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AI

Keir Starmer urged to safeguard AI transparency

AI   Tue 16 Jul 2024

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Civil society groups have called on Keir Starmer to ensure AI remains open and transparent while harnessing it to drive economic growth.

In an open letter, coordinated by the UK Open Government Network, the prime minister was called on to include safeguards to public safety in Labour's Industrial Strategy.

The letter said that as AI continues to be seen as a driver of economic growth, the government must engage with groups advocating for algorithmic transparency.

"Evolving technologies bring challenges, alongside opportunities, and a surprising number of those are met by openness," said signatory and OpenUK CEO Amanda Brock.

"Civil society groups will work collaboratively with the government across artificial intelligence, machine learning, automated decision-making and more widely open data.

"Their expertise can support the government's industrial strategy whilst maintaining safeguards and ensuring public benefit for all."

Brock previously warned the government against 'open washing' – the misleading use of terms such as open source where it does not apply – in upcoming AI legislation.

An AI bill is expected to be included in the first King's Speech under the leadership of Starmer on Wednesday.

The heated debate over the 'openness of AI' is ongoing. Advocates for transparent AI have warned against allowing the algorithms and practices of AI models solely in the hands of Big Tech firms.

Among the largest advocates is itself a Big Tech firm, Meta, which has endeavoured to keep its model Llama open source.

Improbable CEO Herman Narula, also an open source advocate, told *UKTN* he has "never ever publicly complimented Facebook, but now I find myself doing it".

Advocates of open source argue that allowing the largest tech companies in the AI space to operate entirely behind closed doors could enable bad practices. These include unfair harvesting of training data, irresponsible energy use policies and using vast resources to prevent competition.

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