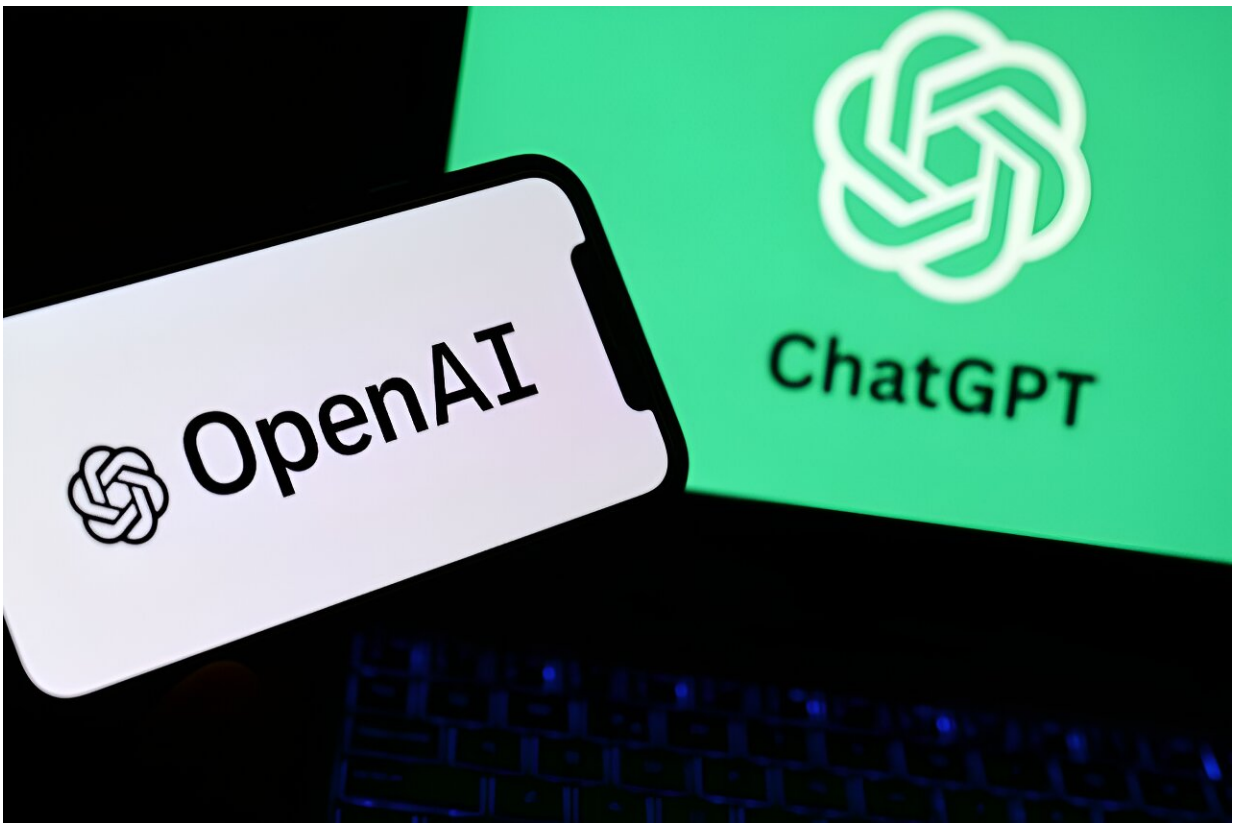# UK prepares to host global leaders' gathering on AI

October 30 2023, by Clara LALANNE

AI has prompted concerns ranging from possible job losses and cyber attacks to humankind losing control of the systems.

The UK government will welcome foreign political leaders, tech industry figures, academics and others this week for a two-day summit billed as

the first of its kind on artificial intelligence (AI).

The gathering, set to be attended by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, US Vice President Kamala Harris, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, will focus on growing fears about the implications of so-called frontier AI.

The most advanced generation of AI models, they have prompted concerns around everything from job losses and cyber attacks to humans losing control of the systems they have designed.

Sunak and other leaders have increasingly joined the industry itself in arguing current regulation of frontier AI is likely insufficient for the challenges it will pose.

"My vision, and our ultimate goal, should be to work towards a more international approach to safety where we collaborate with partners to ensure AI systems are safe before they are released," the British leader said in a speech this week.

"We will push hard to agree the first ever international statement about the nature of these risks," he added, proposing the creation of an international expert panel similar to one formed for climate change.

London, which initiated the gathering, has insisted it is taking the lead at the behest of US President Joe Biden, and because the two countries have some of the leading companies in the sector.

But it has reportedly had to scale back its ambitions around ideas such as launching a new regulatory body amid a perceived lack of enthusiasm.

Bletchley Park

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni is one of the only world leaders, and only G7 leader, attending the conference, which starts on Wednesday.

Sunak's spokesman told reporters this week that "getting all the right people around the table to discuss this important issue" represented "an enormous achievement in itself".

The summit will be held at a deliberately symbolic location: Bletchley Park, where top British codebreakers cracked Nazi Germany's "Enigma" code, helping to hasten the end of World War II.

From smartphones to airports, AI is already ubiquitous in everyday life, but its progress has accelerated with the development of technologies such as ChatGPT.

"It's clear to me that what's going to happen in this year, in these next two, three years, in 200 years, (is that) historians will have a name for this period," Aldo Faisal, an AI and neuroscience professor, said at a briefing this month.

Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak delivered a speech on Artificial Intelligence on October 26, 2023 ahead of the AI summit.

While the potential of AI raises many hopes, particularly for medicine, its development is seen as largely unchecked.

In his speech, Sunak stressed the need for countries to develop "a shared understanding of the risks that we face".

'Missed opportunity'

However, the lack of world leaders, particularly from G7 countries, has dominated discussion of the summit in Britain.

Ahead of the meeting, the G7 powers agreed on Monday on a non-binding "code of conduct" for companies developing the most advanced AI systems.

In the US, the White House announced its own plan to set safety standards for the deployment of AI that will require companies to submit certain systems to government review.

And in Rome, ministers from Italy, Germany and France called for an "innovation-friendly approach" to regulating AI in Europe, as they urged more investments to challenge the US and China.

China will be present, but it is unclear at what level. News website Politico reported London invited President Xi Jinping, to signify its eagerness for a senior representative.

Beijing's invitation has raised eyebrows amid heightened tensions with Western nations and accusations of technological espionage.

Although the UK sees itself as the driving force behind international cooperation on AI, its emphasis on potential disasters has dismayed some in the sector.

They would prefer to stress existing AI issues, such as a lack of transparency in the models designed by companies and their racial or gender bias, rather than the more alarmist fears noted by Sunak.

Detractors have also noted that the common ethical principles the UK wants to establish are likely to clash with the interests of AI labs and tech giants, which are predominantly Chinese and American.

That could limit the likelihood of anything meaningful emerging from the summit.

More than 100 UK and international organizations, experts and campaigners published an open letter Monday to Sunak, branding the summit a "missed opportunity" and too tailored towards "big tech".

The coalition—which includes unions, rights groups like Amnesty International and tech community voices—warned "communities and workers most affected by AI have been marginalized," with the invites "selective and limited".

© 2023 AFP

Citation: UK prepares to host global leaders' gathering on AI (2023, October 30) retrieved 21 May 2024 from https://techxplore.com/news/2023-10-uk-host-global-leaders-ai.html