

Conquest of Seville occurs by Christian troops under King Ferdinand III of Castile after the city surrenders

"Areopagitica", a pamphlet by John Milton decrying censorship, is published



Clipper Cutty Sark is launched in Dumbarton, Scotland, one of the last clippers ever built and the only one still surviving

Sumatran rhino is officially declared extinct in Malaysia after the last known specimen, 25-year-old Iman, dies of cancer in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo

CAPTAIN'S CORNER

The Hidden Price of Our Growing Addiction to Smart Technology



CAPTAIN MAHMOOD AL MAHMOOD

A cuddly cotton doll, equipped with artificial intelligence and marketed as an educational companion for children, recently shocked the world when a U.S. consumer-protection lab discovered it was delivering dangerous and highly inappropriate responses to young users. What was meant to be a harmless "smart toy" suddenly revealed itself as a threat — not only to children, but to the integrity of our increasingly technology-dependent lives.

Users quickly nicknamed it "Chucky-GPT," a playful reference to the horror-film character. Yet beneath the humor lies a chilling truth: this doll may be a small glimpse into a much larger problem. If a child's toy can behave like a rogue device, what does that say about the advanced technologies we are welcoming into our homes with excitement and blind trust?

A similar concern surfaced when an Indian engineer found that his smart vacuum cleaner was quietly collecting data from inside his home and transmitting it to the manufacturer without his consent. The moment he blocked the data flow, the device stopped working altogether — as if its real purpose was surveillance, not cleaning.

No doubt many families in Bahrain already own the same devices, relying on them daily without considering the potential risks. And soon, AI-powered dolls could replace human caregivers, leaving parents comfortable and confident while unknowingly surrendering their children's privacy to machines designed by corporations far beyond our borders.

This should concern us deeply. Our region, rich in strategic importance and natural resources, has always attracted external interest. Today, the battleground is no longer land or oil — it is information. And smart technology has become the easiest, most efficient means of obtaining it.

Our mobile phones, which we carry day and night, are now sophisticated surveillance tools. They track our movements, monitor our conversations, and store intimate details of our daily lives. We know this. Yet most of us feel powerless to stop it. Privacy has evaporated, replaced by a false sense of convenience.

Just days ago, former Mossad chief Yossi Cohen openly admitted that Israel had planted modified, booby-trapped devices for espionage in several countries worldwide. His statement should serve as a global wake-up call about how vulnerable technology has made every society — not just ours.

We love technology. We chase every new device, upgrade our homes with interconnected systems, and hand our children digital tools that promise education and entertainment. But convenience comes at a price. And sooner or later, that price will be high and irreversible.

Our growing dependence on smart devices mirrors the arc of addiction: easy to begin, nearly impossible to reverse.

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Ukraine, Europe scramble to respond to US plan to end war

Zelensky has pushed back against the 28-point US plan

● Trump has given Ukraine less than a week to sign

● Russian army is slowly but steadily gaining ground

● Putin said the blueprint could "lay the foundation" for a final peace settlement



AFP | Kyiv, Ukraine

Ukraine and its European allies scrambled yesterday to come up with counter-proposals after US President Donald Trump gave Kyiv a tight deadline to approve a deal to end the war that accepts some of Russia's hardline demands.

President Volodymyr Zelensky has pushed back against the 28-point US plan. Russian leader Vladimir Putin has welcomed the proposal, which would force Ukraine to give up land, cut its army and pledge never to join NATO.

French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer met yesterday on the sidelines of a G20 summit in South Africa, the French presidency said.

The huddle was held ahead of a wider meeting on the same topic that would include other European leaders, the presidency said.

Starmer had earlier said the aim was to "look at how we can strengthen this plan for the next phase of negotiations".

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said the

allies should make it clear "that there should be nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine."

US Vice President JD Vance reacted to the criticism of the plan, saying it "either misunderstands the framework or misstates some critical reality on the ground."

"There is a fantasy that if we just give more money, more weapons, or more sanctions, victory is at hand," he added.

Ukraine faces one of the most challenging moments in its history, Zelensky said in an address to the nation, adding that he would propose alternatives to Trump's proposal.

A top Ukrainian official yesterday said Kyiv would launch talks with the US in Switzerland to discuss ways to end the war. The delegation will be led by Zelensky's top aide Andriy Yermak.

He'll have to like it, and if he doesn't like it, then you know, they should just keep fighting. At some point he's going to have to accept something

TRUMP TOLD REPORTERS

NTC Rotation



Royal Saudi Land Forces (RSLF) conduct tank gunnery at Fort Irwin during NTC Rotation 26-02 — the first-ever RSLF participation in a U.S. Army combat training center.

TOP 4 TWEETS

01



My message to #G20 leaders is simple: Amid these tumultuous times of massive suffering around the globe, we need leadership & vision. The G20 must use their leverage & enormous influence to set our world on a better, more just & peaceful course for the future..

@antonioguterres

02



Kuwait has been a longstanding supporter and partner of the UAE since before the Union. For one week this coming 29 January onwards, we encourage our community to honour this enduring bond and celebrate Kuwait, its leadership, and its people. May God safeguard Kuwait and bless its continued journey of progress.

@MohamedBinZayed

03



In the coming days, consultations with our partners will take place on the steps needed to end the war.

@ZelenskyyUa

04



Clean energy transitions are cost-competitive, as never before. This can and must be the growth story of the 21st century.

@vonderleyen

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stance)

(Captain Mahmood Al Mahmood is the Editor-in-Chief of The Daily Tribune and the President of the Arab-African Unity Organisation for Relief, Human Rights and Counterterrorism)