

Artificial intelligence to end traffic jams in Israel

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Monstrous traffic jams are a part of daily life for Israelis, but artificial intelligence and its algorithms could help solve the problem, according to an Israeli high-tech company.

This sector is of increasing interest to the automobile industry, and a show on intelligent mobility called "EcoMotion", which promotes more efficient and 'green' transport, was recently held in Tel-Aviv.

Among the participating companies was ITC (Intelligent traffic control), which develops a program capable of storing data in real time from surveillance cameras along the streets, and manipulating traffic lights based on traffic flows.

"ITC came to prove mathematically that many traffic jams can be avoided, if you intervene in time," explains Dvir Kenig, technology manager at this company, who cites a 30% decrease in congestion at two roundabouts where the system was implemented.

The company claims to want to solve a plague that affects the whole world, estimating that an average motorist is stuck for the equivalent of three days a year in traffic jams, which are also a source of greenhouse gas emissions.

"Traffic jams (in Israel) are among the worst" in OECD countries, according to a report by this organization published in 2021.

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According to Meir Arnon, founder of the "EcoMotion" show, the growing global interest in smart mobility has allowed Israel – which presents itself as a "start-up nation" thanks to its prolific high-tech sector – to become a of the automobile sector, despite the fact that the country does not produce vehicles.

"Cars have changed," he tells AFP. "Before, they were made of metal, wheels and a radio, but today those things don't count anymore."

"What distinguishes vehicle manufacturers today is the experience behind the wheel (...), the ability of the car to adapt to the driver," he says.

According to him, the technological systems developed by the army and the private defense sector in Israel, especially in the fields of surveillance, communications and sensors, are essential for car manufacturers.

With more than 600 high-tech start-ups – "just behind Silicon Valley" – Israel has become "a pole" for smart mobility, says Arnon, noting that 35 international auto companies are present in Israel, including the American giant General Motors (GM).

"The future of vehicles lies outside of them: in the 'cloud' (cloud), on our phones," says Gil Golan, head of GM's technical center in Israel, a country he describes as a fertile ground for "innovation "

– Investments –

Rider Dome, another company present at the EcoMotion show in Tel-Aviv, specializes in road safety: its cameras installed in front and behind motorcycles use artificial intelligence to warn their drivers of the risks around them.

“Driving assistance has become the norm in cars, but it doesn’t exist for motorcycles,” explains director Yoav Elgrichi.

But if Israel wants to maintain a relevant place in high-tech automobiles, it will have to invest in engineering, according to Lisya Bahar Manoah of Catalyst Investments.

“Israel must now reflect on having more engineers to support the start-up sector. We must adjust our school system accordingly,” he says.

According to the latest annual report by the Israeli Innovation Authority, the high-tech sector, which employs 10% of the national workforce and accounts for about half of the country’s exports, is declining, as the Hebrew state registers a continuous decline in creations of ‘start-ups’ for two years.

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