

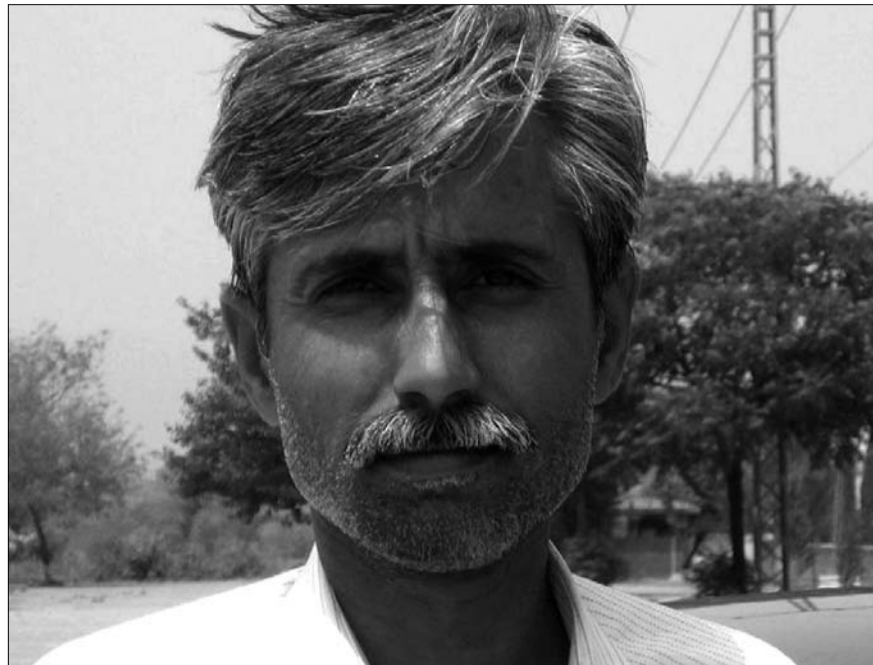
Global Q&A: Modern convenience you can't live without

Epoch Times Staff

Pause for a moment to think of all the computers, vehicles, appliances, communication tools, televisions, audio players, etc. that fill our daily lives—it's overwhelming! How dependent have we become on them? Epoch Times reporters across the globe wanted to find out. From Athens to Ottawa we asked: What one modern convenience could you not live without?

Islamabad, Pakistan
Khadim Hussain, 37, Driver

If I really think about it, I realize there is nothing I cannot do without. I think once a person sets their mind to it, it is possible to do without any of the modern conveniences. I think even if I had to walk hundreds of kilometers to get somewhere, I could do it if I just set my mind to it.



Islamabad, Pakistan—Khadim Hussain. EPOCHTIMES

Ottawa, Canada
John Naccarato, 43, Artist

Espresso Maker, to get up in the morning and have that kind of a persistent buzz to get me through the daily grind.

Surany, Slovakia
Peter Bori, 32, Car Sales Manager

I could not live without my mobile phone, because I need to have contact with my family and friends. It helps me to maintain relationships with people, especially those which I was not in contact with before. It makes my life easier at work. I also have a greater sense of security in case something unpredictable happens.



Athens, Greece—Tsiakou Panagiota. EPOCHTIMES

Nabay, Lebanon
Therese Layous, 33, Graphic Designer

I think the computer is the most important one. Beside that, it keeps me connected to the world through the internet. I spend a very long time working on my projects and if it weren't for the computer, I am sure it would take me forever to finish a single task. So somehow it has become my standby friend.

Athens, Greece
Tsiakou Panagiota, 61, Dentist (recently retired)

I can survive without any mod-

ern convenience. It's not necessary for me to be hooked on any comfort.

Stockholm, Sweden
Daniel Carmstedt, 40, Shop Assistant

A car. I can go from point A to B without any fixed time. The biggest freedom ever was when I got a car and driver's license. The car gives you freedom.

Bangalore, India



Nabay, Lebanon—Therese Layous. EPOCHTIMES

me entertained throughout the day.

Taipei, Taiwan
Jiang Chenxuan, 40, Accountant

Gas. If there was no gas then cooking rice, boiling water, and taking a bath would all be quite inconvenient.

Timisoara, Romania
Anca Porutiu, 29, Lawyer

Computers help to create documents; I like my coffee filter; but what one modern convenience could I not live without and why? I would say nothing. Nothing is really that essential. People in antiquity lived just as well; their lives were a lot less stressful and less complicated, which I really like. So I would assume that there is nothing in the realm of modern convenience which I can not live without.

Wisconsin, USA
Swee Sim, Computer Consultant

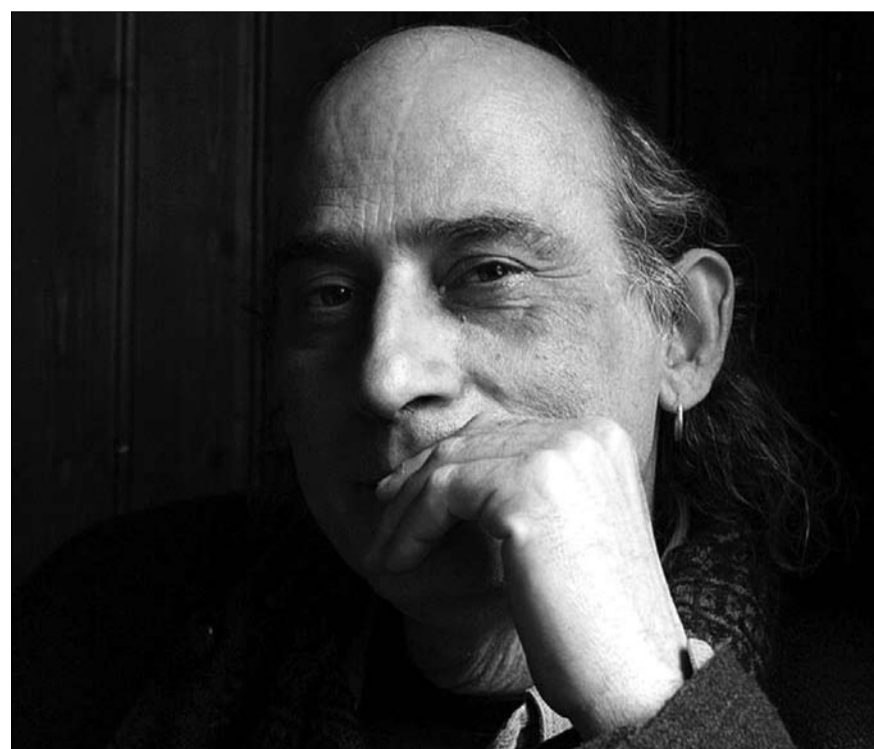
I could live without the TV, because there is a lot of violence, sex and other not so good qualities in most shows. Some few and far between shows are decent like public TV with no commercials, but most of it is garbage.

Cooolangatta, QLD, Australia
Doug Cook, 35, Finance Manager

I think e-mail; the reason being, as within my job in finance, we become very dependent on this form of communication. Seems to be cheapest, quickest, most reliable... But sometimes, I must admit I think it's quicker to ... I don't know, the way that e-mails can be misinterpreted when people read it. Even though you haven't intended it that way, it can cause conflict and sometimes I think it is easier to pick up the phone and do it that way.

Look for the Global Q&A column every week, when Epoch Times correspondents interview people around the world to learn about their lives and perspective on local and global realities.

Next week's global question: In honor of last week's World Press Freedom Day, on May 3, what changes would you like to see in the media in your country in the coming year?



Ottawa, Canada—John Naccarato. EPOCHTIMES

Khanchand Pratabrai, 73, Businessman

The one modern convenience that I am very used to is satellite television. I would not say I can't live without it though, but I really like it. I especially enjoy watching

the news. It helps me keep in touch with the world. It helps me build a perception about what is happening in society—the good, the bad. I also watch various entertainment channels as I enjoy movies as well as music. Satellite television keeps

Romanian president anticipates a social crisis

By GINA NEAGU
Epoch Times Staff

"Social tensions and political extremism could reach alarming levels if European leaders do not solve the growing unemployment," said Vladimir Spidla, European Commissioner for employment.

During a meeting with the Foreign Investors Council (CIS) last Tuesday, the Romanian President Traian Basescu drew attention to the current economic crisis, and predicted an upcoming social crisis. In this context, he made a call to CIS members to think twice before sending the citizenry to unemployment.

"It is clear that a social crisis is drawing near. Think twice before moving to massive unemployment," said the president.

He urged the importance of avoiding an economic slip in Romania, which would cause a major social upheaval.

The head of state said that in Romania there will be a definite increase in unemployment. He added that besides a government partnership with the banking sector, he hopes foreign investors can step in to reduce the effects of the crisis on the country.

On the other hand, he admits that although banks have said 'yes' to the partnership with the government, it has not had tangible effects.

The World Bank and International Monetary Fund have stated: "The world economy has deteriorated considerably. This trend has serious consequences, especially in developing countries, where financial and economic crisis turn into catastrophic human disaster."

According to the IMF and World Bank, the crisis has already sent more than 50 million people into extreme poverty, especially women and children.

Obama says U.S. still committed to defeating al Qaeda

CONTINUED FROM FRONT P1

Civilian casualties caused by U.S. military operations in both countries, including drone strikes inside Pakistan, are deeply unpopular among Afghans and Pakistanis and have made it harder for both countries' leaders to cooperate with the United States.

Obama announced a new approach to the fight against al Qaeda in both countries in late March, offering more aid but also more than 20,000 extra troops to Afghanistan this year.

"We turned a corner," Richard Holbrooke, the U.S. special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, told reporters after Obama's brief address. "We gave physical reality to the strategic plan."

Zardari, who has been under

fierce criticism for his response to Taliban militants who have made inroads in the Swat and Buner valleys this year, pleaded for support for his fledgling democracy.

"My democracy needs attention and needs nurturing," Zardari said. "Pakistani democracy will deliver, the terrorists will be defeated by our joint struggle. Me, my friend President Karzai and the United States will stand shoulder to shoulder with the world to fight this cancer and this threat."

Pakistani security forces attacked Taliban fighters in the Swat valley on Wednesday killing at least 64 of them, the Pakistani military said, after the United States called on the government to show its commitment to fighting militancy.

Mexico chugs back to life after flu shutdown

MEXICO CITY (Reuters)—Mexico emerged on Wednesday from five days of lockdown as traffic clogged streets and taco vendors worked the sidewalks after extraordinary measures aimed at containing the deadly H1N1 flu were lifted.

Companies from cement maker Cemex to brewer Femsa went back to work and Mayan ruins and Aztec pyramids reopened to tourists, although many small enterprises were nervous that lingering fear over catching swine flu would smother business for days to come.

"I hope to return to normal because this is hitting us really hard," said Ernesto Morales, a waiter at the Cafe Genova in Mexico City, where following government guidance, patrons were being seated more than 6 feet apart.

Mexico's giant capital of 20 million people as well as provincial cities ground almost to a halt last Friday as the government ordered non-essential businesses to close to curb the spread of a virus that has killed 42 people in Mexico and two in the United States.

The flu crisis waylaid a country already in recession and could knock an additional 0.3 to 0.5 of a percentage point off 2009 gross domestic product, the government said.

Tourism, which accounts for roughly 8 percent of the economy, has taken a hit and the five-day shutdown dented the income of the millions of shoe shiners and juice makers who depend on foot traffic to make a living.

At a hair salon in the normally buzzing Zona Rosa district, clients were desperate to book appointments.

"Everybody is stressed out," said salon owner Antonio Fonseca, who reckons he lost some \$6,000 in income. "Five days without working but with all the same bills to pay."

Mexican schools remained closed as a precaution against the never-before-seen flu strain, which has infected some 2,000 people in at least 24 countries.

Cinemas were required to leave two seats empty between customers, and restaurants had to limit



MEXICO CITY: A restaurant employee wearing a protective mask carries plates of food at an eatery in the Condesa neighborhood on May 6, 2009 in Mexico City. BRIAN HARKIN/GETTY IMAGES

their hours and could not seat more than four people at a table.

"This is a return to normal but only in a manner of speaking," said Eduardo Corte, a cafe manager. "Of 24 tables, I've only got half of them available and the hours are shorter. There are a lot of restrictions."

Public transport 'launders' money

In Tijuana, on the northern border with California, life slowly returned to normal, although people continued to wear face masks, especially in taxis, restaurants and banks. Farther south, the port of Ensenada was lamenting the diver-

sion of cruise ships to nearby San Diego.

"We hope the government helps us out because in just a few days we saw a catastrophic collapse of 80 percent in sales," said Julian Palombo, president of an association of tourism-related businesses in Tijuana. The government has offered tax relief to some affected companies.

In Ciudad Juarez, on the border with Texas, traffic was light and dentists specializing in serving bargain-hunting Americans reopened.

"(The government) created use-

less panic instead of helping us out," said Emilia Holguin, a stationery store manager.

Mexico City's public transportation network took to disinfecting coins to prevent spread of the virus, which contains DNA typical to avian, swine and human viruses. Humans are especially vulnerable to new viruses against which they have yet to develop defenses.

"It's going to take a long time to return to normality because people are still scared of the disease," said Beatriz Herrera, 35, an assistant at a clothing store where business was slow.