

Britain brings together political and tech firm leaders to discuss AI

LONDON — Britain will convene governments, academia and companies working at the cutting edge of artificial intelligence (AI) on Wednesday at the inaugural AI Safety Summit to debate how, and even if, the risks of the technology can be contained.

The meeting is the brainchild of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, who wants to carve out a role for Britain as an intermediary between the economic blocs of the United States, China, and the European Union.

The 100-strong guest list includes world leaders, tech executives like Elon Musk and ChatGPT boss Sam Altman, and academics for the event at Bletchley Park, home of Britain's World War Two code-breakers, on Wednesday and Thursday.

Skeptics have questioned how much influence Britain can wield when the United States, the Group of Seven industrialized nations and the European Union are pushing other initiatives, some of which are advanced.

But the summit, which focuses on highly capable general-purpose models called "frontier AI," has managed to attract US Vice-President Kamala Harris, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, China's vice-tech minister, and United Nations' Secretary-General António Guterres.

Britain's technology minister Michelle Donelan said "the right people with the right expertise" would be around the table to discuss how to mitigate the risks of AI.

China will be a key participant, given the country's role in developing AI technology, although questions have been raised by some lawmakers in Britain about its presence.

The US ambassador to Britain, Jane Hartley, said the AI conversation should be global, but added that the invitation to China had come from London.

"This is the UK invitation, this is not the US," she told Reuters. "When the UK government was talking to us, we said it's your summit. So if you want to invite them, invite them."

Canada's minister of innovation, science and industry Francois-Philippe Champagne said AI would not be constrained by national borders, and therefore interoperability between different regulations being put in place was important.

"The risk is that we do too little, rather than too much, given the evolution and speed with which things are going," he told Reuters.

On the agenda are topics like how AI systems might be used by terrorists to build bio-weapons and the technology's potential to outsmart humans and wreak havoc on the world. — **Reuters**

NGA 911 seeks to improve LGUs' emergency response capabilities

NEW GENERATION Advanced 911 (NGA 911), a cloud-based technology from the United States, is set to expand its partnerships with local government units (LGUs) in the Philippines to help modernize their emergency response capabilities.

NGA 911 Chief Financial Officer Ishka Villacisneros said the company is inking partnerships with different localities in the Philippines as they aim to help make the country's emergency response most advanced in the region.

"The goal here is to propagate this technology across all LGUs," Ms. Villacisneros said in an interview last week.

NGA 911 is expected to deploy its system in Morong, Rizal, its first partner LGU in Asia, before the end of the year.

Aside from Morong, the technology is also expected to be deployed in Alaminos, Pangasinan.

NGA 911 uses Internet Protocol technology to facilitate communication between callers and emergency responders, enabling the transmission of voice, text, and video messages through mobile devices and even via social media applications.

Its services include the training of staff, hardware, and software tools, and maintenance of the system.

The technology will connect fire, police, and medical authorities to enable quicker response time, Ms. Villacisneros said.

"When residents of Morong call 911, they won't go through the national line anymore — they will be directly connected to Morong emergency response team," she said.

Extended call wait times on the national 911 hotline are due to the influx of spam calls that are hard to filter, Ms. Villacisne-

ros said, adding this can be done by NGA 911.

Instead of having different emergency hotlines for each locality, there is a need to have a unified emergency number for all LGUs, she said.

"The problem in the Philippines is that when you're in Quezon City and then move to Makati, the emergency numbers often change... So our main goal is to unify the emergency number with the international standard 911," she added.

The cost of implementing an advanced 911 system in cities and municipalities is not as expensive as it may sound, Ms. Villacisneros said.

Morong is currently classified as second-class, and we also have a fourth-class municipality in our pipeline. If these LGUs can, highly urbanized cities also can," she said.

"You don't really need to construct a large building because all the equipment is in the cloud. If you were to see our setup, it's just about the size of two DVD players," Ms. Villacisneros added.

Cloud-based technology allows the system to operate even during a calamity, she said.

"With the Philippines having numerous islands and facing calamities, relying on a single system can be risky. But here, we have a backup system. For instance, if one center gets flooded, all systems remain connected," she added.

"If the provincial center sees municipal centers go down, they can step in, and if needed, even the national center can step in. The province can monitor all their LGU centers seamlessly," Ms. Villacisneros said. — **Jomel R. Paguian**

Experts: Digitalization shift should start with local governments

THE DIGITALIZATION of industries and public services should start from local government units (LGUs), experts at a forum held by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) last week said.

LGUs, even the small ones, have been receptive to the shift to digitalization, Dragonpay founder and CEO Robertson Chiang said in an interview at the sidelines of the forum.

"It could be done. It's really just the political will of the

mayor if they want to do it or not," he added.

Government services, including the payment of taxes and documents, should be done digitally to help cater to overseas transactions from Filipinos working abroad, Mr. Chiang said.

"We would want LGUs to have a system that can be accessed by their citizen through the Internet. They should be able to view anything from their property taxes to business permits online," he added.

Meanwhile, Vice Catudio, chief of party of USAID SPEED or Strengthening Private Enterprises for the Digital Economy Activity, said the shift to digitalization starts with educating LGUs on technology.

"By educating our LGUs and teaching them about technology and what technology can do, I think a lot of our LGUs will shift to digitalization," he said in his speech.

Aside from using digital payments in government transactions, for their part, digitalizing Halal goods and services is necessary to

the development of the Bangsamoro region, Dato' Abdul Malik Melvin Castelino bin Anthony, ambassador of Malaysia to the Philippines, said in his speech at the event.

"The Philippines has a strong ecosystem that can support it (Halal economy)," he said. "The collaboration between private and public sectors is crucial because the government may no longer rely on their own funding or their own manpower to achieve the objective and target in terms of development." — **J.R. Paguian**

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