



WhatsApp

Warning over WhatsApp voice notes in South Africa

by: **BusinessTech** writer

Technology experts urge caution over WhatsApp voice notes amid a rise in cybercriminals using generative artificial intelligence to clone the voices of individuals – especially high-level executives.

The uptake and uses for artificial intelligence (AI) have exploded over the past couple of years and have become a catalyst for change, introducing new ways of doing business, managing data, gathering insights, and collating content.

As an intelligent and highly capable technology, it has become a powerful tool in the business toolbox, providing fast analysis, support, and functionality. However, it also presents a new and concerning threat as criminals find new ways to use these advancements to their advantage and have harnessed AI for malicious purposes, such as creating convincing deep fakes and perpetrating unnervingly realistic voice scams.

Using artificial intelligence tools to clone voices has introduced an entirely novel realm of risk for both companies and individuals, noted Stephen Osler, Co-Founder and Business Development Director at Nclose.

In 2019, the technology was used to impersonate the voice of the CEO of an energy company in the UK to extort \$243,000 (R4.3 million). In 2021, a company in Hong Kong was defrauded of \$35 million (R631 million). These attacks are not just aimed at large corporates; individuals are also now being targeted, Osler said.

Voice clone scams, such as kidnapping hoaxes, requests for money from friends or family, and emergency calls, are all part of these scams that are proving difficult to detect.

Companies should also establish a clearly defined formal process for all transactions. "Relying solely on a voice note from the CIO or CISO should not be sufficient to change a password, authenticate a monetary transaction, or grant hackers access to the business," he said.

Cultivate an inquisitive mindset and question the source, whether it is a call, email, or message. By doing so, both organisations and individuals can be better prepared to identify and protect themselves against potential voice cloning scams," he said.

This and That

Chief UNO Player wanted - as toy company Mattel offers a five-figure sum for one month's work. Mattel has announced it is on the lookout for its first-ever "Chief UNO Player" to spearhead its newest addition, UNO Quatro. The Chief UNO Player will be expected to play and teach others UNO Quatro, as well as help the team produce content for their video channels.

Roughly 11 million Pick n Pay Smart Shopper cardholders have not yet claimed their share of cash-back rewards to the tune of R250 million, and they probably don't even know it, according to the supermarket chain. Smart Shopper points are earned every time customers swipe their cards at the check-out counter.

However, to redeem the points, they must register their details. This gives them the freedom to spend money on anything they want from the retailer's stores.

Uber has recorded the first operating profit in its history after trips rose by more than a fifth in the last year.

The American company, best known for its ride-hailing app, recorded pre-tax earnings of \$326m (£255m) from its operations after a rise in demand led to 22% more trips booked on the platform in the year to the end of June.

A "cancer-killing pill" has appeared to "annihilate" solid tumours in early research - leaving healthy cells unaffected.

The new drug has been in development for 20 years, and is now undergoing pre-clinical research in the US. Known as AOH1996, it targets a cancerous variant of a protein called proliferating cell nuclear antigen (PCNA). The pill has been shown to be effective in treating cells derived from breast, prostate, brain, ovarian, cervical, skin and lung cancers. PCNA had previously been labelled as "undruggable" - it is hoped the breakthrough could lead to more personalised, targeted medicines for cancer in the future.



Continental Shift: The World's Most Populous Countries

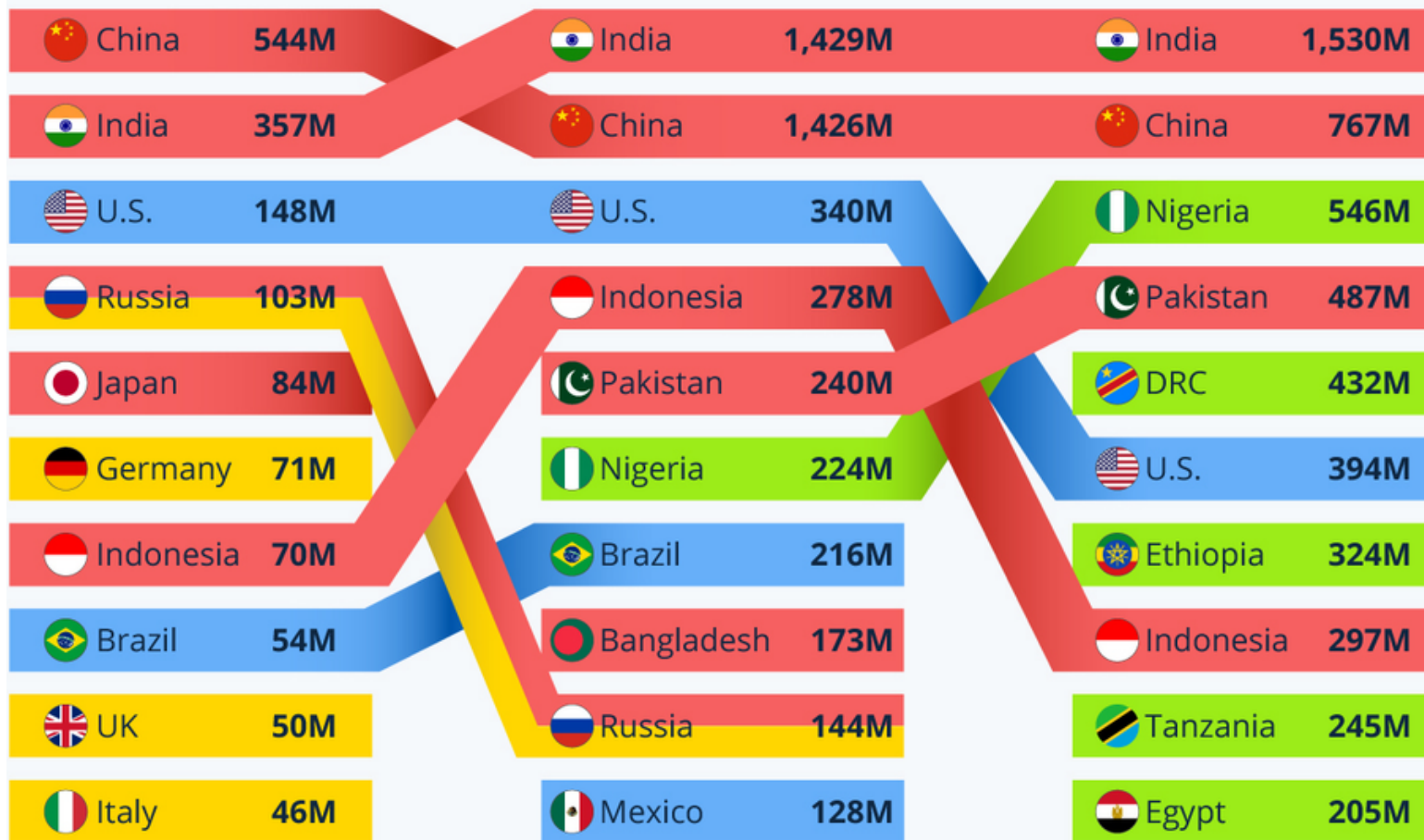
Estimated/projected population on July 1 of the respective year*

■ Asia ■ Americas ■ Europe ■ Africa

1950

2023

2100



* UN population estimates are based on today's borders. For example, the 1950 estimate for Russia is for today's Russia, not the USSR.

Source: United Nations | World Population Prospects 2022

