WORLD NEWS DAY

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Hundreds of news organisations, media support associations, and individuals from over 100 countries have joined hands for World News Day, which takes place annually on September 28.

World News Day—presented by the World Editors Forum, The Canadian Journalism Foundation (CJF), and Project Kontinuum—is a global news media industry awareness campaign to draw public attention to the crucial role that journalists play in providing trustworthy news and information that serves citizens and democracy.

To commemorate World News Day, Asia News Network republishes a few articles that draw attention to the value and importance of fact-based journalism in an age of technology.

In a time where artificial intelligence (AI) scrambles our sense of what is real, we hold the line.

Access to credible, verified news is especially important in a cluttered information ecosystem - journalism has never mattered more.

Choose facts. Choose truth. Choose journalism.

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Information crisis a dire threat to prosperity & progress, but also a unique opportunity

Public interest journalism provides a vital supply widely accessible, verified, and trustworthy information. Without reliable information, we cannot address the most pressing economic, social, and environmental challenges of our times.

Thematic photo. PHOTO: AFP

By Expert Opinion by High-Level Panel on Public Interest Media (Published in Dawn)

Governments around the world are chasing the AI dream, pinning their hopes on these technologies to drive economic prosperity. And yet, they are not investing in the foundational resource that underpins all our 21st century economies — independent, verifiable information.

Well-functioning economies rely on widely accessible, verified, and trustworthy information. Public interest journalism provides a vital supply of such information: it exposes corruption, fraud, and market manipulation, brings stability to financial markets, checks misinformation, and it empowers economic actors to make informed investments. Without it, national economies, international trade, and capital flows between countries cannot function properly, with wide-ranging and negative impacts on social welfare.

But this valuable resource is facing an existential financial and political crisis worldwide.

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The High-Level Panel on Public Interest Media, including two Nobel laureates, was formed to assess the economic and social implications of the crisis confronting public interest media globally. We have reviewed the evidence and surveyed global trends with a growing sense of alarm.

We are concerned that our economies are increasingly vulnerable to information that is neither independent, nor accurate. In 2024, as many as 90 countries were targeted by foreign state-sponsored efforts to manipulate information. The rise of Generative AI risks accelerating these tactics and heightens the challenges in thwarting the spread of false information online. Meanwhile, independent journalists and media organizations are coming under increasing political and economic pressures as autocracies and vested interests take hold.

Our report, The Economic Imperative of Investing in Public Interest Media, shows why market forces alone are incapable of sustaining this vital public good: historically profitable business models are failing as revenues migrate to online platforms, allowing powerful interests to co-opt, intimidate or neutralize independent media.

While donor support for public interest media has always been low, it is now dwarfed by the amount invested by autocratic actors on propaganda. Russia spends on disinformation and propaganda, including on content directed outside its borders, at least three times the foreign aid of the world's largest democratic nations in support of free and independent media, and is not alone in doing so.

The situation is even more complicated in developing economies, where growing inequality regarding access to information requires championing local innovation to correct systematic biases and digital inequalities, as can be observed in the African media ecosystem, for example.

Without reliable information, we cannot address the most pressing economic, social, and environmental challenges of our times. From tackling the climate crisis to managing global pandemics, the proliferation of disinformation over facts carries immense costs. Without decisive action, both at domestic and global levels, we are heading towards what Nobel laureate Maria Ressa has called "an information Armageddon" that will jeopardise global economic stability, social welfare, and sustainable growth.

We urgently call for decisive public action now, and lay out two priority sets of action to protect public interest media, and develop the policies needed to shape tomorrow's information markets for economic prosperity and social welfare.

Both require a fundamental reappraisal of the economic and social value of independent, verifiable information as a foundational infrastructure for thriving markets and societies.

First, governments should invest in the new models needed to incentivize, support and safeguard free and independent media. Financial support to public interest media is one of the most cost-effective interventions to ensure accountable, well-functioning economic systems with potentially large future economic and social returns. However, such investments must be accompanied by strong safeguards to prevent government capture and should foster a pluralistic media ecosystem that includes the private sector and a vibrant civil society.

They should be channeled through proven and effective national and multilateral mechanisms that sustain the supply of factual information and provide guardrails against undue influence. Mechanisms like the International Fund for Public Interest Media demonstrate how independence and scale can be combined to deliver significant global impact, as similar pooled vehicles have done in areas like health and education.

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Second, governments need to actively shape information markets in ways that foster independent, pluralistic and reliable information sources. An 'information industrial policy' is needed to foster a viable and independent media ecosystem - one that incentivizes market dynamism along with carefully managed regulation fit for an AI-driven economy. Such a policy must better incorporate public needs and oversight, which will be critical in developed and developing economies alike, and reward facts over lies. Multilateral cooperation frameworks like the International Partnership for Information and Democracy can help foster shared learning and best practices on policy interventions.

First signs of progress are emerging. In a few weeks, the Presidents of France and Ghana will host an International Conference to strengthen the response to the global information crisis. Yet more leaders must urgently embrace this agenda. Without decisive action, our information ecosystems will continue to deteriorate rapidly, weakening the benefits of the AI revolution and threatening both global prosperity and social welfare. The moment to act is now.

Signatories

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Prof Philippe Aghion, Professor at the Collège de France, INSEAD and the London School of Economics
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(This is the first in a series of special articles, being published in collaboration with the World Editors' Forum ahead of World News Day on September 28, 2025. Published in Dawn, September 23, 2025.)

'Kpop Demon Hunters live-action leak' stuns fans, but revealed to be AI

While many fans praised how realistic the videos are, some local tech experts voiced concerns over the ethical implications of such hyper-realistic AI content.

Screenshots from a short clip from video titled "K-pop Demon Hunters film leaks" uploaded by YouTuber Fantasoner, appearing to show a leaked live-action scene from Netflix's hit animated film. SCREENSHOTS: FANTASONER'S YOUTUBE CHANNEL/THE KOREA HERALD

By Song Seung-hyun, The Korea Herald

SEOUL – A short video showing a supposed live-action remake of "Kpop Demon Hunters" went viral on Thursday, only to later be revealed as an AI creation.

The 35-second clip, titled "K-pop Demon Hunters film leaks," began spreading rapidly on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok.

In the video, actors appeared to be preparing for a shoot and are seen interacting with staff on set. The cast members closely resemble the film's characters, such as Rumi, Zoey and Mira of fictional girl band Huntrix, and Jin-woo and Mystery from Saja Boys.

The clip quickly gained traction, racking up more than 2.6 million views as of Friday noon.

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It was later confirmed, however, that the footage was AI-generated. The video was uploaded by Fantasoner, a YouTube channel with over 80,000 subscribers that produces all of its content using AI tools.

Many viewers expressed shock, leaving comments including, "It's so realistic it's scary," and "I thought Netflix was really filming a live-action film."

The channel has previously released similar projects, including an AI-generated live-action version of the Japanese animated classic "Howl's Moving Castle."

While many fans praised how realistic the videos are, some local tech experts voiced concerns over the ethical implications of such hyper-realistic AI content. They noted that while AI opens new creative possibilities, clearer labeling and stronger guidelines are needed to prevent confusion and to protect original creators.

(This story was published on September 22, 2025.)

Elderly duo travel across Malaysia for cable car ride seen in clip – only to find out it was all AI

The fake cable car is depicted in a nearly three-minute-long AI-generated video in which a journalist from "TV Rakyat" appears to introduce the attraction and interview visitors, including tourists from Thailand.

In the AI-generated video, a journalist from "TV Rakyat" appears to introduce the attraction and interview visitors. PHOTO: SCREENGRAB FROM NURUL AFZARINA/FACEBOOK/THE STRAITS TIMES

By Rhea Jasmine, The Straits Times (Singapore)

SINGAPORE – Hoping to visit a cable car attraction featured in a social media clip, an elderly couple in Malaysia made the more than 300km journey from Kuala Lumpur to Perak before finding out that the video was AI-generated and that the ride did not exist.

A hotel worker who broke the news to the couple detailed the incident in a post on Threads on June 30, saying that their experience had shocked her.

"(The couple) came to check into the hotel, and they asked if I've ridden the cable car at Kuak Hulu. I thought they were just kidding," said the worker. Kuak Hulu is a kampung in Gerik, Perak.

But she soon realised the couple were serious when the elderly woman told her that they had travelled all the way from Kuala Lumpur for it.

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The fake cable car is depicted in a nearly three-minute-long AI-generated video in which a journalist from "TV Rakyat" appears to introduce the attraction and interview visitors, including tourists from Thailand. The video also features scenes of people queueing up at the "Kuak SkyRide" ticket counter.

It then cuts to show the cable car ride going over an expanse of trees, as well as near a stream and a group of deer grazing, before stopping near the foot of Baling Mountain in neighbouring Kedah state.

At the end of the video, an old lady is seen in the background doing a handstand. As she flips, her legs and body merge to become a misshapen blob, before she lands on her feet and returns to normal.

"I was so shocked… I explained to the auntie that the video was (made by artificial intelligence) and not real," said the hotel worker.

"The auntie then asked, 'Why would anyone want to lie? There was even a reporter (in the video),'" she added.

The elderly woman insisted that she did not see any comments under the video to indicate that it was fake, and added she wanted to sue the "TV Rakyat" journalist.

The worker said she again tried to remind the woman that the journalist in the video did not exist.

When asked why they did not check with their children before visiting the non-existent attraction, the couple said they were too embarrassed.

In her post, the worker made a plea for people to check on the places their parents intend to visit during their travels.

Since the incident went viral on social media, it has gained nationwide attention, with the local police urging the public to be wary of viral content online and to verify the authenticity of such videos.

Acting Baling police chief Ahmad Salimi Md Ali told the New Straits Times on July 3 that they have not received any official complaints. However, he stressed that no such cable car project exists in the district.

He added that preliminary checks have confirmed the video was entirely fabricated.

"We advise the public not to fall for viral content without confirmation. In this era of AI-generated media, misleading materials can spread easily and cause confusion," he said.

(This story was published on July 7, 2025.)

Japan newspaper group calls on AI companies to get permission to use news content

The association stated that such acts "could amount to copyright infringement" if they "unreasonably prejudice the interests of the copyright owner," in the words of the Copyright Law, which governs AI training on copyrighted works.

The Nippon Press Center building, which houses the Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association, in Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo. PHOTO: THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN

By The Yomiuri Shimbun (Japan)

TOKYO – The Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association on Wednesday released a statement calling for generative artificial intelligence service providers to obtain permission from news organizations when training AI tools on news content.

The association also urged the government to establish a system to protect news content, saying that a growing number of AI-based services are now using this material without permission.

In the statement, the association noted that some of its member news organizations have taken technical measures on their news sites to indicate their rejection of unauthorized AI training and use of their news content, but that some AI service providers have ignored these measures.

The association stated that such acts "could amount to copyright infringement" if they "unreasonably prejudice the interests of the copyright owner," in the words of the Copyright Law, which governs AI training on copyrighted works.

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In addition, the statement addressed the worsening problem of so-called "zero-click searches," in which users find information to their query directly in their search results, so they do not click through to visit the website that the information comes from. The association expressed serious concern about this issue and raised questions over AI services "free riding" on news content.

"If the functions of news organizations, which are responsible for disseminating the news, deteriorate, the public's right to know is sure to be hampered," the statement said, calling for the implementation of "comprehensive measures that go beyond the existing framework."

(This story was published on June 6, 2025.)

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Chinese authorities issued AI label guidelines to combat the misuse, spread of false information

New rules to regulate the use of artificial intelligence took effect last September 1.

This photo taken on February 2, 2024 shows user Wang Xiuting chatting with her virtual boyfriend on Wantalk - an artificial intelligence chatbot created by Chinese tech company Baidu, on her phone at a shopping mall in Beijing. PHOTO: AFP

By Xu Nuo, China Daily (China)

BEIJING – Chinese authorities issued guidelines on Friday requiring labels on all artificial intelligence-generated content circulated online, aiming to combat the misuse of AI and the spread of false information.

The regulations, jointly issued by the Cyberspace Administration of China, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the Ministry of Public Security, and the National Radio and Television Administration, will take effect on Sept 1.

A spokesperson for the Cyberspace Administration said the move aims to "put an end to the misuse of AI generative technologies and the spread of false information."

The guidelines stipulate that content generated or synthesized using AI technologies, including texts, images, audios, videos and virtual scenes, must be labeled both visibly and invisibly.

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For content generated by deep synthesis technologies that might confuse or mislead the public, explicit labels must be placed in a reasonable position to ensure public awareness.

Explicit labels are those applied within the generated content or user interface, presented in forms such as text, sound, or graphics that are clearly perceptible to users.

Additionally, the guideline requires that implicit labels be added to the metadata of generated content files. These labels should include details about the content's attributes, the service provider's name or code, and content identification numbers.

Metadata files are descriptive information embedded in the file's header, recording details about the content's source, attributes and purpose.

Service providers that disseminate content online must verify that the metadata of the content files contain implicit AIGC labels, and that users have declared the content as AI-generated or synthesized. Prominent labels should also be added around the content to inform users.

AI generative technology has been used to create seemingly realistic content for publicity stunts or commercial gain. For instance, a news report claiming that one in every 20 individuals born in the 1980s had passed away caused a public uproar last month, only to be revealed as a rumor fabricated by AI.

AI generative technology has also been used to clone the voices and faces of many celebrities to produce deepfakes, which constitutes infringement and should be subject to legal accountability.

Earlier this month, 14th National People's Congress deputy and Xiaomi Corp founder Lei Jun, and 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference member and actor Jin Dong, both proposed establishing laws and regulations for AI-generated content during the annual sessions of the 14th NPC and 14th CPPCC National Committee.

"Some viewers who like my movies and TV shows have been deceived by deepfake videos that clone my face, which is a very malicious act. I hope relevant rules can be established and enhanced," said Jin Dong during a panel discussion during the two sessions.

Tu Lingbo, a professor at the Communication University of China, told China Daily in a previous interview that the influx of unlabeled content generated by AI could disrupt the internet ecosystem and pose challenges to internet governance.

"Relevant laws and regulations on AI-generated content should be established and improved," Tu said.

(This story was published on March 17, 2025.)

Bhutan faces AI readiness gaps, calls for national strategy

A UNDP report also pointed out transparency in AI systems as a concern, with limited monitoring mechanisms and underdeveloped concepts of explainability.

THEMATIC IMAGE: AFP

By Sherab Lhamo, Kuensel (Bhutan)

THIMPHU – Bhutan has made significant strides in digital governance, including the establishment of secure digital platforms, but critical gaps remain in artificial intelligence (AI) readiness.

This is according to the United Nations Development Programme report, "Artificial Intelligence Readiness Assessment 2024.

The report highlights challenges in AI skills development, funding, data governance, and ethical frameworks, underscoring the need for a comprehensive national AI strategy.

In the 13th Plan, the government has allocated over Nu 10 billion in 21st century skilling programmes led by the GovTech Agency.

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To fulfil this mandate, there remains a need to strengthen technical skills within the public sector and enhance data integration and accessibility.

The report also pointed out transparency in AI systems as a concern, with limited monitoring mechanisms and underdeveloped concepts of explainability.

One of the most pressing issues identified is the shortage of skilled AI professionals.

Despite government efforts to promote science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), the talent pool remains limited, particularly in areas like machine learning and data science.

The report stated that Bhutan lacks undergraduate programmes in AI, machine learning, software development, and data science, contributing to a scarcity of qualified graduates.

As a result, the talent pool for these fields is small and largely confined to a few organisations like GovTech Agency, Druk Holding and Investments (DHI), and academic institutions.

The report emphasised the need for a robust data governance framework is needed to ensure data quality, security, and interoperability.

It recommended the development of a central data portal to facilitate data sharing among government agencies and promote data literacy across the country.

Ethical considerations are another critical area. The report warns of the risk posed by deepfakes, AI-driven academic dishonesty, and incorrect AI inputs, which could undermine public trust, democracy, and safety.

"A robust ethical framework is essential to address concerns like data privacy, bias, and the potential for AI to exacerbate existing inequalities," the report stated.

It recommended for public engagement and stakeholder consultations to ensure AI development aligns with Bhutan's cultural values and principles.

The survey also found regulatory barriers for technology entrepreneurs, including difficulties in accessing finance, unclear regulations, and a lack of online platforms and networks to offer remote services.

Only 10 percent of respondents were aware of government financial support for AI development, while high costs associated with specialised hardware, such as Graphics Processing Units (GPUs), hinder AI adoption among businesses and the public.

Currently, only a handful of organisations, including the GovTech Agency, DHI, and the College of Science and Technology, have access to these powerful computing resources.

The report recommended the urgent need for a clear and strategic AI vision that aligns with Bhutan's national development plans.

It recommended addressing the skills gap between technical and non-technical public servants, improving data quality and interoperability within government agencies, and fostering collaboration between public and private sectors.

The report surveyed government officials, academics, high school, bachelor and masters' students, and industry stakeholders.

(This story was published on January 31, 2025.)

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AI reshapes, not replaces, say young Malaysians

Malaysian youths say the latest technology should be viewed as an opportunity rather than a threat.

A child shakes hands with a robot controlled by a remote control during the World Artificial Intelligence Conference at the Shanghai World Expo and Convention Center in Shanghai on July 28, 2025. PHOTO: AFP

By Khoo Gek San, The Star (Malaysia)

PETALING JAYA – With concerns growing over artificial intelligence (AI) reshaping the workforce, young Malaysians say the latest technology should be viewed as an opportunity rather than a threat.

Junior executive Zambri Jailani, 25, likened the advent of AI to the introduction of computers in the 1990s.

"Instead of threatening job opportunities, they became an important tool for us," he said.

Zambri said all generations should be ready to adapt to technological changes, adding that AI skills would help increase productivity and boost Malaysia's competitiveness on the global stage.

For content writer Lee Zai Wen, 26, AI is already integrated into his work; however, he believes the technology is unlikely to replace his role in the foreseeable future.

"I use AI quite often to help create content, and while it does write well, the content sometimes lacks the expressive descriptions that help readers relate to it," he said.

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Law student Carmen Ho, 25, said the legal sector was already experiencing the impact of AI, citing a case in the United Kingdom where a lawyer faced disciplinary action after citing fictitious cases generated by AI.

"With the rise of lawyers using AI, it is going to take more time and effort to vet documents, especially if fake cases are used," she said.

While acknowledging that AI could reduce the demand for some roles, Ho said the legal profession still requires human expertise.

"Trained eyes are still needed for legal research and identifying legal issues. Perhaps fewer lawyers will be needed with AI assisting, but legal minds are still necessary," she said.

Dr Muhammad Akmal Remli, director of the Institute for Artificial Intelligence and Big Data (AIBIG) at Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, said the priority should be to equip the local workforce with the right skills to adapt to the rapid changes brought by AI and automation.

"We must focus on reskilling and lifelong learning so workers are not left behind. In this environment, workers who know how to use AI tools will likely replace those who don't," he said when contacted.

Muhammad Akmal said that digital literacy, adaptability, problem-solving and creativity must be at the core of workforce development.

He urged government, industry and education providers to collaborate in creating accessible training pathways, particularly for SMEs, rural workers and vulnerable groups.

"The goal is not just to produce more AI specialists but to ensure every worker – from retail to manufacturing – can apply digital and AI tools in their daily roles," he said.

On the jobs most exposed to disruption, he pointed to wholesale and retail, food manufacturing, global business services, electrical and electronics, and ICT, with roles such as cashiering, data entry, production line work, and basic coding or testing most at risk.

He said workers in these areas must be supported through reskilling into adjacent roles – such as retail staff moving into e-commerce or logistics, or call centre staff into customer experience design.

"Workers should be trained to see AI as a co-pilot rather than a competitor. With clear transition pathways, at-risk jobs can evolve into new opportunities such as automation technicians, digital supply chain managers or sustainability specialists," he added.

(This story was published on August 20, 2025.)

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