Veritable feast

Love astronaut-themed science fiction? Here’s a list of some beloved books and movies of that genre. P4-5

GLITZ & GLAM

Fashion moments at LSA2019.

Cover Story


BACK PAGE

Young Sri Lankan expat campaigns for climate change in Qatar.
QUOTE
“True strength lies in submission which permits one to dedicate his life, through devotion, to something beyond himself.”
— Henry Miller

COMMUNITY

SPIDER-MAN: FAR FROM HOME
DIRECTION: Jon Watts
CAST: Tom Holland, Samuel L Jackson, Jake Gyllenhaal
SYNOPSIS: Following the events of Avengers:

THEATRES: The Mall, Landmark, Royal Plaza

THE LION KING
DIRECTION: Jon Favreau
CAST: Donald Glover, Beyoncé, Seth Rogen
SYNOPSIS: Simba idolises his father, King Mufasa, and takes to heart his own royal destiny on the plains of Africa. But not everyone in the kingdom celebrates the new cub’s arrival. Scar, Mufasa’s brother and former heir to the throne, has plans of his own. The battle for Pride Rock is soon ravaged with betrayal, tragedy and drama, ultimately resulting in Simba’s exile. Now, with help from a curious pair of newfound friends, Simba must figure out how to grow up and take back what is rightfully his.

THEATRES: The Mall, Landmark, Royal Plaza

THE MALL CINEMA (1):
Gorilla (2D) 2:30pm; Toy Story 4 (2D) 5pm; Spider-Man: Far From Home (2D) 7pm; Escape Plan: The Extractors (2D) 9:30pm; Super 30 (Hindi) 11:15pm.

THE MALL CINEMA (2):
Pathinettam Padi (Malayalam) 2:15pm; Pathinettam Padi (Malayalam) 5:15pm; Pathinettam Padi (Malayalam) 8pm; Pathinettam Padi (Malayalam) 11pm.

THE MALL CINEMA (3): Super 30 (Hindi) 2:30pm; Aladdin (2D) 5:30pm; The Lion King (2D) 8pm; The Lion King (2D) 10:30pm.

LANDMARK CINEMA (1): Spider-Man: Far From Home (2D) 3pm; Toy Story 4 (2D) 5:30pm; Escape Plan: The Extractors (2D) 9:15pm; Super 30 (Hindi) 11pm.

LANDMARK CINEMA (2): Super 30 (Hindi) 2:30pm; Spider-Man: Far From Home (2D) 5:30pm; The Lion King (2D) 8pm; The Lion King (2D) 10:15pm.

LANDMARK CINEMA (3): Super 30 (Hindi) 2:30pm; Spider-Man: Far From Home (2D) 5:30pm; The Lion King (2D) 8pm; The Lion King (2D) 10:15pm.

ROYAL PLAZA CINEMA PALACE (1): Pathinettam Padi (Malayalam) 2:15pm; Pathinettam Padi (Malayalam) 5:15pm; Pathinettam Padi (Malayalam) 8:15pm; Pathinettam Padi (Malayalam) 11pm.

ROYAL PLAZA CINEMA PALACE (2): Super 30 (Hindi) 2:30pm; Spider-Man: Far From Home (2D) 5:30pm; The Lion King (2D) 8pm; The Lion King (2D) 10:15pm.

ROYAL PLAZA CINEMA PALACE (3): Venilla Kabaddi Kuzhu 2 (Tamil) 2:30pm; Toy Story 4 (2D) 5pm; Spider-Man: Far From Home (2D) 7pm; Escape Plan: The Extractors (2D) 9:15pm; Super 30 (Hindi) 11pm.
Cultures

Favorite animals, birds or bugs. From nature, as they create art featuring their dot painting and making silhouette shapes, different canvas painting techniques, such as

EVENTS

Animal Canvas Painting
WHERE: Qatar National Library
WHEN: Today
TIME: 10am – 11:30am
In this event, children will enjoy learning different canvas painting techniques, such as dot painting and making silhouette shapes from nature, as they create art featuring their favorite animals, birds or bugs.

MF Husain: The Horses Of The Sun Exhibition
WHERE: Mataf: Arab Museum of Modern Art
WHEN: Ongoing till July 31
TIME: 9am – 7pm
The exhibition presents Husain’s pluralist approach to the divine and cosmic aspects of being, articulated through the myths, symbols and narratives of the world’s religions and philosophies. M. F. Husain: Horses of the Sun bears witness to a recurrent motif in his art, a personal symbol of self-renewal and vitality.

Summer Camp for Special Needs
WHERE: Step by Step Centre for Special Needs
WHEN: Ongoing till August 1
TIME: 8:00am – 12:30pm
During this time, all therapists and teachers will be working together, running individual, peer and group sessions within classes. The children will continue learning age-appropriate concepts, work on social skills, life skills training, arts and crafts, music, and fun activities such as water play.

Career Guidance
WHERE: Right Track Consultants, Al Sadd
WHEN: Sunday – Thursday
TIME: 6pm – 8pm
Career guidance for course, country, college and entrance for students of Grade IX-XII, of all curriculum. Career assessments administered for stream preference, career test, branch preference, personality, multiple intelligence and learning styles and productivity. For more information, 55448835.

Artistic Gymnastic Classes
WHERE: Qatar Academy Msheireb
WHEN: Ongoing
TIME: 3:15pm – 4:15pm
The olympic sport using horizontal bar, rings and floor exercises on mats for the children from age 4 till 16.

Under the context of cultural exchange, FBQ Museum brings together the treasures of the museum owned collection in order to promote mutual understanding, recognition and appreciation between Qatar and India. Composed of five main topics, including community, trade, arts, food and incense, the exhibition takes one on a journey to explore the rich and diverse Indian cultures, the long historic links between Qatar and India, and cultural similarities between Qatar and India.

Arabic Calligraphy Workshop
WHERE: Mamangam Performing Art Centre
WHEN: Saturday – Wednesday
TIME: 6pm
Arabic Calligraphy workshop is back. Come and learn the artistic practice of Arabic handwriting and calligraphy at Music and Arts Atelier. The lessons will take place every Saturday, Monday and Wednesday at 6pm. For more information, contact registration@atelierqatar.com

Iran to Qatar – Symbiosis of Cultures
WHERE: FBQ Museum
WHEN: Ongoing till July 31

Ballet Lessons
WHERE: Music and Arts Atelier
WHEN: Ongoing
TIME: 4pm – 8pm
For more info e-mail at registration@atelierqatar.com or call on 33003839.

After School Activities
WHERE: Atelier
WHEN: Ongoing
Music and arts activities for students taking place after they finish their day in school includes Group Music lessons, Hip-hop, Ballet, Drawing and Painting, Drama Theatre & Taekwondo. Ages between 5 and 10 years old after school hours.

Hobby Classes
WHERE: Mamangam Performing Art Centre
WHEN: Wednesday – Monday
Mamangam Performing Art Centre, is a holistic performing arts institution and a one stop solution for adults as well as children looking to explore their talents in various art forms. We offer classes in contemporary, Bollywood, hip hop, Indian classical dance, music (Hindustani and Carnatic), arts and craft, karate, yoga, percussion (Chenda, Thimila, Eathamalam and Madhulam), violin, harmonium, public speaking.

Additional services include dance education, choreograph music videos and dance cover albums, choreograph dance musical projects, corporate workshops and events, choreograph events for schools, colleges, alumni meets and corporate and choreograph event. For details, call 33807609.

Dance and Instrument Classes
WHERE: TCA Campus, Behind Gulf Times Building
WHEN: Wednesday – Monday
Learn the movements of dance styles in Bollywood, Hip Hop and also the musical instruments such as Piano, Guitar, Keyboard for adults as well kids and move in the world of music. For details, contact 66523871/31326749.

Compiled by Nausheen Shaikh. E-mail: gtlisting@gmail.com. Events and timings subject to change
With the moon landing’s 50th anniversary coming up, now’s the time to indulge astronaut-themed work, both books and films.

**BOOKS**

**Binti: The Complete Trilogy** by Nnedi Okorafor (DAW, February 5). When Binti becomes the first of the Himba people to join the ranks of students at the prestigious Oomza University in space, she leaves Earth behind and finds herself thrown into the centre of a generations-long war between the university and an alien race known as the Meduse. This three-book series follows Binti and her unlikely allies as she balances the culture she came from and the future she represents.

**The Calculating Stars** by Mary Robinette Kowal (Tor Books, July 3, 2018). An alternate-history novel set in the early ‘50s. The premise? A giant meteorite smashes into Washington, DC, in 1952 and accelerates the need for humans to find another planet to live on. Dr Elma York is a World War II veteran who flew planes as a WASP. She also happens to be a math genius and one of NASA’s human computers, and she decides she wants to be an astronaut. The novel explores what might have happened if women were allowed in the astronaut corps early in the space race, and it also touches on the civil-rights movement and struggles faced by African Americans in that time period.

**The Fated Sky** by Mary Robinette Kowal (Tor Books, August 21, 2018). In this sequel to The Calculating Stars, mankind has managed to reach the moon and has now set its sights on establishing a human colony on Mars — in 1961. Dr Elma York — otherwise known as The Lady Astronaut — is hoping to get chosen for the Mars mission, but torn between her professional ambitions and her personal life.
Once again, Kowal does not fail to pull in the social environment of the early '60s, and the tensions resulting from the civil-rights movement and South Africa’s apartheid are woven into the narrative.

The Wanderers by Meg Howrey (G.P. Putnam’s Sons, March 14, 2017). This is character-driven literary science fiction at its finest and it examines how humans will deal with the challenges of long missions of space exploration. The Wanderers follows three astronauts through a 17-month training simulation for a Mars mission and through them get at the question of what drives humanity’s need to explore. But the narrative also pulls in the families of the astronauts and we see the strain that the long separation puts on them.

Seveneves by Stephen King (William Morrow, May 19, 2015). What would we do if we knew the world was about to be destroyed by “hard rain” that will fall for 5,000 years? That’s the premise of this science-fiction saga by a Seattle novelist who is one of the masters of the genre. As Seattle Times reviewer Nisi Shawl wrote in 2015, “Stephen King’s storytelling style combines the conversational and the panoramic, allowing him to turn his piercing gaze on the familiar aspects of a strange future, encompassing the barely conceivable detail by detail, striking vistas by sweat-covered henchmen, and telling us how it might be possible to regain what we could so easily lose in so many heartbreaking ways.”

The Three-Body Problem series by Cixin Liu (Tor Books, English translation of first book published November 2014). President Barack Obama called it “just wildly imaginative, really interesting.” Amazon reportedly may spend up to $1 billion acquiring the rights to produce a three-season TV show based on the Hugo Award-winning series. There’s a reason the first installment in this trilogy was the first Asian novel ever to win a Hugo Award. The series, based in China, chronicles the existential crisis that grips all of humanity when it encounters an extraterrestrial civilisation bent on taking over Earth. But the alien armada won’t arrive for another 400 years, leaving humans plenty of time to bicker over how best to prepare the eventual space battle.

The Expanse series by James S.A. Corey (Orbit, first book published June 2, 2013). This eight-novel series also inspired a TV series. First novel is Leviathan Wakes. My whole family loves both books and TV shows for realistic depictions of working and travelling in space. The summary: In a world in which humanity has colonised most of the solar system, tension builds between Earth, Mars and the outer planets, and then alien tech comes into the picture.

Stories of Your Life and Other by Ted Chiang (Vintage, July 5, 2002). Stories of Your Life was adapted to the big screen as the movie Arrival, featuring a fearless Amy Adams as Dr Louise Banks, a linguist charged with finding a way to communicate with Earth’s new alien arrivals. But this isn’t your everyday alien encounter story. It incorporates sophisticated concepts of physics, language and time, and wrestles with the idea of free will.

MOVIES

Apollo 11 (2019). It is one of the best documentaries about the space programme I’ve ever seen. Released in 2019, it consists solely of archival footage — on 70mm no less — of the mission’s various stages from launch to touchdown, plus on-the-ground video of the folks camped out to see the rocket blast into the sky. With a subtly thrilling score, masterful editing and no talking heads or hand-holding narration, it unfolds more like an exciting novel than a dry historical account, and short of sitting in front of a living-room TV on July 16, 1969, it may be the closest thing we have to a real-time look at the moon landing.

Hidden Figures (2016). A rousing, inspiring crowd-pleaser, this fact-based 2016 Oscar nominee shone a light on a trio of heroines: three brilliant black women who worked as “computers” in the early days of the space program, a workplace dominated by white men.

The Martian (2015). Whipsmart astronaut played by Matt Damon uses his science-based skills to save his life on the Red Planet after being accidentally stranded there.

Interstellar (2014). A Christopher Nolan masterpiece featuring Matthew McConaughey, Anne Hathaway and Jessica Chastain as astronauts who travel through a wormhole to search for a home for humanity. It’s weird, complex and all about relativity. And I loved every second of it.

Afronauts (2014). True story: In 1964, Zambian science teacher Edward Makaika launched his own space programme to try to beat the US to the moon. He formulated a dubious plan to launch 16-year-old Matia Mwambwa into space using an aluminium rocket and a catapult system. The rocket never took off, but decades later director Frances Bodomo’s short film takes a look at what the Zambian space program might have looked like.

Gravity (2013). Astronauts (Sandra Bullock and George Clooney) try to rescue themselves after their space shuttle suffers catastrophic damage.

Another Earth (2011). A thought-provoking film on second chances and forgiveness that follows a young and intelligent woman whose one mistake leads her to deal with the consequences of her choice and the choices she continues to make afterwards. While the film largely ignores the scientific and physical impacts of having another Earth — such as gravity and the atmosphere — the second Earth in the film adds a layer of mystery and uneasiness to the story.

Sunshine (2007). Director Danny Boyle’s visually gorgeous, contemplative drama about a crew of astronauts dispatched on a mission to try to reignite the dying sun.

Space Cowboys (2000). Senior-citizen astronauts (Clint Eastwood, James Garner, Donald Sutherland and Tommy Lee Jones) prove to Nasa that age is no barrier when it comes to space travel.

Contact (1997). Robert Zemeckis is a hit-or-miss director if there ever was one, but his adaptation of the Carl Sagan novel Contact is one of his triumphs. Starring Jodie Foster as a woman of science and Matthew McConaughey as a man of faith, Contact is the kind of space-travel movie that’s about so much more: love, death, science, religion and the nature of reality, all in a warmly cerebral movie that privileges character development over spectacle.

Gattaca (1997). Featuring one of Ethan Hawke’s most underrated performances and prescient details about DNA testing, 1997’s Gattaca is more than just a movie you probably saw in your high-school biology class during senior week. With coolly minimalist design and cinematography and Uma Thurman and Jude Law doing the most in key supporting roles, it’s a story of thwarted ambition and the planetary loneliness of space travel, sibling rivalry and conformity, with old Hollywood-style glamour, Patricia Highsmith-esque intrigue, and a wonderfully ’90s vision of a dystopian future.

Apollo 13 (1995). In all the celebration this year over Apollo 11’s successful moon landing, we’d be remiss if we didn’t also mention this classic space movie starring Tom Hanks, that immortalised the words, “Houston, we have a problem” and tells the story of Apollo 13’s ill-fated mission to the moon in April 1970.

The Right Stuff (1984). It doesn’t get better than Sam Shepard as Chuck Yeager — that’s a man’s man. Mr Cool. It’s three hours long, but so well done.

Outland (1981). A science Western retelling of High Noon with Sean Connery in the Gary Cooper role. — David Miller

Silent Running (1972). About a post-apocalyptic space station (a floating garden in space — like a biodome) run by the last remaining (and injured) crew member (Bruce Dern) and his cadre of little robots.


— The Seattle Times/TNS
The rocket scientist who helped the US land on moon

US astronauts proudly planted a flag on the moon in July 1969, but the achievement would not have been possible without rocket technology developed by German researchers headed by Wernher von Braun - whose work originally served the Nazi regime, writes Christoph Driessen.

The moon landing 50 years ago was not only a triumph for the United States. It was also the crowning achievement in the life of the German rocket scientist Wernher von Braun.

Born in 1912, von Braun became fascinated with rocket flight by reading the work of science fiction authors, according to a Nasa biography. He even wrote his own science fiction story on the moon at age 17, called Lametta.

For von Braun to realise his dream, any means was acceptable. He spent his life building rockets. It didn’t really matter for whom.

“Science in itself has no moral dimension,” he once claimed.

Von Braun would become a member of the Nazi Party and an SS officer. As late as 1945, he is pictured in photos with Adolf Hitler and other leaders of Nazi Germany.

After that, there is a sudden gap in the historical record. Later photos show him standing next to US presidents Dwight D Eisenhower, John F Kennedy and cartoonist Walt Disney.

Von Braun was born into aristocracy in eastern Prussia. In 1937, at the age of 25, he became technical director of the Army Research Institute at Peenemunde on the island of Usedom in northern Germany.

It was in that job that he led the secret development of the V-2 rocket, the “magic weapon” that Hitler hoped would turn the tide for Germany in the final phase of World War II.

Von Braun once recalled how Hitler mimicked a rocket blast after he showed him a movie about a rocket launch.

The V-2 flew at speeds in excess of 5,600 kilometres per hour, capable of delivering 1 ton of explosives on a warhead to a target 320 kilometres away. The weapon was used to terrorise London and other targets in Western Europe in the final stages of the war.

In 1943, Nazi rocket production was relocated to a tunnel system in Thuringia to protect it against air raids. Prisoners from the Buchenwald concentration camp, some hand selected by von Braun, became slave labourers on the project.

When the defeat of Nazi Germany became apparent after the Normandy invasion in 1944, von Braun resisted SS chief Heinrich Himmler’s recruitment efforts and spent a short time in the custody of the Gestapo.

Shortly before the end of the war, he brought the most important documents of German rocket research to safety. That gave him a bargaining chip in his negotiations with the Americans.

Their race against the Soviet Union to claim the spoils of war – including new technologies developed by the Nazis – had already begun.

In a report written in May or June 1945, von Braun presented the Americans with the prospect of a flight to the moon, and they took the bait. On September 18, 1945, the chief designer of Germany’s dreaded V2 rocket flew to the United States.

He would receive first-class treatment from that point forward. Even when he briefly returned to Germany for his wedding, he was closely guarded by the Americans over fears that the Soviets could kidnap him.

Eventually, 115 members of his Peenemuende team were brought to the US. In the early 60s, Germans occupied all department heads at the US rocket research centre. Not all of them were grateful. One complained in an interview about bad American cuisine.

In the Texas desert and later in Huntsville, Alabama, von Braun continued his work so seamlessly that his research centre was unofficially called Peenemuende South. He developed the first medium-range nuclear missile as part of an armaments project, just as the Cold War began to dominate the geopolitical stage.

Just like in Nazi Germany, von Braun cleverly placed his dream of building a super rocket in the context of the political and military realities of the time, according to his biographer Johannes Weyer.

To gain funding and political support for his research centre, Braun mounted a public relations campaign. Eloquent, charming and photogenic, he quickly became a celebrity.

In 1956, just four months after the Soviet Union shocked the US by launching Sputnik, he shot the first American satellite into orbit, helping to restore US national pride.

Sputnik, coincidentally, was also a project carried out by German researchers. The group was tied to Braun’s former colleague Helmut Groettrup, who initially worked in the Soviet occupation zone but was deported in 1946 with about 5,000 other engineers and their families to the Soviet Union.

The Sputnik project was led, however, by Ukrainian-born Sergei Korolev, whose identity was kept secret for life. The Americans knew him only as Mister X. When the Nobel committee asked to whom it could award a prize to recognise the achievement, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev said it belonged to the Soviet people.

The race to the moon became a showdown for the two superpowers. In the US, von Braun developed the Saturn V rocket that Nasa used to reach the moon, landing 50 years ago on July 20. He also would have liked to build the Apollo capsule in which the astronauts rode, but that job went to the Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston.

In the decades following the moon landing, the US government radically pared down the expensive space programme as public interest flagged once the goal of beating the Soviets to the moon was achieved.

Von Braun, disappointed with work in the private sector, died of cancer in 1977 at the age of 65.

– DPA
Driving diversity: Breaking stereotypes

First female chauffeur from Nepal talks to Usha Wagle Gautam about her hardships in life and taking people places in Doha

The odds that you would happen to see a female limousine driver in Doha are slim. Still, Qatar is not just any other country; women are free to do whatever they like. Well, mostly. And if you commit the error of thinking they could not drive any better than their male counterparts, try getting your right of way with a woman in Doha traffic. There are probably as many women as there are men on Doha roads. Women at the wheel of public transport or limousine services are not as many. It is not the norm. So even as there are many of them driving all sorts of vehicles in their private capacity, from those with little engines to the SUVs, it is still a novelty to find female chauffeurs.

Mina Thapa Chhetri, a mother of nine-year-old, the first female chauffeur from Nepal in Qatar, is breaking that stereotype. From the modest beginning as a cleaner, Mina has come a long way. She came to Qatar in 2013 as a school cleaner and later after an year and half went on to learn driving and acquire a driving licence. After the expiry of her initial contract, she managed to join a limousine company in Qatar, disregarding the narrative that women cannot be chauffeurs, to support her family.

Before coming to Doha, Mina had worked in Malaysia to help with the bags for a solar company. Talking about family and life back home in Nepal, Mina said, “I have a big family. We’re five sisters and three brothers. I’m the youngest one. But, to support my family, I had to look for a job when I was merely thirteen years old. I worked as a tourist guide and as an assistant teacher in Nepal although I never attended a formal school as a kid.”

As she drives her limo in Qatar, she talks about the stereotypes she faces in her daily life. “I have broken the stereotype with my own patience. I come from a very conservative society but my family has always been very supportive of whatever I do and go for. They’re my real strength in what I am today,” she says.

Talking about driving around in Doha, Mina says, “It is difficult to be a driver in a foreign country, at least, psychologically. Many of my passengers don’t believe that I am a Nepali. They think I am an East Asian, an Indonesia or a Malaysian. I love talking to my passengers when I’m driving them to destinations. I know Arabic quite well. I want to know more about them, for what they do and the kind of life they’re living around.” Chhetri finds her passengers happy to see a woman behind the wheel. “I think women are much more careful drivers than men. The percentage of female accidents is very low. Children and seniors alike really like to ride with female chauffeurs. Back in Nepal even, we have very few female cab drivers. Last year I met one, and she was quite a bold woman. I was proud to see my reflection in her,” she says.

Drawing parallel between female chauffeurs in Nepal and Qatar, Chhetri says, “It’s a matter of security for a woman driver in Nepal. However, in Qatar it’s totally different. We feel so secure here.”

An independent woman, Chhetri is an inspiration to Nepali rural women. She is the sole breadwinner of her family, including son, husband and in-laws. “They [family] live in Chitwan, which is quite expensive. But my job pays me enough,” she tells.

Recently, Chhetri also opened a small shop selling plumbing items in Chitwan for her home-bound husband and in-laws.

Chhetri wants to continue driving in Qatar. “My plan is to own vehicles in Nepal to ferry female passengers. She feels confident that a driver’s job is more than enough to survive.

“I think women are much more careful drivers than men. The percentage of female accidents is very low. Children and seniors alike really like to ride with female chauffeurs. Back in Nepal even, we have very few female cab drivers. Last year I met one, and she was quite a bold woman. I was proud to see my reflection in her.” — Mina Chhetri, female chauffeur
Everything and nothing has changed in Cuba from Obama to Trump, Cuba appears different in many aspects and the same in an essential way. With Obama’s easing of restrictions gradually taking root, options for travelling from the US to Cuba were still limited in 2015, and I got a costly charter out of Tampa, Fla., with a lot of paperwork. For my visit last month, a couple of days after Trump tightened travel restrictions, the 59-minute JetBlue hop with express beverage service from Orlando, Fla., to Jose Marti International Airport was paid for with points.

Four years ago at Jose Marti airport, I was cornered by unsmiling and relentless Cuban security personnel and closely questioned. This time, Jose Marti’s previous tension was gone. There was little sign of police. That was because of the surge of Americans that Cubans got used to, many people told me. In 2015, changing dollars for Cuban Convertible Pesos, or CUCs, anywhere but at a government currency exchange felt treacherous. This time, seemingly, everybody gladly calculated the dollars-to-CUCs math: in hotels, taxis, restaurants and hole-in-the-wall art galleries tucked into Havana’s crumbling streets. The influx of Americans created a boom in restaurants and rooms-for-rent operated out of private homes. Once illegal in Cuba, they are now flourishing.

There are dozens of high-end ‘paladares’ in Havana, where you can get a delicious meal for two for about $60, the same as a doctor’s monthly government pay. And you can get fresh, organic produce, once unheard of in a country that imports most of its food. Some ‘casa particular’ accommodations, rooms for rent, are like boutique hotels, tranquil and alluring with local art. Those places might charge 40 CUCs a night. Others cost 15 CUCs and are often noisy, Havana’s nightly symphony of babies, television, dogs, car horns, conversations and slammed doors riffs through porous buildings, and not so plush.

Four years ago, Cubans spoke cautiously of their government’s repressions, mixing metaphors, questions and third-person declarations so that it was impossible to say if they were guilty of being critical. Maybe with the passing of Fidel Castro, he died in 2016 at age 90 and the ubiquitous billboards with his portrait and slogans have since been taken down, there is more openness.

Cubans, particularly artists in storefront cubbyholes that seem to be everywhere, now readily share their views with American strangers. “A lot of other countries are doing business in Cuba,” said one. “Why isn’t the United States? You could be the boss of Cuba.”

But the anticipated big change didn’t really happen, which leads to the part about Cuba that remains the same: a grinding frustration over the lack of opportunity in a country where literacy and college completion rates outpace the US, but jobs are scarce and poorly paid. Four years ago, a lot of people spoke of their distress from the US embargo on trade. More recently, the embargo was rarely mentioned. Their focus is internal, on what Cubans need to do.

That Havana entrepreneur, saying the government will never change for the better on its own accord, suggested only the collapse of the Venezuelan government and the end of its oil for Cuba will bring the civil unrest that will trigger what Obama failed to provoke: el cambio. There were other entrepreneurs who nodded their respect to Trump for a ‘mano dura’, or hard hand. But they were a small minority. Obama is still widely embraced and ‘Trump crazy’ is often one of the first things Cubans say within seconds of realising they are meeting an American. As many US citizens found in the four years between the presidents, the US and Cuba are familiar neighbours and worlds apart.

“Enjoy my country but just don’t try to understand it.” That advice came at a junk-yard art gallery, while the artist held court and
and nothing has changed

Santeria-infused music and dance swirled outside.

Cuba is difficult to understand.

Havana combines colonial architecture in a dizzying flux of disintegration and reconstruction, Russian, Chinese and Venezuelan influences, infusions of global tourism and continued constrictions of a communist government.

Thanks to the embargo, Havana mirrors the 1950s, with American cars flamboyantly plying island roads. Their skins declare classic Detroit but conceal a puzzle of transplanted engines, transmissions and brakes that are new, antique, international and handmade.

By outward appearance, much of the city comes across as a dangerous ghetto. Wrong. It's a police state where guns are outlawed. Streets are safe. And while the exteriors of many buildings are in a shocking state of exotically gorgeous deterioration, inside they are scrupulously clean and tidy.

"That is the Cuban way," a businessman said, chuckling, of the nation's devotion to domestic cleanliness. "I don't know why."

But there is a recurring theme. For decades, the government has provided free housing, healthcare and subsidised staples. Job placement for everything from tradesmen to professors to professionals is centrally controlled, and a high monthly salary is about $60 a month.

That has left Cubans healthy, informed and hungry for meaningful pursuits. They typically enjoy talking to Americans, often because they have a mother in Houston, or have visited Miami, or have some other visceral bond with the US.

During the Obama administration, Americans thronged to Cuba under the Treasury Department's "people-to-people" permission aimed at cultural engagement. Trump eliminated that option and shut down popular travel via cruise ships.

Permissions that remain include visits for family, government business, journalism, professional, religious, educational and humanitarian matters.

Another is "support of the Cuban people," or engaging "in a full-time schedule of activities that enhance contact with the Cuban people."

It feels often like there is a kinship of one or two degrees of separation between Floridians and Cubans, via the lawyers, stylists, pharmacists, teachers, police and others who are our friends and neighbours in Florida and came from Cuba.

But on the island of Cuba, Cubans are blessed and burdened in ways that would be unimaginable to most Americans.

– Orlando Sentinel/TNS

**COMMUTE:** American cars flamboyantly ply Cuba roads. Their skins declare classic Detroit but conceal a puzzle of transplanted engines, transmissions and brakes that are new, antique, international and handmade.

**ARCHITECTURE:** Havana combines colonial architecture in a dizzying flux of disintegration and reconstruction.

**SHARE VIEW:** Cubans, particularly artists in storefront cubbyholes that seem to be everywhere, now readily share their views with American strangers.

**LESS STRESS:** Previous tensions at Havana's airport have lessened significantly in recent years.

**CHANGE:** Four years ago, Cubans spoke cautiously of their government's repressions, mixing metaphors, questions and third-person declarations so that it was impossible to say if they were guilty of being critical. Maybe with the passing of Fidel Castro there is more openness.
Doha — Brightly lit at night

Amidst the tall structures that stand there as an ant. Hair flying in the air, wind on your face, such a gorgeous view. The joy of seeing changing colours of the building in the night is spectacular.

The glass and mirror on the building dazzle at night in the reflecting light. The whole view is so colourful, filled with hues of orange and red. The adjacent water body reflects the skyscrapers, increasing its grandeur to another level.

Just seeing it is not enough, you would want to freeze the moment. So I have captured it through my lens in a way that everybody can experience it.

— Text by Keerthana Kandarajam, photos by Santhiya Kandaraja (santhiya.09)
College is stressful. Students have classes, exams and so many other pressures common in modern life and now researchers have found that petting dogs and cats can improve students’ mood with stress-relieving physiological benefits, a study shows.

According to the study published in the journal AERA Open, many universities have instituted “Pet Your Stress Away” programmes, where students can come in and interact with cats and dogs. “Just 10 minutes can have a significant impact,” students in our study that interacted with cats and dogs had a significant reduction in cortisol, a major stress hormone,” said Patricia Pendry, Associate Professor at Washington State University. The study involved 240 college students randomly divided into four groups. The first group received hands-on interaction in small groups with cats and dogs for 10 minutes. They could pet, play with and generally hang out with the animals as they wanted. To compare effects of different exposures to animals, the second group observed other people petting animals while they waited in line for their turn. The third group watched a slideshow of the same animals available during the intervention, while the fourth group was “waitlisted”.

According to the researchers, those students waited for their turn quietly for 10 minutes without their phones, reading materials or other stimuli, but were told they would experience animal interaction soon. For the findings, several salivary cortisol samples were collected from each participant, starting in the morning when they woke up. Once all the data was crunched from the various samples, the students who interacted directly with the pets showed significantly less cortisol in their saliva after the interaction.

These results were found even while considering that some students may have had very high or low levels to begin with. “What we wanted to learn was whether this exposure would help students reduce their stress in a less subjective way. And it did, which is exciting because the reduction of stress hormones may, over time, have significant benefits for physical and mental health,” Pendry said. – IANS

Petting dogs, cats may reduce stress in college students

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Community

Lifestyle/Horoscope

Petting dogs, cats may reduce stress in college students

You may feel a strange tension. It seems that nothing you say or do is quite right. Capricorn. As much as you may try to do the correct thing, you can't make things click the way you'd like. Try not to raise your expectations too high. Let go of the idea that things are going to work out exactly the way you want. You may not even know what's best for you in the end.

You may not know which way to turn, Taurus. You may be emotionally weighed down by sentimental feelings and memories that bind you to the past. You may also feel restricted by authority figures who've been around the block more times than you, and therefore feel they have the right to tell you how to run your life. Try not to let your thoughts get tied up in either of these scenarios.

You should be in a good mood, Leo, although you might have a hard time fully expressing yourself. Perhaps you feel like there is someone keeping an eye on your every move. You may feel like a kid in class being watched by the teacher. Don't be intimidated by those with a self-righteous air. You have just as much right to speak your mind as anyone else.

You're the liquid that takes the shape of its container, Scorpio. Even though this may seem like the most non-confrontational way to do things, you may find that it's actually a cause of great frustration for you and others. People may be annoyed that you're always following someone else's lead instead of taking the initiative. Try to be more assertive while continuing to be easygoing.

You may get the feeling that despite all the hard work you've accomplished, something is still missing, Virgo. There's still a long road ahead, regardless of the goals you've attained so far. Perhaps the thing you're searching for is a tender moment with a loved one, something that's much closer than you think. Stop searching far and wide for the thing that's right under your nose.

You may feel like a puppy that has been let outside for the first time, Sagittarius. The air is warm and you're full of energy. You're ready to run over the fields and hills. Unfortunately, you're tied to a stake and you can't move beyond a ten-foot radius. Your heart is ready to fly, but something beyond your control keeps you where you are. Start chewing the rope.

You may feel like a shy person when it comes to expressing your emotions today, Aries. This could be a rare thing for you. Other people may wonder if something is wrong. The truth is, you may feel like you need to calm down and focus more of your attention inward instead of directing it outward. Don't look to others to resolve your problems. Deal with them yourself. You're just going through an introspective period.

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Wordsearch

Every letter of the alphabet is used at least once. Squares with the same number in have the same letter in. Work out which number represents which letter.

Codeword

Sudoku

Bound And Gagged

Puzzles courtesy: Puzzlechoice.com
Super Cryptic Clues

Across
1 Monk’s garb is hot to some extent (5)
4 Old rulers of Iran unaffected by revolution? (5)
7 Organisms present in dressed crab I ate? (8)
8 Spoil English horse (4)
9 Eddy, possibly, changed colour (4)
10 Offering to pay for the lot? (7)
12 Sergeant may revert to former state (4,7)
14 Drooping duck by Italian river - or African river (7)
16 Seaside attraction or something to eat by river (4)
19 Helsinki resident, perhaps, fine in north (4)
20 I can’t stir, I’ve become idle (8)
21 A girl not entirely repellent (5)
22 Loner forced to register (5)

Down
1 Firm with nothing in stock (5)
2 Gamblers associated with elders? (7)
3 Rent provided by tenant or neighbour (4)
4 European coming from Paris and needing translation (8)
5 Injured leader departs, carrying a weapon (5)
6 Elastic band held by agent (7)
7 Cooke tangy pie-like mummy? (8)
11 Journalist provided with cool building (7)
13 One who flies from Swansea via Torquay (7)
15 Greek god on the Spanish jury (5)
17 Composer left after dance party (5)
18 Naked animal we hear (4)

Yesterday’s Solution

Wordsearch

Codeword
Fashion moments at LSA2019

Lux Style Awards are known for nothing safe or crowd-pleasing fashions. As Pakistan entertainment industry came together to celebrate one of Pakistan’s most cogitated statuettes, as a matter of fact, the award that specifically defined what fashion and style is for Pakistan, we spotted some head-turner appearances on the red carpet. Nothing too conventional, but we got to see the stars to play it chic not safe by any means. Risks yielded the event’s big wins this time. A series of show-stopping golden metallic gowns embellished to the hilt, the deployment of white couture and a man who left the standard tux behind twinning with his long-time beau and fiancé; the red carpet was filled with plenty of encore worthy looks, a pinnacle of iconic style. Badly structured silhouettes, too blingy couture lines, awkward poses and dodgy hairdos are often part of the narrative, but with sprinkling A-list stylists, designers and makeup artists working strenuously behind the scenes, every attendee pulls out all the stops when it comes to their red carpet looks. However where we had some extra ordinary glamorous silhouettes hitting the red carpet of LSA2019, we had equal misses. From Mahira Khan to Maya Ali, Iqra Aziz to Sana Javed, the stars transformed the vulnerable venue into a father-and-flounce-filled fantasy that was embellished for all the right reasons – each doing their best to step up to the grand occasion. Fluttery ruffles, crystals aplenty and vintage gathered strapless gown, there are plenty of looks that broke the mould for awards season style. The fashion desk curates the hottest red carpet looks that made the cut this year.

Mahira Khan

Thus far this season, there has been an about-turn in atmosphere on the runways: the protective layers have been shed and, beneath them lies a sheer abundance of glitter and gold, and we believe the power shoulders and golden revolution is just never enough. Beautiful, semi-sheer, strappy, body-skimming gown with gold embellishments made of lace, sequins, beads and crystals; a gold leaf-inspired look — a dress by Maison Yeya, is exactly what we would’ve wanted to see Mahira Khan in. Her freshly trimmed hair in layers, nothing too extravagant, paired with golden slippers just caterwauled how a red carpet is done! And who would know better than Mahira herself? A look that shined quite literally, just like the Lux statue itself. Mon Cheri, Carina!

Maya Ali

Wicked pretty! Nothing says classic award night like a white dress, but this season’s crop — cascading with extravagant frills looks more statement than staple. Maya Ali set the tone with Nomi Ansari’s exuberant, multi-tiered dress that demanded to be paraded round town. Nomi’s white hand-embroidered tulle ruffled bustier with white hand-embroidered tulle.

Sheheryar Munawar Siddiqui

The theme of the day: romantic, bohemian, and utterly casual. Cut a Gatsby figure, but shed just a bit of that mythic, stalwart exterior and have a little fun with the details. Two words: Bow Tie. You can never go wrong with a classic bowtie ensemble and Sheheryar proved it,

Sadaf Kanwal

Not only did she win Model of the Year at the LSAs, but she also won hearts with her neon yellow Sana Safinaz dress! Kanwal styled neon like La’Shaunae, Rihanna, and Kendall Jenner. It was all about tempering the day-glo hue with a dark neutral colour, creating the perfect contrast. The black bow and the peeking leg was supreme. Sana Safinaz have lately been venturing into clothes that does not define their retail but are fashion forward and where neon can be imposing on the eye and your pre-existing wardrobe, this was just the perfect highlighter piece – like an ode to 80’s, the perfect balance between neon and subtlety.

Sana Javed

Purple is the colour of luxury and passion, of princely robes and papal vestments, dazzling gems and florid prose. And now it’s the reigning colour of the season, Sana Javed proved this to us in an off-shoulder San Safinaz gown that had just a perfect length of taffeta tail with it. Utterly glamorous and a colour that suited the entire cheeky personality of Sana herself. When it comes to fashion, you see, it’s something of a shrinking violet.

Sana Javed

Mahira Khan

Maya Ali

Sheheryar Munawar Siddiqui

Sadaf Kanwal

By Muhammad Asad Ullah

Like every time he does. We loved the Ismail Farid outfit – especially the jacket, and the understated look he pulled off! He’s the dapper guy of the industry! Voila.

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Keegan-Michael Key is living the acting dream by being part of two major movies hitting the theatres only weeks apart.

He’s not only a part of the much-loved Toy Story franchise with the recently released Toy Story 4, but Key will be going head-to-head with himself in theatres on Friday when the live-action version of The Lion King is released. In Toy Story 4, Key’s the voice of the not-so-lovable stuffed toy Ducky, while in The Lion King he speaks for the hyena Kamari.

“It feels satisfying. You can ask any journeyman actor, someone who works their whole career, sometimes you are doing it for the love and sometimes you are just doing it for the money,” Key says.

“But, you hit pinacles and right now is a pinnacle moment for me. Sometimes you are doing it for the money, “ Key says.

For debutant who hasn’t trained in acting, conviction in a script and the curiosity and excitement to essay a character is most important, since that’s the clutch that enables you to perform. I am thankful to essay a character is most important, since that’s the clutch that enables you to perform. I am thankful to have found the experiences of getting the opportunity to work on something here. It was extremely organic. Sometimes he would not be getting the line read that he wanted and Jon would then act with us. If you have seen the movie Made, with him and Vincent Vaughn, it’s that dynamic. I’m him and Eric Andre is Vince Vaughn.”

Key got to show off his improvisational skills as in the early recording sessions. Favreau would allow the actors to come up with their own material to go with what was in the script. With each session, the process got more refined until the hyenas had their voices. The freedom Key felt when recording came from having a director like Favreau, who has worked on both sides of the camera.

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“That is a very archaic style and a little baroque,” Key says. “In classical theatre, especially when you are reading prose, there’s lots of syntax you have to try to manage in specific parentheticals. It’s being able to run into the parentheticals, bit the semicolon, back up, small pause to the period. That’s where the voice work training came from.”

Key’s well known for his voice work, but he has an equally impressive list of jobs where he’s performed sketch and improvisational comedy from MADtv to Whose Live is it Anyway? and Key And Peele, where he worked with his Toy Story 4 recording buddy Jordan Peele, who is the voice of Bunny in the Pixar production. Key found over the 16 years he did nothing but improvisational and sketch comedy that style of working has a much more organic feel than he needed to be able to do voice work. But the experience he gained by having to modulate his voice to play so many different characters was an element that helped him, especially in Toy Story 4.

Both Toy Story and The Lion King required Key to go in and out of recording studios for years. He found the experiences of getting his lines recorded for the projects to be quite different. In Toy Story 4, he worked with Peele in two recording booths that faced each other. Being close enough to see Peele’s eyes made the recording sessions feel more like the days when the pair were working together on their sketch-comedy show. The Lion King director Jon Favreau went for a different approach having Key and Eric Andre, who speaks for the hyena Azizi, work in a room that felt more like they were working on a stage production. The pair were fitted with microphones so they could move around the room while delivering their lines.

“Jon sat at a small table with a bottle of water and he would just watch us,” Key says. “He would tell us to start from the beginning, invade his space, we are finding something here. It was extremely organic. Sometimes he would not be getting the line read that he wanted and Jon would then act with us. If you have seen the movie Made, with him and Vincent Vaughn, it’s that dynamic. I’m him and Eric Andre is Vince Vaughn.”

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Youth Sri Lankan expat campaigns for climate change in Qatar

By Mudassir Raja

Gradual degradation of the environment is perhaps the only issue that threatens the planet earth and every individual needs to be responsible to mitigate its adverse effects. To have a cleaner environment is a global issue and it needs global attention. Every bit of effort to take action and raise awareness about the issue is worth noticing.

When it comes to raising awareness and taking initiatives towards improving the environment, Qatar is not behind the rest of the world. There are numerous organisations, groups and individuals who have been involved in all sorts of activities – from raising awareness to cleaning beaches.

Intiqab Rawoof, a young Sri Lankan expat, has been living in Qatar for over five years. He has actively been involved in raising awareness about climate change and its possible adverse effects in Qatar and around the world. The climate campaigner has been collaborating with other individuals, groups, organisations and embassies and organising different awareness campaigns and exhibitions in Qatar to make people aware of their responsibilities towards a better environment.

Community recently spoke with Intiqab and discussed his efforts and viewpoints about climate change.

A graduate in IT and business, Intiqab started volunteering for different activities related to climate change at a young age. “When I was in my high school in Sri Lanka, I was always attracted towards the news about causes and effects of global warming. I got involved with the United Nations’ volunteers programme in Sri Lanka. I became the group leader of a group called V Force [volunteer force]. We as a group of young volunteers used to take part in different environment related activities in Sri Lanka. We became a very big group on climate change volunteers.”

He added: “As my interest grew in volunteering for the climate change, I got involved with Earth Lanka, an independent, non-governmental and non-profit organisation. The group provides news related to environment. They have journalists in different countries working as volunteers – not paid. I got involved with the group and started writing for Earth Lanka. This led me to the UN. I started attending different climate change conferences and workshops in different countries.”

It was in 2013 that Intiqab moved to Qatar. “Two years ago in Qatar, we started a campaign called My Climate Action in Qatar. We as the group partner with the country that hosts international conferences on climate change. We have so far partnered with German and Polish embassies in Qatar. We organised a photography competition highlighting different climate related issues in Qatar. We also collaborated with different schools and engaged young children in the campaigns to raise awareness. It was a kind of community event.”

“Last year, we again arranged a photography competition and an exhibition at Katara themed as ‘Green City’. The contributors highlighted beautiful green places in Qatar. This year we also plan to have the second round of the same exhibition.”

The enthusiastic climate campaigner believes that every individual has the responsibility to improve the environment. “The whole world has to act. To make the world sustainable we need to think and act for the future we want. It is not about a certain country, it is about everyone. Simple, we need to reduce use of plastic items in our daily activities. Every human being on the face of the earth has a duty to improve the climate.”

ACTIVIST: A graduate in IT and business, Intiqab Rawoof started volunteering for different activities related to climate change at a young age.