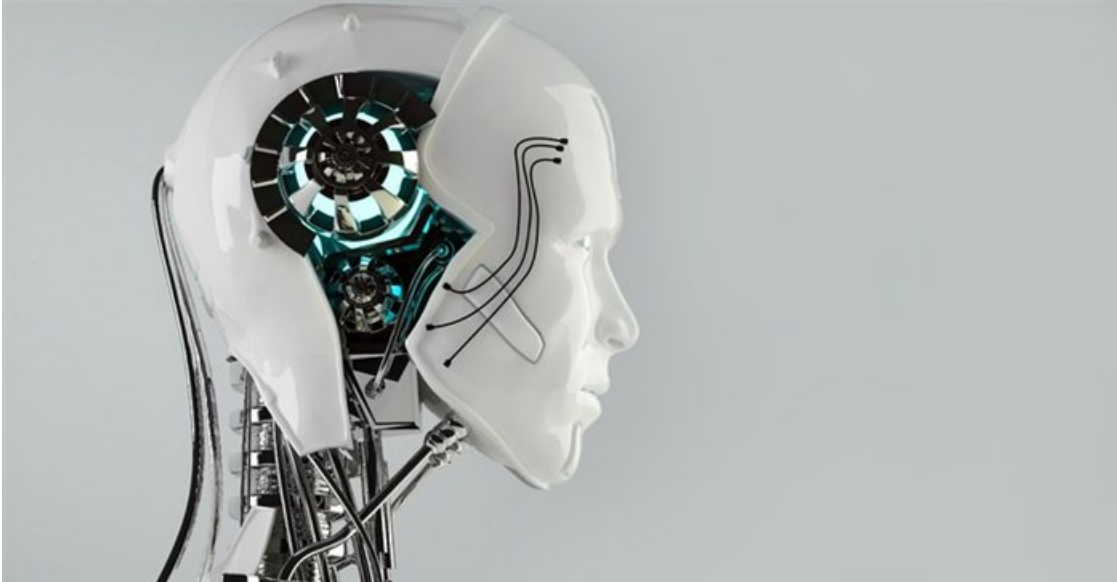


Tech titans form artificial intelligence alliance

SAN FRANCISCO: Major technology firms have joined forces in a partnership on artificial intelligence, aiming to cooperate on "best practices" on using the technology "to benefit people and society".



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Microsoft, Amazon, Google, Facebook, IBM, and Google-owned British AI firm DeepMind on Wednesday announced a non-profit organisation called Partnership on AI focused on helping the public understand the technology and practices in the field. The move comes amid concerns that new artificial intelligence efforts could spin out of control and end up being detrimental to society.

The companies "will conduct research, recommend best practices, and publish research under an open licence in areas such as ethics, fairness, and inclusivity; transparency, privacy, and interoperability; collaboration between people and AI systems; and the trustworthiness, reliability, and robustness of the technology," according to a statement.

Academics, non-profit groups, and specialists in policy and ethics will be invited to join the board of the Partnership on Artificial Intelligence to Benefit People and Society (Partnership on AI).

Democratising AI

Microsoft on Thursday meanwhile took a further step on artificial intelligence, announcing a unit devoted to "democratising" the technology, with more than 5,000 computer scientists and engineers. Microsoft expected its new AI and Research Group to speed up putting human-like thinking into virtual assistants, applications, services and computing infrastructures.

"We are focused on empowering both people and organisations, by democratising access to intelligence to help solve our most pressing challenges," Microsoft chief executive Satya Nadella said in a release. "To do this, we are infusing AI into everything we deliver across our computing platforms and experiences." The new unit will include scientists from Microsoft Research, Bing and Cortana product groups, and its Ambient Computing and Robotics teams.

Helping people, not hurting them

Late last year, SpaceX founder and Tesla chief executive Elon Musk took part in creating nonprofit research company OpenAI devoted to developing artificial intelligence that will help people and not hurt them. Musk found himself in the middle

of a technology world controversy by holding firm that AI could turn on humanity and be its ruin instead of a salvation.

Google, Apple, Facebook and Microsoft are among technology giants that have been investing in making machines smarter, contending the goal is to improve lives.

"If we create some digital super-intelligence that exceeds us in every way by a lot, it is very important that it be benign," Musk said at a Code Conference in California in June. A danger, he contended, was that highly advanced artificial intelligence would be left to its own devices, or in the hands of a few people, to the detriment of civilization as a whole.

Source: AFP

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