease tech industry critics like OpenAI, Meta and Google. The changes also reflect some suggestions made by another prominent start-up, Anthropic. Advertisement

The bill would no longer create a new agency for A.I. safety, instead shifting regulatory duties to the existing California Government Operations Agency. And companies would be liable for violating the law only if their technologies caused real harm or imminent dangers to public safety. Previously, the bill allowed for companies to be punished for failing to adhere to safety regulations even if no harm had yet occurred. “The new amendments reflect months of constructive dialogue with industry, start-up and academic stakeholders,” said Dan Hendrycks, a founder of the nonprofit Center for A.I. Safety in San Francisco, which helped write the bill. A Google spokesperson said the company’s previous concerns “still stand.” Anthropic said it was still reviewing the changes. OpenAI and Meta declined to comment on the amended bill.

Updated - August 16, 2024 12:02 pm IST
Published - August 16, 2024 10:48 am IST
The Hindu Bureau

The AI chatbot Grok on Elon Musk-owned social media platform X is being used to generate graphic, explicit, fake, or illegal media soon after its image-generation capabilities were announced, claimed general users and journalists. Just by entering a simple text prompt, *The Hindu* was able to use the new Grok 2 mini (beta) model to generate highly realistic deepfakes featuring Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi as well as U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris wielding rifles.

