techbuzz

Apple unveils new 14-inch MacBook Pro with M5 chip

TDT | agencies

Apple has introduced the new 14-inch MacBook Pro powered by the latest M5 chip, marking a significant step in the company's AI-focused hardware evolution. The laptop, available in space black and silver, will be open for pre-orders ahead of its release on October 22.

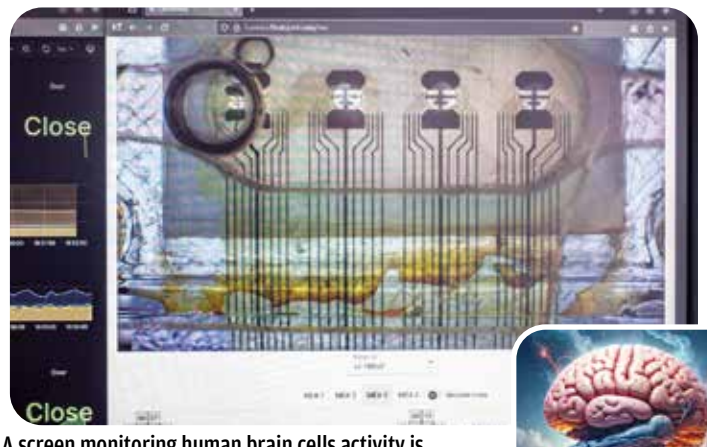
The M5 chip features a redesigned 10-core GPU with a Neural Accelerator in each core, promising up to 3.5 times faster AI processing and up to 1.6 times better graphics performance than the previous generation. The CPU has also been upgraded for improved efficiency and speed, while memory bandwidth has been increased to support demanding professional workflows.

The new MacBook Pro is capable of running large language models and AI-based applications locally, enhancing productivity for professionals who rely on generative tools, data modelling, and machine learning. The system also supports faster SSD storage and offers up to 4TB of capacity, improving tasks like video editing and image rendering. Apple retains key features such as the Liquid Retina XDR display, 12MP camera with Centre Stage, and six-speaker sound system. Battery life is rated at up to 24 hours, extending mobility for users on the go.

With the M5 chip, Apple aims to solidify its position in the AI-enabled computing market, offering improved performance across both creative and technical workflows.

Scientists explore "wetware" using *human mini-brains to power computers*

TDT | agencies



A screen monitoring human brain cells activity is photographed at the Swiss start-up FinalSpark in Vevey

In a lab in Vevey, tiny clumps of human brain cells, known as organoids, are being used as rudimentary computer processors. This emerging field, called biocomputing or "wetware," seeks to harness the human brain's natural computing power rather than simulating it with silicon chips.

FinalSpark, a Swiss start-up, creates these bioprocessors from stem cells originally derived from human skin. The cells are transformed into neurons and formed into millimetre-wide organoids, roughly the size of a fruit fly larva's brain. Electrodes monitor and stimulate the organoids, allowing scientists to record their activity, which serves as the equivalent of ones and zeroes in traditional computing.

Co-founder Fred Jordan believes that, in the future, brain-based processors could complement or even replace the chips driving artificial intelligence, which currently consume massive amounts of energy. Biological neurons are significantly more energy-efficient than artificial ones and can be reproduced in the lab, unlike in-demand AI chips.

Globally, ten universities are experimenting with FinalSpark organoids. At the University of Bristol, researchers used an organoid to power a simple robot that could distinguish braille letters. Johns Hopkins University is studying organoids to investigate conditions such as autism and Alzheimer's disease.

Challenges remain, including interpreting the organoids' neural activity and managing their limited lifespan of up to six months. While wetware is far from competing with traditional computing hardware, scientists hope it will not only improve AI efficiency but also deepen understanding of how the human brain functions. Ethical considerations are also being addressed, as the organoids currently have only around 10,000 neurons—far fewer than a human brain—and lack the structures required for consciousness.

Scientists continue to monitor these neural clusters, often encountering unexpected activity that underscores how much about the brain remains a mystery.

UK TV channel deploys AI host for current affairs doc

AFP | London, United Kingdom

UK TV channel deploys AI host for current affairs doc

A British television channel became the latest from around the world to use an artificial intelligence (AI) presenter, in a programme airing Monday about the emergent technology's growing impact.

Channel 4 said it opted for an AI-generated host for the latest episode in its long-running current affairs series, "Dispatches", to raise a wider question about trust and authenticity in the digital age.

The publicly-owned, privately-funded channel claimed the stunt was a first for British TV.

"The use of an AI presenter is not something we will be making a habit of at Channel 4," its head of news and current affairs Louisa Compton said in a statement.

"Instead our focus in news and current affairs is on premium, fact-checked, duly impartial and trusted journalism -- something AI is not capable of doing.

"But this stunt does serve as a useful reminder of just how disruptive AI has the potential to be -- and how easy it is to hoodwink audiences with content they have no way of verifying."

The Dispatches episode -- "Will AI Take My Job?" -- investigated how it is changing workplaces across industries, including law, music, fashion and medicine.

The fact that the presenter, named Aisha Gaban and who appears on-screen throughout the programme, was entirely AI-generated is revealed in its closing moments.

"Some of you might have guessed: I don't exist, I wasn't on location reporting this story. My image and voice were generated using AI," she informs viewers.

Highlighting the growing role of AI tools in workplaces, the episode revealed that nearly three quarters of UK bosses have already introduced the tech for tasks previously performed by humans.

AI hosts have been appearing on TV screens in different parts of the world for a number of years. China's state news agency Xinhua made headlines in 2018 when it introduced an AI news anchor who was a digital version of one of its regular presenters. More recently, an AI persona named Fedha read the headlines for Kuwait News in the Gulf emirate, while Greek state broadcaster ERT did the same with an AI host named Hermes in May 2023, according to the BBC.

AI helping fuel reduction in global religious freedom: study

Pope Leo XIV gives an audience to pilgrims at the Paul VI Hall in the Vatican

AFP | Paris, France

Threats against religious freedom are increasing across the world, a Roman Catholic aid organisation warned yesterday, pointing to a rise in persecution in countries including China and North Korea and the repressive use of AI.

"Almost two-thirds of humanity -- almost 5.4 billion people -- live in countries where serious religious freedom violations take place," Aid to the Church in Need International (ACN) said.

Twenty-four countries, including China, Nigeria and North Korea, are ranked in the worst category -- "persecution" -- where people face "serious and repeated acts of violence or harassment because of their faith".

Thirty-eight, including Egypt, Ethiopia, Mexico, Turkey and Vietnam, are classified under the second-worst category -- "discrimination" -- where there are "laws or practices that unfairly target certain religious groups".

Twenty-four others were classed as "under observation", where there are "warning signs of serious violations of religious freedom", ACN's "Religious Freedom in the World Report 2025" stated.

ACN, a papal foundation, said the overall situation has not improved since its last report in 2023, blaming a rise in authoritarianism, jihadist violence and ethno-religious nationalism.

There had been a "sharp rise" in antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate crimes, including in Europe and the United States, since the October 7, 2023 attack on Israel by Hamas militants that sparked the war in Gaza.

On artificial intelligence, the group said the new technology and other digital tools were being "weaponised" to "monitor, profile and penalise religious expression".

"In countries such as China, North Korea and Pakistan, both governments and non-state actors deploy digital tools to censor, intimidate and criminalise believers -- transforming religious faith into a perceived security threat," the report stated.

"AI's capacities for manipulative purposes are enormous," it added.

The ACN report, which is published every two years, is the only one conducted by an NGO that looks at all religions.

Pope Leo XIV said in a post on X after its publication that religious freedom was "a cornerstone of any just society, for it safeguards the moral space in which conscience may be formed and exercised".

YOU KNOW WHAT

A key fact about AI is that artificial intelligence is now widely used across industries for tasks such as data analysis, predictive maintenance, customer service, and healthcare diagnostics, enabling faster decision-making and often reducing human error.