Intel is going all-in on advanced chip packaging

Last month, Anwar Ibrahim, the prime minister of Malaysia, revealed in a post on Facebook that Intel is expanding its Malaysian chip-making facilities, which were first established back in the 1970s. Ibrahim said the head of Intel's Foundry, Naga Chandrasekaran, had "outlined plans to commence the first phase" of expansion, which would include advanced packaging.

"I welcome Intel's decision to begin operations for the complex later this year," a translated version of Ibrahim's post read. An Intel spokesperson, John Hipsher, confirmed that it's building out additional chip assembly and test capacity in Penang, "amid rising global demand for Intel Foundry packaging solutions."

Package store

According to Chandrasekaran, who took over Intel's Foundry operations in 2025 and spoke exclusively with WIRED during the reporting of this story, the term "advanced packaging" itself didn't exist a decade ago.

Chips have always required some sort of integration of transistors and capacitors, which control and store energy. For a long time the semiconductor industry was focused on miniaturization, or, shrinking the size of components on chips. As the world began demanding more from its computers in the 2010s, chips started to get even more dense with processing units, high-bandwidth memory, and all of the necessary connective parts. Eventually, chipmakers started to take a system-in-packages or package-on-package approach, in

which multiple components were stacked on top of one another in order to squeeze more power and memory out of the same surface space. 2D stacking gave way to 3D stacking.

TSMC, the world's leading semiconductor manufacturer, began offering packaging technologies like CoWoS (chip on wafer on substrate) and, later, SoIC (system on integrated chip) to customers. Essentially, the pitch was that TSMC would handle not just the front end of chip-making—the wafer part—but also the back end, where all of the chip tech would be packaged together.

https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/04/intel-is-going-all-in-on-advanced-chip-packaging/

AV1's open, royalty-free promise in question as Dolby sues Snapchat over codec

Besides Dolby, InterDigital is also suing over AV1 [PDF] and is accusing some Amazon Fire streaming devices of infringing on its patents by supporting the codec.

Additionally, European Union (EU) antitrust regulators investigated AOMedia's licensing policy in 2022 but closed the investigation in 2023 "for priority reasons," an EU spokesperson told Reuters at the time, noting that "the closure is not a finding of compliance or non-compliance of the conduct in question with EU competition rules."

The results of Dolby's and InterDigital's lawsuits could have lasting implications for AV1 adoption, which lags behind that of HEVC eight years after its release.

"Only because Big Tech says a codec should be royalty-free doesn't mean that it is. … Given that all codecs use somewhat similar techniques, the risk of an infringement of patents belonging to parties who did not offer royalty-free licenses is substantial," intellectual property activist and commentator Florian Mueller told Ars Technica.

Mueller said that many streaming services have operated without video codec licenses for years as patent holders prioritized collecting royalties on hardware and software products. That has changed in recent years amid the growth of streaming.

"Companies like Amazon and Disney would like to persuade courts that after many years of no one, or at least no major player, knocking at their doors, they don't have to pay now," Mueller, who runs the online publication IP Fray, said.

Although the debate over whether a codec can be truly royalty-free goes back years, the debate around AV1 is getting more attention than previous discussions. Dolby's lawsuit in particular could have resounding implications on the AV1 standard should a judge decide that Dolby is not obligated to license patented technologies said to be leveraged by AV1.

As Mueller pointed out, HEVC was created with most essential patent holders signing a FRAND licensing pledge, which differs from AV1's creation:

> *With AV1, it could turn out that there are far more patent holders out there with essential patents but no FRAND licensing obligation. In that case, they could theoretically ask for anything, even extortionate amounts, up to the point where someone would then stop implementing AV1. And the really bad thing here, which I'm sure is not Dolby's*

> *objective but it could be someone else's, is that someone could purposely make prohibitive royalty demands for AV1 in order to discourage use of the standard.*

Dolby and Snap didn't respond to requests for comment. An AOMedia spokesperson acknowledged receipt of our questions but didn't provide responses ahead of publication.

https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/03/av1s-open-royalty-free-promise-in-question-as-dolby-sues-snapchat-over-codec/

Sony is raising PlayStation 5 prices again, this time by between $100 and $150

Memory and storage shortages and price hikes that started hitting PC components late last year have steadily rippled outward across all kinds of consumer tech—some products have disappeared, gone out of stock, or been delayed, and others have undergone multiple rounds of price hikes.

Today's bad news comes from Sony, which is raising prices for PlayStation 5 consoles in the US just eight months after their last price hike. The drive-less Digital Edition will increase from $500 to $600; the base PS5 with an optical drive will increase from $550 to $650; and the PS5 Pro is going up from $750 to a whopping $900. At the beginning of 2025, these consoles cost $450, $500, and $700, respectively.

Sony, Microsoft, and Nintendo had all announced one or more price increases for one or more consoles throughout 2025, though these were driven more by the Trump administration's tariffs on imported goods than component shortages. Game console price cuts had already become less common over the course of the 2010s, making consoles like the 5-plus-year-old PS5 historically expensive compared to older consoles at this point in their lifespans.

RAM and flash memory chips are in short supply primarily because of demand from AI data centers—memory manufacturers have shifted more production toward making the kind of memory found in AI accelerators like Nvidia's H200, leaving less for the consumer market.

And the situation is unlikely to improve any time soon, barring a major shift in demand from the AI industry. Manufacturers like Kioxia have said that their capacity is already sold out through the end of 2026. The complexity of chipmaking means it takes months or years to ramp up additional manufacturing capacity, and chipmakers can be slow to do it because they don't want to end up with a glut of memory they can't sell if market conditions change. In the short-to-medium term, this all means these high prices will probably stick around for a while.

https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/03/sony-is-raising-playstation-5-prices-again-this-time-by-between-100-and-150/

Apple pulls the plug on its

high-priced, oft-neglected Mac Pro desktop

After more than a decade of flirting with the idea, Apple has finally discontinued the Mac Pro tower. The company confirmed to 9to5Mac that the latest Mac Pro iteration—an M2 Ultra model first released in mid-2023—would be its last, at least for the time being. There are no plans to make another Mac Pro.

The discontinuation of the Mac Pro should come as no surprise to anyone who has been paying attention. Reporting from late last year suggested that the Mac Pro had been put "on the back burner," but the desktop has clearly been in danger of falling off the stove since at least the mid-2010s, during the six-year period where the controversial cylindrical "trash can" Mac Pro design languished without updates.

Apple briefly rededicated itself to its pro desktop in 2019 with a new design that hearkened back to more versatile, upgradeable, be-handled versions of the Power Mac and Mac Pro. But by the time it was updated again with M2 Ultra four years later, it was already clear that the idea of a huge and expandable Mac desktop was out of step with the Apple Silicon era. The desktop's demise confirms that, at least in Apple's estimation, the Mac Pro was trying to fill a niche that no longer exists.

The Mac Pro is survived by the M4 Max and M3 Ultra versions of the Mac Studio desktop, as well as by the M4 Pro Mac mini. It was preceded in death by the 27-inch iMac (2009–2020) and the iMac Pro (2017–2017).

The fourth quadrant

When Steve Jobs returned to lead Apple in 1997, one of his early initiatives was to streamline and refocus the Mac product family, which at that point had grown into a sprawling and poorly differentiated maze of Quadras, Performas, Power Macintoshes, and even third-party systems. The initial focus was a lineup of four computers to serve four market quadrants: a consumer laptop, a consumer desktop, a more powerful professional laptop, and a professional desktop.

https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/03/apple-has-finally-discontinued-the-mac-pro-desktop-after-years-of-fitful-effort/

AMD’s Ryzen 9 9950X3D2 Dual Edition crams 208MB of cache into a single chip

For about four years now, AMD has offered special “X3D” variants of its high-end desktop processors with an extra 64MB of L3 cache attached, an addition that disproportionately benefits games. AMD calls this “3D V-Cache” because it stacks the cache directly on top of (for Ryzen 5000 and 7000) or beneath (for Ryzen 9000) the CPU die.

The 12- and 16-core Ryzen chips have their CPU cores split between two silicon chiplets, which has historically made the 7900X3D, 7950X3D, 9900X3D, and 9950X3D a bit weird. One of their two CPU chiplets has the 64MB of 3D V-Cache attached,

and one does not. AMD relies on its driver software to make sure that software that benefits from the extra cache is run on the V-Cache-enabled CPU cores, which usually works well but is occasionally error-prone.

Enter the Ryzen 9 9950X3D2 Dual Edition, a mouthful of a chip that includes 64MB of 3D V-Cache on both processor dies, without the hybrid arrangement that has defined the other chips up until now. This gives the chip a grand total of 208MB of cache—16MB of L2 cache, the 32MB of L3 cache built into each of the two CPU dies (for a total of 64MB), and then another 64MB chunk of 3D V-Cache per die. In total, AMD says the new chip should be as much as 10 percent faster than the 9950X3D in games and other apps that benefit from the extra cache.

https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/03/amds-ryzen-9-9950x3d2-dual-edition-crams-208mb-of-cache-into-a-single-chip/

Netflix raises prices for every subscription tier by up to 12.5 percent

In its most recent earnings report, Netflix said its 2025 net income was about $11 billion, up from $8.7 billion in 2024. In an earnings call that took place on January 20, Spencer Adam Neumann, Netflix’s CFO, named pricing, membership growth, and a doubling of ad revenue as the key revenue drivers for 2026.

Netflix was expected to raise prices if it acquired Warner Bros. Discovery's (WBD's) movie studios and streaming businesses (especially if Netflix started offering HBO Max's library), so some subscribers may be disappointed to see the streaming service getting more expensive despite the deal falling through in February.

Today's price hike doesn't seem directly tied to the shelved acquisition, based on statements made by Gregory K. Peters, Netflix's president and director, during January's earnings call. He said then that the planned WBD acquisition was having "no impact or change to our approach and how we're running the business" in regard to pricing.

It's still possible that Netflix may show more pricing stability moving forward compared to if it bought WBD's film and streaming businesses.

But if that's not enough solace, disappointed subscribers can always, as Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos said last month, "cancel with one click."

https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/03/netflix-increases-prices-for-all-plans-by-up-to-2-per-month/

BRINC's new police drone uses Starlink, carries Narcan, chases vehicles at 60mph

"If you had Guardian playing a siren tone that was tuned to

match the frequency of the speaker and a police car playing as the siren tone next to it, Guardian would be three times louder," he said.

The Seattle-based BRINC makes drones currently used by over 900 American cities, including Laredo, Texas, and Chattanooga, Tennessee, as part of the growing "drone as first responder" (DFR) system.

Typically, cities pay a few hundred thousand dollars per year per drone—with contracts reaching into the millions with more drones and more capabilities. A year ago, Newport Beach, California, announced a $2.17 million, five-year contract with BRINC for seven drones. (According to Forbes, BRINC is valued at around $480 million as of last year.)

One existing customer, the Redmond Police Department in the state of Washington, told Ars that this new model was a "completely new and different airframe."

"This is a huge step in DFR innovation and possibility," emailed Jill Green, a police spokesperson.

Still, one longtime drone watcher and analyst, Faine Greenwood, wasn't as taken with this news.

"Even if these claims are true (which I doubt at the moment), the speed/battery life is an incremental improvement over other comparable drone platforms," Greenwood told Ars by email. "This is not a game-changer situation, and I don't see it as really changing the calculus for police who are on the fence about drones."

https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/03/brincs-new-police-drone-uses-starlink-carries-narcan-chases-vehicles-at-60mph/

Reddit will require “fishy” accounts to verify they are run by a human

Reddit will require accounts that exhibit “automated or otherwise fishy behavior” to verify that a human runs them, Reddit CEO Steve Huffman said in a Reddit post today. The verification process aims to combat unwanted bots from flooding Reddit at a time when AI bots are poised to take over the Internet.

“As AI becomes a bigger part of the Internet, we want to make sure that when you’re on Reddit, you know when you’re talking to a person and when you’re not,” Huffman said.

Human verification will only occur if Reddit suspects that an account is a bot. This is “rare” and won’t apply to “most users,” Huffman emphasized. If the account cannot prove that it’s human, it “may be restricted,” he said.

Reddit will check if an account is run by a human by using third-party tools that Huffman said won’t expose users’ true identity, Reddit username, or Reddit activity. Current methods that Reddit is exploring include passkeys, which Huffman said are a great starting point but don’t provide any “proof of individuality or anything other than ‘a human probably did something.’”

Reddit is also looking into third-party biometric services, like World ID, which uses iris-scanning tech.

“I think the Internet needs verification solutions like this, where your account information, usage data, and identity never

mix," Huffman said.

A last resort may be third-party government ID services, which Reddit is already required to use in some geographies, like the UK. Huffman said this is "the least secure, least private, and least preferred" method for human verification on Reddit.

"When we are forced to do this, we design the integrations so that we never actually see your ID information, so your Reddit data cannot be tied to you," he added.

https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/03/reddit-will-require-fishy-accounts-to-verify-they-are-run-by-a-human/

Microsoft keeps insisting that it's deeply committed to the quality of Windows 11

AI skeptics may also be cheered to hear that the company is pumping the brakes on Copilot, which has made its way into everything from the keyboard to the humble notepad.exe over the last few years (even as the standalone Copilot app's appearance and capabilities have changed pretty dramatically from iteration to iteration). Davuluri said Microsoft would be "more intentional" about where Copilot appears and how it works and specifically promised to "[reduce unnecessary Copilot entry points, starting with apps like Snipping Tool, Photos, Widgets, and Notepad."

Davuluri also said Microsoft would begin testing less-

disruptive Windows updates that would give users more opportunities to (temporarily) skip them; a “faster and more dependable File Explorer,” “quieter defaults” for the Widgets pane, and better descriptions for the various Windows Insider Program channels and improved mechanisms for sending feedback to Microsoft.

Beyond these specific short-term changes, Davuluri also listed a broader laundry list of goals, including more reliable operation for Bluetooth and USB peripherals, faster and more accurate search, reduced memory usage, and improving responsiveness and performance for bedrock Windows components like the Start menu, taskbar, and File Explorer.

These are all nice-sounding promises, though the specifics will matter a lot—being “more intentional” about Copilot, for example, still leaves room for Microsoft to intentionally force it into each and every one of Windows’ built-in apps. And one major annoyance, the mandatory Microsoft Account sign-in requirement, isn’t mentioned anywhere in this post. But Microsoft at least seems to be moving in the right direction.

Windows 10 has remained enduringly popular despite its October 2025 end-of-support date, and one year of additional free-ish security updates has given people who want to keep Windows 10 a way to do so without exposing themselves to security holes. But we’re already nearly halfway through that year, which means a Windows 11 upgrade is probably in your future one way or another. Hopefully, Microsoft’s repeatedly professed commitment to quality means the OS will be more welcoming by the time October rolls around.

https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/03/microsoft-keeps-insisting-that-its-deeply-committed-to-the-quality-of-windows-11/

Amazon is reportedly developing an AI-centric smartphone

AI integration is a “key focus” of Transformer, per Reuters’ sources, who said that Amazon wants the phone to drive usage of Amazon’s AI products. The phone may use AI in lieu of app stores, the sources said, similar to the Light Phone, which the Transfomer development team is taking “inspiration” from, Reuters said, citing two of its sources.

Reuters’ report doesn’t explicitly mention “Alexa+,” the generative AI version of Alexa, but the subscription-based assistant would likely be central to Transformers’ reported goals.

Fire Phone, take two

Amazon’s reported attempts to develop a new smartphone come at an interesting time. It’s been about 11 years since Amazon killed the FireOS-based Fire Phone, which sold for only about a year before it was discontinued due to poor sales. Meanwhile, Amazon’s devices division has reportedly struggled financially for years, largely because Alexa-based devices have failed to generate revenue.

A return to smartphones would pit Amazon against Apple and Samsung, which dominate the market and bring years of app ecosystems, hardware innovation, AI development, and loyal fanbases.

It’s unclear why Amazon thinks now is a good time to get back into phones. Even potentially low prices may not be enough to

convince people to buy.

https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/03/amazon-is-reportedly-developing-an-ai-centric-smartphone/