

Meta releases new AI model as Zuckerberg lays out vision

AFP | Washington, United States

Meta chief executive Mark Zuckerberg called yesterday for lower barriers for open source AI, as his company introduced a new model that can run on a personal computer.

The launch comes amid debate in the United States on whether access to the technology should be more restricted, and on local push-back against the buildout of data centers that power it.

This was accompanied by a long essay outlining Zuckerberg's vision for artificial intelligence in which he stressed the need to remain competitive against countries like China, among other issues.

Competitors OpenAI and Anthropic largely focus on closed AI models.

Zuckerberg said in an Instagram video Monday that his company would open the weights for its latest AI model, enabling it to be downloaded by the public.

Weights refer to calculations or rules governing how an AI system behaves.

He said Meta would also release a new class of open source models, designed to run on a laptop.

“Rather than centralizing superintelligence, we should distribute it widely and give every person the ability to direct it,” Zuckerberg said in his essay.

Amid growing public opposition to data center development in the United States, Zuckerberg added that Meta is launching a fund to directly support communities around its facilities.

A Meta spokesperson said the size of the fund, launched Monday, is \$1 billion.

Meta has in recent months reaffirmed plans to keep spending heavily on the data centers and chips underpinning its AI effort. It expects capital expenditures of up to \$145 billion this year, nearly doubling the amount it spent in 2025.

China imposes levies on pecans from US, Mexico

AFP | Beijing, China

China announced steep levies on pecans imported from the United States and Mexico yesterday after it found the products were being dumped on the Chinese market.

Beginning Tuesday, pecans from Mexican producers will

face levies between 17.8 percent and 51.6 percent while those from US companies face a blanket 54.3 percent rate, the Chinese commerce ministry said. The rates were issued after the ministry reached a “preliminary ruling” on its anti-dumping investigation into imported pecans it initiated in September last year.

US, South Korea to drill for new threats from North

AFP | Seoul, South Korea

South Korean and US forces will hold major joint drills next week simulating combat against North Korean troops battle-hardened by deployment in the Russia-Ukraine war, an exercise spokesman said yesterday.

The “Ulchi Freedom Shield” exercise is a regular summer fixture for South Korea’s armed forces and their US allies, designed to

steel them for defence against the nuclear-armed North.

Pyeongyang has always been angered by the drills, decrying them as dress rehearsals for an invasion.

This year’s 11-day exercise starting on August 17 will account for the changing “character of warfare”, said Colonel Ryan Donald, spokesman for the US and South Korean Combined Forces Command.



Iran supreme leader names Guards general Abdollahi military chief

AFP | Tehran, Iran

Iranian supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei named Revolutionary Guards general Ali Abdollahi head of the country’s armed forces yesterday, while also confirming a new commander of the Guards, putting his imprimatur on the country’s military.

An statement on Khamenei’s website announced that “Major General Ali Abdollahi has been appointed chief of staff of the armed forces. Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi has also been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps with the rank of major general.”

UK radio broke rules in announcing king’s death

● Radio Caroline, a former pirate radio that now mostly plays rock music, apologised in May after airing messages falsely announcing the monarch’s death.

AFP | London, United Kingdom

A community radio station breached the rules after accidentally announcing the death of King Charles III in a May broadcast, a UK watchdog said on Monday.

Radio Caroline, a former pirate radio that

now mostly plays rock music, apologised in May after airing messages falsely announcing the monarch’s death.

One of the messages had said “we have suspended our normal programmes until further notice as a mark of respect following the passing of His Majesty King Charles III”.

The national anthem was then played, followed by around 16 minutes of silence before the regular programme resumed.

The presenter apologised 30 minutes after the messages were initially triggered, Ofcom said.

Radio Caroline told Ofcom the error occurred when a member of staff accessed sound files pre-recorded in the event of the monarch’s death while carrying out maintenance on the studio computer, as the programme

was being streamed remotely.

The staff member played the files “out of curiosity”, which stopped the stream from the presenter’s remote location and broadcast the files on air.

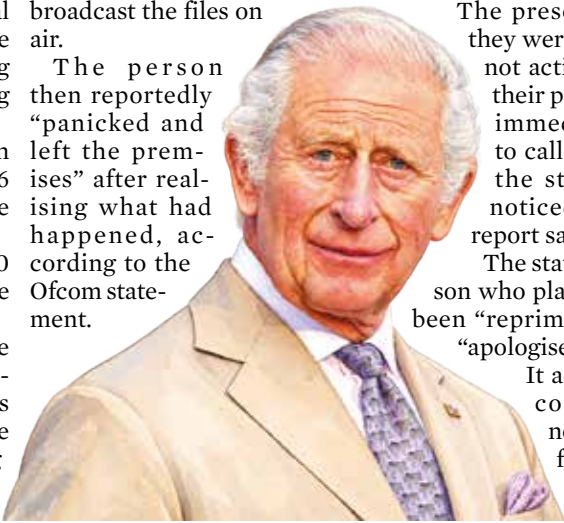
The person then reportedly “panicked and left the premises” after realising what had happened, according to the Ofcom statement.

Radio Caroline said the remote presenter “would not realise that they had gone ‘off air’ unless they were monitoring their output via an internet monitor.”

The presenter, believing they were still on air, was not actively monitoring their phone and did not immediately respond to calls from people at the station who had noticed the error, the report said.

The station said the person who played the files had been “reprimanded” and had “apologised”.

It added the pre-recorded files had now been removed from the studio computer.



Ocasio-Cortez

US left-wing star reveals decision to freeze her eggs

AFP | Washington, United States

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, one of the most prominent figures on the US left

and a potential presidential contender, has revealed she is freezing her eggs, saying she wants to speak openly about choices confronting women balancing careers and family.

The 36-year-old Democratic congresswoman from New York shared videos of the fertility

treatment on social media over the weekend, including footage of herself administering hormone injections.

“This is a choice that I am making to feel more in control of my life,” Ocasio-Cortez said, describing her ability to undergo the procedure as a “very privi-

leged position.

Hours later, Ocasio-Cortez said in a television interview that she had not ruled out running for the White House in 2028, while also leaving open the possibility of challenging Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer for his New York seat.

Deadly Quake rocks Colombia, toll climbs

● The early-morning quake was also felt in Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela

● At least 69 people were killed in the city of Pereira alone

● Choco was at the epicenter of the quake

AFP | Bogote, Colombia

A magnitude 7.4 earthquake struck western Colombia yesterday, killing at least 69 people, toppling dozens of buildings and reverberating in nearby countries too.

Emergency teams rushed to help victims and search for survivors under the rubble after the quake hit the coastal Choco region at 7:34 am local time.

The tremor, with an epicenter 100 kilometers (60 miles) deep in the San Jose del Palmar municipality, killed at least 40 people in the Risaralda region.

“The situation is critical,” Mayor Mauricio Salazar of the provincial capital Pereira told Caracol Radio.

Twenty-seven people were killed in the Valle del Cauca department, and two more died in the city of Manizales, in Colombia’s coffee-growing region.



An elderly woman is carried on furniture near a collapsed building after an earthquake in Cali, Colombia

The quake caused a tower of Manizales’ beloved cathedral to fall over, an AFP journalist observed.

“A great many buildings” in the city sustained damage, said administrator Jaime Zuluaga, 50. “Traffic is paralyzed and people don’t want to go back to their homes for fear of an aftershock.”

Airports shut

Twenty buildings crumbled in Colombia’s third-largest city Cali, trapping people beneath the debris, Mayor Alejandro Eder said.

Choco’s governor warned of serious damage in the provincial capital Quibdo, where videos showed more buildings reduced to rubble. The death toll in the

impoverished region remains unknown.

Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela also felt the early-morning quake, which prompted building evacuations in Bogota.

Still wearing their pajamas, crowds of people rushed out into the street upon feeling the tremor, AFP reporters saw.

“The quake was very, very strong,” said content creator Valeria Polo, 29, in the capital, where only minimal damage was recorded. Six small airports in western Colombia suspended operations, the civil aeronautics agency said, and the soccer governing body postponed upcoming football matches.

President Abelardo de la Espriella, who was just sworn in

on Friday, said he was heading to Bogota to convene an emergency meeting.

“To the Colombians who are going through difficult times today, I want to say: You are not alone,” he added.

De la Espriella has pledged to build close ties with the United States and Israel, both of whom voiced support following the disaster. Washington is “closely monitoring the large earthquake that struck Colombia and stands ready to support the people of Colombia,” Secretary of State Marco Rubio wrote on X.

Israel offered its assistance, as did Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum and Ecuador’s Daniel Noboa.