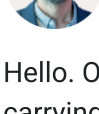




Tech Decoded

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Daniel Thomas
Editor, Tech Decoded

Hello. Over the last few years, we've been sold the idea that electric air taxis could soon start carrying passengers around our cities. And yet it has never come to pass. I explore what's holding the industry back and whether a new approach is needed. We also bring you news that Nvidia has become the world's first \$4 trillion company, and hear about the growing backlash against datacentres in US communities.

THE DOWNLOAD

Why Uber-style air taxis may be a fantasy



US firm Joby Aviation recently completed successful test flights of its electric air taxi. Credit: Getty

The thought that electric air taxis could one day transform urban mobility is a tantalising one.

Imagine being able to hail one like an Uber, so you could leapfrog city traffic and slash your journey time.

Over the last five years we have repeatedly been told that a so-called electric vertical take-off and landing aircraft (eVTOLs) **would start carrying paying passengers** in this way, but it hasn't happened.

Indeed, it was hard to get excited about US President Donald Trump's recent executive order to boost the sector, or news that air taxis could transport passengers **at the 2028 LA Olympic Games**. A **similar plan** at the 2024 Paris games came to nothing, after all.

Part of this is just the reality of aircraft certification, which is always a long and drawn out process. But it would be wrong to assume the technology isn't ready.

Players in the US and Europe **have had successful test flights**. And China's Ehang already offers limited sightseeing trips to the public (although it says air taxi services are 3-5 years away).

The issue is more one of economics and logistics.

The eVTOLs in development can only carry a handful of passengers, making them expensive to operate. In most cities, taking the train or bus is likely to remain cheaper and more convenient over shorter distances.

A large amount of new infrastructure will also need to be built, such as landing pads and charging stations, with more energy capacity brought online. But that's unlikely to happen if politicians don't see a clear public benefit.

According to Darrell Swanson and Jarek Zyche, aviation experts at EA Maven, eVTOLs are much more likely to succeed by providing trips *between* cities or towns, rather than within them.

They told me that along with larger electric fixed-wing aircraft, flying taxis could help us develop a new form of regional advanced air mobility that fills the gap left by large hub airports.

The download: *It looks increasingly unlikely that eVTOLs will revolutionise urban mobility - but they just might unlock a cleaner, more efficient form of regional transport.*

TOP STORIES



Nvidia becomes world's first \$4tn company

The chipmaker, which hit the milestone this week, continues to benefit from the AI boom. It has gained around \$3tn in market value since mid-2023.

[Read more >](#)



Four arrested over UK retail cyber-attacks

The hacks - which began in April - have caused huge disruption for the Co-op and for M&S, whose online shopping services are still not back to normal.

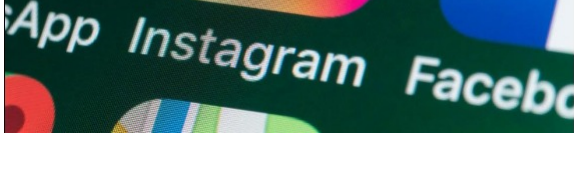
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Linda Yaccarino departs as boss of X after two years

Her departure comes at a time of tumult for the platform, which has been in the spotlight for antisemitic posts churned out by its AI chatbot, Grok.

[Find out more >](#)



Meta wrongly claims users broke child sex abuse rules

Instagram users say they faced "extreme stress" after the platform wrongly accused them of breaching its child sexual abuse rules and banned their accounts.

[Read what happened >](#)



'I can't drink the water' - life next to a data centre

Data centres are popping up across small-town America because of the AI boom - but the number of complaints from nearby residents is also rising.

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SOMETHING DIFFERENT

The true price of China's rare earth metals



The Bayan Obo mine sits in the vast, aridness of Inner Mongolia. Credit: BBC

Rare earths are key components in nearly everything that we switch on - from smartphones and computers to electric vehicles and TVs. China dominates global production, but has paid a high price for it. The BBC travelled to the country's two main rare earth mining hubs and found lakes full of radioactive sludge and heard claims of polluted water and contaminated soil. **[Can the authorities get on top of the problem?](#)**

PODCAST PICK



AIs on the road

An AI device that assesses driver safety has been fitted to thousands of delivery vans and fleet vehicles worldwide. But some workers complain it's intrusive.

[Listen here](#)

And finally...

Drama on Centre Court. For a few minutes last weekend, Wimbledon's Centre Court became the perfect encapsulation of the current tensions between humans and machines. When Britain's Sonay Kartal hit a backhand long, her opponent Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova knew it was out. But the electronic line-calling system remained silent and when the point was eventually replayed, Pavlyuchenkova lost it. It's not the first time something like this has happened, and some athletes no longer trust the tech. **[But are their doubts misplaced?](#)**

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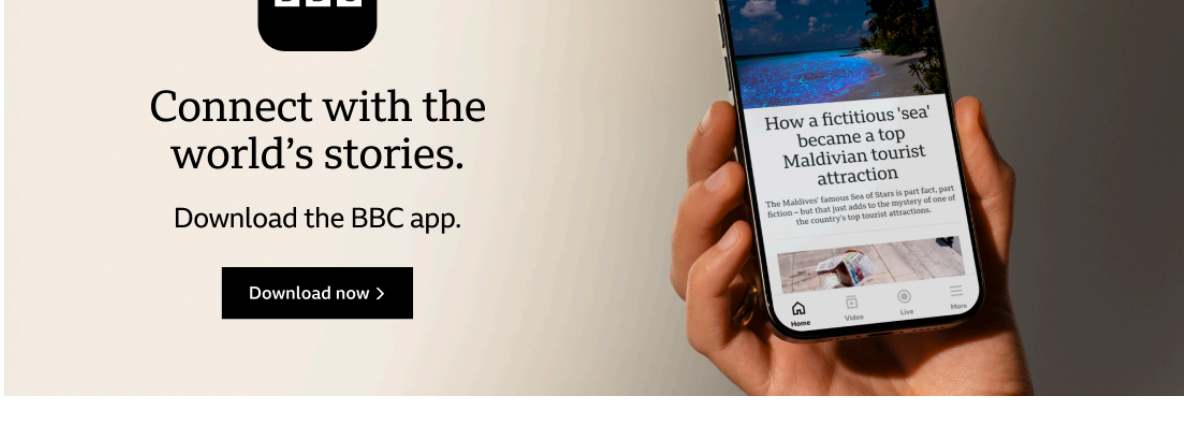
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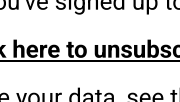
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