X halts using personal data of Europeans to train AI


The logo of US online social media and social networking service X - formerly Twitter - is seen on a smartphone screen

AFP | Paris

Social platform X said yesterday it would work European regulators after agreeing to suspended its heavily criticised use of European users' personal data to train its artificial intelligence chatbot Grok.

After Elon Musk's social platform began using personal data in public posts made by European users Ireland's data protection commission (DPC) launched a court case arguing that violated users' data privacy rights.

As X has its European headquarters in Ireland, the country's data protection commission is the lead regulator in Europe for the social platform.

"We will continue to work with the DPC about Grok and other AI matters as we have been doing since last year," X said in a post.

That came after Ireland's Data Protection Commission said Thursday the social platform had agreed to suspend use of personal data contained in the public posts of X's users in Europe to train Grok.

The DPC said X had agreed to suspend the use of users' personal data while European data regulators examine whether such processing complies with Europe's data privacy directive, the GDPR.

DPC chief commissioner Des Hogan said "today's developments will help us to continue protecting the rights and freedoms of X users across the EU and EEA".

The European Economic Area includes the 27 EU countries plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

In June, Meta backtracked on plans to use personal data from Facebook and Instagram posts in Europe to train its AI model after data privacy pressure group NOYB -- None of Your Business -- lodged complaints in several countries.

NOYB is concerned that platforms are not giving users clear opportunities to opt out of the use of their data to train AI, as European data regulations require.

Stocks choppy at end of turbulent week

● **Uncertainty reigns after a brief rally sparked by positive unemployment data**

AFP | London

As stocks rebound ran out of gas yesterday, at the end of a roller-coaster week for markets on worries the US economy could tip into recession.

Wall Street's top indices opened lower at the start of trading, a day after rallying on unemployment data that soothed concerns the world's top economy was set to slump into recession.

Europe's top indices gave up their gains in afternoon trading, while Asia closed mostly higher.

"There's not a lot of conviction from buyers or sellers," Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare said in a note to clients ahead of start of trading on Wall Street.

The reaction to the Thursday unemployment data was in marked contrast to separate US employment numbers a week ago that triggered massive selling across markets on Monday.

Since then, equities have seen big fluctuations as traders seek to get on hold of the economic outlook for the United States and elsewhere.

People walk past the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) at Wall Street

"A drop in jobless claims helped alleviate recession fears," noted Mark Haefele, chief investment officer at UBS Global Wealth Management.

"Markets are now eyeing upcoming (US) inflation and retail sales data, which could lead to future volatility."

Recent trading sessions have been dominated also by sharp swings for the yen against the dollar, with the Bank of Japan indicating that it is done for now on raising rates and amid uncertainty over the pace of cuts to US borrowing costs.

The yen rose against the dollar yesterday. In commodities trading, oil prices rose slightly.

Thursday's data showed fewer people than forecast applied for US unemployment benefits last week, tempering worries about the economy.

"Despite the volatility in claims data, especially around this time of year, the data helped allay fears of a more rapid deterioration in the labour market," said National Australia Bank's Taylor Nugent.

Last week's US non-farm payrolls report came in well below forecast, triggering turmoil on markets.

Traders are now awaiting the release of next week's US inflation data as they attempt to judge the Federal Reserve's plans for interest-rate cuts.

Slowing prices and a softening labour market have ramped up bets on at least one US rate reduction before January.

In China meanwhile, data yesterday showed consumer inflation rose more than expected in July to hit a five-month high, providing some much-needed positive news on the world's number-two economy.

China endured a period of deflation between October to January, when sliding prices of goods and services heightened worries of an economic slowdown.

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Despite the initial panic from the non-farm payrolls report, a decrease in US jobless claims has temporarily alleviated recession fears. Investors are now keenly awaiting inflation data, which will be pivotal for the Federal Reserve's interest rate decisions

China launches appeal at WTO over EU electric vehicle tariffs

AFP | Beijing

Beijing said it had filed an appeal with the World Trade Organization over the European Union's imposition of additional tariffs on imports of electric vehicles from China.

In July, the EU slapped extra provisional duties of up to 38 percent on Chinese EVs after its executive arm concluded in an investigation that they were unfairly undermining European rivals.

"On August 9, China appealed to the World Trade Organization's dispute settlement mechanism over the EU's temporary anti-subsidy measures on EVs," a spokesperson for the country's commerce ministry said in a statement.

A Leapmotor C10 model car is displayed at a showroom

The ministry said the appeal aimed to "safeguard the development rights and interests of the electric vehicle industry and cooperation over the global green transformation".

"The EU's preliminary ruling lacks a factual and legal basis, seriously violates WTO rules, and undermines the overall situation of global cooperation in addressing climate change," it said.

"We urge the EU to immediately correct its wrong practices and jointly maintain the stability of China-EU economic and trade cooperation as well as EV industrial and supply chains."

Brussels said it took note of Beijing's move but was "confident" its probe and provisional measures were WTO-compatible.

"The EU is carefully studying all the details of this request and will react to the Chinese authorities in due course according to the WTO procedures," a European Commission spokesperson said.

India's Ola Electric shines in market debut

Ola Electric scooters are displayed at a showroom in Bangalore

AFP | New Delhi

India's biggest e-scooter maker Ola Electric Mobility dazzled on its market debut yesterday after raising $734 million, as traders bet on surging demand for battery-powered vehicles.

A booming stock market in the world's fifth-largest economy has stoked an initial public offering frenzy over the last two years, with start-ups and companies scooping up billions of dollars from domestic and foreign investors.

Ola Electric, backed by global investors such as Japan's SoftBank and Singapore's Temasek, has managed to establish a leading position in a country where electric vehicle adoption is low but growing fast.

Sales of two-wheelers dwarf cars in India, but less than 6 percent of the nearly 18 million scooters and bikes sold in India in the fiscal year ending March 2024 were electric.

Ola has sought to convince wary Indian customers that long-term fuel savings will make up for a lack of country-wide charging infrastructure.

The company sold 35 percent of all electric scooters bought in India in the year to March, but has reported losses for the last three years.

The Indian government has spent over a billion dollars subsidising the sale of electric and hybrid vehicles over the last five years in an attempt to cut down on vehicle emissions.

Founder Bhavish Aggarwal, who often cheekily says "Tesla is for the West, Ola for the Rest", was jubilant as he entered the billionaires' club.

"Our hard work has paid off and the world recognises that," Aggarwal wrote on Tesla boss Elon Musk's social media platform X.

UK probes Amazon partnership with AI firm Anthropic

AFP | London

Britain's competition regulator yesterday said it had launched an inquiry into a partnership between US e-commerce giant Amazon and Anthropic, an American developer of artificial intelligence.

The move comes after the Competition and Markets Authority in April said it was examining tie-ups between artificial intelligence firms and their US big tech partners Amazon and Microsoft.

Action by the CMA follows similar examinations by regulators in the United States and European Union.

The logos of Amazon and Anthropic are seen on screens

In a statement yesterday, the British regulator said it was considering whether the Amazon-Anthropic partnership "has resulted, or may be expected to result, in a substantial lessening of competition within any market or markets in the United Kingdom for goods or services".

This follows Amazon's investment of up to $4 billion in Anthropic, which is developing a rival to ChatGPT-style AI chatbot.

Amazon hit out at the decision, saying in a separate statement that its "collaboration with Anthropic does not raise any competition concerns or meet the CMA's own threshold for review".

It added: "By investing in Anthropic, Amazon, along with other companies, is helping Anthropic expand choice and competition in this important technology."

Anthropic insisted it was "an independent company", while promising to "cooperate with the CMA and provide them with a comprehensive understanding of Amazon's investment and our commercial collaboration".