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Tech

IBM has created a computer smaller than a grain of salt

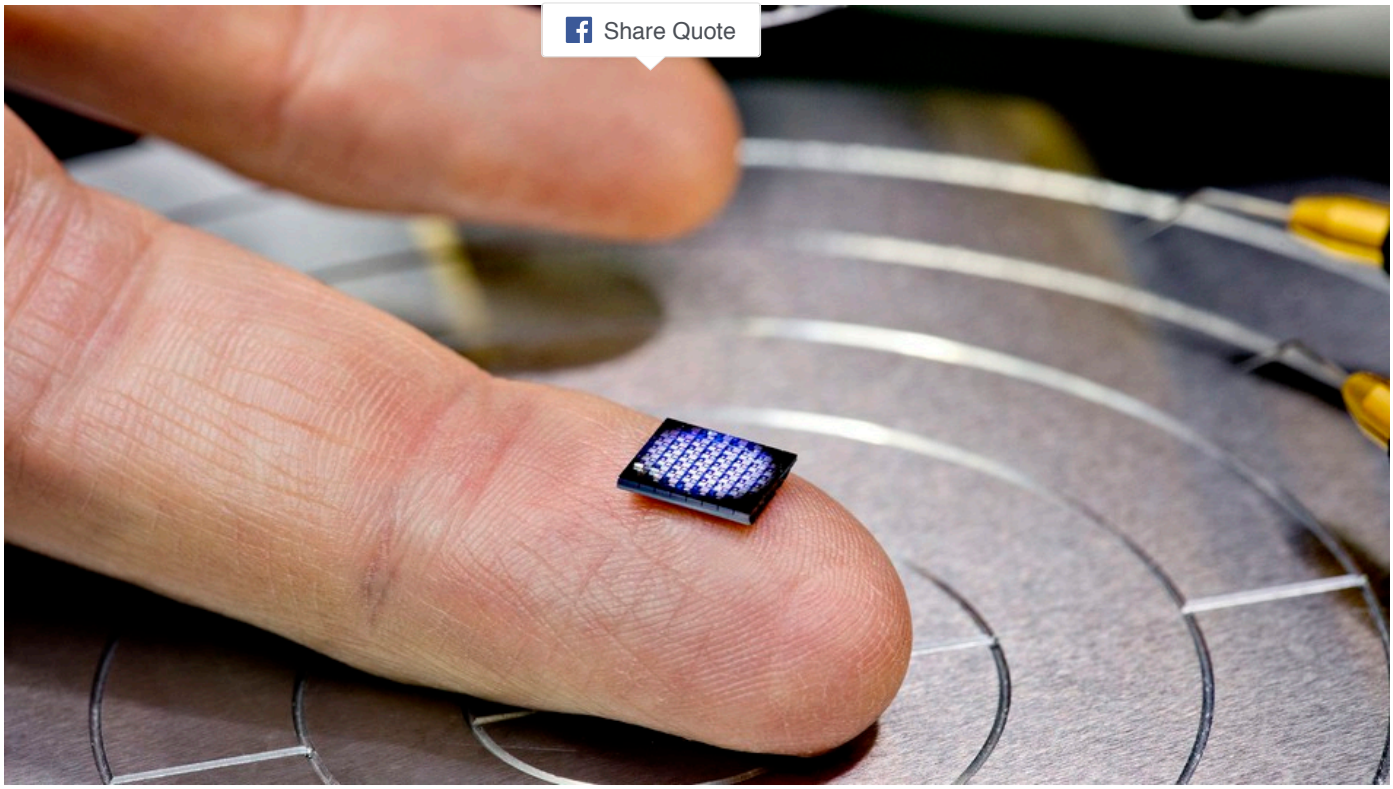

IMAGE: IBM

BY MONICA CHIN
10 HOURS AGO

If there's one downside to powerful computers, it's that they're too damn big.

Luckily, that's about to change. At least, if IBM has anything to say about it.

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March 19 is the first day of IBM Think 2018, the company's flagship conference, where the company will unveil what it claims is the world's smallest computer. They're not kidding: It's literally smaller than a grain of salt.

But don't let the size fool you: This sucker has the computing power of the x86 chip from 1990. Okay, so that's not great compared to what we have today, but cut it some slack — you need a microscope to see it.

The computer will cost less than ten cents to manufacture, and will also pack "several hundred thousand transistors," according to the company. These will allow it to "monitor, analyze, communicate, and even act on data."

IMAGE: IBM

Don't worry, bitcoin bros: It works with blockchain. Specifically, this computer will be a data source for blockchain applications. It's intended to help track the shipment of goods and detect theft, fraud, and non-compliance. It can also do basic AI tasks, such as sorting the data it's given.

According to IBM, this is only the beginning. "Within the next five years, cryptographic anchors — such as ink dots or tiny computers smaller than a grain of salt — will be embedded in everyday objects and devices," says IBM head of research Arvind Krishna. If he's correct, we'll see way more of these tiny systems in objects and devices in the years to come.

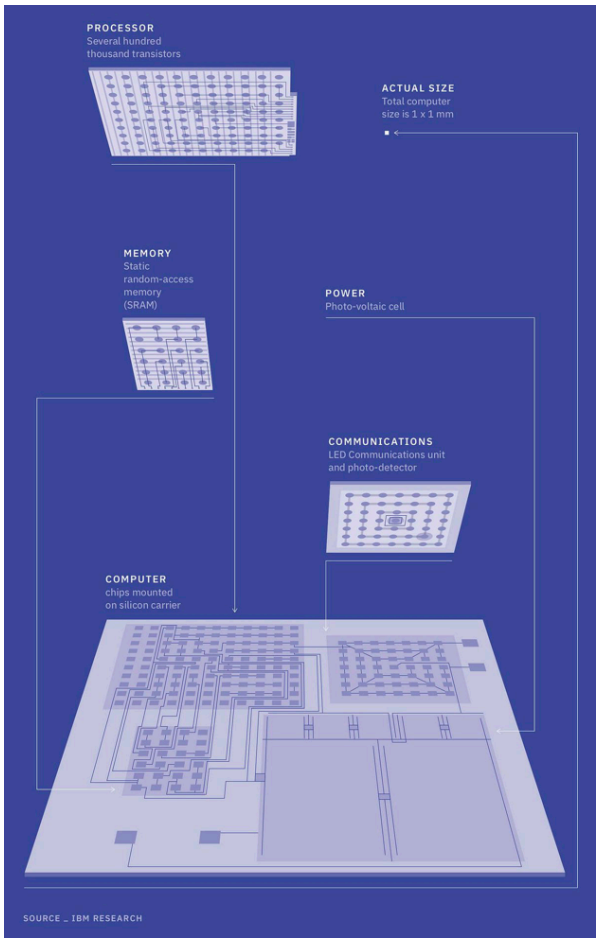
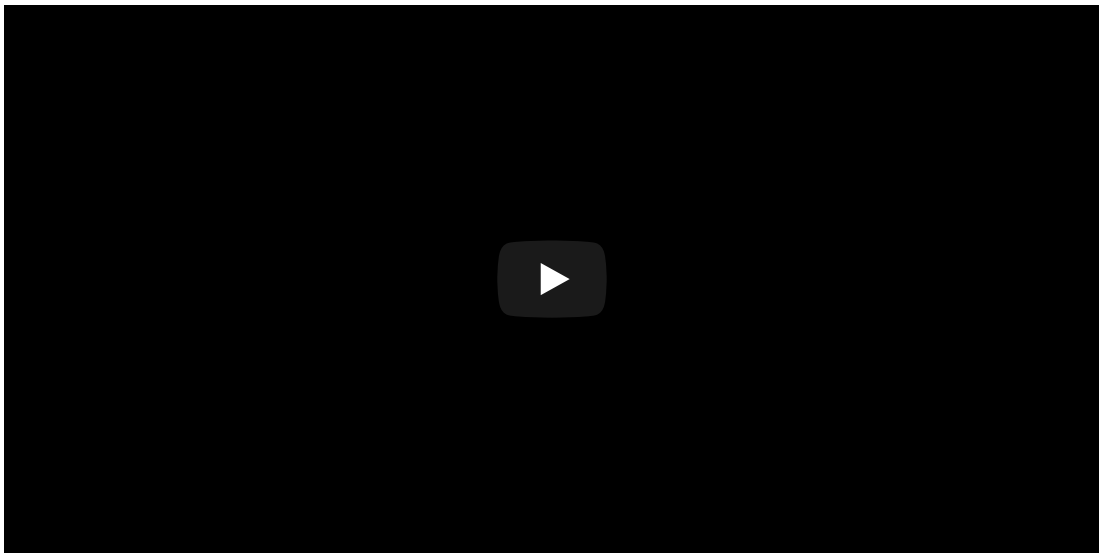


IMAGE: IBM

It's not clear yet when this thing will be released — IBM researchers are currently testing its first prototype.

But one thing's for sure: The future is here. You just might need a microscope to see it.

WATCH: 'I'm not afraid of death, but I'm in no hurry to die.': some of Stephen Hawking's most inspirational quotes.



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