Google will run undersea cables to eight Pacific Ocean nations under a joint US-Australian deal, says Reuters. The deal will expand an existing regional project to include Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, The Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. The Australian government will contribute $50 million and the US another $15 million. Small pacific nations have become a geopolitical focus as China and the US compete to provide infrastructure projects.

Indonesia has introduced a new regulation prohibiting social media companies from using their platforms for online sales. A government minister accused TikTok of ‘predatory pricing’ and causing damage to local small and medium sized businesses. He said the regulation ‘will justly regulate fair trade online and offline’. Sellers at Jakarta’s largest market had complained of 50 per cent losses in profits, claiming they could not compete with much cheaper imports sold online. Social media companies are said to be considering applying for separate e-commerce licenses.

The EU’s AI Act is said to be making progress as lawmakers agreed a critical part of the new rules. The current talks, between representatives of the European parliament and member states, are confidential. But it's understood that the resolution refers to Article 6, which deals with which AI systems are to be designated ‘high risk’. This has been a stumbling block in previous iterations of the bill. Meanwhile, representatives from 27 governments, big technology companies and civil society organisations will attend this week’s summit on the risks from ‘frontier AI’, hosted by the UK government.

The EU has launched investigations into three tech platforms over content moderation decisions. It follows a surge in harmful content following Hamas’ attack on Israel. One of the investigations is understood to concern X, previously Twitter. Under the Digital Services Act very large tech companies have extensive obligations to tackle illegal content and protect their services against manipulative techniques.

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Researchers at the University of Chicago have devised a data poisoning technique designed to disrupt the training of AI models, according to MIT Technology Review. Called ‘Nightshade’, the tool alters images in ways that are invisible to the human eye, but which are sufficient to corrupt an AI model's training process. The aim of the project is to ‘balance the playing field between model trainers and content creators’ by forcing AI training companies to license image data sets, respect crawler restrictions and conform to opt-out requests. AI researchers’ reliance on data scraped from the web is seen as ethically fraught, but companies with large existing image datasets, such as Getty Images, are at an advantage when using licensed training data.

The UK online safety bill has now come into force. Controversial powers to force messaging services to examine the contents of encrypted messages for child abuse material have been retained in the act but the regulator, Ofcom, has indicated that tech firms would only be asked to access messages once ‘feasible technology’ has been developed. A number of companies have said that they cannot access messages without compromising privacy and at least one has threatened to take the government to court if it is asked to do so. Wikipedia has also said that it would not be able to obey some aspects of the act, including age verification. Ofcom is now expected to consult on proposals for the bill’s implementation, including codes of practice and enforcement processes.