

1975

Mozambique achieves independence from Portugal.

1975

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declares a state of internal emergency in India.

1993

Kim Campbell is sworn in as the first female Prime Minister of Canada.



2017

The World Health Organization estimates that Yemen has over 200,000 cases of cholera.



Ordinary Russians are going of their way to accommodate thousands of guests. On social media and in opinion columns, visitors are asking the same question: Who might Russia could be so fun? Some Russians are wondering if these foreigners are getting away with things that would land us in jail for “unsanctioned rallying” or a hefty fine for “public disturbance.” The authorities have used the excuse of the World Cup to fustify the barely existent free-assembly. A special decree issued by President Putin in 2017 restricts “public events not related to sports competitions” for the duration of the tournament. Refusing to have fun is a public offense: On June 12, the opening day of the World Cup, an activist was sentenced to 15 days in jail for protesting against the tournament in downtown Moscow. It is unlikely that the crackdown will ease up once the trophy has been awarded: Russia’s state security apparatus is never very eager to

give back the liberties it has taken away in the name of security. And it’s not just the torture. While foreigners are enjoying the hospitality, they shouldn’t be oblivious to the cost the World Cup is inflicting on ordinary Russians, who didn’t have a say in opening their doors to reveling sports fans. Moscow State University’s students and researchers have been protesting against the “FIFA Fan Fest” — a party area for tens of thousands of people, perched on a hill next to their campus. Its construction cost about \$40 million from the city’s budget and wreaked irreparable damage on a park. The protesters haven’t achieved much, apart from a smear campaign against them and a few fines and arrests for “illegal picketing.” Let’s be clear: Aside from being a sporting event of global significance, the World Cup is a major public relations exercise for President Putin and his entourage. And it seems to be working, by legitimising some of the least savory aspects of

Putin’s rule. Ramzan Kadyrov, the thuggish ruler of Chechnya — who, among other things, implausibly claimed that human rights abuses against gay people couldn’t have possibly happened because there were no gays in Chechnya — didn’t miss a chance to snap a selfie with Team Egypt’s wildly popular forward Mo Salah. The Russian authorities will undoubtedly use this article to again cast themselves as victims of “Rusophobic campaigning in the Western press.” To them, I can only say: You can prevent unfavorable coverage by not doing any of the things you are accused of doing. Don’t torture people. Don’t take away their livelihoods. Don’t bulldoze over their lives to make room for your international show. That should be pretty easy. Certainly easier than beating Egypt 3-1.

(Alexey Kovalev is the editor of codaru.com, a nonprofit independent publication in Moscow.)

Mexico

Struggling people hope

Peña Nieto oversaw a series of reforms aimed to modernize the economy, including opening up the oil industry to private foreign investment. But while these moves were hailed by investors, they produced only minor short-term growth in a time of soaring prices; inflation was officially 6.8% last year, with the cost of fruit and vegetables rising 18.6%. Peña Nieto’s approval rating plummeted and the PRI’s presidential candidate is languishing in third place, polling at 21%. In these circumstances, promises of more government help for the poor are applauded. A huge chunk of PRI voters — especially in poorer states like Hidalgo, where this town is situated — appear to have migrated directly to López Obrador. They are the biggest bloc of voters pushing him into the lead. López Obrador has also made inroads in wealthier northern states, where the center-right National Action Party, known as the PAN, has historically been strong. A likely reason is that former President Felipe Calderón, of the PAN, waged a military crackdown

on drug cartels during his tenure, from 2006 to 2012, that led to an explosion of violence in the north. The bloodshed has continued under Peña Nieto, with 2017 being Mexico’s most homicidal year in decades. López Obrador blames both parties for the violence, and has pledged that he will bring peace to Mexico, even floating the idea of an amnesty for some criminals and inviting the pope to oversee a reconciliation process. His rivals denounce these proposals, but many here find it hard to see how violence could get any worse and are open to new ideas. The rise of President Trump could also be helping López Obrador, convincing people that a stronger, more nationalist figure could better defend their interests against threats from the north. But this is probably a minor factor; most people I talk to at rallies are far angrier with their own rulers than those over the river in the United States. Critics retort that López Obrador is himself a member of the establishment he rails against. He began his career in the PRI in the

1970s, then left to help found the Democratic Revolution Party in 1989; he founded his new party, National Regeneration Movement, or Morena, in 2014. When he was mayor of Mexico City from 2000 to 2005, his minister of finance was caught on camera as a regular in a Las Vegas casino and subsequently imprisoned for embezzlement and money laundering. Many PRI and PAN politicians have switched to Morena as it surges in the polls. But while López Obrador may indeed be another career politician, his style and discourse contrasts with those who have governed this nation the last few decades. This is enough of a signal of change to attract the votes of millions of people who are struggling to provide for their families, to escape violent gangs, or to recover from being deported from the United States. Time will tell if it is enough to really solve Mexico’s fundamental problems. (Joan Grillo is the author of “Gangster Warlords: Drug Dollars, Killing Fields, and the New Politics of Latin America” and a contributing opinion writer)



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



First day today of women driving cars in #SaudiArabia. This reform is of enormous social and economic consequences not only for the women of Saudi Arabia, but for the country in general. The heir of the throne, prince Mohammed Bin Salman is leading the country into a new era.

@jokraniareflex1

02



Fadya Basmer, 23, one of first female taxi drivers in #SaudiArabia after ban lifted at midnight. When we were out on our drive, a little girl saw her in the driver’s seat and smiled- couldn’t believe her eyes.” It’s about inspiring girls to do what men do.”

@Josiensor

03



#Women can finally drive in #SaudiArabia! I hit the road at midnight in #Riyadh w/a fabulous group of ladies. What a night! Thanks to all who advocated and sacrificed to get here. For me & many others it will be life-changing! #SaudiWomenDriving #Women2Drive #WomenEmpowerment

@AliyaMawani

04



Saudi police update on the first day of women driving so far: No major incidents reported. “There is a high level of discipline,” official said.

@ahmed

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

Karak Break

Are we getting any results?



MOHAMED ISA

Over the past two weeks, I told you about how a bank’s cash machine withheld my credit card. And then, my struggle to get it back and my hassle to reactivate it by the bank.

Before I released my book “Chai Karak: A Customer Service Story,” I asked many customer service experts to review it. This is what Mr. Jim Cathart said about it: “A relationship is a direct connection between people in which value is exchanged. If there is no value emanating from each side, then it is not truly a relationship. To strengthen a relationship in business the most direct way is to find out what the other person considers valuable and then deliver more of that. Chai Karak highlights this with elegance and eloquence.” The most important word in this quote is “value.”

To report the incident to the bank and get my credit card reactivated I talked to different departments including the General Call Center, the Credit Cards Call Center, the Complaints Call Center and the Credit Cards Collection Center. If you ask me how I would describe these calls, it will be very easy to me: Useless. The various Centers were playing Ping Pong with me. Each one, told me to call another Center. I do not recall anyone going out of his or her way to help resolve my simple issue.



To prepare myself for the anticipated bad experience, I visited my mum to get a dose of love, compassion and some porridge. When I left her, I placed the dreaded call.

In all these calls, I insisted in asking the same question to all the agents: “Are we getting any results from this call?” I received the same answer from all the agents: Pin drop silence. They all realized I was not getting any value out of my calls. My problem was not resolved. In essence, the bank did not pass the relationship test highlighted by Jim. I did not get any value from these calls. I received my credit card but I could not use it. How inconvenient!

Compare this to my positive experience with Khaleeji Commercial Bank, my credit card was deactivated by the cash machine because I entered the wrong password. After my experience with the other bank, I thought: “Oh my God. Here we go again.” To prepare myself for the anticipated bad experience, I visited my mum to get a dose of love, compassion and some porridge. When I left her, I placed the dreaded call.

To my surprise, the agent answered my call within few minutes, he was professional and courteous. I told him about that I wanted to reactivate my credit card. He said: “I will get it done for you after you answer few securities questions.” And he did. The call took only seven minutes. As Jim suggested, he delivered what I wanted: Resolving my problem. Bravo Hesham!

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