

## MIT unveils new \$1 bn college for AI

Washington, United States

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology announced plans yesterday to create a new college of artificial intelligence with an initial \$1 billion commitment for the program focusing on “responsible and ethical” uses of the technology.

The prestigious university said it would add 50 new faculty members and create an interdisciplinary hub for work in computer science, AI, data science, and related fields.

A large part of the new funds will come from a gift from Stephen Schwarzman, chairman and co-founder of the financial giant Blackstone, after whom the new college will be named.

“As computing reshapes our world, MIT intends to help make sure it does so for the good of all,” said MIT President Rafael Reif.

An MIT statement said the initiative represents the single largest investment in computing and AI by an American academic institution.

The initiative comes amid growing concerns about the impacts of artificial intelligence on global institutions.

“There is no more important opportunity or challenge facing our nation than to responsibly harness the power of artificial intelligence so that we remain competitive globally and achieve breakthroughs that will improve our entire society,” Schwarzman said.

The new college is slated to open in September 2019, with a new building scheduled to be completed in 2022.

# Prince Harry and Meghan expecting their first baby

AFP | London, United Kingdom

Forget Brexit. Prince Harry and his wife Meghan announced yesterday they were expecting their first baby, sparking a media frenzy, debates over the royal name, and expressions of delight from the queen.

Kensington Palace said Queen Elizabeth II’s 34-year-old grandson and the 37-year-old US actress, who had just arrived in Sydney ahead of a 16-day tour of the Pacific, would be having a child in the spring.

“The Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Sussex are very pleased to announce that the Duchess of Sussex is expecting a baby in the spring of 2019,” their Kensington Palace residence said in a statement.

“Their Royal Highnesses have appreciated all of the support they have received from people around the world since their wedding in May and are delighted to be able to share this happy news with the public.”

The queen was said to be “delighted”, Prime Minister Theresa May tweeted her “warmest congratulations”, and Meghan’s mother Doria Ragland said she was “very happy about this lovely news”. “Happy news to wake up to on a Monday morning,” US Ambassador Woody Johnson said in his own tweet.

### Name game

The big announcement came with the nation gloomily pondering the prospects of Britain crashing out of the European



Britain’s Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex (R) and Britain’s Meghan, Duchess of Sussex (L) meet with young people on a visit to Joff Youth Centre in Peacehaven in East Sussex, southern England

Union without an agreement.

TV stations broke away from their Brexit coverage, banner headlines appeared on newspaper websites, and debates began about possible name for the future seventh in line to the British throne.

Google said searches for “when is spring?” had spiked while UK newspapers played

up an inter-continental rivalry over what the child, who will become either an earl or a lady, will be called.

Meghan was a popular US actress before becoming the Duchess of Sussex. Some UK media said the California native would draw on her American roots.

But the bookies are favouring Diana -- name of the late

## Royals arrive in Down Under

Sydney, Australia

Prince Harry and Meghan touched down in Sydney yesterday, kicking off a bumper Pacific tour that is the British royals’ first major outing abroad as a couple.

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex made a low-key arrival to a wet and wintry Australia after a weekend spent celebrating the marriage of their relative Princess Eugenie and following an overnight commercial flight with Qantas.

They were seen leaving the airport with staff, looking relaxed, as Meghan clutched a pair of purple binders and Harry carried a brown and green manbag.

Their more-than-two-week official visit will take in multiple stops in Australia, Fiji, Tonga and New Zealand -- all parts of the Commonwealth, a group of predominantly former British colonies.

Queen Elizabeth II is still

the head of state in Australia although there is significant support for the country becoming a republic.

Recent polls show Australians fairly evenly split on the issue, with only the slimmest of majorities in favour of ditching the British Queen and nominating an Australian head of state.

During the trip, the royals plan to pet koalas, watch soldiers perform the haka and attend the Invictus Games, a multi-sport tournament for military service personnel and veterans who have been wounded or suffered injury or illness that opens on Saturday 20 October.

The whole visit will be keenly watched by the British and Australian media.

Meghan, a photogenic US actress, married the grandson of Queen Elizabeth II in May, becoming the newest royal to attract media obsession in Britain and beyond.

## Turkey suspends over 250 officials for ‘terror links’

Ankara, Turkey

Turkey has suspended more than 250 senior local officials over alleged terror links and activities unrelated to their posts, the interior ministry said yesterday, in the latest purge of the country’s bureaucracy.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu removed 259 local neighbourhood heads -- known as “muhtar” in Turkish -- from their posts, his office said in a statement.

It did not provide further detail on what terror organisa-

tions the officials were allegedly linked to.

The muhtar is the elected chief of a village or a city neighbourhood, and responsible for day-to-day services for residents such as registration.

Turkey has suspended or sacked over 140,000 public sector employees because of alleged links to the US-based Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen blamed for the July 2016 failed coup and Kurdish militants.

Turkey claims Gulen ordered the coup but he denies the accusations.

Last week, the ministry suspended 559 village guards -- locals employed to combat Kurdish militants -- accused of links to terror organisations while 76 were accused of people trafficking and drug crimes.

Turkey has been fighting an insurgency against the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) since 1984.

The group is blacklisted as a terror group by Ankara and its Western allies.

Turkish authorities detained 137 people in country-wide operations earlier this month over alleged links to the PKK.

## 13 dead as flooding hits southwestern France

AFP | Toulouse, France

At least 13 people died when violent rainstorms turned rivers into raging torrents in southwest France yesterday, prompting some of the deadliest flooding in years, officials said. The equivalent of three months of rainfall was dumped overnight in the Aude region in just a few hours, swelling rivers and flooding fields and towns, officials added.

One of the overnight victims was an 88-year-old nun who was swept from her room by floodwaters at the Burning



People look at damaged cars following heavy rains that saw rivers bursting banks

Bush priory in the village of Villardonne, north of the fortress city of Carcassonne.

Elsewhere, flash floods over-

turned cars, ripped up streets and battered buildings and bridges, especially to the north of Carcassonne.

## China purrs over white tiger triplets

Kunming, China

Three playful white Bengal tiger cubs are charming visitors as they clamber around their enclosure at a zoo in China.

The rare, blue-eyed triplets were born nearly three months ago at the Yunnan Wildlife Zoo in Kunming, and made their public debut in early October.

“The oldest one -- the largest



Chinese zookeeper feeds newborn white bengal tiger cubs



The tigers’ white fur is a genetic variation of the common orange Bengal tiger.

-- is very naughty and has a real appetite. He’s the naughtiest. The youngest is like a baby, she’s gentle. She never wins when fighting for food,” zookeeper Hao Li said.

The cubs’ busy mother is getting a helping hand keeping her youngsters from getting hungry, with keepers always ready to step in with a bottle.

The tigers’ white fur is a genetic variation of the common

orange Bengal tiger.

The mutation seldom occurs in the wild, but the zoo is home to 41 cats of this rare white variety.

There are currently more than 2,500 Bengal tigers outside captivity, most of them in India, according to conservation group World Wildlife Fund.

A competition is being held to name the three newborns, with final names chosen at the end of October.