

Sony reveals PlayStation 5 console, games

NEW YORK: Sony gave the world the first look at its upcoming PlayStation 5, along with a glimpse at action-packed games being tailored for the next-generation consoles. The Japanese consumer electronics giant did not reveal pricing or a launch date for the PS5, which will take on a new Xbox Series X from Microsoft when the rival consoles hit the market later this year.

"With PlayStation 5, we are making a significant leap to deliver a truly new generation of transformative play experiences that will redefine expectations for what games can be," said Sony Interactive Entertainment chief Jim Ryan.

Ryan said the powerful hardware will offer "richer and more beautiful" content that will "captivate your senses in ways you didn't think possible." A streamed, hour-long presentation showing off titles being readied for PS5 ended with a first glimpse at the console — a dark tower with white sides that encased it like a partially open clamshell.

Two versions of the PS5 were shown, one with a slot for game or

video disks and another without for players who prefer to download titles via the internet. Ryan touted PS5 as Sony's most "striking" console design to date.

The PlayStation presentation, though, showcased games, which are main drivers of console sales.

Sony said the latest edition of the controversial blockbuster video game Grand Theft Auto, in which players engaged in rampant criminal activity, is being tuned for PS5 with expanded content and improved performance. Games shown during the PS5 event included Marvel's Spider-Man Miles Morales and first-person shooter Deathloop in which rival assassins are locked in a time loop on an island rife with enemies. Car racing game Gran Turismo Sport was also shown off, along with a Resident Evil Village addition to the hit survival-themed franchise. "PlayStation 5 will represent a paradigm shift in what players expect from gaming," said Hermen Hulst, head of PlayStation worldwide studios and a co-founder of Guerrilla Games. Guerrilla is working on a "Horizon Forbidden

West" action game sequel exclusively for PS5.

THE XBOX FACTOR Microsoft last month unveiled games for its new Xbox console coming this year, wooing fans hungry for escape in a time of pandemic. Microsoft has not yet announced a release date for Xbox Series X. PlayStation 4 consoles have trounced Xbox One in sales since the rival gaming systems launched in late 2013.

While many titles may be played on different consoles, Sony has a strong library of exclusive content such as Horizon Zero Dawn, God of War and Marvel's Spider-Man, according to analysts who point out that Microsoft has a difficult challenge. "While, from what we have been told so far, we know the Xbox Series X will, on paper, have stronger specifications than the PS5, Sony has a tight grip on the gaming market," said market tracker Futuresource. Video games have been seeing exceptional growth during the Covid-19 pandemic which has shut down real-world activity and kept billions



Artificial Intelligence model to detect COVID-19 from X-rays within seconds



A new Artificial Intelligence model has been introduced to detect coronavirus infection by examining CT scan reports of patients' lungs within seconds without any testing, US-based magazine The Scientist reported. Amid the pandemic outbreak, where coronavirus testing has been identified as critical by governments and health authorities across the world, new technologies are enabling health professionals to detect the disease in minimum time. According to a report, an AI was fed 532,000 CT scans from 3,777 patients to look for coronavirus traits in lungs in China. Using this AI model, hospitals in China were able to correctly diagnose patients with coronavirus 85% of the time. The AI will also allow health authorities to implement contact tracing with a high degree of accuracy, limiting the spread of the virus; it will also help governments to know when it is the right time to ease lockdown measures. With this new development, accurately diagnosing coronavirus pneumonia will allow health professionals to tailor treatment to the virus. —Agencies

Twitter's new feature asks you to open article before retweeting



NEW YORK: Twitter is testing a new feature which will ask users if they would like to open the article before retweeting it in order to stem the rapid spread of misinformation. According to Engadget, the feature which is currently being tested on Android phones should "help foster informed discussion". The micro-blogging site added that it doesn't have a timeline for bringing the feature to iOS. "Sharing an article can spark conversation, so you may want to read it before you Tweet it," a tweet read. "To help promote informed discussion, we're testing a new prompt on Android — when you Retweet an article that you haven't opened on Twitter, we may ask if you'd like to open it first," it added. "Headlines don't tell the full story," reads the prompt. "Want to read this before Retweeting?" The prompt will appear if the user does not open the article on Twitter's platform before clicking retweet. However, if they read the piece before or just want to share it anyway, nothing is stopping them from hitting the retweet button and sharing the tweet on the social platform. "It's easy for links/articles to go viral on Twitter," tweeted Twitter product lead Kayvon Beykpoor. "This can be powerful but sometimes dangerous, especially if people haven't read the content they're spreading." —Agencies

New Zealand reduces scientific projects in Antarctica to keep it free from coronavirus

WELLINGTON: New Zealand said Tuesday it will reduce its scientific projects in Antarctica to keep the virtually uninhabited continent free from COVID-19.

Antarctica New Zealand, the government agency that does environmental research on the desolate landmass and the Southern Ocean, said limiting the number of people visiting was key to stopping the spread of the coronavirus.

The agency said it had decided to support "only long-term science monitoring, essential operational activity and planned maintenance this season" at its Scott Base after consulting other research programmes in the region.

According to reports, the number of projects was being cut from 36 to 13 across the upcoming research season from October to March.

"Antarctica New Zealand is committed to maintaining and enhancing the quality of New



Zealand's Antarctic scientific research," Chief Executive Sarah Williamson said. "However, current circumstances dictate that our ability to support science is extremely limited this season."

Antarctica New Zealand said it was developing a managed isolation plan with multiple government agencies to ensure COVID-19 does not reach the continent. Scott Base is New Zealand's only Antarctic research station and is 3,800 kilometres (2,360 miles) south of Christchurch and 1,350 km (840 miles) from the South Pole, according to Antarctica New Zealand.

Up to 86 scientists, staff and visitors can usually stay there at any one time.

Russian maker recalls ventilators tied to deadly hospital fires: The Russian manufacturer of ventilators involved in two deadly fires at hospitals treating virus patients said Wednesday it has recalled the devices for checks.

In a statement sent to AFP, the Urals Instrument-Building Factory that makes the ventilators said it decided to "carry out extra technical tests on the equipment supplied earlier". Doctors said the Aventa-M ventilators made by the company sparked a fire at a hospital in Saint Petersburg that killed five people on May 12, three days after one person died in a blaze at a Moscow hospital. Investigators said the same model of ventilator was in use at both hospitals and the state healthcare regulator after the Saint Petersburg fire told hospitals to stop using devices manufactured after April 1. Russia delivered a batch of the machines to the United States on April 1 to help its fight with the coronavirus but they have never been used and are being kept in storage pending the result of Russia's investigation into

the fires. The manufacturer, part of Rostec state conglomerate, said it ordered the recall on its own initiative because it wanted to test how the devices perform "under heavy use and in non-routine situations." In some cases these tests will be carried out in hospitals with medical staff involved, it said. It did not say how many of the devices will be checked or give details of any possible malfunction.

The Russian healthcare regulator has circulated a letter on the recall to healthcare providers, according to its website. The letter says the ventilators were first registered for use in 2016. The recall comes as Russia has confirmed 493,657 virus cases and 6,358 deaths, while the number of new cases has been over 8,000 for the last week. —AFP



Japanese firms develop electrified fabric to zap bacteria

TOKYO: A fabric that can produce small amounts of electricity powered by movement will allow your clothing to zap microbes and bacteria as you go about your day.

A pair of Japanese firms say that's exactly what their new product can do, and are touting it for everything from curbing body odour to offering the ideal material for protective gear like face masks.

The fabric jointly developed by electronics company Murata Manufacturing and Teijin Frontier, dubbed PIECLEX, generates power from the expansion and contraction of the material itself, including when worn by someone moving around. The low voltages aren't strong enough to be felt by the wearer, but they effectively stop bacteria and viruses from multiplying inside the fabric, the companies said.

"It has been effective on 99.9% of bacteria and viruses we tested, working to curb their proliferation or inactivate them," a Murata spokeswoman told AFP on Friday. The firms say the fabric has already shown promise for products like sportswear, sanitary items including diapers and masks, and for use in fil-

ters in industrial products. They are now hoping to test whether the fabric can take on a particularly po-

tent foe: the new coronavirus. But testing is proving a challenge, with strict limits on the institutions that



Microsoft bans face-recognition sales to police as Big Tech take a stand



Microsoft Corp said it would await federal regulation before selling facial recognition technology to police, making it the latest big firm to back away from the business following protests against law enforcement brutality and bias.

The announcement came shortly after rival Amazon.com Inc declared it was pausing police use of its "Rekognition" service for a year and International Business Machines Corp said it no longer offers the software generally. In a statement, Microsoft said it has worked on enacting principles and legislation for the software's use.

"We do not sell our facial recognition technology to US police departments today, and until there is a strong national law grounded in human rights, we will not sell this technology to police," the company said. The Washington Post first reported the news. The death of George Floyd, a black man pinned down by a white officer who knelt on his neck for nearly nine

minutes, prompted worldwide protests against racial inequity. Concerns also arose over whether facial recognition could be used against protesters unfairly.

Research found that face analysis was less accurate for people with darker skin tones, adding to activists' warnings that false matches could lead to unjust arrests.

Amazon bans police use of its facial recognition tech Matt Cagle, an attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California, said, "When even the makers of face recognition refuse to sell this surveillance technology because it is so dangerous, lawmakers can no longer deny the threats to our rights and liberties."

Congress has weighed possible regulation for months.

RIPPLE EFFECT? Facial-recognition vendors working with police have included Idemia and DataWorks Plus. One of Amazon's early law enforcement customers, the Washington County Sheriff's Office in Oregon, decided to halt its pro-

gram after the tech company's policy change. "This program was an innovation in law enforcement technology worth exploring, but until stronger regulations to govern the ethical use of it are in place, our program has been suspended indefinitely," the office said on Thursday in an internal memo seen by Reuters. It was unclear if others would follow suit.

Microsoft and Amazon did not answer a request for comment on whether their bans applied to law enforcement broadly, such as an unnamed prison to which Microsoft had previously said it would provide software. Militaries and intelligence agencies also use facial recognition, an old tool that has become common in recent years because of newer computer models that detect patterns in faces and objects. But concerns persist over weaknesses with people of color and targeted use against minorities. Microsoft said it was updating how it reviews customers looking to deploy the technology widely. —Reuters