

ON TECHNOLOGY
AND THE INTERNET

OpenAI fears get brushed aside

Big Tech dismissed board’s worries, along with the idea profit wouldn’t rule usage.

BRIAN MERCHANT

It’s not every day that the most talked-about company in the world sets itself on fire. Yet that seems to be what happened Friday, when OpenAI’s board announced that it had terminated its chief executive, Sam Altman, because he had not been “consistently candid in his communications with the board.” In corporate-speak, those are fighting words about as barbed as they come: They insinuated that Altman had been lying.

The sacking set in motion a dizzying sequence of events that kept the tech industry glued to its social feeds all weekend: First, it wiped \$48 billion off the valuation of Microsoft, OpenAI’s biggest partner. Speculation about malfeasance swirled, but employees, Silicon Valley stalwarts and investors rallied around Altman, and the next day talks were being held to bring him back. Instead of some fiery scandal, reporting indicated that this was at core a dispute over whether Altman was building and selling AI responsibly. By Monday, talks had failed, a majority of OpenAI employees were threatening to resign, and Altman announced he was joining Microsoft.

All the while, something *else* went up in flames: the fiction that anything other than the profit motive is going to govern how AI gets developed and deployed. Concerns about “AI safety” are going to be steamrolled by the tech giants itching to tap in to a new revenue stream every time.

It’s hard to overstate how wild this whole saga is. In a year when artificial intelligence has towered over the business world, OpenAI, with its ubiquitous ChatGPT and Dall-E products, has been the center of the universe. And Altman was its world-beating spokes-

[See Merchant, A9]

Battle erupts at Gaza hospital

Israel denies targeting the facility; meanwhile, premature babies are evacuated to Egypt. **WORLD, A3**

\$10 million for Messi’s jerseys?

Six that the Argentine soccer star wore in the 2022 World Cup are heading to the auction block. **BUSINESS, A8**

PG&E wins ruling on suits

The utility can’t be held liable for losses during power shutoffs during wildfires, court rules. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Weather

Sunny and warm. L.A. Basin: 82/52. **B6**

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ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

THE 10 FREEWAY’S expedited reopening after a fire gave Gov. Gavin Newsom a chance to bat down criticism that he is not focused on California’s problems, seen as a factor in his low approval ratings in a recent poll.

Climate alarm bell’s clang just got louder

The Earth surpasses a crucial 2-degree Celsius warming threshold, a European research group says.

BY HAYLEY SMITH

For the first time since record keeping began, Earth has surpassed a critical temperature threshold that scientists have long warned could unleash the worst effects of climate change.

On Friday, the planet

soared 2.07 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels, or the 1850 to 1900 average, according to Europe’s Copernicus Climate Change Service.

Two degrees Celsius — or 3.6 degree Fahrenheit — is the internationally agreed upon upper limit of warming established by the 2015 Paris climate agreement. The agreement seeks to hold the increase in the global temperature to well below that limit, and preferably below 1.5 degrees Celsius, in recognition that “this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate

change.”

Copernicus officials shared the finding Monday in a post on X. Deputy director Samantha Burgess said preliminary data also show that the global temperature on Saturday measured 2.06 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels, indicating that there are “now two November 2023 days” where the temperature exceeded the benchmark.

Scientists have long warned that sustained warming of 1.5 degrees or more will lead to cascading risks for human and planetary systems, including

negative impacts on ecosystems, biodiversity, water supplies and food security. Warming land and ocean temperatures are already contributing to sea level rise, melting ice sheets and increased hazards such as heat waves, drought and extreme precipitation, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

While significant challenges are expected for many regions and systems at 1.5 degrees of warming, “risks would be larger at 2 degrees Celsius of warming [See Climate, A5]



JOSH EDELSON For The Times

BRENT WALKER, manager at EARTHseed Farm in Sebastopol, Calif., checks apples for sunburn. Making the farm less susceptible to climate change is still a work in progress, Walker says.

Forging Black connections to land

Founder of Sonoma County farm uses Afrocentric approach to promote best practices around climate change, environment

BY TYRONE BEASON

SEBASTOPOL, Calif. — EARTHseed Farm is unlike its counterparts among Sonoma County’s rolling vineyards and redwood forests.

A hand-painted sign at the entrance greets visitors with the words, “Welcome Black to the land.”

On the driveway to the two-story farmhouse that lies at the heart of the 14-acre property, another sign pays homage to the

Black scientist George Washington Carver and the escaped slave who rescued scores from Southern plantations on the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman.

A few steps away, a likeness of the late Black sci-fi author and Pasadena native Octavia Butler gazes from a mural painted on an outbuilding.

The Afrocentricity that radiates across EARTHseed is meant to make Black visitors in particular feel welcome — not an easy task in a county that is just 2.3% Black and where the average home price —

\$1.1 million — is out of range for most Californians of any race.

For the farm’s founder, Pandora Thomas, there’s an even greater purpose. Thomas, a Berkeley-based naturalist and environmental educator, wants to teach her fellow Black Californians to use their African American heritage to usher their communities — and all of humanity — through the climate crisis.

What comes across as a hip U-pick fruit farm — one that is open to all — is also a laboratory for perma-

[See Farm, A5]

ANALYSIS

FREEWAY REPAIRS BOLSTER NEWSOM

Governor’s swift response draws praise, but his administration still faces scrutiny over the I-10 fire.

BY TARYN LUNA

Gov. Gavin Newsom got his victory lap.

Sporting a brown jacket, jeans and a baseball cap as he stood on the 10 Freeway, the governor announced Sunday morning that all lanes of the roadway would reopen weeks earlier than he originally estimated after a massive fire shut down a main artery through downtown Los Angeles.

Southern California’s traffic nightmare ended later that evening, days before the heavily traveled Thanksgiving holiday.

“This is about pride,” Newsom said at a news conference with Vice President Kamala Harris, U.S. Sen. Alex Padilla and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass. “It’s about government getting things done.”

The Newsom administration still faces questions as the landlord of the parcel where the fire ignited and engulfed the underbelly of a major metropolitan freeway.

The crisis provided Newsom a chance to bat down criticism of being overly enchanted by the national political stage as he raced to fix a high-profile California problem, but the fire could present a political vulnerability for the governor if it turns out that stronger state oversight could have prevented the blaze.

Newsom’s announcement came two weeks after a poll showed his standing

[See Newsom, A6]

Officer shoots, kills pedestrian on freeway

A bystander’s video appears to show a brief struggle before the man is shot as he lies on the ground.

BY NOAH GOLDBERG AND BRENNON DIXON

Video recorded by a bystander appears to show a deadly encounter in which a California Highway Patrol officer repeatedly shoots a man after a struggle in the middle of the 105 Freeway in Watts on Sunday afternoon.

CHP officials said Monday evening that they responded to the freeway about 3:15 p.m. Sunday after receiving multiple calls about a man walking through traffic near the Wilmington Avenue exit.

After the trooper made contact with the pedestrian, “a struggle ensued and an officer-involved shooting occurred,” the CHP said in a release.

CHP officials said that during the altercation the man took a Taser from the

[See CHP, A6]



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