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Developments from the lab are expected to help Razer build AVA, its 3D holographic digital companion. AVA can be plugged into a computer through a cable to oversee tasks on the computer or act as a gaming wingman.
ST PHOTOS: MARK CHEONG

Razer-NUS AI lab to work on digital companions that go beyond Tamagotchi

Sarah Koh

A 3D holographic desk companion that manages schedules, tracks the weather and coaches video-gaming combat is a step closer to reality with the setting up of a joint research lab between gaming firm Razer and the National University of Singapore.

Unveiled on Aug 5, the Razer-NUS Joint AI Research Lab aims to drive research in artificial intelligence models that support in-game and real-life conversations and tasks.

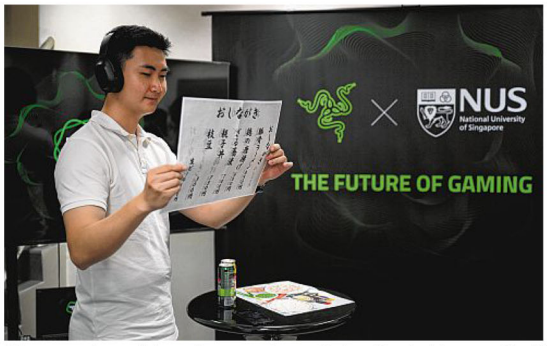
For one, developments from the lab are expected to help Razer build AVA, its 3D holographic digital companion first showcased in January at the Consumer Electronics Show 2026 in Las Vegas.

AVA features a 5.5-inch animated hologram display that scans its surroundings through in-built cameras and microphones. AVA can also be plugged into a computer through a cable to oversee tasks on the computer or act as a gaming wingman.

"Digital avatars, like Tamagotchi, are not new. What we're doing now is to take (things) to the next level," said Razer's chief strategy officer Li-Meng Lee on Aug 5.

Lee said that Razer pictures a future where AVA understands users' daily routines and offers reminders or advice without being prompted.

AVA, which takes the shape of a transparent cylindrical block, is currently a prototype that uses xAI's Grok to power its conversational abilities. Razer is developing a feature to allow users to switch among AI models of their choice.



A Razer employee giving a demonstration on Project Motoko. The wearable AI headset translated a Japanese menu into English in real time. It was also able to suggest a recipe based on a list of ingredients and provide a calorie count.

The holographic avatars of interchangeable animated characters are projected in the block.

During a demonstration on Aug 5, one of the animated characters called Kira was able to introduce herself, provide restaurant suggestions for dinner and calculate how long it takes to drive from NUS to Changi Airport.

An undisclosed number of users in English-speaking countries around the world are involved in beta testing the product.

The beta programme aims to test its multi-step task execution, and data and safety boundaries, among other features.

Lee said that over 15,000 potential buyers have put down a deposit of $20 each for the product.

Research from the Razer-NUS Joint AI Research Lab will also support Razer's Project Motoko, a wearable AI headset with in-built cameras to scan the user's environment and provide advice powered by users' AI model of choice, be it OpenAI's ChatGPT or Google's Gemini.

For instance, Motoko was able to suggest a recipe based on a list of ingredients, provide an estimated calorie count, and translate a Japanese menu in real time during the demonstration.

Razer enters a crowded AI wearables market with Project Motoko, a headset that competes with smart glasses launched by major tech rivals like Meta and Google.

But Razer believes that the wearables market is big enough for many players.

"Headsets are already being used by young people. We want to enhance the experience, increase the battery life and reduce the latency," said Lee.

Razer has not revealed launch dates or price points for both products.

The Razer-NUS Joint AI Research Lab, located at NUS, will house around 20 PhD and postdoctoral AI researchers from the university.

These researchers will also have direct access to Razer's engineering department, which will validate real-world uses and provide product integration.

Investments have not been disclosed, but both entities will jointly fund operational costs and jointly own the intellectual properties created.

NUS associate professor Ooi Wei Tsang, a co-director of the lab, said: "NUS and Razer are charting the pathway towards next-generation intelligent systems that will shape the future of interactive gaming experiences."

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