

# THE DIALOGUE

## Latin America Advisor

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### FEATURED Q&A

## What Is Latin America Bringing to AI Development?



Chile last month launched a new open-source artificial intelligence language model called Latam-GPT. // File Photo: tippapatt via Adobe Stock.

**Q** Chile on Feb. 10 launched Latam-GPT, an open-source artificial intelligence language model trained on Latin American data and developed through a regional collaboration led by Chile's National Center for Artificial Intelligence. The initiative aims to address linguistic bias in global AI systems and position the region more prominently in the global AI race. What does Chile's government hope to achieve with this project? How significant are initiatives like Latam-GPT for Latin America's technological sovereignty and regulatory capacity? What challenges could the initiative face in competing with larger global AI developers, and how might it affect the region's investment climate for AI and data infrastructure?

**A** Rodrigo Durán, general manager of Chile's National Center for Artificial Intelligence (Cenia): "Latam-GPT is a multilateral project driven by Cenia, a private nonprofit organization. Our goal was the development of technical and academic capabilities, the construction of a model with superior performance across Latin America and the Caribbean, and the creation of a network of institutions dedicated to promoting AI at the service of people. As Director Alvaro Soto stated during the launch, this is 'the end of the beginning' of an ecosystem that seeks to articulate Latin American capabilities in the field of AI. This articulation is fundamental because no single country, with the eventual exception of Brazil, possesses sufficient strength in data, talent or computing power to participate in the global conversation on AI governance. However, the region as a whole does, and Latam-GPT is a

Continued on page 2

### TODAY'S NEWS

#### POLITICAL

## Haiti Working on Plan for Election This Year: Police Head

Haitian officials are still working on a plan for an election this year in Haiti, the interim head of the country's national police told the Associated Press in an interview on Friday.

Page 3

#### ECONOMIC

## U.S. Dep't of Energy Issues Permit for DR-Puerto Rico Cable

The U.S. Department of Energy has issued a permit for the construction of a high-voltage undersea power cable between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

Page 3

#### POLITICAL

## Machado Vows to Return to Venezuela

Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado vowed Sunday to return to Venezuela. She left Venezuela in December to accept the Nobel Peace Prize.

Page 2



Machado // File Photo: Kevin Payravi via Wikimedia Commons  
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## POLITICAL NEWS

## Machado Vows to Return to Venezuela

Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado vowed in a social media post on Sunday to return to the South American country, the Associated Press reported. Machado did not specify when she would return to her home country, but she said in a video message that she is preparing “for a new and gigantic electoral victory.” She also urged her supporters to “strengthen the unity of Venezuelans that began with the primaries,” a reference to the 2023 contest in which she emerged as the opposition’s candidate to run against President Nicolás Maduro in the country’s 2024 election. After the primaries, Maduro’s government banned Machado from running—her stand-in, former diplomat Edmundo González, faced Maduro in the election. Venezuelan electoral

authorities declared Maduro the winner despite exit polling and ballot tally sheets released by the opposition showing that González had won more than twice as many votes as Maduro. Machado, who in December, emerged from nearly a year in hiding to travel from Venezuela to Oslo to accept the Nobel Peace Prize, which she later controversially presented to U.S. President Donald Trump, told Politico last month that Venezuela could hold an election in less than a year to replace Maduro, whom U.S. forces deposed on Jan. 3. The assertion reportedly irritated Trump administration officials, who were concerned that the remarks could undermine the administration’s objectives in Venezuela, Politico reported “The world now knows: the transition to democracy in Venezuela is unstoppable,” she said in the video posed on Sunday, Politico reported. “For years we said this regime would only relinquish power when confronted with real force and a credible threat. First, we had to defeat them spiritually, then politically, then electorally and

## NEWS BRIEFS

## At Least 22 Killed in Crash of Bolivian Military Plane

At least 22 people were killed and 29 others were injured after a military transport plane crashed in the Bolivian city of El Alto on Friday and veered into a nearby road before bursting into flames, the Associated Press reported. The Lockheed C-130—which was carrying 18 tons of new banknotes—was attempting to land during a hailstorm at El Alto’s international airport, which serves the La Paz metropolitan area. Police used tear gas and water hoses to disperse a crowd of people who were attempting to collect banknotes from the debris on Friday, the AP reported.

## Dominican Republic Has 150 Million Tons of Rare Earth Deposits: President

The Dominican Republic has more than 150 million tons of rare earth deposits that could position the country as a supplier of minerals needed for high-tech industries, President Luis Abinader said Friday, Reuters reported. In an address to Congress, Abinader said his government wants to finish assessments of mineral deposits this year and certify reserves by early next year, the wire service reported. Preliminary studies indicate reserves of 17 metals, according to a government statement.

## Bolsonaro Supporters Take to Streets in Brazil

Thousands of supporters of imprisoned former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro held demonstrations in major cities across Brazil on Sunday, the Associated Press reported. Large-scale marches were held in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Brasília. “This year will be decisive for all Brazilians ... we’re one step away from succeeding at rescuing our Brazil,” Flávio Bolsonaro, Jair Bolsonaro’s eldest son who is running for president in October, said in an Instagram post before the demonstrations.

## FEATURED Q&amp;A / Continued from page 1

decisive step in that direction. In this sense, Latam-GPT does not seek to compete with, but rather to complement existing services. It is not feasible to expect a 70B parameter model like Latam-GPT 1.0 to outperform GPT 5.2, which is trained with 1,700B parameters. Our vision is to focus on those problems whose solution requires deep and specific knowledge of the region—a different world model—such as in education or public management.”

**A Ignacio Araya, Chile-based political scientist:** “The Chilean government seeks to reduce the linguistic and cultural bias present in global AI models by training a system on Latin American data that better reflects regional Spanish and Portuguese. At the same time, it aims to position Chile and the broader region as active players in artificial intelligence development, strengthening local capabilities in data, talent and model training. Latam-GPT also seeks to support

public policies and sector-specific applications with more context-aware solutions, while consolidating a regional AI innovation ecosystem based on collaboration and open-source principles. They are strategically significant for advancing technological sovereignty understood as greater capacity for decision-making and adaptation. Developing in-house capabilities enables the region to assess external offerings—performance, costs and risks—and reduces information asymmetries in negotiations with major global providers. At the same time, hands-on experience in building and governing AI models strengthens regulatory capacity and enhances the region’s credibility in international forums, allowing it to ground its positions in technical practice rather than solely in normative principles. The main challenge is scale in processing capacity. Training advanced models requires thousands of GPUs—specialized chips designed for massive parallel calculations—operating simultaneously in large data centers with

Continued on page 4

finally, militarily. We said it would happen, and it happened," she added. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Jan. 15 issue of the Advisor.]

## Haiti Working on Plan for Election This Year: Police Head

Haitian officials are still working on a plan to hold a general election this year, the head of the country's national police told the Associated Press on Friday. "We have a plan for the election, but it's still in the kitchen and has not finished cooking yet," André Jonas Vladimir Paraison, who became the interim head of the national police in August, told the wire service in an interview. Haiti's government has said that it wants to hold the first round of an election in August and a runoff in December. The country has not had an election for more than a decade, and its gang violence has worsened since the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021. More than 5,900 people were killed last year in Haiti and more than 2,700 were injured, according to statistics released by the United Nations.

### ECONOMIC NEWS

## U.S. Dep't of Energy Issues Permit for DR-Puerto Rico Cable

The U.S. Department of Energy has issued a key permit for a high-voltage undersea cable between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, the president of Puerto-Rico-based Atabey Capital, the project's principal partner, told Reuters on Friday. As part of the Hostos project, developer Caribbean Transmission Development Company will construct a 500-megawatt-capacity natural gas-fired power plant in the town of San Pedro de Macorís, which is located approximately 30 miles east of Santo Domingo. The gas plant will be connected to a 90-mile transmission line that will traverse the Mona Passage, which separates the

## THE DIALOGUE CONTINUES

### Why Are Ecuador-Colombia Trade Tensions Flaring?

**Q U.S. President Donald Trump has offered to act as a mediator in a trade war between Colombia and Ecuador, Colombian President Gustavo Petro said after he met with Trump on Feb. 3 at the White House. The meeting happened on the same day that protesters gathered at a border crossing between the two Andean nations to demand that they eliminate tariffs on dozens of goods. What is at the root of the trade tensions between Ecuador and Colombia, and what are the main points of contention? How has the Ecuador-Colombia trade war affected both countries' economies and residents? To what extent will Trump and his administration be able to help the two sides reach a deal?**

**A G. Philip Hughes, resident of the Council of American Ambassadors and adjunct professor of diplomacy at the Institute of World Politics in Washington:** "The Ecuador-Colombia tariff war that erupted with Ecuadorean President Daniel Noboa's Jan. 21 tweet from Davos, imposing a 'security tariff' on a range of Colombian products representing the bulk of its exports to Ecuador, has much more to do with domestic politics than with commerce. Facing the herculean task of curbing the surging organized crime violence that was his centerpiece campaign pledge, imposing the 'security tariff' made Colombia 'co-responsible' for Ecuador's sticky domestic safety crisis. It demonstrated 'taking action' while aligning Noboa's

Dominican Republic from Puerto Rico, and link with Puerto Rico's power grid at the port city of Mayagüez. The Hostos project's estimated cost of \$2.5 billion will be financed entirely by private entities and is set to be completed by 2031, Rafael Vélez, Atabey Capital's president,

more conservative Ecuadorean government with Trump's rhetoric and pressures on Colombia and its 'lame duck' president, Gustavo Petro, in the wake of the Jan. 3 U.S. capture of Venezuelan President Maduro. Even Ecuador's tariff tactic was 'Trumpian'—and Colombia's tit-for-tat trade retaliation, which quickly expanded to the energy sector with a ban on electricity sales to Ecuador, was predictable. But if Noboa's gambit aimed to reinforce or echo U.S. pressures on Petro and Colombia over narcotics trafficking, Ecuador got caught leaning the wrong way by the Feb. 3 Trump-Petro White House summit, which seems to have generated nothing but bilateral sweetness and light—including Trump's supposed offer to mediate the Ecuador-Colombia trade fracas. What will happen next? President Trump is surely too busy to mediate, so realities will take over—Colombia's economy is three times the size of Ecuador's; imports from Colombia are far more economically important to Ecuador than the reverse; and trade paralysis at the border is proving a domestic political liability, especially to Noboa. So both nations will eventually talk their way back to normalcy. And where is the Andean Community in all of this? Seemingly nowhere—diminished by its own mistakes and Trump's impact on the international trading system. Sad."

**EDITOR'S NOTE: The comment above is a continuation of the [Q&A](#) published in the Feb. 23 issue of the Advisor.**

told Reuters. The project is expected to provide enough electricity to power more than 500,000 households in Puerto Rico, which equates to roughly one-third of the island's population, the Caribbean Transmission Development Company said Friday in a statement.

## FEATURED Q&amp;A / Continued from page 2

high demands for energy, connectivity and storage. Major global players operate with far greater infrastructure and resources, giving them an advantage in speed and model size. Competition for highly skilled talent, as well as the quality and volume of available data, also matter. If Latam-GPT consolidates technically and financially, it could stimulate investment in data centers and regional digital infrastructure. If not, its impact may remain more symbolic than structural.”

**A Paola Gálvez-Callirgos, technology policy consultant:** “Latam-GPT strengthens regulatory capacity by providing technical expertise, datasets and institutional collaboration within the region. Moreover, open-source regional models like Latam-GPT create a public digital infrastructure layer that regulators can audit, experiment with and use for public sector pilots, strengthening oversight and accountability, a topic that we have been actively discussing at the IndiAI Impact Summit. Latam-GPT also illustrates the potential to move from dependence on foreign models toward building regional foundational infrastructure. This is a core element of technological sovereignty. It enables Latin America to shape AI trajectories according to local priorities in education, health and culture rather than importing values and assumptions embedded in Global North systems.”

**A Alejandro Patiño Cruz, international consultant and former deputy ambassador of Costa Rica to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development:** “Digital trade is no longer a peripheral extension of international commerce; it is now central to economic competitiveness, regulatory sovereignty and geopolitical positioning. Globally, rule-making is shifting away from a single multilateral center toward a more fragmented but innovative landscape in which regions, coalitions and issue-specific

frameworks shape how data, digital services and technologies move across borders. In this context, initiatives like Latam-GPT are particularly significant for Latin America. Governance is increasingly defined through practical architectures rather than abstract principles, with rules on data flows, interoperability, digital services and AI emerging through regional agreements, regulatory cooperation and shared technical standards. OECD initiatives, including the AI Policy Observatory and AI Policy Toolkit, have helped translate high-level principles into actionable guidance, reinforced by Costa Rica’s 2025 leadership of the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting, which promoted these tools for capacity-building, regulatory coherence and inclusive digital transformation. At the same time, digital innovation and regulatory capacity are deeply intertwined—regions that combine technological development with policy coordination are better positioned to shape global norms rather than merely adapt to them. Latam-GPT can bridge technical innovation and public policy by contextualizing global frameworks for Latin American realities, turning international standards into regionally relevant solutions. This comes at a strategic inflection point for Latin America, which is gaining momentum toward more coordinated digital governance. Regional institutions have supported this shift through financing, technical assistance and platforms focused on digital government, data infrastructure and regulatory modernization. Within this ecosystem, Latam-GPT can reduce information asymmetries and strengthen the analytical foundation for more coherent regional positions, making it not only a technological initiative but part of a broader effort to ensure Latin America plays a more strategic role in shaping the evolving global digital economy.”

*The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta.*

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