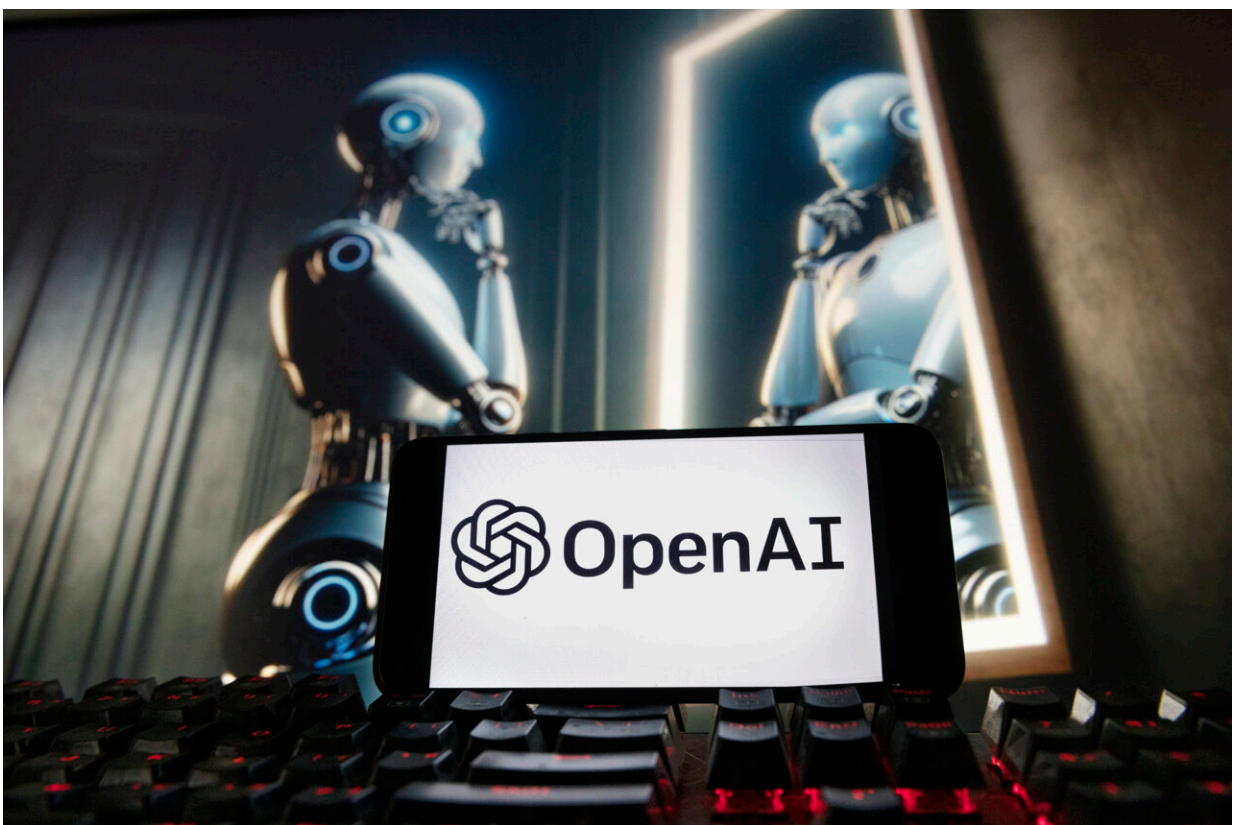


Hong Kong is testing out its own ChatGPT-style tool as OpenAI planned extra steps to block access

July 16 2024, by Kanis Leung



The OpenAI logo is displayed on a cellphone with an image on a computer monitor generated by ChatGPT's Dall-E text-to-image model, Dec. 8, 2023, in Boston. Hong Kong's government is testing out the city's own ChatGPT-style tool for its employees, with plans to eventually make it available to the public, its innovation minister said Saturday, July 13, 2024, on a radio show, after OpenAI took extra steps to block access from the city and other regions it does not

support. Credit: AP Photo/Michael Dwyer, File

Hong Kong's government is testing the city's own ChatGPT -style tool for its employees, with plans to eventually make it available to the public, its innovation minister said after OpenAI took extra steps to block access from the city and other unsupported regions.

Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry Sun Dong said on a Saturday radio show that his bureau was trying out the artificial intelligence program, called "document editing co-pilot application for [civil servants](#)," to further improve its capabilities. He plans to have it available for the rest of the government this year.

The program was developed by a generative AI research and development center led by the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology in collaboration with several other universities.

The system's writing assistance functions could help draft, translate and summarize documents to enhance the efficiency of civil servants, said the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer. The program's database and [large language model](#) were independently developed by the center, it said.

Sun said the model would provide functions like graphics and video design in the future. To what degree it would compare to the capabilities of ChatGPT was unclear.

He told the radio show that industry players and the government would play a role in the model's future development.

"Given Hong Kong's current situation, it's difficult for Hong Kong to get

giant companies like Microsoft and Google to subsidize such projects, so the government had to start doing it," Sun said.

Beijing and Washington are locked in a race for AI supremacy, with China having ambitions to become the global leader in AI by 2030.

China, including Hong Kong and neighboring Macao, is not on the list of "supported countries and territories" of OpenAI, one of the best-known artificial intelligence companies.

The ChatGPT maker has not explained why certain territories were excluded but said accounts in those places attempting to access its services may become blocked.

According to a post on OpenAI's online forum and local media reports, the company announced in an email to some users that it would be taking additional measures to block connections from regions not on the approved list starting July 9.

Francis Fong, the honorary president of the Hong Kong Information Technology Federation, said it was hard to say whether the capabilities of the program in Hong Kong could match those of ChatGPT. With the input of AI companies in the city, Fong said he believed it could technologically catch up with the standards.

"Will it become the top? Maybe not necessarily be as close as that. But I believe it won't be too far behind," he said.

He also said a locally developed AI program might more accurately address local language and localized issues, but adding it would "make sense" if the final product appears to be "politically correct."

Like most foreign websites and applications, ChatGPT is technically

unavailable in China because of the country's firewall, which censors the internet for residents. Determined individuals can still gain access via commonly available "virtual private networks" that bypass restrictions.

Chinese tech giants such as Alibaba and Baidu have already rolled out primarily Chinese-language AI models similar to ChatGPT for public and commercial use. However, these AI models must abide by China's censorship rules.

In May, China's cyberspace academy said an AI chatbot was being [trained on President Xi Jinping's](#) doctrine, a stark reminder of the ideological parameters within which Chinese AI models will operate.

Also in May, SenseTime, a major Chinese artificial intelligence company, launched SenseChat for users in Hong Kong, where most of the population speaks Cantonese as their mother tongue rather than Mandarin, which is more widely spoken in mainland China. But a check on Tuesday found the application could not provide answers to politically sensitive questions, such as what the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989 and Hong Kong's protests in 2019 were about.

During the 1989 crackdown, Chinese troops opened fire on student-led pro-democracy protesters, resulting in hundreds, if not thousands, dead, and that remains a taboo subject in mainland China.

In 2019, protests that started over unpopular Hong Kong legislation morphed into an anti-government movement and the greatest political challenge to Beijing's rule since the former British colony returned to China in 1997.

© 2024 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: Hong Kong is testing out its own ChatGPT-style tool as OpenAI planned extra steps to block access (2024, July 16) retrieved 16 July 2024 from

<https://techxplore.com/news/2024-07-hong-kong-chatgpt-style-tool.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.