

THE LONG WEEKEND

Between the humdrum of our hectic grey lives, some time off renders us colourful and light, by **Arefa Tehsin & Adityavikram More**

A term we didn't know as we grew up but has since been lodged in our brains like a trigger. Mention one long weekend coming and people might sit up, grin and exclaim something on the lines of "Wow..." "Really?" "Howzthat!" "Let's plan something!" "I can apply for one leave and get four days at a stretch!" We used to have summer holidays and Diwali breaks and Christmas vacations. And those delightful short breaks, such as Eid-ul-Fitr, Gandhi Jayanti, Guru Nanak Jayanti and not to forget the blissful heavy showers that led the school to shut down unexpectedly for the day. But nothing which was so short and still had 'long' in it.

So what is this new syndrome?

Symptom: You don't get warts or carbuncles. You just feel like a loser if you don't do something on the long weekend. And, ahem, even if you do.

Effect: You start in your car early in the morning and get stuck in a long traffic jam, bumper to bumper, before you can even have a mouth-stretching, satisfying yawn. Everyone had the same idea to step out of their homes with their bags on a Friday morning. From the unassuming stuffed vans to the mean BMWs with tinted glasses. How uncanny! Clutch. Brake. Clutch. Brake. You reach the resort



Illustrations: SAJITH KUMAR

and encounter, to your horror (what had you expected anyway?) the swimming pool full of shrieking brats and raucously laughing men. What's so funny, boss? You wonder. You stand in queues to take your buffet and then scan the dining area for an empty table like Mr. Holmes with your mate. "Watson, you keep your eyes on the right!" You slip in an extra currency note and pat on the back of the harassed waiter and whisper, "Dost, our drinks first," and wink at the guy conspiratorially. You spend a night or two, see the sights squeezing your way through the throngs to click a selfie with the waterfall or that darned ancient temple. Some snaps with those seductive pouty lips,



'awesome' waterfall on the social media and revel in the comments that start to pour in: "Ooooooh....you look smashing!" "What a tranquil place...I envy you!" "Stud!" "Gorgeous!" and so on. Satisfied and grinning, you dig into the appetising fare of packed potato chips and gear up for some more minutes before you shout indecencies to the traffic again.

Cause: So what is the cause of this new world syndrome? Limited supply and unlimited demand for one. The dogmatic routines that we follow religiously. The same pleasures that we seek. The same yardsticks for success that we emulate. The set standards of living that we try to match. The same gadgets we want to own. A handful of cities and localities that we want to inhabit... Our cities are so chocked with the living that we wonder where all the ghosts have gone. No places left for the spirits to live. When was the last time you encountered a haunted house in a city? They all have been taken over by the deadlier living beings. Ah...those are the ones we really need to be scared of.

that too! Mission accomplished. You start on your six hour long homeward journey, which was supposed to take one and half actually.

Side Effect: As you sit in the traffic with a martyred look on your face, you decide to pull out your mobile phone. Pulling out one's mobile is a chain reaction of sorts. Others start doing the same and their heads duck down in a synchronised motion to stare at the virtual world: checking emails, WhatsApp, SMSs and Twitter. Or just lurking on Facebook. You post your selfie with that

Our cities are so chocked and cluttered, we barely find the time or peace to decompress

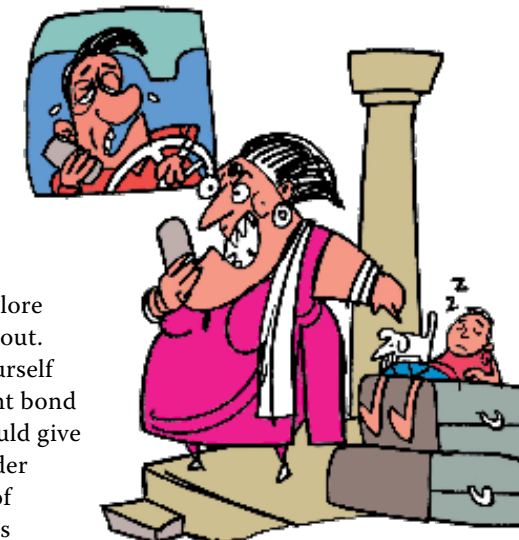
universally should give the option of flexible timings to the employees with some regulations. People should be given the option, especially in the big cities, to work from home if the job permits or have alternate working days from home. Even if there are cuts in salaries, people can have a more relaxed, stress-free lives and save on commuting expenditure. Everyone doesn't need to have the same holiday pattern. That can be tailor made too without affecting the work. We are not robots, though we can be made to act like them, with the same body clock ticking from 8 to 5. Someone can be the most productive during the early evening hours and yet others late in the morning. These measures will not only increase productivity, reduce the stress in our lives and traffic on the roads—be it on working days or holidays—but also result in spending more quality time with the family, having extra time to give the children a meaningful upbringing, getting involved in local communities to improve our own areas than relying on the local politician to do it for us and give back to the society in



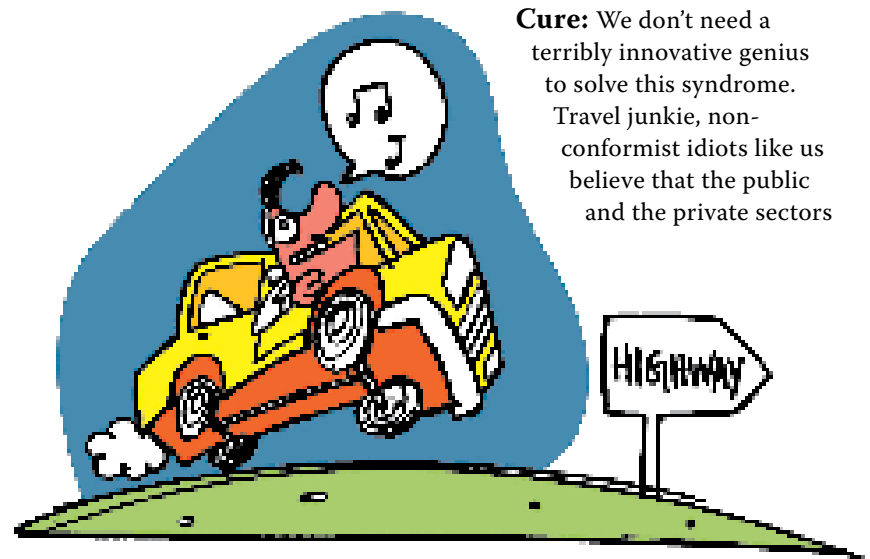
whatever small way we can.

Those who are self employed should work according to their own whims and fancies (why not?) and not the working calendar of the year. And give time to explore the world within and without. Read, spend time with yourself and re-connect our ancient bond with nature. Now that would give major food for soul. Wonder why this isn't a yardstick of modern times. To sum this up, that is the long....and short of it.

Alas, we shouldn't be surprised by the new 'long' in our lives. The long traffic jams, the long wait on the e-commerce telephone lines (aap kataar mein hain, kripiya pratiksha kigiye) and the long queues for...movie tickets! No, we



emphatically refuse to accept that we mentioned ATMs. Only if we could have equally long attention spans (despite our cellphones) and long relationships. Seems in these times, this is a long shot, after all. ■



Cure: We don't need a terribly innovative genius to solve this syndrome. Travel junkie, non-conformist idiots like us believe that the public and the private sectors



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