



US President Joe Biden names economic policy adviser Elizabeth Kelly to lead the AI Safety Institute at the National Institute for Standards and Technology that will play a key role in development of AI

UMA KANNAN @ Bengaluru

ONE of the early adopters of the artificial intelligence (AI) technology, India is witnessing its tech space enter a frenetic pace with young entrepreneurs setting up as many as 100 startups every day.

These are some of the views that emerged from the Microsoft AI Tour event held in Bengaluru on Thursday. Top executives and AI experts who attended the event were bullish on India's stupendous growth prospects in the AI space.

Puneet Chandok, president, Microsoft India and South Asia, said India is the most exciting market in the world fuelled by AI. "We all have to learn and if you are not learning about AI every day, you are falling behind," he said, stressing on the need to unlock productivity.

More than 1,100 developers gathered at the Microsoft AI event spoke about Copilot, a chatbot developed by the US the giant based on a large language model.

Launched in 2023, Copilot in Windows empowers one to create faster, complete tasks with ease and lessens cognitive load.

Microsoft chairman and CEO Satya Nadella, who is currently in India, reinforced the company's commitment to supporting India's transformation into an AI-first nation. He highlighted how Microsoft Copilot, along with the company's



FUELLED BY AI, INDIA EMERGES AS THE MOST EXCITING MARKET IN THE WORLD

Puneet Chandok, president, Microsoft India and South Asia

other AI solutions, is driving measurable productivity gains for people and organisations by helping them complete work faster and with superior quality.

Organisations in India are seeing an average \$3.86 return for every US dollar spent on AI projects, and more than 150 organisa-

tions are already innovating with Azure OpenAI Service across industries such as agriculture, aviation, e-commerce, and fast-moving consumer goods, Microsoft said.

AI is an equaliser

When the full potential of AI is realised, it can strengthen India's economy including rural economy. AI is an equaliser and will reduce the gap between urban and rural India democratising skills, says Manav Subodh,

founder of 1M1B (One Million for One Billion).

According to him, in the space of skilling, AI is going to be revolutionary in its ability to provide a robust system of support for youths. AI will facilitate an ease of work in small businesses and entrepreneurs.

"Where previously they were unable to hire big-time agencies to expand their operations, they can now get a surprising amount done by leveraging generative AI," he said.

Medical drones for first & last mile

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ Chennai

USING drones for urgent delivery of medicine is talked about a lot. So is the use of drones in e-commerce and quick commerce deliveries. But, aside from the hype, much is not happening on the ground or, to be more precise, the sky.

However, things are expected to change with the viable commercial applications drone-deliveries projected to grow. Delhi-based Skye Air is betting on it. The startup provides drone delivery as a service for healthcare and moving along to agriculture, e-commerce and logistics sectors. It also has a data intelligence platform for freight management.

Ankit Kumar, co-founder and chief executive of Skye Air, said the use of medical drones has huge potential for expanding the reach of healthcare facilities in sub urban settlements apart from rural parts of the country. "This would increase the radius of healthcare services from 10 km around the hospital to maybe 20-30 km. This can provide more accessibility for medicines to reach patients for diagnostic samples, medicines or vaccines. This is easy instead of a doctor or patient traveling to the centers," he said.

The company has bagged eight healthcare medicine delivery government ten-



ders across the country from AIIMS Rajkot to Central Leprosy Teaching and Research Institute in Tamil Nadu. The list includes AIIMS Rajkot and Bhubaneswar, AIIPH Kolkata, RLTRI Bankura, and RLTRI Aska. Its StarLiner and Artemis drone models have started transport of medical supplies using temperature-controlled boxes in these places.

Ankit Kumar says private players deploying drones is crucial for scaling up and bringing down the prices of trips. Only public-sector play-

ers and the government have stepped in and invested in drone delivery, he said.

"But it requires both public- and private-sector players as well as scaling up of medical drones delivery to make it a viable and profitable model," he added

The company conducted the beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) medicine delivery flight with Flipkart for 104 km between Baruipur and Medinipur in West Bengal. It claims the flight time reduced 80% compared to conventional means and is one of the longest medical drone drops.

Skye Air currently has 35 drones and plans to ramp up its fleet size to 100 in six months. It has raised \$1.7 million from venture capitalists in a seed round. It is in the process of securing a Series A round, which is expected in a few weeks. It is also working to procure bigger drones of 50 kg for enterprise customers.

Current drones have a payload capacity of 5kg and travel 50-80 km. According to Ankit, the adoption of drones will grow where it is time-sensitive, time-critical or if the volumes are low. The demand for drone-based delivery in e-commerce and quick commerce is real and is likely to grow fast in the next two years.



Ankit Kumar, Co founder and Chief Executive of Skye Air

Smartwatch market in India sees 50% growth

ENS @ Bengaluru

WITH increasing penetration of smartwatches and proliferation of low-cost devices, India's smartwatch shipments grew 50% year-on-year in 2023. The market saw over 125 active smartwatch brands in 2023 even as it started moving towards consolidation, according to the latest research from Counterpoint's IoT Service.

Fire-Bolt led the market with a 30% share, and the brand maintained its focus on offering a wide SKU portfolio and a strong offline presence. Noise (along with sub-brand Alt) captured the second spot with a 26% market share. The Noise Colorfit Icon 2 and Colorfit Icon Buzz were the best-selling smartwatches in 2023. The brand expanded its retail presence in 2023 and also expanded its portfolio in the kids smartwatch category.

boAt (with sub-brands TAGG and Defy) maintained its third spot in the market with a 17% share and 40% YoY growth. The brand sported its widest portfolio in 2023 and also introduced its Crest+ OS. Besides, it launched limited-edition smartwatches for the CWC in 2023.

Fastrack registered the highest shipment growth among major OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) to move to the fourth spot with a 5.4% market share.

Boult captured the fifth spot with a 3.8% market share. It had the lowest ASP among the top five OEMs.

Samsung declined by 3% YoY in 2023 but registered 17% YoY growth in Q4 2023.

The Galaxy Watch 4 continued to be the brand's best-selling model owing to its promotional pricing.

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