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LOCAL **14**

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New security concerns in the region

Former United States Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff spoke to The Times, Kuwait in an exclusive interview on the sidelines of the Globsec conference – one of the top annual conferences on global security in the world – which was held in Bratislava, Slovakia at the end of May. He spoke about various security issues facing the region and some of the concerns of the international community on terrorism. Chertoff, an authority on security affairs was appointed as Secretary of Homeland Security in 2005 and was co-author of the USA Patriot Act.

By Reaven D'Souza
Managing Editor

The development of new bomb technologies that can be packaged in small devices and dispersal of foreign fighters currently fighting with the Islamic State (IS) are two of the biggest regional concerns for security experts everywhere," revealed Mr. Chertoff.

Elaborating on this he pointed out that, with IS rapidly losing ground in both Syria and Iraq, some of the fighters could go to other parts of the region, while a considerable number may go back home, which in many cases is Europe. Keeping track of them so that they do not end up being security threats is a major challenge;

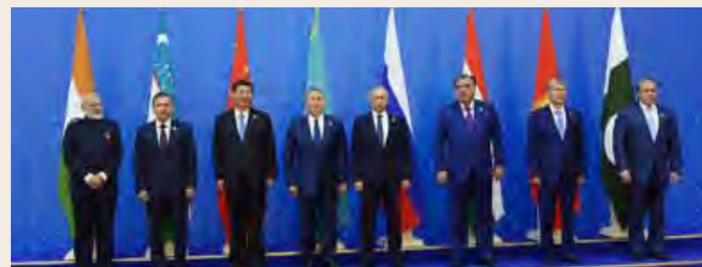


we need to ensure that Paris or Manchester is not repeated.

Disclosing another major security concern, Chertoff said, "Terrorists are increasingly using technology and one of reasons for banning laptops

on board some airlines is because the bomb-makers are gaining more and more expertise in building bombs that can be contained in smaller amounts of space."

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SCO Summit brings Kazakhstan to center of world stage

Central Asia has rarely been at the center of geopolitics, but last week the world wound its way to Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, for not one, but three important global events.

First was the opening of the 17th Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit, which was attended by Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President

Xi Jinping, host-nation's President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with nearly two dozen fellow world leaders.

Concurrent with the opening of SCO Summit was the inauguration of World Expo 2017, which brought together pavilions from more than 100 countries, where representatives

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Financing SDG to exceed \$6 trillion annually

A top UN official said that estimates suggest that financing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) will require annual investments of around US\$6 trillion (or \$90 trillion over 15 years).

Meanwhile, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Development

For its part the UN System Task Team Working Group on Financing for Sustainable Development said \$17 trillion, a relatively small portion of annual global savings, could have an enormous impact.

If there is consistency amongst these estimates, it is that the financing needs for sustainable development are enormous. There is enough money to close this gap, but currently only a small portion of the global investment assets of banks, pension funds, insurers, foundations and multinational corporations is targeted at sectors and areas that advance sustainable development. The challenge will be unlocking the potential of the private sector and catalyzing financing from diverse private sector sources towards the SDGs.

During a one-day event in mid-April, held at the UN headquarters in New York, the UN General Assembly President Peter Thomson convened a high-level SDG Financing Lab highlighting the critical importance of sustainable finance for the achievement of the goals including climate action.

The event highlighted the critical importance of sustainable finance for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including climate action. It focused on how to drive the transformation to align financial markets with sustainable development, as well as showcased concrete ways in which Member States can approach the financing of



different SDGs.

While the sums announced seem enormous and complex, the fact is the cost of inaction will ultimately be far greater, said Mr. Thomson.

"It is no exaggeration to say that the costs of inaction might include putting at risk the future of humanity's place on this planet," he added.

Taking part in the event, UN Deputy Secretary General, Amina Mohammed, stressed that after the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda in 2015, governments needed to act on their promises and implement their own action plans to achieve the SDGs.

"It is in the interest of all countries, companies and people to tap the wealth of good that sustainable development will bring in

environmental, economic and social terms," she added.

Further, the UN official pointed out to partnerships between the government and the private sector and the engagement of youth as key aspects to stimulating investment and achieving sustainability.

In the meantime, the OECD Development Co-operation Report 2016 has identified five pathways to ensure the quantity and quality of investment for implementing the SDGs. Of these, blended finance is regarded as both largely underutilized and with high potential for impact.

The blended finance model uses development finance and philanthropic resources to mitigate risks and enhance returns for investors. 'Blending' can mobilize private capital to dramatically scale

up investment and development outcomes across a range of sectors and countries.

Citigroup, HSBC, Standard Chartered and Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation are joined in a public-private partnership developing new blended finance solutions, the Sustainable Development Investment Partnership. With partners including Danish pension fund PKA, USAID, the OECD, the World Economic Forum, the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency and others, the partnership aims to catalyze \$100 billion in private financing over five years to infrastructure projects in developing countries in support of the SDGs. It will leverage official funding to better mitigate risk and 'crowd-in' private sector capital.

The potential of finance to directly support progress towards the SDGs is enormous, especially in sectors such as infrastructure, telecommunications and water and sanitation where the funding gap is greatest.

However, a recent report by Development Initiatives cautions that the claims that blending can significantly plug the SDG funding gap have been based on little evidence to date. Improved transparency and data is required on where blended finance spending is going and on its impact on the ground. The report recommends development of a common reporting standard for better disclosure on who ultimately benefits from such financing.



“It is no exaggeration to say that the costs of inaction might include putting at risk the future of humanity's place on this planet.”

Cooperation Report 2016 estimated that the annual SDG financing gap in developing countries is \$2.5 trillion, or 3 percent of global Gross Domestic Product.

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In a 'World of Plenty,' Africa should not be in famine

Ahead of the 43rd G7 summit, which was held in Sicily, Italy on 26 - 27 May, non-governmental organizations (NGO) urged world leaders to urgently address the unprecedented level of famine currently affecting four African countries.

World leaders must step up and take action in fighting famine to prevent further catastrophic levels of hunger and deaths, said Oxfam's Executive Director Winnie Byanyima. "Political failure has led to these crises and political leadership is needed to resolve them. The world's most powerful leaders must act now to prevent a catastrophe happening on their watch," she said.

In northeast Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen, approximately 30 million people are severely food insecure. Of this figure, 10 million face emergency and famine conditions; this number is more than the entire population of London.

After descending into conflict over three years ago, famine has now been declared in two South Sudan counties and a third county is at risk if food aid is not provided. In Somalia, conflict alongside prolonged drought that was likely exacerbated by climate change has left almost seven million in need of humanitarian assistance. Drought has also contributed to cholera outbreaks and displacement.

Escaping hunger and conflict, Nigerians in the north-east of the country have sought refuge in the Lake Chad region which shares its borders with Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, where they once again face



high levels of food insecurity and disease outbreaks.

Meanwhile, the United Nations has warned that the ongoing conflict and drought conditions in Yemen will place nearly 17 million Yemenis in famine unless the world sends urgent humanitarian help.

These widespread crises are not confined within the four countries' borders. According to the UN Refugee Agency, almost two million South Sudanese have fled to neighboring countries, including Uganda, Ethiopia, and Kenya, making it the world's fastest growing refugee crisis. Due to the influx of South Sudanese refugees, the Bidi Bidi refugee camp in Uganda is now the largest in the world, placing a strain on local services.

Oxfam called on the G7 countries to provide its fair share of funding and focus on the crises by upholding their 2015 commitment to lift 500 million people out of hunger and malnutrition. So far, they have provided 1.7 billion dollars, just below 60 percent of their fair share. Meanwhile, only 30 percent of a 6.3-billion-dollar UN appeal for all four countries has been funded. Oxfam estimates that if each G7 country contributed its fair share, almost half of the appeal would be funded.

However, some of the recent actions by G7 nations do not bode well for accelerated action on famine. For instance, the US government has proposed significant cuts to foreign assistance, including a 30 percent

decrease in funding for the US Agency for International Development (USAID). The proposal also includes the elimination of Title II for Peace, a major USAID food aid program, which would mean the loss of over US\$1.7 billion in food assistance.

International Rescue Committee's (IRC) President David Miliband highlighted the importance of continuing US foreign assistance in order to alleviate humanitarian suffering abroad. "Global threats like Ebola and ISIS grow out of poverty, instability, and bad governance. Working to counteract these with a forward-leaning foreign aid policy doesn't just mean saving lives today, but sparing the US and its allies around the world the much more difficult, expensive work of combating

them tomorrow," he stated.

President Trump also called for the elimination of the US African Development Foundation which provides grants to under-served

How is famine defined?



communities in Sub-Saharan Africa. Meanwhile, UK's Prime Minister Theresa May has already abolished its climate change department.

In addition to scaling up humanitarian funding, G7 nations must commit to fund longer-term solutions that build resilience and improve food security to avoid large-scale disasters, including on climate change. "History shows that when donors fail to act on early warnings of potential famine, the consequence can be a large-scale, devastating loss of life...now clear warnings have again been issued," Oxfam stated.

The NGO went on to add that the international community has the power to end such failures by marshaling international logistics and a humanitarian response network to work sustainably with existing local systems to prevent famine and address conflict, governance, and climate change drivers. However, they need the will to do so.

Indonesia to buy crude oil from Nigeria

Former OPEC-member state Indonesia has indicated that it is interested in purchasing more crude oil from Nigeria. This was disclosed by Indonesian ambassador to Nigeria Harry Purwanto who declared the South-East Asian country's interest in Abuja when he paid a courtesy visit last week to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC).



The envoy noted that although Indonesia produced 900,000 barrels of crude oil per day, it supplements its 1.4 million barrels per day consumption with supplies from Nigeria, which supplies 18 percent and Saudi Arabia

which delivers 28 percent.

According to a statement from NNPC, Mr. Purwanto said Indonesia looked forward to lifting crude oil directly from Nigeria, rather than through a third party as is currently the case. The ambassador was quoted as saying that his country's president, Joko Widodo, had instructed Indonesia's national oil company, Pertamina, to direct its attention to Nigeria in its quest to meet that country's surging energy needs.

Indonesia's interest in Nigerian crude signified the soaring prospects for Nigerian oil's market share in Asian emerging economies which include China and India, having lost grounds in crude oil sales in the US due to shale oil exploration there.

For its part, NNPC said it was interested in working with Indonesia on its initiative to replace firewood and kerosene with Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) as primary domestic fuel for cooking. He said the corporation was aware of the huge success of the kerosene substitution program in Indonesia and would like a collaboration to help Nigeria achieve a similar feat.

NNPC added that it would also like to partner with Indonesia in the area of bio-fuels production to diversify the nation's energy mix and meet its energy needs. He challenged Indonesia to consider participating in an upcoming bid round in order to realize its aspiration of maintaining a presence in the Nigerian oil and gas sector.



Kenya launches SGR railway with funding from China

The largest infrastructure project in Kenya, the 472-km long Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) connecting the Kenyan capital with the key port city of Mombasa was inaugurated last week with President Uhuru Kenyatta and his entourage boarding the train for its first run.

The Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) is expected to bring wide range of benefits to the country and could spur economic growth of the whole region. "We have had to go through very many challenges; the court cases, the environmental issues and the political issues surrounding this project. The launch of this line today is a very proud moment for all Kenyans," said Deputy President William Ruto at the launch of the railway line.

The SCR is part of the country's Vision 2030, and is meant to fit into an ambitious plan to have the necessary infrastructure needed to make Kenya a middle income economy by 2030. This calls for new industrial parks and the roads, railways, ports, power generation plants and related facilities necessary to

support the envisioned industries. Managing Director of Kenya Railways, Atanas K. Maina noted that the project would help boost local people's livelihood. He said that the project funded by financial loan from the China Exim Bank, and constructed by China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) has helped to create jobs for Kenyans, and that more African young people can learn from the skills and technical training partnerships between Kenya and China.

"We can say without a doubt that in the last three years, a lot of Kenyans have been able to acquire skills. For the time that CRBC have been in Kenya, the bulk of their workforce, over 90 percent are locals. We believe that even when you go into operations and maintenance, we are working with CRBC. They will be able to hire a lot of locals who have acquired skills during construction and those who already have skills from other sectors within the economy," he said.

The new railway is also expected to benefit tourists and boost business in the region.





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Economic consequences of a hung Parliament



Diane Coyle
Professor of Economics at the University of Manchester and co-director of Policy@Manchester



The United Kingdom's just-completed election was supposed to provide — as the Conservative Party's campaign slogan put it — a 'strong and stable' government. It ended up doing the opposite, producing a hung parliament and the likelihood of another general election later in the year.

Meanwhile, the clock is ticking for concluding negotiations with the other 27 EU members on the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. To anyone with an inkling of how demanding and complicated the Brexit talks will be, and how ill-prepared British politicians and officials are for them, this is a depressing prospect.

Although a hung parliament, with the Tories attempting to form a minority government, might tilt UK politics in the direction of a 'softer' Brexit, at least in terms of the future trade relationship with the EU, it will probably leave Britain's political leaders even less able to cope with the negotiations. Britons will have to hope that EU leaders are willing to show some compassion: after all, the one clear message from voters was their lack of confidence in the alternatives on offer.

But the UK economy will be facing significant challenges — all but ignored during the election campaign — even without Brexit. One is the chasm between the winners and losers from trade and technology, a gap that goes a long way to explaining last year's pro-Brexit vote.

Related to this is the UK's shockingly low level of productivity. Of course, the gap between winners and losers — which broadly corresponds to the electoral map — is not unique to Britain; it has incited populism and other forms of anti-establishment politics across the West. Nor is the UK the only country to be experiencing flat or slow productivity growth.

But the UK's productivity level is some 16

percent lower than the G7 average. And it is by far the most regionally unequal EU economy.

To improve UK productivity, the country's underperforming regions must catch up. The Brexit vote makes it doubly necessary to focus on these poorer regions: to address the divisive politics that underpinned the narrow Leave majority, and to minimize the economic damage that the rupture with the UK's biggest trading partners, especially if badly negotiated, is sure to cause.

The best hope to tackle the profound structural problems came with the May government's pre-election announcement of its intention to adopt an industrial strategy. Although industrial policy is in line with May's corporatist instincts, the UK's policy classes have been allergic to the idea since the late 1970s.

Officials shudder at the memory of ill-fated interventions designed to prop up failing companies (such as carmakers and steel producers) or invest in ultimately doomed new technologies (Concorde, DeLorean cars). It did not take Margaret Thatcher long after her election in 1979 to downgrade the National Economic Development Office (known as Neddy), the body responsible for strategic state interventions, which was finally dismantled under Thatcher's successor, John Major, in 1992.

The allergy to industrial policy is particularly acute among those who equate it with subsidies and tax breaks. Yet, given that the government constantly intervenes in the economy, it surely makes sense to think about its actions and interactions with the private sector in a far more strategic way. Indeed, some below-the-radar — or even accidental — industrial policies have been rather successful.

Finance is one beneficiary, thanks to benign regulation and huge investment in infrastructure in the City of London and Canary Wharf. The pharmaceutical industry has been another, owing to special tax breaks such as the 'patent box' and the NHS as a huge customer.

The creative sector has benefited as well, thanks to the BBC. Although under constant political attack, the BBC acts exactly as a public partner should, undertaking research and development, setting technical standards, providing skills training, and adhering to open

procurement from small and medium-size suppliers, which are among the UK's most successful producers and exporters.

The economic case for industrial policy is compelling, so long as it is understood as a vehicle for strategy coordination, risk pooling, and the provision of public goods. The old mistakes — propping up lame-duck industries or betting on specific technologies — can largely be avoided through strong policies on competition and state aid (to ensure that support for the auto sector, say, is not seen as support only for current incumbents) and sunset clauses for specific assistance.

The case against not having an explicit industrial policy is also compelling. The accidental character of government intervention

helps explain why the economy is so regionally lopsided. For example, cost-benefit analyses of proposed infrastructure projects that rely on market metrics such as wage rates or property prices to assess potential benefits will create ever-increasing investment around London, and a vicious circle of apparently decreasingly attractive investment in the UK's north.

A strategic view would recognize the productivity benefits of seeding new clusters elsewhere — like the happenstance measures that put UK automakers in the northeast of England and the country's second-biggest broadcast-media sector outside London in Salford, Greater Manchester, when the BBC moved part of its operations there.

There is ample historical evidence of

the merits (and demerits) of specific policies. As Britain has long been plagued by seesaw policies and a plethora of headline-grabbing (but ineffective) initiatives, the real challenge will be to establish a political and institutional framework to implement viable initiatives, and to shape governmental interaction with the private sector.

Of course, any pre-election policy ideas might fall victim to political deals or simply the massive uncertainty implied by the recent election result. That would be a shame. The greater the political instability, the more acute is the need for a framework that will finally start to address the deep divisions and challenges facing the British economy.



“
Britons will have to hope that EU leaders are willing to show some compassion: after all, the one clear message from voters was their lack of confidence in the alternatives on offer.”

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Defending academic freedom in a populist age



Michael Ignatieff
A former leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, is President and Rector of Central European University.

I am the President of Central European University, which is now under attack. CEU is fighting to remain a free institution in Budapest, Hungary's capital, following the passage of new legislation that would, in essence, require the university to close.

CEU's battle has become a global cause célèbre. More than 650 colleges, universities, and professional associations have opposed Hungary's legal moves against CEU. Some 80,000 people marched through the streets of Budapest in our defense. Twenty-four Nobel laureates have lent their prestige to our cause. On June 22, one of them, Mario Vargas Llosa, will join us in Budapest for a conference on the global challenge to academic freedom.

We at CEU know that we are not the only university struggling to repel government attacks. Across Turkey, universities are being padlocked, and professors are being purged. In St. Petersburg, our sister European University struggles against repeated malicious attempts to close it down. These are but some of the threats that universities now face from without. Yet there are equally worrying threats from within.

At Middlebury College in the US state of Vermont, a crowd recently shouted down the conservative author Charles Murray, preventing him from speaking; in Oregon, a professor was harassed for refusing to join a protest against racism. And Europe is not immune: In Berlin and Dresden, professors have been harassed for their conservative views or for attempting to explain the appeal of the far right.

The people responsible for these episodes do not distinguish between criticism and harassment. But self-righteousness, especially when couched in the language of anti-sexism, anti-militarism, and anti-racism, closes all of us off from honest self-reflection. Today, it seems, those who are doing freedom the most harm are often those who benefit from it the most.

The best way to understand the double threat that academic freedom faces today – the danger from without and from within – is to step back from these controversies and return to first principles. What is academic freedom?

We need to be honest. Outside of university seminar rooms, research labs, and libraries, many people regard academic freedom as a privilege – and a dubious one at that. So let us tackle the issue of privilege head-on.

Those of us lucky enough to work in universities know how privileged we are, but there is a discomfort here. Our salaries are paid by citizens – through taxation, for example, or via tuition support for a son or daughter – who may never have finished secondary school, let alone attended university. We must be able to justify ourselves to them. Our doors must always be open to the public. We must communicate our research in an accessible fashion. And we must remove barriers that exclude our fellow citizens from the chance to learn with us. If we have privileges – and we do – they come



with responsibilities, which we must discharge conscientiously.

Academic tenure may be the most conspicuous privilege that needs to be addressed – and defended. If you ask people on the street what academic freedom means, some will say: it means professors have a job for life and no risk of being fired. In a world of pervasive economic insecurity, sinecures for the few look hard to justify. And yet there is a profound and compelling justification for this rather unique form of job security. Tenure for professors protects the right to pursue unpopular research and take unpopular positions. It is one of the counter-majoritarian bulwarks of a free society, like a free press or an independent judiciary.

Of course, like all privileges, academic tenure can be abused: those who get it, having written one good book, sometimes go to sleep intellectually for the rest of their lives. But others use it magnificently to advance learning and add to the stock of human knowledge. We should be proud of those who use tenure for the benefit of us all and be as vigilant as we can to withhold the privilege from those who are not worthy of it. Tenure is not the only aspect of university life that is unpopular. Academic freedom is commonly regarded as a kind of license for

self-appointed experts to talk a lot of nonsense on television, radio, and social media. As someone who has been called a "public intellectual," I confess to a few occasions when, through laziness or vanity, I allowed myself to pontificate on issues about which I had no real competence. The moral of my story is simple: stick to what you know. Otherwise, 'experts' give

expertise a bad name. Aversion to 'expertise' and rejection of 'establishment' authorities is a central element in the politics of populism. The honest, practical, plain-speaking majority is pitted against the complacent, condescending, and entitled mandarins.

The truth, however, is that populism is a politics of bad faith. Our societies would stop functioning without the expertise that comes from academic knowledge. Populist political leaders who win votes by disparaging experts – we can all choose our favorite examples – are bound to find themselves fumbling for the light switch when they come to power. Expertise remains essential to any decent governance whatsoever. But it is not enough to defend

academic expertise if all the public hears is a defense of our privileges as elites. The deeper problem that must be confronted is the erosion, in public opinion, of the link between academic freedom and the freedom of all citizens. Those who would say, "Academic freedom is my freedom, too," are a minority.

Those of us who believe in universities, who love them, for all their faults, who treasure what they have taught us, must proudly affirm

that our freedom is not a privilege, but a right that we have earned, when we serve truth and knowledge, on behalf of the societies we serve. But if universities are to regain the democratic support they need, it is vitally important for those of us within academia to respond honestly to outside criticism, instead of wincing in silent complicity when one of our colleagues plays around at being an 'expert'.

Continued on Page 14

“
The deeper problem that must be confronted is the erosion, in public opinion, of the link between academic freedom and the freedom of all citizens.
”

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Easy to make TOFU SCRAMBLE

There are several ways of preparing tofu: Deep fry, sear, press, grill, the list goes on. But sometimes, particularly in the morning, one does not have the energy to persuade tofu to become a more desirable texture. That is where tofu scrambles comes in.

Tofu scramble is how you are going use the block of tofu you have avoided marinating, dredging, and pan-frying for too many days. With tofu scramble, you can enjoy tofu's slightly mushy, slightly creamy texture as is. It is not going to pass for scrambled eggs, but it is a great breakfast, lunch or dinner option for those on the search for a new, less involved way of preparing tofu.

Finding tofu: When purchasing tofu, look for the firm or extra-firm type (other, more silken types will not retain their shape when stirred and sautéed). Depending on how much you bulk up your scramble with additional ingredients, you will want between 113 to 226 grams of tofu per person.

If you have time, slice the tofu into thin slabs, wrap it in paper towels, and press it under a heavy weight for about 15 minutes.

When preparing the scramble, always make sure to start with aromatics like onions and scallions to build flavor.

You will also need spices such as cumin, turmeric, chili powder and nutritional yeast.

Lastly, think about how you will want to eat your scramble. For that, you can opt for cubed avocado, cilantro, and hot sauce.



Ready your ingredients: Use your fingers to crumble the pressed tofu into small pieces. You could also use a fork or a potato masher to achieve the same effect. Avoid tearing the tofu to shreds - you will want to have chunks that are large enough that the outsides will brown while the middles stay creamy.

Dice or thinly slice the onions, shallots, and/or scallions; mince any garlic you are using; devein the greens and tear them into bite-sized pieces; and cut any other vegetables into a rough chop. If you are using vegetables that take a long time to cook such as potatoes, squash, or cauliflower, steam or blanch them before you get started at the stove. That way, you will not end up with rock-hard potato pieces in your final scramble.



Soften your vegetables: Add a couple tablespoons of oil to a heavy skillet over medium heat and start sautéing your aromatics. Cook them,

stirring occasionally, until the onions are translucent and everything is softening and relaxing. Be sure to season with salt and pepper as you go. Then add minced garlic, and any vegetables that need more time to cook and brown.



Add in the tofu: When the vegetables are cooked to your liking, dump in the crumbled tofu. Cook for about five to ten minutes, stirring occasionally but giving the tofu time to crisp up on the bottom. You can add additional oil if the scramble seems too dry and the tofu is sticking to the pan; it is also helpful to use a metal spatula to detach any crispy bits that have adhered to the bottom of the pan.



Add the spices: Use about one teaspoon of cumin, one teaspoon of chili powder, and 1/2 teaspoon of turmeric (mostly for color). You can adjust the spices according to your preferences. Pour a couple of tablespoons of water into the pan after you add the spices - this will help them to dissolve and to evenly coat all of the tofu and vegetables. Season liberally with salt and pepper.

Mix in the beans: If you are using canned beans, drain and rinse them. If you are using dried beans, make sure you have soaked and cooked completely before adding them. Stir them into the tofu and vegetables and cook until the beans are heated through (another three to four minutes).

Wilt the greens: When you are ready to eat, add a handful or two of torn greens and stir them around until they are slightly wilted and bright green. You can finish your scramble with a tablespoon or two of nutritional yeast for a savory, cheesy taste. Or, if you have a few carrots lying around, grate them into fine shreds and toss into the scramble for a bit of brightness and crunch.

Garnish and serve: You can eat your tofu scramble taco-style, wrapped in tortilla and topped with cubed avocado and Sriracha.



Parliament approves labor law bills

The Parliament, in its regular session on Tuesday, approved the report of the Health, Social and Labor Affairs Committee on two bills amending some provisions of the Private Sector Labor Law Number 6/2010..

The amended law states that "a worker is entitled to full end-of-service remuneration (indemnity) upon ending his service without deducting the amount paid by



the employer for the worker's contribution to the Public Authority for Social Security during the duration

of his employment." The revised law also stipulates that "a worker has the right to a 30-day paid annual leave

in the first year of service provided he completed at least six months under the employer. As in the case of employees in the government sector; the weekend holidays, public holidays and sick leave days shall not be counted as part of annual holidays."

During its sessions last week, the parliament also:

Approved bills on granting allowances and bonuses to Kuwaiti teaching staff in the ministries of

Education, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs

Rejected the Public Prosecution's request to lift the immunity of MPs, Waleed Al-Tabtabaei and Ahmed Al-Fadel; Al-Tabtabaei is accused of participating in the gathering in front of the Egyptian Embassy. Al-Fadel is involved in two cases: Audio-Visual (Press) Misdemeanor case number 26/2016 and another case filed by some advertising staff at the Ministry of Justice.



Bhavanites connect with nature on World Environment Day

On the occasion of World Environment Day, Indian Educational School (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan) Kuwait organized a variety of programs to celebrate the significance of the day.

The day started with a morning assembly by the primary kids clad in green with the mantra of 'Go Green'.



The school principal, T. Premkumar then addressed the students and teachers, emphasizing the importance of making the planet healthy and beautiful for inhabitants. He ended his speech with the wise saying: "When the last

tree is cut down, the last fish is eaten, and the last stream poisoned, you will realize that you cannot eat money."

On the occasion, the school's Supreme Council members led by the Head Boy and the Head Girl repeated slogans to save the environment and gave suggestions to make the environment clean in all the classes. The useful items that children made from trash during the 'Best out of Waste' campaign were then rolled out along the school corridors.

A short film-making competition organized by the Eco Club of Bhavans on 'Save Nature' turned out to be the highlight of the day, as the prize-bagging films had exceptionally high quality to them. Gayatri Rajeev and Malavika Krishna of Grade 9, Shubham Gupta and Team of Grade 10 and Nityansh of Grade 7 won the first, second and third prizes respectively. Principal Premkumar appreciated the initiative taken by the Eco Club and praised the creative efforts of the budding directors.

The celebration ended with a procession of office-bearers of different clubs who voiced their concerns about the continued harmonious existence of living beings on our beautiful planet Earth, and urged the new generation to fight the harmful agents that damage our environment.

Long-term Business Visas to India

To further strengthen historical ties between India and Kuwait, Indian Embassy has been issuing long-term (up to 5 year) Business Visa to businesspersons in Kuwait.

All are invited to avail this long-term business visa facility of up to 5 years duration with multiple entries for a fee of KD78.

Shorter duration business visa of 1 year duration with multiple entries is also available to businesspersons for a fee of KD38.

Applicants, along with an introductory letter from their Company in Kuwait and the purpose of visit may please visit Passport and Visa Centers of CKGS at (a) 17th Floor, Behbehani Building in Sharq :

Tel. No. 22440392 (e-mail: indiavisa.kuwait@ckgs.com) or ; (b) Complex Kais Alghanim, 4th Floor, Mecca Street, in front of Annod Complex in Fahaheel: Tel. No. 22909229 (e-mail: indiavisa.kuwait@ckgs.com). (c) Xcite Building, 2nd Floor, Block 1, Street 1, in Jleeb Al Shuyoukh (Abbasiya) Tel. No. 24342428 (e-mail: indiavisa.kuwait@ckgs.com) for this purpose. CKGS's website is <http://www.kw.ckgs.in>. All visas are issued within 72 hours.

During emergency, applicants can get business visa on the same working day. Indian Embassy accepts visa applications directly at its Visa Wing at an additional charge of KD12. Contact the Embassy Visa Officer at Telephone no. 22530600/ Ext 279.



NSH observes World Environment Day – 2017

World Environment Day was launched at various locations of NSH with awareness lectures, contests and sapling planting. The theme for 2017 'Connecting people to nature' was well elaborated during the awareness events.

NSH was responding to the call by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to cherish the planet that protects us, and that "without a healthy environment we can't end poverty or build prosperity;

we all have a role to play in protecting our only home". Winners were honored by Project Manager V.G. Nair who also planted saplings as a mark of respect to mother Earth. He hailed the environment team for their good work.

Awareness events and sapling plantings were also held in Ahmadi, led by P.V. Santhosh Kumar and in Al Zour where the campaign was headed by Dileep Kumar.

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PRAYER TIMINGS - KUWAIT

DAY	RAMADAN	DATE	IMSAK	FAJR	SUNRISE	DHUR	ASR	MAGRIB	ISHA
Sunday	16	June 11	3:01 AM	3:11 AM	4:48 AM	11:49 AM	3:23 PM	6:49 PM	8:19 PM
Monday	17	June 12	3:00 AM	3:10 AM	4:48 AM	11:49 AM	3:24 PM	6:50 PM	8:20 PM
Tuesday	18	June 13	3:00 AM	3:10 AM	4:48 AM	11:50 AM	3:24 PM	6:50 PM	8:20 PM
Wednesday	19	June 14	3:00 AM	3:10 AM	4:48 AM	11:50 AM	3:24 PM	6:51 PM	8:21 PM
Thursday	20	June 15	3:00 AM	3:10 AM	4:48 AM	11:50 AM	3:24 PM	6:51 PM	8:21 PM
Friday	21	June 16	3:01 AM	3:11 AM	4:48 AM	11:50 AM	3:24 PM	6:51 PM	8:21 PM
Saturday	22	June 17	3:01 AM	3:11 AM	4:48 AM	11:50 AM	3:24 PM	6:51 PM	8:21 PM
Sunday	23	June 18	3:01 AM	3:11 AM	4:49 AM	11:51 AM	3:25 PM	6:52 PM	8:22 PM
Monday	24	June 19	3:01 AM	3:11 AM	4:49 AM	11:51 AM	3:25 PM	6:52 PM	8:22 PM
Tuesday	25	June 20	3:01 AM	3:11 AM	4:49 AM	11:51 AM	3:25 PM	6:52 PM	8:22 PM
Wednesday	26	June 21	3:01 AM	3:11 AM	4:49 AM	11:51 AM	3:25 PM	6:52 PM	8:22 PM
Thursday	27	June 22	3:02 AM	3:12 AM	4:49 AM	11:52 AM	3:26 PM	6:53 PM	8:23 PM
Friday	28	June 23	3:02 AM	3:12 AM	4:50 AM	11:52 AM	3:26 PM	6:53 PM	8:23 PM
Saturday	29	June 24	3:02 AM	3:12 AM	4:50 AM	11:52 AM	3:26 PM	6:53 PM	8:23 PM



Iftar and Ghabka at Al Manshar Rotana Kuwait

Al Manshar Rotana is welcoming guests to their Failaka restaurant for Iftar and Ghabka during the holy month of Ramadan.

Enjoy the chef's finest choices and traditional Arabic cuisines combined with international delicacies that are bound to suit everyone's taste.

A mixture of traditional and contemporary décor including lantern displays and an elegant majlis welcomes everyone to the Failaka

restaurant's elegant atmosphere.

Among the dishes lined up are salads, hot mezzes, main dishes, an array of Arabic sweets, Ramadan juices and much more. A beautiful display of dates and dried fruits is also set for the guests to break their fasts.

Restaurant remains open from Iftar till 12 midnight.

For more information, call +965 2393 1263 or email: failaka.almanshar@rotana.com.

TVS Hyder Group hosts grand Iftar banquet



TVS Hyder Group hosted a grand Iftar banquet on 2 June at Teachers Society, Dasma. The grand Iftar was attended by prominent personalities from various associations in Kuwait.

The event started at 5pm with recitation of the Holy Quran by Ms. Ameera and very large number of community people from different associations attended the party.

Feroz Khan (TVS Cargo) welcomed the gatherings, association members, families, friends and the guests.

The special guests Moulavi Abdulul Ulama Sehu Ali Firthavzi a leading Islamic scholar, (Teacher - Rightway Islamic School - Madurai) and Tanjai Badusha (TMMK State Associate secretary) from Tamil Nadu delivered keynote address about Ramadan.

Non-Muslim members from different associations shared their greetings and delivered speeches about Ramadan.

Dr. Hyder Ali, Chairman, TVS Hyder Group thanked one and all for their presence. The function was organized by Arif, Fathima, Velladurai, Rasheed Khan, Mathi and all staff. Whole program was compeared by Vittukatti Mastan.

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ICSK Junior holds special Ramadan assembly



The students of Indian Community School Kuwait (ICSK) Junior, welcomed the holy month of Ramadan by holding a special assembly on 20 May by Class II and 30 May by class V.

A special assembly on Eid ul Fitr was conducted by the students that started with the recitation of the verses from the Holy Quran. This was followed by a short beautiful speech conveying the importance of love, peace, faith and hope in our lives. The students then performed a group song symbolic of the day, a beautiful rendition

of a Qawwali song and then, through a well-enacted skit, conveyed a moving and inspirational story on how we should keep the flame of hope and love, faith and peace burning in our hearts.

The Principal Sherly Dennis appreciated the participants and teachers-in-charge for the assembly. Through a few words she imparted to the students the importance of love and respect for others. After the prize distribution to the CCA winners for the month of May, the assembly ended with the Kuwait National Anthem.

Minimum payment in private, oil sectors KD75 per month

The Minister of Social Affairs and Labor has decreed that the minimum wage for workers in the private and oil sectors should be KD75. The decision by Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs, Hind Al-Sebeeh,

is also applicable to work contracts and permits, according to a ministry statement issued on Monday. Meanwhile, official spokesman of the Kuwaiti Workers Authority Aseel Al-Mazyad announced a union for workers in the private sector.



British Academy of Sport hosts Swim Gala

The British Academy of Sports (BAS) organized its second Swimming Gala where 45 advanced students, both boys and girls from 8 to 14 years, took part in a medley of races based on their age and ability.



The competition was intense with very strong sprints and finishes culminating in a jubilant atmosphere poolside from the highly excited parents and guests. Each student swam the four Olympic styles: Freestyle, Backstroke, Breaststroke

and Butterfly for 20 or 50 meters. At the end of the races each group was awarded with Gold, Silver and Bronze Medals for each swimming stroke. There was an electric buzz around the winners' podium especially as many of the students won more than one medal. The top swimmer in each age group received the BAS Swimming Trophy 2017. Meanwhile, the focus now shifts to the Summer Swim Camp which begins on Sunday 11 June and the Summer Arts and Sports Camp which runs from 02 to 20 July. Following the summer break BAS returns with a fabulous line up of 12 sports courses, including swimming, which will be launched at a mega Carnival weekend in September. For more information about BAS Activities please visit www.bas.edu.kw or call 99458013.

IEI Kuwait Chapter holds seminar on Energy Systems in Geo-biology

IEI Kuwait Chapter conducted its first seminar of the year, on 24 May at Kohinoor Restaurant in Fahaheel for all engineers in Kuwait, as part of the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) program of the Chapter.



The seminar topic was titled 'Energy systems in Geo-biology' and was delivered in two parts. Part

one was by Egr. Sundararajan, the former chairman of Kuwait Chapter and former head of the electrical department of Pan Arab Consultants in Kuwait, while the second part was given by Egr. Ravi Shankar who was the former Executive Committee member of the chapter. The balance of forces or the harmony of various energies in a space or building is the fundamental of all architecture. Geo-biology is study of the effects of bio- electromagnetic radiation emitted by various sources including Earth, Sun, Moon and the environment. The sick building syndrome, which is recognized by WHO (World Health Organization), points to the fact that illness can be due to working or staying in sick buildings caused by geopathic stresses that result in an imbalance in the energy field. The members enjoyed the presentation which was followed by a lively question and answer session.



ICSK exemplifies academic brilliance in CBSE Class X results

The exuberance of victory and cheer radiated all over the school premises as Indian Community School Kuwait (ICSK) students celebrated the school's success in the recently declared AISSE March 2017 result published by the Central Board of Secondary Examination (CBSE), Delhi. The 391 students, who appeared for the class X CBSE Examinations 2017, bagged 100 percent success.



ICSK carved a splendid niche with 58 students scoring Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) 10 with A1 in all the subjects. Subject-wise performances are as follows: - Out of 391 students appeared, 186 students have scored A1 grade in English, 29 students got A1 in Hindi and 75 students got A1 in French, 89 students scored the top grade of A1 in Mathematics, 96 students in Science and 107 students

secured A1 in Social Science. The result is even more commendable as ICSK sent the maximum number of students for Class X - AISSE 2016-17 among all the schools in Kuwait. The astounding and enthralling results were the outcome of diligence and deep commitment of the students

and their family, jelled with the tireless efforts of teachers. Students were fully committed to strenuous and continuous efforts and their ambitions refined their success story. The ICSK management, staff and students congratulated the achievers of ICSK for their stellar performance.

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Kuwaiti women denied leadership roles in public sector

Despite the presence of a large number of women in the public sector workforce they continue to be denied leadership roles in government institutions.

According to latest statistics issued by the Public Authority for Civil Information, the number of Civil Service Commission (CSC), the number of employees in the public sector was 445,480 of whom 317,169 or 71 percent were Kuwaitis. Of the Kuwaitis in the government sector, men accounted for 52 percent (164,940) and women were 48 percent (152,229). However, this close gender parity in employment was not reflected in the leadership roles given to Kuwaiti women in public sector.

Some experts believe the crisis

faced by Kuwaiti women in taking up leadership positions in the public sector is based on many factors. They are mainly employed in education and health sectors, and 'wasta' (connections) also plays a big role in selection of leaders. They also highlighted favoritism for male employees in most cases for leadership positions.

Head of Kuwait's Liberal Movement Iman Hayat explained that Kuwaiti women now excel in all fields. They outshine their male counterparts in the university because, when a woman studies or works, she pays attention to details and ends up performing well. The problems Kuwaiti women suffer from in employment hierarchies could be a



result of preplanned marginalization.

Hayat insisted that it is high time for Kuwaiti women to take up all jobs without just focusing only on health

and education sectors. She said though women constitute nearly half of all employees in the public sector, there was scarcity of women in

leadership positions because of wasta and nepotism.

For his part, Professor of Psychology at Kuwait University Dr. Khader Al-Baroun said Kuwaiti women have been known for their excellence and their perseverance against difficulties. He stressed that they stood side-by-side with their male counterparts before the discovery of oil and the threshold of luxury life.

Dr. Al-Baroun indicated that the insistence of Kuwaiti women to work in the public sector is connected with the stability factor. He said the high number of women in the public sector also reveals that the number of women is more than men in the Kuwaiti society.



SUPW activities in ICSK Junior

ICSK Junior students of Class I and II had Gift Wrapping as a part of SUPW activity on 15 May. Gift wrapping is not only an activity but also it is a nice art. Children were taught to pack articles with gift paper for good presentation while giving a gift to their loved ones. Child safe scissors, special gift paper, glue and decorative items were used as tools.

Meanwhile, students of Class III were taught to make different type of

flowers with satin ribbons. These fun filled activities were meant to make children think creatively.

Puppets are a great way to engage the attention and imagination of children. Children of Kindergarten had a hand puppet day on 24 May. Kids enjoyed coloring the picture of happy holidays for their hand puppet and teachers stuck the color pictures on Popsicle stick to make hand puppets.

A special day was also celebrated

by the Kindergarten students on 31 May to commemorate the Earth Day. 'Go Green' was the thought behind the activity to inculcate the importance of saving trees in the coming generations to ensure a healthy and green earth.

Children were asked to bring old T-Shirts and were made to hand print the images of trees on the t-shirt. Children enthusiastically printed their t-shirts.



Mother's Day at Integrated Indian School

The kindergarten wing of Integrated Indian School celebrated Mother's Day on 14 May.

The toddlers made their mother's

extremely happy with the variety program. It commenced with the assembly followed by the address of the principal Arul Dharmaraj

Thomas and kindergarten teachers. Various games were conducted in which every mother took active part and made their wards very happy. The purpose behind all these is to build a strong bond between mothers, children and the school. Children presented cards to their mothers to show their love and respect towards them. Parents highly appreciated the program and thanked the principal and teachers for the wonderful entertainments and thoughtfulness shown to them by the school. All the parents were presented with a participation certificate by the management.



Environment Day at Integrated Indian School



World Environment Day was celebrated on 5 June with full enthusiasm by Integrated Indian School under the theme 'Connect People to Nature'.

The Student Council of Integrated Indian School took the initiative to conduct a short film fest based on World Environment Day illustrating mankind's impact, images of sprawling urban housing, focusing on the current environmental conditions changing the perspective of our present situation. The theme based film empowered the students to become active agents

of sustainable and equitable development. It promoted that the pupil are pivotal in changing their attitude towards the environment for making a safe future. The film had a simple yet effective message. "This is our home and only we are responsible to maintain its natural beauty forever and now is the time to act." The film reinforced the three R's of environmental conservation, Reuse, Reduce and Recycle. It inspired the students and teachers and encouraged for positive action regarding protection of the environment..

TKS holds Executive Committee elections



The Telugu Kala Samiti (TKS) Election Committee announced that the following members have occupied the positions in the TKS Executive Committee for the year 2017- 18. The elected members are: President Vasu Maguluri; Vice President Charles N; General Secretary Parthasarathi P; Joint Secretary Subba Rao Mudda; Treasurer Babu Naidu P; Executive Member (Abuhalifa) Sridhar Kethavarapu; Executive Member (Abuhalifa) Naga Jyothy Ravuri;

Executive Member (Abbasiya) Ravi Garne; Executive Member (Fahaheel/ mangaf/ Ahmadi) Srikanth A K; Executive Member (Farwaniya/ riggae/omaria/ City) Venkata Ratnam and Executive Member (Salmiya) Bhavani Vikram Joshi.

The election committee would like to express its appreciation for the unity and support displayed by all members in completing the election process successfully, and wishes the new executive committee great success during their tenure.



Alongside the religious obligations, Ramadan in Kuwait is marked with a variety of customs and rituals that have been observed by generations in Kuwait and evoke the past with all its beautiful details.

Like elsewhere in the Muslim world, people in Kuwait fast from dawn to sunset throughout the month. Ramadan in Kuwait is a time of prayer, charity and heightened piety. Ranging from traditional costumes and dishes to special Ramadan celebrations, Kuwaiti families continue to revive authentic traditions that heighten social values and promote harmony among members of society.

Despite the progress of life and civilization, Ramadan-related customs such as Graish, Gergean, Ghabgah, and the Iftar cannon maintain their inherent traditional color.

In Kuwait, Ramadan gathers people through shared meals and other communal activities, and among these social customs is



'Graish', a traditional pre-Ramadan feast when family members and friends gather to celebrate the last day of the month of Sha'aban and to prepare for Ramadan fasting.

The holy month's social activities primarily include the 'Ghabgah' gathering; it is a dinner party between the Iftar meal at sunset and the suhoor meal at dawn, where family

Ramadan Celebrations

steeped in traditions among Kuwaitis



of children and families daily. A single shot announces the end of a fast, while two shots announce the beginning of the Holy Month of Ramadan, and Eid Al-Fitr.

The Holy Month of Ramadan is an interesting blend of piety and festivity; an ambience of celebration sweeps the country where coffee houses and restaurants are full in the evening, there are a host of special offers on various goodies, and more enjoyable social gatherings are organized.

Although many of the customs and traditions have changed over the years, and almost all of the forms of

and friends share food, stories and enjoy each other's company.

Since Ramadan is considered to be the most sacred month of the whole year, children also have their share of fun through a well rooted tradition called 'Gergean', which usually takes place between the 13th and 15th nights of the holy month of Ramadan.

Dressing up in their finest traditional clothes, boys and girls stroll around their neighborhoods, singing happy songs as they knock on their neighbors' doors seeking treats and candy in exchange for a song.

Another significant Ramadan tradition that has stood the passage of time is the Iftar cannon stationed at the beautifully restored Naif Palace in Kuwait. The cannon sounds announce



the time for breaking the fast.

Even though times have changed, and the tradition is quite old, the firing of the cannon attracts droves

these activities have become modified and reinterpreted to fit modern lifestyles, the spirit of Ramadan in Kuwait continues to thrive.

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The University of Mysore is a public state university locating in Mysore, Karnataka, India recognized by the University Grants Commission, the statutory body supervising the functioning of all Indian universities. The university was founded in 1916, sixth oldest university in India and accredited "Grade A" by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), India. Mysore University offers diverse programs in various streams. The main goal of Mysore University is to provide normal and distance education the the students.

Universal Institute (UI) has arranged to provide the post graduate and under graduate courses of University of Mysore in Kuwait. Universal Institute will provide required teaching material and extensive tutorial support/training to the students at its facility in Kuwait. The exams will be conducted by the University of Mysore and degree will be awarded by the University directly to the student. This arrangement is most suitable for students who wish to pursue higher education while staying in Kuwait.

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Indians top list of 13,000 expats deported this year



Thirteen thousand expatriates of various nationalities have been administratively deported from Kuwait this year until date, quoting deportation administration sources.

The source pointed out the deportees included violators of residence and labor laws, criminals, those who had committed serious traffic violations and misdemeanors or other crimes.

The source explained Indians topped the list of deportees with 23%; Egypt came in second place with 20%, Philippines third with 17%, Ethiopians fourth with 15%, Sri Lanka fifth with 7% and Bangladeshi sixth with 6%. The sources noted the six nationalities made the bulk of the deportees at 88 percent and of other nationalities 12 percent.

Indian Embassy to mark 3rd International Day of Yoga

The Indian embassy has announced that it will be celebrating the 3rd International Day of Yoga in Kuwait (IDY-2017) at its premises in the Diplomatic Enclave, Arabian Gulf Street, Daiyah Area, Safat 13015.

The event is scheduled for Saturday, 17 June from 6:30am to 8:30am. Members of prominent yoga institutions in Kuwait, such as Art of Living, Heartfulness, Harmony House, Sevdarshan and Amma Kuwait will be participating in the event. All yoga enthusiasts are cordially invited to attend this session.

New security concerns in the region

Continued from Page 1

Commenting on the approach of the United States, Chertoff said, "There is a lot of debate on why people become terrorists; some are alienated in their own country, while for others religion is the rationalisation for acts of violence. From extremist views of a particular religion is born an ideology that leads to terrorism."

The US also does things that are sometimes unhelpful, such as making irresponsible comments and generalising, or pointing at a particular religion as being responsible for terrorism.

This is a big mistake, the right way to approach is to work together on this as most people are good and want to be safe, but there are fringe elements who have to be dealt with differently. Alienating entire communities might not be a good idea.

On the present US administration, Chertoff agreed that there had been rhetoric during the election campaign that was unhelpful. But he pointed to President's Trump recent speech in Saudi Arabia where he said it was a fight against good vs

evil it was a welcome change from the earlier stand blaming religion for the problems.

On the level of preparedness by Gulf states, Chertoff said having worked with Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and some other Gulf states in the region he found that they were aware that they were in an area where there was a lot of danger and they had done a good job in building intelligence and defence capabilities.

Chertoff, who co-authored the Patriot Act, which is deemed to have made US a safer place, said it was time to refresh the technology and approach used at airport security. "Frankly we built our security around the way Al-Qaeda operated, which was to get on airplanes and blow them up.

But now, we have to look at the way IS operates, which is to take any target even a few people and engage in a terrorist act."

There is a need to think of new technologies and procedures to screen people with high risk and that process is now underway, even European airports are now considering this, he concluded.

SCO Summit brings Kazakhstan to center of world stage

Continued from Page 1

would be presenting the best that their nations offered to millions of visitors over the next three months. Also slated to take place this week in Astana is the next round of the Syrian Peace Talks that aims to bring about a resolution to a conflict that has raged on mercilessly for the last six years.

The rapid pace of events unfolding in the Kazakh capital has reinforced the country's growing influence on the global arena, where last week Kazakhstan assumed the rotation presidency of the United Nations Security Council. Kazakhstan says that it is leading not just for itself but on behalf of a broader regional and international community.

This view was reiterated at the end of the SCO Summit when Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev said, "We discussed the current state of affairs, further steps to promote comprehensive cooperation, as well as current international issues related to the activities of the SCO. I am sure that the exchange of views that took place, as well as the initiatives and proposals put forward, will find practical application taking into account the interests of our countries. Such an approach will strengthen relations within the SCO and will help to increase the effectiveness of the Organization's activities."

At the conclusion of their summit on Friday, the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and newly joined members India and Pakistan, strongly condemned all forms of terrorism and agreed to jointly fight international terrorism. A statement released on behalf of the leaders said that they stand firmly against linking terrorism with any religion, and condemn all intolerant, discriminatory and violent activities against religious people.

The organization stressed the core coordination role of the United Nations and its Security Council in the fight against international terrorism and in international anti-terrorism cooperation, saying the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, as well as norms of international laws, should be strictly observed. The leaders warned against the propaganda and

instigation of terrorism and extremism through the internet, as well as the recruitment activity for such purposes, calling for comprehensive measures to combat the spread of terrorist and extremist thoughts. The SCO leaders reiterated the prohibition against undermining state sovereignty, equality and territorial integrity, the prohibition against intervening in domestic affairs, saying that there is no tolerance for using terrorist or extremist groups for political or geopolitical purposes.

The SCO leaders reiterated to jointly fight all types of terrorist and extremist organizations listed by any SCO member.

With the accession of India and Pakistan at the 17th SCO summit in Astana, the SCO now covers three-fifths of Eurasia, has nearly half the world population and nearly 20 percent of the global GDP. Since its inception in 2001, the SCO has played an exemplary role in building a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation. As a driving force in regional security and stability, the SCO has made security cooperation a priority. The expansion from six to eight members will further improve its potential for cooperation and representation and boost international security and stability. The expansion also indicates that the 'Shanghai Spirit', which created the organization in the first place, has been recognized by more and more countries and that it has a bigger appeal in regional cooperation.

Speaking at his first SCO summit meeting after India's membership, Prime Minister Modi thanked the leaders for accepting India's membership and said that India is prepared and committed to creating an active and positive partnership with SCO. Calling terrorism a major threat to humanity, the Indian premier added, "Terrorism is one of the biggest violators of human rights and human values. We will have to make coordinated efforts to counter the menace of terrorism."

We have extensive cooperation with SCO nations and we want to deepen this by focusing on connectivity with respect for sovereignty and regional integrity, as well as inclusivity and sustainability, said the Indian premier.

Defending academic freedom in a populist age

Continued from Page 7

Likewise, we must also stop jargon from taking over academic discourse entirely. I have attended too many seminars, in some great universities, which degenerated into a closed language game played by a coven of initiates who prized obscure self-referential congratulation over honest engagement with reality. So, yes, the outside world is often right. Some academics give academic freedom a bad name.

But it is equally true that the scholars I have revered all my life – true giants like Isaiah Berlin, Albert Hirschman, David Landes, and Judith Shklar, to choose but four – all had the gift of clarity. Their work expressed a moral obligation to the truth and to their society: to be accessible to their fellow citizens about the problems we face together. These are our great ones, the men and women of deep learning whose use of their academic freedom gives luster to our own.

Enough said about the threats from within. I put them first, because if we cannot defend the best among us and criticize the worst, if we cannot discharge our responsibilities to our fellow citizens, if we cannot prevent our independence from serving coercive political correctness, academic freedom will perish at the hands of its privileged beneficiaries.

But the threats from without are no less serious. I will not rehearse our 'little

local difficulty' as the British might call it, in Budapest. Negotiations are underway between the Governor's office in the state of New York, where CEU degrees are accredited, and the government of Hungary. I want negotiations to succeed, so that my colleagues and I can resume the daily – and now, it seems to us, blessed – life of a normal academic institution.

So the less said in public about the battle with the Hungarian government the better. But I can reflect on what the episode has taught me about the relationship between the freedom of universities and democratic freedom itself.

We have shrunk the scale and scope of academic freedom when we use it to refer only to the private privileges of individual members of a corporate caste. For academic freedom surely also means a community's collective right to govern itself in order to serve the wider society. We have given so much attention to the meaning of academic freedom for individuals that we have neglected its implications for the organization of society. And yet those implications are essential: unless institutions can defend their right to govern themselves against outside forces, they cannot effectively defend the individual rights of their members within. As for CEU, we have demonstrated that one common cliché about freedom happens to be true: it is worth what you are prepared to pay for it. Those who do not fight for their

freedom will lose it.

But I must emphasize that we have been able to do so because a private endowment gives us the resources to do so. Turkish and Russian academic institutions lack these resources.

Our endowment comes from a single philanthropist: George Soros. No man has done more for Hungary, and no man has been more unfairly traduced. In the battle that we have fought to keep CEU in Budapest, Soros has respected academic freedom a good deal better than the Hungarian government has.

The larger point is that the state is not the only source of external pressure on universities. No academic institution is free if its executive is controlled by its benefactors. No institution will receive authoritative accreditation, as CEU has done – with both New York State and the US Middle States Commission on Higher Education – unless it can demonstrate that it is entirely independent of those who provide it with resources.

So CEU's academic freedom – and that of any academic institution – must mean both freedom from the state and freedom from any private interest. Neither freedom is unlimited. All rights should be bounded by obligations. In relation to private interests, the university accepts a fiduciary responsibility to account for its use of resources and to use them exclusively for the purposes of teaching and research. In relation to the state, a university, while free to challenge the law and dissent

from it, must also obey it.

I come out of the battle for CEU more convinced than ever that financial independence is a critical guarantee of academic freedom. So universities that are exclusively dependent on government funding should diversify their sources of support. Academic freedom is always more secure when it rests on many pillars. Defending academic freedom successfully means multiplying a university's network of connections to the wider society. There are, no doubt, both perils and opportunities in a university's engagement with the private sector. It is good for research and good for our students to welcome partnerships with private companies. We can produce knowledge together, share the income from patents, and train students to be their future employees. But every contract we write with the private sector must safeguard the integrity of our research agendas, our curricula, and our appointment criteria. Universities are not businesses: we are self-governing non-profit institutions with purposes that are distinct from those of commercial enterprises. When both sides understand the rules of engagement, both can benefit from the knowledge we create together.

Ultimately, academic freedom depends on the health of democratic institutions. When democracies are weak, when majoritarian populists erode checks and balances, press freedom, and judicial independence, universities are

especially vulnerable. That is what has happened in Hungary.

To survive, universities need to do whatever they can to strengthen the democratic institutions that protect them, and they must seek and earn the solidarity of the societies they serve. That is the ultimate guarantee of their freedom.

Democracy, after all, is much more than its machinery. All of its institutions – majority rule, minority rights, checks and balances, independent judiciary, free press – are animated by the noble ideal of self-government, the idea of free communities choosing their aims for themselves, giving themselves rules by consent, and discharging obligations of protection and care to their members.

This ideal first took root in Europe, in the medieval universities of Bologna, Salamanca, Oxford, Cambridge, and the Sorbonne, and the great early modern universities of eastern Europe: Charles University in Prague, Jagiellonian University in Kraków, and Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. All of them, founded centuries ago, are still self-governing institutions, embodying the ideal of self-rule that is the very core of the democratic faith.

The battle for academic freedom is never over: we must defend it against its enemies from within and without. On both fronts, our success ultimately depends on convincing our fellow citizens that when we fight for ourselves, we are also fighting for them.

Wireless, battery-less pace maker for the heart

A new pacemaker that can be implanted directly into a patient's heart without trailing wires or onboard batteries was revealed last week by researchers from Rice University in Texas and the Texas Heart Institute (THI).

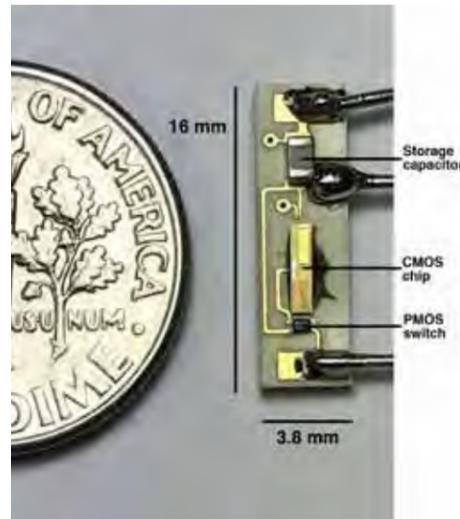
The pacemaker, which was presented at the International Microwave Symposium in Honolulu, harvests energy wirelessly from microwave radio frequency radiation transmitted by an external battery pack.

Pacemakers use electrical signals to prompt the heart to keep a steady beat, but they have traditionally not been implanted directly into a patient's heart. Instead, they are located away from the heart, where surgeons can periodically replace their onboard batteries with minor surgery; their electrical signals are transmitted to the heart via wires called 'leads'.

Some of the common problems with this

arrangement are complications related to the leads, including bleeding and infection. The prototype wireless pacemaker reduces these risks by doing away with leads and onboard batteries that need to be changed. Moreover, these wirelessly powered microchips can be implanted directly to pace multiple points inside or outside the heart.

"This technology brings into sharp focus the remarkable possibility of achieving the 'Triple Crown' of treatment of both the most common and most lethal cardiac arrhythmias: external powering, wireless pacing and, far and away most importantly, cardiac defibrillation that is not only painless but is actually imperceptible to the patient," said Dr. Mehdi Razavi, director of clinical arrhythmia research and innovation at THI. The chip at the system's heart is less than 4 millimeters wide



and incorporates the receiving antenna, an AC-to-DC rectifier, a power management unit and a pacing activation signal. A capacitor and switch join the chip on a circuit board that is smaller than a dime. The chip receives power using microwaves in the 8 to 10 gigahertz electromagnetic frequency spectrum.

The frequency of the pacing signals produced by the pacemaker can be adjusted by increasing or decreasing power transmitted to the receiving antenna, which stores it until it reaches a predetermined threshold. At that point, it releases the electrical charge to the heart and begins to fill again.

The team successfully tested the device in a pig and demonstrated it could tune the animal's heart rate from 100 to 172 beats per minute; research on humans is still awaiting permissions.

Benefits to the brain from walking



You probably know that walking does your body good, however, new research now shows that it is not just your heart and muscles that benefit, but also your brain.

Researchers at New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU) have found that the foot's impact during walking sends pressure waves through the arteries that significantly modify and can increase the supply of blood to the brain.

Until recently, the blood supply to the brain (cerebral blood flow or CBF) was thought to be involuntarily regulated by the body and relatively unaffected by changes in the blood pressure caused by exercise or exertion. The NMHU research team had earlier found that the foot's impact during running caused significant impact-related retrograde (backward-flowing) waves through the arteries that sync with the heart rate and stride rate to dynamically regulate blood circulation to the brain.

In the current study, the research team used non-invasive ultrasound

to measure carotid artery blood velocity waves and arterial diameters to calculate hemispheric CBF to both sides of the brain of healthy young adults during standing upright rest and steady walking (1 meter/second). The researchers found that though there is lighter foot impact associated with walking compared with running, walking still produces large pressure waves in the body that significantly increase blood flow to the brain. While the effects of walking on CBF were less dramatic than those caused by running, they were greater than the effects seen during cycling, which involve no foot impact at all.

"What is surprising is that it took so long for us to finally measure these obvious hydraulic effects on cerebral blood flow," said the study authors. "There is an optimizing rhythm between brain blood flow and ambulating. Stride rates and their foot impacts are within the range of our normal heart rates (about 120/minute) when we are briskly moving along," they added.

Self-ventilating workout suits for athletes

A team of MIT researchers has designed a breathable workout suit with ventilating flaps that open and close in response to an athlete's body heat and sweat.

The ventilating flaps, which range from thumbnail to finger-sized, are lined with live microbial cells that shrink and expand in response to changes in humidity. The cells act as tiny sensors and actuators, driving the flaps to open when an athlete works up a sweat, and pulling them closed when the body has cooled off. The researchers have also fashioned a running shoe with an inner layer of similar cell-lined flaps to air out and wick away moisture.

In nature, biologists have observed that living things and their components, from pine cone scales to microbial cells and even specific proteins, can change their structures or volumes when there is a change in humidity. The MIT team hypothesized that natural shape-shifters such as yeast, bacteria, and other microbial cells might be used as building blocks to construct moisture-responsive fabrics. The team printed parallel lines of the common, non-harmful strain of the bacteria *E. coli* onto sheets of latex, creating two-layer structures, and exposed the fabric to changing moisture conditions. When the fabric was placed on a hot plate to dry, the cells began to shrink, causing the overlying latex layer to curl up. When the fabric was then exposed to steam, the cells began to glow and expand,

causing the latex flatten out.

The researchers then worked the bio-fabric into a wearable garment, designing a running suit with cell-lined latex flaps patterned across the suit's back. They tailored the size of each flap, as well as the degree to which they open, based on previously published maps of where the body produces heat and sweat. Support frames underneath each flap keep the fabric's inner cell layer from directly touching the skin, while

flaps effectively removed sweat from the body and lowered skin temperature, more so than when participants wore a similar running suit with nonfunctional flaps.

The team also integrated the moisture-responsive fabric into a rough prototype of a running shoe. Where the bottom of the foot touches the sole of the shoe, the researchers sewed multiple flaps, curved downward, with the cell-lined layer facing toward, but not touching, a runner's foot. They again



at the same time the cells were able to sense and react to humidity changes in the air lying just over the skin.

In trials, study participants donned the garment and worked out on exercise treadmills and bicycles while researchers monitored their temperature and humidity using small sensors positioned across their backs. After five minutes of exercise, the suit's flaps started opening up, right around the time when participants reported feeling warm and sweaty. According to sensor readings, the

designed the size and position of the flaps based on heat and sweat maps of the foot. As with the workout suit, the flaps on the running shoe opened and lit up when researchers increased the surrounding humidity; in dry conditions the flaps faded and closed.

Going forward, the team is looking to collaborate with sportswear companies to commercialize their designs, and is also exploring other uses, including moisture-responsive curtains, lampshades, and bed-sheets.

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Elements of INTERIOR DECOR

Decorating your house is fun, but it calls for a lot of effort and time on your part and the help of experts if you are thinking of designing from scratch. Here we bring you some of the essentials of interior decoration.

When doing any interior it is necessary to think of the house as a totality; a series of spaces linked together by halls and stairways. It is therefore appropriate that a common style and theme runs throughout. This is not to say that all interior design elements should be the same but they should work together and complement each other to strengthen the whole composition. Below are some of elements that you need to consider:

Style: Your first step should be to select a style for your home interior. This will promote the design principle of unity and harmony, thinking of the entire home with a unifying theme. It can be as simple as choosing casual instead of formal or traditional instead of contemporary. From there, you can refine it to more specific styles.

Balance: This is another principle that helps distribute the visual weight in a room. You can do it symmetrically, as is common in traditional interiors, or with asymmetrical balance as seen in casual interiors.

Focal point: A well-designed room always has, depending on the size of it, one or more focal points that set itself apart by scale, color or texture. A focal point must be dominant to draw attention and interesting enough to encourage the viewer to look further. A focal point thus must have a lasting impression but must also be an integral part of the decoration linked through scale, style, color or theme.

A large framed picture or a flat TV is the first example that most people think of when we talk about a room focal point. If you do not have a natural focal point in your space, you can create one by highlighting a particular piece of furniture, or by simply painting a contrasting color in one area. Try to maintain balance, though, so that the focal point does not hog all of the attention.

Rhythm: In interior design, rhythm is

all about visual pattern repetition. To achieve this, you need to think about repetition, progression, transition and contrast. Using these mechanisms will impart a sense of movement to your space, leading the eye from one design element to another.



Repetition is the use of the same element more than once throughout a space. You can repeat a pattern, color, texture, line, or any other element, or even more than one element.

Progression is taking an element and increasing or decreasing one or more of its qualities. The most obvious implementation of this would be a gradation by size. A cluster of candles of varying sizes on a simple tray creates interest because of the natural progression shown.

You can also achieve progression via color, such as in a monochromatic color scheme where each element is a slightly different shade of the same hue. Transition is a little harder to define. Unlike repetition or progression, transition tends to be a smoother flow, where the eye naturally glides from one area to another. The most common

transition is the use of a curved line to gently lead the eye, such as an arched doorway or winding path.

Finally, contrast is fairly straightforward. Putting two elements in opposition to one another, such as black and white pillows on a sofa, is the hallmark of this design principle. Opposition can also be implied by contrasts in form, such as circles and squares used together. Contrast can

be quite jarring, and is generally used to enliven a space. Be careful not to introduce too much contrast that could shake the total experience

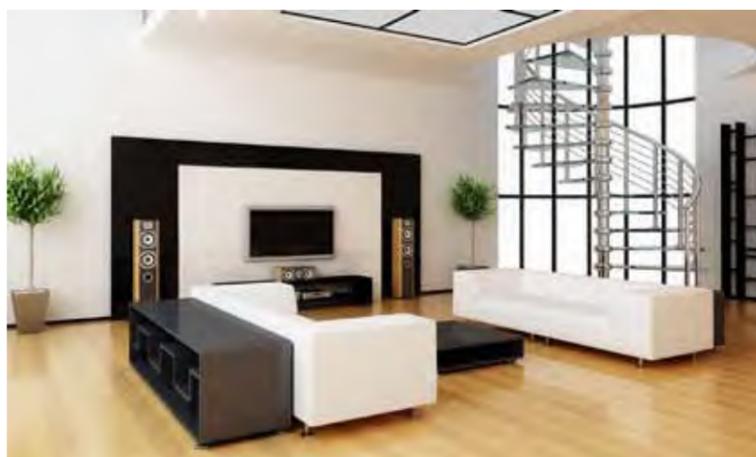
Detail: Another important element of interior design where it is necessary to take infinite pains is details. Everything from the trimming on the lamp shade, the color of the piping on the scatter cushion, to the light switches and cupboard handles need attention. Details should not be obvious but they should be right, enhancing the overall feel of a room.

Scale and Proportion: These two design principles go hand in hand, since both relate to size and shape. Proportion has to do with the ratio of one design element to another or one element to the whole. Scale concerns itself with the size of one object compared to another.

Color: Choosing a color palette is one of the most essential parts of interior design. Colors have a definite impact on the atmosphere that you want to create when doing interior design. While you could have a different style and color scheme in each room, often you will want to tie the whole dwelling together. You will want to consider the right colors for a small room as well as the right colors and patterns for a large room.

Patterns: While patterns do not have to match, they still need to complement and coordinate with each other by considering their color, size and scale.

From the entry to the family room and the kitchen to the home office, you can find decorating help online for every room in your home. Explore the basics of setting up a room and the finishing touches to make your space a reflection of your personality and good taste.



Centrepoint presents festive

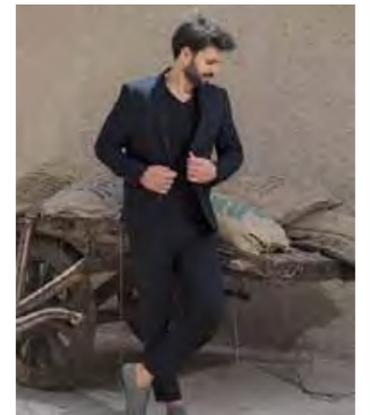
Ramadan collection



Centrepoint, the region's largest fashion retailer, has created a special Ramadan collection encompassing a selection of fashion, kids wear, footwear, accessories, cosmetics and home décor.

boys sees a more relaxed and comfortable vibe with highlights including washed chinos, half placket shirts, mock polos, shorts with suspenders and pleated trousers.

Shoe Mart's selection of footwear styles ensure ease and style, featuring beautiful bows, sequins and pearls embellishing the season's range of stilettos,



Make your home a setting of style and elegance, with Lifestyle's collection of Ramadan inspired décor, furnishing and home fragrances. Customized Arabic calligraphy has been interwoven in to the design of the collection that evokes the positive feelings one experiences during Ramadan.

Dress to impress with Splash's festive collection for the holy month and Eid celebrations with the women's fashion collection that features long silhouettes with a modern aura and fresh colors and prints. Easy flowing lines are complemented by volume sleeves, setting the ground for a dramatic mood. The men's collection for the season is classic with modern tailoring touches for a perfect sharp and dressed up look.

Babyshop's beautiful collection of party dresses in summer whites and soft pastel are showcased in tapestry-inspired vintage floral prints in mesh-enclosed floral dresses, maxi jumpsuits, prom dresses, and 2-piece skirt and trouser sets.

The collection for well-groomed

sneakers and sandals as well as hand bags and feminine backpacks.

The Men's footwear collection focuses on casual summer style options in sporty sneakers, strapped sandals, casual loafers, canvas trainers

Handbags in natural leather in a range of tan tones are the pick of this season with floral prints and mineral and gemstone fixtures and adding a touch of luxury to minimalist hardware.

As the humidity and high temperatures soar, Lifestyle's range of color cosmetics promotes glowing skin, vibrant glossy lips, and a soft nude color palette - based makeup.

Get your hands on the latest Ramadan collection at Centrepoint stores located in Al Rai, Avenues, Hawally, Salmiya, Fintas, Jahra, Fahaheel, Sulaibhikhat, Kuwait City and Khaitan.

Now open at Hawally - Commercial complex, Tunis street.



Google curriculum to help kids learn internet safety

Google has launched an educational program designed to teach kids about phishing, internet harassment, passwords, and other internet safety issues. Called 'Be Internet Awesome', it includes a classroom curriculum and a video game called Interland. It was developed with help from teachers, YouTube videographers, and internet safety and literacy organizations, and resources are now available online for free.

Be Internet Awesome tackles topics that are relevant to all ages, though it is seemingly aimed at younger children. It includes sections on how to limit sharing personal

information with people online, avoid falling for scams or phishing attacks, creating strong passwords, and avoiding negative behavior online.

The program includes a range of quizzes, role-playing activities, and other abstract exercises. In the 'Share with Care' module, students look at a made-up social media profile and cross out information that a parent, employer, or future self might look poorly upon. In 'Don't Fall for Fake', they decide whether a series of webpages and emails look real or fake. And 'It's Cool to be Kind' urges kids to avoid responding or reacting to hurtful messages, as well as block and report bullies.



Interland, the accompanying video game, is less like a training tool and more like a sweetener that could get students interested in the

material. 'Mindful Mountain', for example, turns the process of sharing specific posts with the right people into a spatial puzzle.

Players promote positivity in a platforming game by tossing out friendly emoticons and hitting the 'block' button to trap trolls. The password security game is a Temple Run-style endless runner about collecting letters and symbols.

Even if this program is effective in teaching students the basic principles of internet use, we do not know how well it will translate into real-world social media use. But at the very least, it is a non-alarmist take on internet safety.

Apple launches HomePod to take on Amazon, Google offerings

Apple raised the curtain on HomePod, its upcoming smart speaker, during the keynote presentation at its Worldwide Developers Conference last week. The company also announced some desktop OS features for the iPad, and revealed its plans to become an augmented reality powerhouse.

"Just like iPod reinvented music in our pockets, HomePod is going to reinvent music in our homes," Phil Schiller, Apple's senior vice president for worldwide marketing, told an enthusiastic crowd at the San Jose Convention Center in California.

HomePod, which will be available in December and will retail for US\$350, is slightly less than 18cm tall and is covered with a seamless 3D mesh fabric. Inside the speaker, there are seven tweeters, each with their own driver, that give sound precise directional control. HomePod also has a 10cm woofer that uses dynamic software modeling to eliminate distortion as the volume is cranked up.

The 'smarts' of the speaker is from an Apple A8 processor found on older iPhones. It is perhaps the biggest brain ever in a speaker and allows for real-time acoustic modeling, audio beam forming and multichannel echo cancellation. It also has six microphones that can handle voice commands even when it is playing music through Apple's digital assistant Siri.

"We really believe it's going to take your home music experience to the next level," Apple CEO Tim Cook said at the event. Although the smart speaker market is dominated by Amazon and Google, Apple is positioning HomePod more as an audio device than a smart home interface and it is priced notably higher than Amazon's Echo or Google's Home. Apple appears to have set its sights on other high-end players in the speaker market, including Sonos and Bose music systems; at least they have priced it in that bracket.

Arsenal helps take photos like a pro

Taking a decent photo on your smartphone is easier than ever, but if you want to graduate to the next level of photography with a DSLR or mirror-less camera, there is a lot more to think about. Factors range from focus to shutter speed, aperture to ISO, color range and more, and knowing how to balance them all requires practice. Now a new gadget named Arsenal — currently raising funds on Kickstarter — claims it can do all the hard work for you, taking the perfect photograph every time.

Think of it like a supercharged version of the 'auto' mode in any point-and-click camera. These auto functions adjust just one or two settings (like changing the exposure based on how bright the scene is) but Arsenal examines far more — looking at 18 separate factors in total. Most significantly, it also uses neural



networks to recognize the scene you are looking at and compare it to a database of professional photographs. It then takes the camera settings used to capture those images and applies them to your camera. You can tweak them to your liking and then take the shot.

Ryan Stout, the creator of Arsenal, says he thinks his product fills a gap in the market. Stout says camera companies have underinvested in auto modes as they are usually disdained by

pro photographers. This means, Stout says, they have not kept up with the advances possible using latest AI and new hardware. Stout thinks the Arsenal will appeal to beginner and intermediate photographers who want to make the leap from phone photography, but are finding it difficult to get good shots with their DSLR.

The gadget itself looks like a slim battery pack and clips into the hot shoe mount on top of a camera. It connects via Bluetooth to an iOS and Android app, which can also be used to create time-lapses and long-exposure shots. With a price tag of \$150, the gadget's Kickstarter campaign has attracted more than \$700,000 from backers — way over the \$50,000 goal. It might not be long before mainstream camera companies also decide this sort of tech is worth a shot.

Skype undergoes redesigning to add Snapchat like features

Microsoft acquired Skype nearly six years ago, and ever since then it feels like the messaging service has been experiencing an existential crisis. Now, Microsoft is once again redesigning Skype. Described as "the next generation of Skype," the new design focuses on messaging.

Skype is well known and used widely for video and audio calls, but iMessage, WhatsApp, Messenger, Snapchat and other messaging services have taken the lead for today's conversations. The new Skype messaging interface now includes three sections in a conversation: find, chat, and capture. Find lets you search through a conversation, or find images, restaurants, and even add-ins like

YouTube or Giphy to add content into a message. Chat is the basic conversation view you would expect with options for emoji or picture additions, but the newest section is capture.

Capture feels a lot like Snapchat within Skype, and it immediately launches into the camera to let you take pictures or hold down for video. As you hold down for video you will immediately recognize one of the more subtle design changes in this new version of Skype, a squiggly line that represents the amount of time for a recording. This line is also used for calling, or when contacts are typing. Once you have captured a video or picture you can then add stickers, text, or simply annotate it, all just like



Skype is also introducing a new Highlights feature that is again a lot like Snapchat stories. Highlights lets you post a stream of photos and videos that friends can view and react with emoticons. Even in text- or video-based conversations you will be able to react on Skype with emoticons.



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ITALY



Fascinating cities, ancient sights, cultural treasures and beautiful scenery

Arguably Europe's most enticing country, Italy charms visitors with irresistible food, awesome architecture, diverse scenery and unparalleled art. In fact, it is so packed with possibilities it can almost overwhelm.

If you have not visited before, you could well wonder what to see, where to go or how to travel. So, here is everything you need to know to get the utmost out of your first-time Italy trip.

Italy's greatest hits: If you are short on time, then start with the big three: Rome, Florence and Venice. A week is enough to enjoy the country's headline acts.

Discover art in Florence: Two days in Florence sees you cherry-picking the



incomparable art in the Uffizi gallery, delighting in the frescoes in the Duomo and pondering the anatomy of Michelangelo's David.

Bewitching Venice: To enjoy unique, utterly exquisite Venice, allow a few days. Glide down the Grand Canal, by gondola or vaporetto (water bus), tour the grand Palazzo Ducale, gape at the treasure-filled Basilica di San Marco and run out of camera space snapping the extraordinary

array of Venetian architecture. There will also be time to join the locals shopping at Rialto Market, tuck into cicheti (Venetian tapas) and get a little lost amid the 400 bridges and 150 canals.

Best of the rest: If you have a couple of free weeks at your disposal, you can add on a few of other dolce vita delights. Captivating Naples; extraordinary Pompeii: Gritty and not always pretty, Naples demands to be seen. Come here for an anarchic zest for life, a UNESCO-recognized historic core, Greco-Roman artifacts in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, and the Neapolitan Baroque Certosa e Museo di San Martino. Then day-trip it to Pompeii for ruined cityscapes, and to Mt. Vesuvius to gaze into a live volcano and across a wide blue bay.

Style and beauty in Milan and the Lakes: For big-city style and legendary landscapes, head to Italy's northwest. A day in Milan opens up a grand Gothic Duomo (cathedral), Leonardo Da Vinci's Last Supper and world-class opera at La Scala. A short train ride away, belle époque Lake Maggiore harbors the beguiling Borromean Islands, specks of rock crowned by ornate palaces and extravagant gardens. Or spend a few days at glamorous Lake Como reveling in sumptuous villas, vintage speedboat trips and the snowy-mountains-meets-azure-water scenery.

Cinque Terre's harbors and hills: In Cinque Terre National Park terraced vineyards cling to sheer hills traversed by improbably steep hiking trails, and villages flow down to tiny harbors lined with restaurants and bars. Ferries and a rattling rural train link the five villages. Allow two to four days to hit the walking trails, swim in the sea, soak up the atmosphere and re-charge.

Eating and drinking: The diversity of regional cuisine alone is worth traveling to Italy for. Bistecca alla fiorentina (Florence's iconic T-bone steak); creamy Po plains risotto; olive oil and lemon-laced grilled fish on Elba; espresso and sweet treats in Naples' backstreets bars and fresh-from-the-wood-oven pizza al taglio (pizza by the slice) in Rome.

Wheretostay: Choose from lakeside campsites, mountain huts, monasteries, hip hostels, family-run hotels, antiques-packed palazzos, secluded villas and remote farmhouses framed by vines and complete with pools.

How to travel: Domestic air links, and ferry, train and bus networks are good between main towns and cities. Italy's trains range from slow regionale and InterCity (faster, making fewer stops) to the high-tech, high-speed alta velocità services. The latter can cut longer journey times in half, although on shorter routes do not save that much time.



The glories of Rome:

As the famous saying goes, Rome was not built in a day, and you definitely cannot see it in one. Instead, allow at least two, preferably three. That is the time it takes to take in the spectacular Colosseum, the 2000-year-

old Pantheon, the palace ruins of the Palatino, sacred St. Peter's and the art-filled Vatican Museums. Trot up the Spanish Steps, toss a coin in the Trevi Fountain, shop in narrow lanes and indulge in prime people watching.



Practical Tips

When greeting people, shake hands or kiss both cheeks and say buongiorno (good day) or buona sera (good evening). Only use first names if invited.

Restaurants have a cover charge. If service is not included, a small tip may well prompt a smile.

When visiting religious sites, avoid offence by dressing modestly. Although shorts and sandals are fine for the beach, you will need smart-casual clothes for towns. Walking shoes make cobbled streets and hill paths more comfortable, as will a sunhat, sunscreen and sunglasses.

In the main tourist centers, English is fairly widely spoken, but in rural areas and south of Rome learning a few key expressions and using a phrasebook/phone app with a menu guide will make your visit more fun and mealtimes more enjoyable.

Qatar remains defiant as GCC feud embroils region

Since 5 June, when Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain severed all relations with Qatar, citing security and stability concerns and its continued support of terrorism, the region has been caught up in a political storm that shows no sign of abating.

A day after announcing the cut in relations, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir said that Qatar must take several steps, including ending its support for the Palestinian group Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, to restore ties with other Arab states.

Qatar knows exactly what it has to do to restore relations with Riyadh and its Arab allies, said the Saudi foreign minister, clarifying, "We want to see Qatar implement the promises it made a few years back with regard to its support of extremist groups, with regard to its hostile media and its interference in affairs of other countries."

"Nobody wants to hurt Qatar. It has to choose whether it must move in one direction or another direction. We took this step with great pain so that Qatar understands that these policies are not sustainable and must change," Jubeir said.

For his part, Dr. Anwar Bin Mohammad Gargash, the UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, said the UAE and other countries are fed up with Qatar's duplicity. "We had an agreement in 2014, on paper, signed by the Emir of Qatar, pledging that he would abide by the various grievances that were put in the agreement. They have not held to that agreement, so clearly there is a lack of trust."

Calling for a "guaranteed roadmap" before relations could be restored, Gargash said, "Qatar has chosen to ride the tiger of extremism and terrorism and now needed to pay the price." The UAE minister also accused Qatar of escalating the row by seeking help from Turkey and Iran. This was in reference to Iran's offer to send food and water to Qatar within 12 hours, and Turkey's decision to expedite the planned deployment of Turkish troops to Qatar. The UAE minister said in a Twitter post: "The request for political protection from two non-Arab countries and military protection from one of them could be a new tragic and comic chapter."

On Friday, Bahrain's foreign minister Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmad Al Khalifa ruled out any intention to retreat from the common position taken against Qatar, saying that it was in the interest of security and stability in the region. He added, "It is now up to the Qatari leadership to change its approach, to respond and to correct its position by adhering to all commitments." He added, "There is a need for genuine guarantees for honoring the pledge as it cannot be just through promises."

With regard to Qatar's membership in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) union, the foreign minister said that it was too early to comment on the option of suspending Qatar from the six-nation bloc set up in 1981, but he could not rule out that prospect.

But on Friday, Qatar's Foreign Minister Shaikh Mohammad Bin Abdul Rahman Al Thani struck a defiant tone saying, "We have been isolated because we are successful and progressive. We are a platform for peace." He added, "We are not ready to surrender, and will never be ready to surrender, the independence of our foreign policy." He however insisted that the matter should be solved peacefully and stated that Qatar had not yet been presented with a list of demands by countries that cut off diplomatic and transport ties.

The Qatari foreign minister also spoke with US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, about the latest developments engulfing the region. The US Secretary of State who was formerly the CEO of American oil giant Exxon Mobil and had business dealings with Qatar, is believed to be



on good terms with the country's leadership. On Friday, Mr. Tillerson spoke with the Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, who had just returned after a trip to various GCC capitals with the aim of brokering a settlement to the rift that threatens the stability of the region.

Meanwhile, the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini held a telephone conversation with Kuwait's First Deputy Prime

and support at their disposal to accompany it in the best possible manner."

She went on to warn, "The region of the Gulf has to understand that what happens there is relevant for many parts of the world in term of security and stability... We see a clear risk of the situation escalating further and spreading in an unpleasant and dangerous manner beyond the region of the Gulf."

Qatar Emir, Shaikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al

its borders and to address the long-term and continuing threat of terrorist financing emanating from Qatar, and associated material support for terrorist organizations, said a statement published by the official Saudi news agency.

Qatar, one of the world's largest gas exporters and home to less than 2.7 million people, including over 2.3 million foreigners, is one of the wealthiest countries in the world. The country is also host to the largest US airbase in the region which is crucial to the fight against IS and other militants in the Middle-East. In the past, Qatar has used its massive wealth and strategic connections to punch above its weight on the international arena and rattle the GCC alliance with its independent foreign policies.

For years, Qatar has been viewed with lingering suspicion by its Gulf neighbors over its cozying up to Iran and its close relations with Islamist groups, such as the Palestinian Hamas, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, as well as more violent brands such as Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Besides, Qatar was seen as a strong supporter and benefactor of the so-called 'Arab Spring' revolts that raged through the region in 2011. Qatar has also been accused of supporting saboteurs and conspirators targeting the security of Bahrain and of fermenting trouble in Yemen, where it supports both the Houthis rebels aiming to topple the government and fights alongside the Saudi-led coalition that aims to restore Yemen's elected government.

Meanwhile, the international rating agency Standard and Poors (S&P) announced on Wednesday that it lowered its rating on Qatar's long-term debt to AA-minus because of the country's dispute with its neighbors. The rating agency said those countries' severing of diplomatic and business links "will exacerbate Qatar's external vulnerabilities and could put pressure on its economic growth and fiscal stability."

Qatar's main trading partners are Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and already, the closing of the Salwa/Abu Samra border crossing — Qatar's only land border with Saudi Arabia — has led to the stranding of thousands of trucks plying food and other essential goods to Qatar. Denying of ports in UAE and Saudi, which service Qatar's maritime links to vital goods from around the world, could further exacerbate the situation. Any increase in political, economic and financial pressures in the days ahead could only worsen the woes of ordinary people in Qatar.



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The request for political protection from two non-Arab countries and military protection from one of them could be a new tragic and comic chapter.

Dr. Anwar Bin Mohammad Gargash
UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

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Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Sabah, as well as with Saudi and Qatari foreign ministers. She said, "We do not want to multiply mediation efforts. For us it is clear that there is one mediation effort in place that is the one which succeeded during a similar but less dramatic crisis in 2014. We believe that the Kuwait effort can be the one to succeed. We support their work and we have put the EU help

Thani, has yet to speak publicly on the severing of relations with its neighbors. His Highness Sheikh Sabah had, prior to beginning his shuttle diplomacy, requested the Qatari emir to postpone a speech to the nation planned earlier last week to give dialogue efforts a chance. However, a senior Kuwaiti diplomat associated with the mediation talks said, "We think that it is going to take a while to fix. Currently, we are trying to contain the situation and prevent things from escalating."

But in a further escalation of the row, on Friday, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain jointly released a list of 59 people and 12 entities that it designated as terrorists. Among the 18 Qataris named are alleged terrorism financiers, as well as prominent businessmen, politicians and senior members of the ruling family, including a former interior minister. The list also names three Kuwaiti nationals, two Jordanians, two Bahrainis, an Emirati, a Saudi and a Yemeni.

The designations are a direct response to the Government of Qatar's consistent refusal to take meaningful steps to disrupt the activities of terrorist support networks operating within

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