

Altman unveils 'always-on' AI agent after ditching model over security concerns

Says dot agents will be like an AI helper that "always have your back"

SAN FRANCISCO

OPENAI CEO Sam Altman introduced a "remarkably capable, always-on" artificial intelligence agent at an appearance Tuesday, a day after the company halted the rollout of a more advanced model over security concerns.

At the company's annual developer conference, Altman made a slew of product announcements and updates, including OpenAI's new agents, called Dots. The agents, designed to complete ongoing tasks proactively on behalf of users, are a competitor of Meta's personal agent Muse, which exploded in popularity after Meta's own conference last week.

Dot agents will be "like an AI helper that always has your back, inspired by the cool versions of what we all watched in movies growing up," Altman said.

On Monday, OpenAI said it was holding off on releasing the other model because of concerns raised by its researchers. That followed broader calls within the industry to decelerate the pace



The image shows dot agent's 3d image

OpenAI's announcements came as Altman's industry peers were meeting with President Donald Trump Tuesday. While many in Silicon Valley have called for the government to help establish guardrails for the technology, Trump has pushed back against the idea of greater government oversight of AI

cerns around the shelved model during his keynote address, but said during a question-and-answer session that the company was investing more in safety, security and monitoring of AI agents.

The AI boom should be considered more like a period of renaissance than an industrial revolution, he said.

"The best version of AI is not about making people cogs in a giant machine, ever whirling faster and faster. There are some parts of life that we cannot and should not automate," Altman said. "AI should be about giving

people more power over their own lives, more tools to create, learn, discover, expand knowledge."

The company also announced the release of GPT-6.1 Sol, an upgraded version of its model GPT-6 Sol, and a premium speed tier called "Ultrafast," among other launches and updates.

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While Altman didn't attend, OpenAI president and co-founder Greg Brockman was at the White House, along with Dario Amodei of Anthropic, Amazon chief Jeff Bezos, Nvidia's Jensen Huang, Tesla and SpaceX's Elon Musk and Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella. Several other industry leaders joined them, along with senior administration officials and House Speaker Mike Johnson.

Coimbatore could host nearly 200 GCCs by 2032 on strong talent base: Report

NEW DELHI: Coimbatore has the potential to increase its number of Global Capability Centres (GCCs) from more than 75 currently to nearly 200 by 2032, a report said on Wednesday.

According to a joint report by EY and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the city can attract around 125 additional GCCs over the next six years by leveraging its engineering talent, industrial base, workforce stability and growing innovation ecosystem.

Coimbatore has a population of 3.8 million, a technology workforce of over 300,000 professionals, 137 engineering colleges and more than 30,000 STEM graduates entering the workforce every year, it added.

The report has outlined a five-pillar '5R Growth Framework' to support the city's GCC ambitions which focuses on attracting companies looking to expand beyond major metro hubs, building on existing GCC success stories, encouraging regional enterprises to establish capability centres, developing specialised engineering and innovation capabilities and helping existing GCCs scale up operations.

Viral infection may pave way for Parkinson's: CCMB

NEW DELHI

A new study has described how molecular changes triggered by a viral infection may pave way for one to develop neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's disease.

Neurodegenerative diseases are marked by amyloid deposits in the brain -- abnormal clumps formed when proteins aggregate together.

Researchers from the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad, said the amyloids hamper a transmission of information across neurons, leading to an impaired functioning.

In Parkinson's disease, the protein 'α-Synuclein' forms amyloid clumps in the brains of patients.

"Even if there are protective mechanisms in the cells to prevent viral infections and avoid amyloid formation, there are situations that favour one kind of reaction more than the other. These decide the final outcomes in cells, and sometimes amyloid formation is accelerated in virus-infected cells," Swasti Raychaudhuri, researcher at



CSIR-CCMB and author of the study published in the journal Cell Reports, said.

"So, while not every viral infection leads to increased amyloid formation and neurodegenerative disease, (a) repeated exposure might tilt the odds against us," Raychaudhuri said.

Several emerging studies have linked Influenza and Covid-19 to elevated risks of neurodegenerative diseases, including Parkinson's disease, the researchers said.

Influenza and Covid-19, among other respiratory illnesses, are caused by RNA viruses -- viruses that use RNA instead of DNA as their genetic material.

The study found that the viruses fold their RNA -- genetic material folds continuously throughout the life of a cell -- into special 3D struc-

tures, called 'RNA G-quadruplexes'.

When viruses infect cells, the special 3D structures bind to α-Synuclein, accelerating the formation of amyloid clump, a hallmark of Parkinson's disease, the researchers said.

Cells are equipped with a protective mechanism against viruses.

Upon infection, a helicase protein -- an enzyme that unwinds DNA or RNA strands -- called 'DDX39A' and usually housed in the cell's nucleus, is released into the cytoplasm and binds to α-Synuclein and RNA G-quadruplexes, the team found. The helicase protein unwinds the viral RNA G-quadruplexes, and offers a line of protection against viral infection, the researchers said.

Heart attack at 24 highlights rising young-age cardiac risk

NEW DELHI

A 24-year-old UPSC aspirant suffered a heart attack and underwent angioplasty at a Delhi-NCR hospital after doctors found double-vessel coronary artery disease, highlighting the risk of serious heart disease even among younger adults.

The doctor attributed the young man's cardiovascular risk to a combination of smoking, lifestyle factors, a strong family history, and high LDL cholesterol and Lipoprotein(a) levels. The man had been experiencing chest pain at night, which he and his friends initially attributed to acidity and gas. When the pain did not subside the next morning, he was brought to Fortis Gurugram, where an ECG showed that he had suffered a heart attack, an official statement said. An angiogram subsequently showed double-vessel coronary artery disease, requiring angioplasty, said Dr Sanjat Chiwane, Senior Director, Cardiology, Fortis Gurugram.



Chiwane said the 24-year-old had been living with friends while preparing for the civil services examination and had irregular sleep and eating patterns. He had also been smoking for around five to six years, and there was a reported history of substance abuse.

The patient also had a strong family history of heart disease, with his father dying at a young age, between 35 and 40 years, Chiwane said.

His lipid profile showed low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol above 190 milligrams per decilitre (mg/dL), while his Lipoprotein(a), or Lp(a), level was around 150, which was also high, he said.

Delhi gets ₹1,790-cr AI Push for traffic management

NEW DELHI

THE Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday approved the implementation of an Intelligent Traffic Management System (ITMS) project for Delhi at an estimated cost of Rs1,789.52 crore, aimed at improving traffic flow, road safety and urban mobility across the national capital.

The project, to be implemented by



The image shows a view of traffic in Delhi

Delhi Police, will cover 42 identified traffic corridors and will be rolled out in three phases over a period of 24 months. It will be followed by five years of operation and maintenance.

Ayush services economy could scale up to \$318 billion by 2047

NEW DELHI

THE Ayush services sector contributed an estimated \$36.92 billion in FY25 to India's economy and could scale to \$216 billion-\$318 billion by 2047, the government said on Wednesday, citing a study by the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS).

The statement from the Ministry of Ayush said the sector has recorded a 16.91 per cent compound

annual growth rate since FY23, supports about 1.76 million livelihoods and generated \$1.77 billion in Medical Value Travel revenue.

The sector is increasingly contributing to India's economic growth through healthcare, wellness, employment generation and Medical Value Travel, according to the report released during the 11th Ayurveda Day celebrations in Nagpur.

"The findings of this landmark

study affirm that Ayush is not merely a cultural inheritance but a dynamic and high-growth engine of India's economy. The Ayush sector is poised to play an increasingly important role in healthcare, wellness, employment and global economic engagement, while contributing to our vision of a healthy and self-reliant India," said Prataprao Jadhav, Union Minister of State (IC) for Ayush and Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare.

GenZ office presence crates two-tier finance workforce

NEW DELHI

GENERATIONAL differences in working patterns and rising concerns about AI, pay and mental health could create talent development challenges in the banking and financial services sector, a report said on Monday.

The report from ACCA (the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) said that Gen Z workers are

far more likely to be in the office full time than older cohorts which create a two-tier workforce, which complicates talent development as freshers lose chance to learn from more experienced colleagues.

Over 900 finance professionals worldwide were surveyed for the report, which found 52 per cent of Gen Z work full time in the office, compared with 33 per cent of Gen X and 14 per cent of



Baby Boomers.

"Time spent with older and often more experienced

colleagues in the workplace is an important part of gaining useful real-world experience in the workplace for younger employees, and it's helpful for driving more effective cross-generational collaboration at work," said Jamie Lyon, Head of Skills, Sector and Technology at ACCA.

This mismatch complicates future skills development and workplace culture assimilation, Lyon said.

Nearly 55 per cent of employees believe time spent in the office has a positive

impact on promotion opportunities. The majority of respondents in the sector (61 per cent) agree that organisations should require employees to spend a set number of days in the office.

Around 55 per cent cited concerns about the use of AI algorithms in hiring processes, while 56 per cent of board-level financial service leaders remained sceptical about the growing reliance of AI when selecting talent.



THE POLITICA

Nothing political about it

NASSER KARIMI & AMIR-HUSSEIN RADJY

MEDICATION prices are soaring in Iran and some treatments have become hard to find, leaving patients and their families scrambling as a US blockade and stepped-up sanctions squeeze the country's pharmaceuticals industry. Some medicines have more than tripled in price, further squeezing Iranians' finances seven months into the country's war with the United States and Israel. Prices for food and other goods have skyrocketed even as unemployment has risen and the currency, which hit a record low this week, has lost half its value.

The war has become an economic endurance test. Iran has tried to push world energy prices higher with attacks on the region's oil shipping routes; the United States, in turn, has aimed to wreck Iran's economy by blockading its ports since June and slapping it with increasingly tough sanctions.

Iran's pharmaceutical industry is vulnerable because of its reliance on imports. So far there has been little sign of major shortages of medicines at Iran's hospitals, but the difficulties are showing at pharmacies. Gholamreza

Iranians face soaring prices for medicine as US blockade hits hard

Iran has tried to push world energy prices higher with attacks on the region's oil shipping routes

Rahmani, a Tehran welder, and his wife recently scoured several pharmacies over two days hoping to fill prescriptions for four medicines for their 12-year-old daughter, who was having stomach troubles. "Each one would have one or two items, not all of them," he said, noting that they couldn't find one of the medicines anywhere. The search cost him two days of wages because he couldn't go to work.

"My daughter's illness and the loss of income are like scissors, cutting from two sides," he said. **Iran's pharmaceutical industry needs imports**

Iran produces more than 80 per cent of its medicines domestically, according to official statistics, but many of those rely on imported raw materials. Before the war, most medicines and pharmaceutical components were brought in by sea, but the American naval blockade has cut off shipping, Bahman Sabour, a member of the Tehran Pharmacies Association, told local media. Medical importers switched to more expensive air routes. But that access has been threatened by new US sanctions on a number of Iranian airlines, which led to some international flights being halted.

US sanctions don't directly target medicines, but financial sanctions in place for years also hurt the pharmaceutical supply because international banks and companies often will be overly cautious and refuse transactions because they fear running afoul of sanctions, said Reza Majdzadeh, a professor at the School of Health and Social Care at the University of Essex in England.

"A medicine may be perfectly legal to sell to Iran, but a bank may refuse to process the payment," he said. "A pharmaceutical or shipping company may simply decide that dealing with Iran is not worth the risk. ... The transaction is legal on paper, but it does not happen in the real world."

The Iranian government hasn't said how much medicine production has fallen. But officials say it has been hurt because airstrikes damaged more than 40 pharmaceutical factories, including some producing cancer treatments.

Also, cash-strapped pharmacies sometimes struggle to keep their shelves stocked. Insurance companies have fallen behind by as much as nine months on payments to pharmacies for drug coverage because of the "current situation," said Mohammad Ja-



A representational image of a pharmacy in Iran

Tablets essential for patients undergoing kidney dialysis, for example, have climbed by nearly 350 per cent in recent months. So have over-the-counter painkillers like acetaminophen, if it can be found at all

malian, a member of parliament's health committee.

Sabour, of the pharmacies' association, said insurance companies owe pharmacies about \$270 million.

Supplies are also strained because medicines are smuggled to neighboring Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq, where prices are higher, state media reported.

Pharmacy prices are spiking

"The price of almost everything has gone up, in some cases doubling, quadrupling, or even increasing sixfold," said Mina Mohammadian, a salesperson at a pharmacy in Tehran.

Mehdi Pirsalehi, head of the government agency that sets drug prices, said last week that the prices of 2,000 types of medi-

cines were "amended" over the past six months because of inflation and currency issues.

Ali Fallah, a Tehran resident, said the ointment he buys for inflammation has quadrupled in price in three months -- from 750,000 rials, or about \$0.35, to 3.25 million rials, or roughly \$1.46. The minimum daily wage for an unskilled worker in Iran is about 7.5 million rials, or about \$3.50.

"I honestly don't know where this situation is heading," Fallah said.

Tablets essential for patients undergoing kidney dialysis, for example, have climbed by nearly 350 per cent in recent months. So have over-the-counter painkillers like acetaminophen, if it can be found at all.

The government appears to be ensuring hospitals are supplied

An employee at one public hospital said there are shortages of key specialized psychiatric medicines to treat bipolar disorders and acute psychosis, and more common medications for anxiety and panic disorders. Doctors have had to use electroconvulsive therapy on patients more often because the relevant drugs weren't available or were

of inferior quality, she said. "The side effects for patients are really a lot," she told The Associated Press by phone from a major Iranian city. She spoke on condition that she and her location would not be identified for security reasons.

Azita Hassanpour, a part-time teacher, said that her mother, who has cancer, has been able to get her chemotherapy treatments, but sometimes they are delayed because the medicines aren't as available as they were before the war. Hassanpour is also concerned because her mother hasn't been able to get her annual flu shot, with authorities trying to track down new vaccine sources.

"I am worried that I may lose her because of flu. I weep out of her sight every night," Hassanpour said. Hadi Ahmadi, a spokesman of the Iranian Pharmacists Association, told local media Saturday that about 700,000 flu vaccine doses were imported from China and another half million doses are expected soon. But a jab this year is going for 22 million rials, or roughly \$9, which is almost double last year's price, though authorities have promised to provide it to high-risk patients free of charge.