

Sure shot: A contraceptive jab for men

It Uses A Combination Of Testosterone And Progesterone To Reduce Sperm Count

London: Women have been awaiting it for years — a contraceptive option for men to help them share the family planning burden.

And now, scientists at Edinburgh University have confirmed that such a contraceptive jab has proved successful in preventing unplanned pregnancies after tests in Scotland, the Scotsman reported.

The World Health Organisation trial, involving 200 cou-

ples around the globe, uses a combination of the hormones testosterone and progesterone which dramatically reduce a man's sperm count.

The contraceptive, given in the trial in two jabs, works by reducing sperm counts from above 20 million sperm per millilitre to zero, and to less than one million in others, below the viable threshold for a pregnancy.

This result provides better contraceptive protection than

The contraceptive works by reducing sperm counts from above 20 million sperm per millilitre to zero, and to less than one million in others, below the viable threshold for a pregnancy. This result provides better contraceptive protection than condoms

and a similar success rate to the female pill. Professor Richard Anderson, who led the Scottish team, was quoted as saying, "The results are very encouraging and it has gone very well. Most of our couples will be finishing (the trial) over the course of the spring. A couple of other centres will go on the rest of this year, so

it will be a while before we get a final analysis."

It will still need to satisfy researchers that it is effective on a large scale and does not have any unwanted side effects. A major barrier to the acceptance of male contraception has been reluctance of men to undergo a daily ritual. But the new injection technique only needs to be given every two months, it is hoped men will now accept a greater share of the responsibility for contraception. **PTI**

Traffic jam? This car turns into plane in just 30 secs

London: Fed up with traffic jams? Here's some good news — 'the flying car' is on its way. An American company, Terrafugia Transition, based near Boston, is to soon start manufacturing "the flying cars", called the Transition Roadable Light Sport Aircraft, which can be transformed from a car to a plane in just 30 seconds.

The Transition can fly at 185kmph and reach 105kmph on the road; on the ground, with its wings tucked up and in, it can fill up with petrol at a normal filling station and fits in an average size garage, the Sunday Express reported.

"The flying car" is set to go into production this year and is expected to cost between £125,000 and £160,000, say its developers.

Richard Gersh, of Terrafugia, the US company which makes the vehicle and hopes to sell 200 a year, said: "This is an aeroplane first and foremost. The idea is you can drive it to and from a regulation airport. Fully fuelled, you can fly it for a range of



FLYING START: The flying car, called the Transition, can fly at 185kmph and reach 105kmph on roads. It can fill up at a normal petrol pump and fits in an average-sized garage

400 to 450 miles. We have 100 orders so far. There are still some minor changes that need to be made because it has to meet both road and aviation standards. However, we expect to be delivering at the end of this year."

According to the CEO of the company, they have successfully test-flown "the flying car" as many as 28 times.

"It has been very successful. We have got a very good handling vehicle and our test pilot said that the flights were just remarkably unremarkable — it just flies like a really nice, little airplane," CEO Carl Dietrich told Canadian TV. He also said that this car would also ease problems for pilots who currently face problems like weather. **PTI**

SHORT CUTS

Archaeological sites found using Google Earth

An Australian archaeologist claims to have identified nearly 2,000 potentially important sites in Saudi Arabia using Google Earth. David Kennedy, a professor of classics and ancient history at the University of Western Australia, says with the help of satellite images from Google Earth he has pinpointed 1,977 archaeological, including 1,082 teardrop shaped stone tombs in the Arab country. "I've never been to Saudi Arabia. It's not the easiest country to break into," New Scientist magazine quoted Kennedy as saying. Instead, Kennedy said, he scanned about 1240sqkm in Saudi Arabia using Google Earth. From their birds-eye view he found 1,977 potential archaeological sites.

We are happiest at 7.26pm on Saturday: The happiest time of the week is 7.26pm on a Saturday evening, according to a study. In the research, early Saturday evening emerged as the preferred time for millions because they are finally able to unwind after a busy week at work. According to the study, one third of Brits regularly spend time with friends on a Saturday night, either dining out, going to pubs and clubs or going to each other's houses. The study of 3,000 British people also found 7.29am on a Monday — amid the commute to the office after an enjoyable weekend — is the lowest point for most. Seven out of ten said they then "dread" returning to work after the weekend.

First sundial made 10,000 yrs ago in Oz:

A new find from Australia has suggested that ancient Aboriginal tribes were the world's first astronomers. Scientists at Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation in Canberra discovered a pile of old rocks laid out in a particular manner to map the progress of the sun — to create a primitive form of sundial. "These stones have been laid out precisely to map the sun," professor Ray Norris said. The rocks have been laid out in a semi-circle, with two points set in perfect alignment with the setting sun on a midsummer's day.

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As survival becomes easier, our brains shrink to make us smarter

Washington: Human brains have shrunk over the past 30,000 years, puzzling scientists who argue it is not a sign we are growing dumber but that evolution is making the key motor leaner and more efficient. The average size of the brain of modern males — homo sapiens — has decreased about 10% during that period — from 1,500 to 1,359 cubic centimeters, the size of a tennis ball. Women's brains, which are smaller on average than those of men, have experienced an equivalent drop in size. These measurements were taken using skulls found in Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

"I'd called that a major downsizing in an evolutionary eye blink," John Hawks of the University of Michigan told Discover magazine.

But other anthropologists note that brain shrinkage is not very surprising since the stronger and larger we are, the more gray matter we need to control this larger mass. The Neanderthal, a cousin of the modern human who disappeared about



DOWNSIZE THIS: The average size of human brain has shrunk by 10%

30 millennia ago, was far more massive and had a larger brain.

Psychology professor David Geary of the University of Missouri said these traits were necessary to survive in a hostile environment.

Geary and his colleagues used population density as a measure of social complexity, with the hypothesis that the more humans are living closer together, the greater the exchanges between group, the division of labor and the rich and varied interactions between people. They found that brain size decreased as population density increased.

"As complex societies emerged, the brain became smaller because people did not have to be as smart to stay alive," Geary said.

But the downsizing does not mean modern humans are dumber than their ancestors — rather, they developed different, more sophisticated forms of intelligence, said Brian Hare, an assistant professor of anthropology at Duke University. **AFP**

Bat-winged drone bomber clears hurdle

Los Angeles: A robotic, bat-winged bomber designed to take off from a US aircraft carrier has passed its first test in a debut flight in California, the US navy said.

The X-47B jet, which looks like a smaller version of the B-2 stealth bomber, stayed in air for 29 minutes and climbed to 5,000ft in a test flight on Friday at Edwards Air Force Base, according to the navy and defense contractor Northrop Grumman.

Military leaders see the plane as part of a new generation of

drones that would be able to evade radar and fly at much faster speeds than the current fleet of propeller-driven Predators and Reapers used in the war in Afghanistan.

INVISIBLE TO RADAR

"Today we got a glimpse towards the future as the US navy's first-ever tailless, jet-powered unmanned aircraft took to the skies," Captain Jaime Engdahl, a programme manager for the warplane project, said

in a statement.

Northrop is building the navy bomber under a \$636 million contract awarded in 2007. With no pilot on board, the experimental aircraft was operated by a joint navy and Northrop team on the ground.

The plane "flew a racetrack pattern over the dry lakebed with standard-rate turns," the navy said.

It will be years before the X-47B joins the naval air fleet, with the first tests on a carrier scheduled for 2013, Northrop said. **AFP**

This piece is from the pages of The Times of India CREST Edition, available every Saturday at Rs 6/-

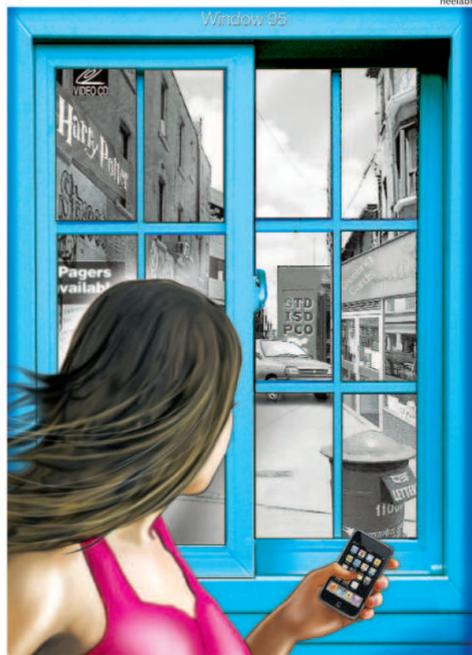
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Nostalgia on speed

Vishant V Agarwala | TNN

Not so long ago, yearning for the 'good ol' days' was the prerogative of the ageing. Today, with shorter childhoods and faster lifestyles, even the young are feeling the urge to turn back the clock



some point in life, we all have sighed out loud when our grandparents moaned about the days when the young respected the old, women wore lots of clothes, people didn't need calculators to add up unending numbers, a kilo of rice came for less than a rupee and people needed to cycle 12 km to get to work every morning. Although every generation reminisces about the 'better and simpler' days, it seems too early for people in their 20s and 30s to be looking back.

According to psychologist Jitendra Nagpal, "Nostalgia is more popular than ever before and it is no longer the preserve of the old. We now live in a society where even the youngsters dream about the times things were 'better'."

But why are so many young adults suffering from extreme short-term nostalgia, where they get teary-eyed about things that happened only a few years, or even

months, ago? Why are 20-somethings seeking to relive the childhood they have barely left behind?

Nagpal, citing a recent study which found that childhood in the modern era ends at the age of 12, says the one driving force for the 'new nostalgia' phenomenon is the increasing pressure on the youth. "Today, the grind begins very early in life. Even eight-year-olds are under pressure to perform in class and make a career. Teenagers are working as interns at multinational firms, lest they be left behind in the rat race. People barely in their 20s are facing girlfriend problems, and have mounting debts on their credit card. In response, they are holding on to things which remind them of the past to get some sort of control and comfort. They are reacting to the uncertainties and rigours of life by trying to hold on to

Youngsters today are clinging on to memories that are barely a year or two old as a response to the pressure and complexity of modern-day living. It is their way of expressing their desire for comfort, tradition and stability

things that represent stability and tradition," he says.

Internet marketing expert Amit Nair believes that the speed with which technology is changing our lives is another reason youngsters are turning to old times. "Just a decade ago, people sent letters and hand-made cards to each other. There was something known as a 'decent time' to call someone on the phone and

only your near and dear ones knew how your day had been. Email, mobile phones, social networking websites and digital cameras have changed the way people communicate and turned social dynamics on its heels." Nair says that people who have grown up in the '90s today feel a certain kind of pressure even to communicate. "It's like 'he'll feel bad if I don't wish him a happy birthday'. Technology has made things faster, no doubt, but it hasn't made them simpler. No wonder youngsters are clinging to the days just gone by."

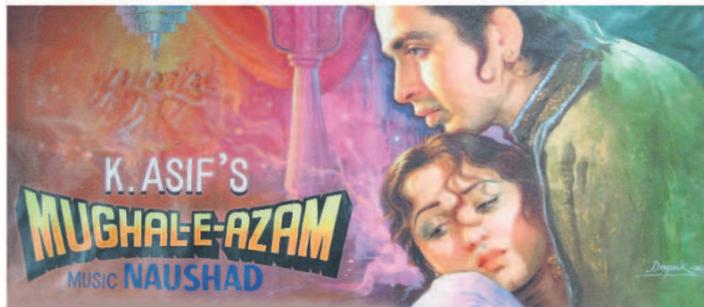
While few consumers can give up their cell phones or online access for long, Nair has observed this very recent trend of people trying to recreate their past through technology. More than a million people have seen the unforgettable 'Ek Chidiya' animation — a part of growing up with Doordarshan in the '80s — in the three years since it was uploaded on YouTube. Yesteryear soaps like Buniyad and Nukkad are downloaded and seeded by thousands of surfers and retro ring tones are topping popularity charts. "The net, for all its futuristic aura, is steeped in nostalgia. A longing for community is the backdrop for most of the online activity. The upsurge in social networking sites can also be seen as a longing for the recreation, though a virtual one, of social ties," says Nair. "They still crave for 'nuggets of wisdom' — the rise in the number of 'Ask Your Grandma' sites is a sign of the young longing for the past."

Sociologist Dipankar Majumdar explains that young adults' obsession with their childhood suggests they might feel uncertain about their own future. "Older people have a reason to be nostalgic — the best part of their life is behind them. A youngster looking over his or her shoulder is a sign of lack of confidence. The reassuring thing about the past is that we already know the outcome. It is their comfort zone, protecting them from the future."

That may be the comfort zone of the new youth, but there's nothing as disconcerting as premature graying of the head — a condition for which there are no dyes as yet.

The memory market

There's a booming market for products from a bygone-era from rocking chairs to gramophones. Who needs a time machine?



Diya Banerjee | TNN

It's kitschy, eye-catching and makes for quirky art-decor. But old artifacts and curios are no longer just collector's items. Instead, they have trickled down to mass markets, creeping into the living rooms of art connoisseurs. Oil-lamps that collected thick soot may dot a quiet corner, while a huge antique clock that required regular oiling, one that stands grand as a symbol of opulence and class, may hog enviable space on the other. Antiques have silently tip-toed into middle-class Indian homes not just as an odd 'look-at-me' item, but as a premium product that bespeak of a certain time, perhaps even a lost era. "Madamji, gramophone to bahut bikta hai (gramophones sell a lot)," brags a street-seller. Claiming that he has sold hundreds of such objet d'art to foreign tourists who are willing to pay any price, Mukes says. Fetching anywhere between Rs 3,000 and Rs 10,000 a piece, depending on the size, in flea markets such as those of Janpath in New Delhi, these oddities are no longer

the monopoly of selected suppliers.

Old vinyl records too have made a great comeback. Kalyan Bhuta from Mumbai vouches for that. "I have been in this business for the past 10 years and many youngsters have contacted me through my website to purchase records," he says. From Naushad to Asha Bhosle and Manna Day's duet to Bade Gulam Ali Khan, Bhuta's selective list of records makes a killing. "The price I quote depends on the rarity of the album and its condition."

Pranav Sharma, who runs a successful online business venture called Indian Gifting Portal, says the demand for antique replicas will never die. "They make for interesting gifting ideas. We have always had a constant demand for things like old jewellery boxes, antique brassware clocks, Gandhi spectacles and even compasses. Lately, these so-called collector's items have been doing brisk business."

From gifts ranging between Rs 1,000 and Rs 2,500, Sharma's site is abuzz with activity. A former computer engineer

and now an art dealer, Hinesh Jethwani, 29, who runs the quirky art store called Indian Hippy, says that old Bollywood vintage posters make for a great stylish statement. "Ninety per cent of my clients are first-time art owners."

After reconnoitering the Dadar, Mahim and Matunga area, also known as the erstwhile Bombay film poster colony for artists, he says he was lucky to chance upon painters who knew the art of painting life-sized film posters. "It was a tedious process. To find artists who could paint posters exactly the way it was done in the '60s." Today, with a dedicated team of over 20 artists, Mumbai-based Jethwani says his vintage canvas poster collection is of impeccable quality.

Hand-painted and exquisitely detailed, no one, he emphasises, can claim that the painting is not an original. "Whoever is in this market is selling digital replicas. We are amongst the very few who do hand-painted replicas. Our orders usually come from the UK, US and Dubai. These paintings make for premium products."

So, while Mukes throws big numbers when asked about his recent sales, one thing is for certain — holding onto the past indeed makes for great business strategy.