

FLAIR FOR FLARE PANTS

SHAGUFTA KALIM

THE ASIAN AGE

✓ Fashion isn't about repeating; it's all about improvising. That's exactly how the trouser tale is shaping up at the moment. Flare seems to be the keyword this season — from Tom Ford (in classic black) to Marchesa (in metallic sheen), Chanel (in shimmering pin-stripes) to Tommy Hilffiger (all over stripes), Donna Karan (in soft colours accentuated with ribbons and sequins) to Balmain (in pleated sheers) — every high-end label is embracing this style for Spring/Summer 2015.

"The fluidity in your trousers makes it bohemian. It's like taking pajamas to a sophisticated level," says designer Anamika Khanna. She offers some interesting ideas and adds, "Invest in an over all de-constructed look, i.e pair your pajama-like trousers with a loose top. I feel the palazzo silhouette doesn't compliment the Indian body type, so avoid that."

Keeping in mind the versatility that flared patterns offer, the ace designer is still in favour of going on with *dhori* or *churidar* style pants.

This fusion look is a hit with other Indian designers as well. For instance, designer Harsh Gupta has fused pants and tops to create an interesting silhouette. He also created a wide leg shimmery pant with a double breasted wrap vest to make it look interesting.

"The loose dominance is so strong right now, that even denims have unabashedly flared. The top pick on the international circuit is flared culottes with a crop top," he points out.

According to designer Zulekha Shariff, the wide-legged trousers and culottes trends have re-emerged from the seventies taking on a loose, laid-back vibe that comes off as casual, sultry and sophisticated. She says, "This trend is known for flattering the body as it highlights the waist and curve. Pear-shaped women benefit from wearing wide legged pants as it draws attention to the ankle making the hip narrow."

She lists her choices, "From patterned to solid, pleated and floor-sweeping — the wide-leg pants are really versatile this season. Seek them in double-faced satin, stretch wool, crepe or silk for a laid-back, yet glam-



(L to R) Models showcase various versions of flare pants that will be big this season. Ensembles by Payal Khandwala; Urvashi Joneja; (left below) Harsh Gupta; (right) Mrinalini

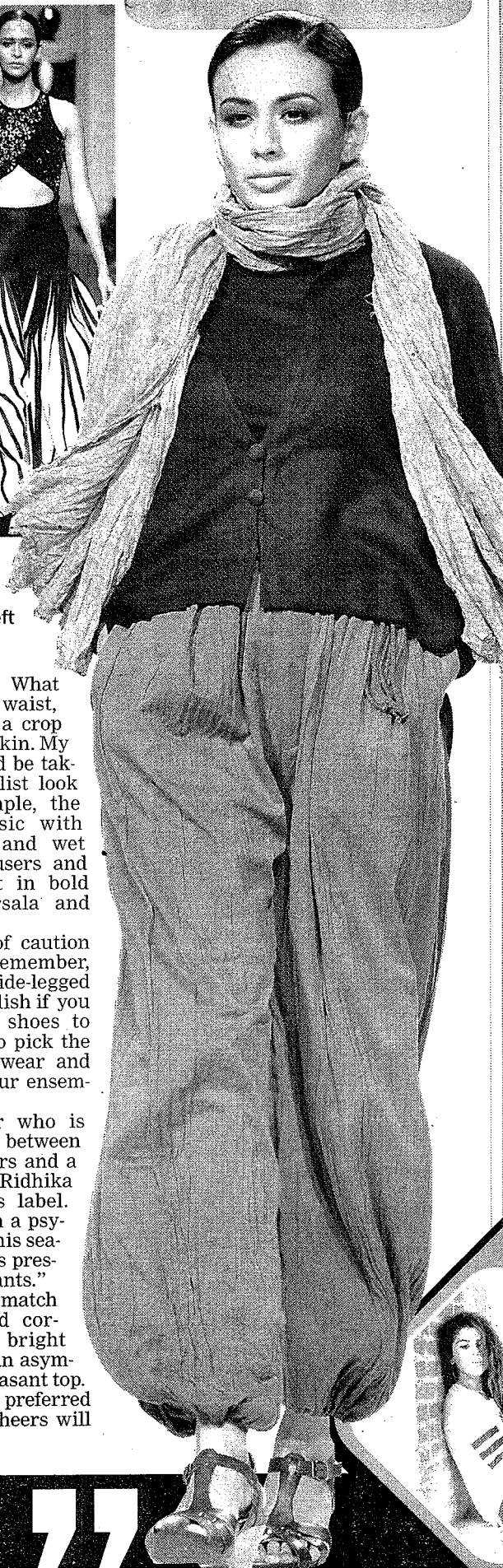
orous take on the trend. What also works well is a high waist, wide trouser paired with a crop top to reveal a hint of skin. My favourite style would be taking on the minimalist look by keeping it simple, the colour palette basic with neutral make-up and wet hair. Wide-leg trousers and culottes look best in bold colours like marsala and cobalt blue."

She adds a note of caution and suggests, "Remember, even the nicest wide-legged pants won't look stylish if you choose the wrong shoes to wear with them. So pick the right kind of footwear and team them with your ensemble."

Another designer who is drawing a connect between the wide-leg trousers and a decade gone by, is Ridhika Khanna of Ridress label. She says, "Back with a psychedelic vengeance, this season 1970s is making its presence felt with flared pants."

She prefers separates to match the flare shape. "Flared corduroy trousers with bright colours will do well with an asymmetrical top as well as a peasant top. White and pastels will be preferred colours, and cotton and sheers will be the fabrics of choice."

Making a haute statement this season are flare pants that have a loose, laid-back vibe and a style that's casual, sultry and sophisticated.



style sheet

FOOT FORWARD



ANUBHA VIR SHARMA

✓ In the Spring-Summer of 2015, it's a good idea to know that this season's biggest fashion trends for footwear are florals, metallics and bling. Floral prints in vibrant and exciting colours are very fashionable. And not to forget, the eye-catching metallics and bling will be big this season as well.

In 2015, there is a shift towards the softer and cooler side of the colour spectrum. A beautiful mix of pastels, understated brights and neutrals inspired by nature will take center stage.

The colours which will be very trendy for footwear this season are citrus shades such as custard yellow, lime and tangerine

orange. Pastels such as aquamarine blue and teal will also add the cool factor to the heat.

Also colours like evergreen toasted almond and the classic blue, should definitely be a staple in your wardrobe. In metallics, we are still in love with gold, so get one of them too!

The shoe trends emphasise on ease and wearability, and so this season wedges, platforms and not to mention a selection of flats which are dressed up with embellishment and stones, will be totally in vogue. The idea behind wearing embellished footwear is that they are dressy enough to wear along with your party dress, whether it is western or Indian. A pair of gold or silver embellished footwear is a must-have in your wardrobe.

The writer is founder of Blue Button Shoes

fashion news

SELENA'S SPORTY SIDE

After singer Rita Ora, the latest songstress to flaunt her sporty side is Selena Gomez. The pop star has collaborated with Adidas to create the new 'City Life' collection. The NEO label by the star is heavily inspired by the glam sportswear look, fusing contemporary sportswear with city attitude.



The fluidity in your trousers makes it bohemian. It's like taking pajamas to a sophisticated level

— ANAMIKA KHANNA, DESIGNER



National Handloom Expo is an initiative of the office of Development Commissioner for Handlooms, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India through National Handloom Development Corporation (NHDC) Ltd. to provide direct access to the handloom weavers to market their products to consumers in various cities of India. The participants are from various State Government Bodies/ Apex Societies, Primary Handloom Weavers Co-operative Societies and Handloom Agencies. 60 agencies belonging to 15 states are participating. The exhibition has the participation of three weavers who are recipients of National Award for design.

महेश्वर की साड़ियां साउथ अफ्रीका में

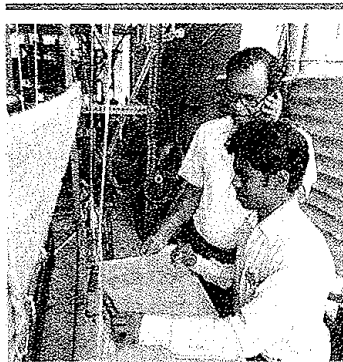
अभय तिवारी >> महेश्वर (खरगोन)

नगर में बनने वाली महेश्वरी साड़ियां यूं तो विश्व प्रसिद्ध हैं, लेकिन अब हथकरघा पर बनी शिल्प भी विदेश जाएगी। इसे साउथ अफ्रीका में होने वाली एक प्रदर्शनी में फ्रेम के रूप में शामिल किया जाएगा। इन दिनों इसे तैयार किया जा रहा है।

तीन शताब्दी पूर्व महारानी देवीश्री अहिल्याबाई होलकर ने इस उद्योग को यहां स्थापित किया था। तब भारतीय पहनावे में अग्रणी साड़ियों का निर्माण ही इस पर किया जाता था, परंतु समय के साथ आए बदलाव ने इन हैंडलूमों पर साड़ी के साथ ड्रेस मटेरियल, परदे के कपड़े, पीलो कवर आदि वैरायटी का निर्माण भी किया जाने लगा।

कड़ी मेहनत से उकेर रहे उँ की आकृति : इन दिनों एक बुनकर द्वारा हथकरघा पर विशेष प्रकार से बुनाई कर

महेश्वर की हथकरघा पर बनी शिल्प



कपड़े का निर्माण किया जा रहा है। इस कपड़े का आगामी दिनों में साउथ अफ्रीका में आयोजित होने वाली प्रदर्शनी में बतौर फोटो फ्रेम के रूप में इस्तेमाल किया जाएगा। कदीर अंसारी के कारखाने में इस कपड़े को तैयार कर रहे बुनकर मुशरफ अंसारी ने बताया कि 40 बाय 40

इंच के विशेष कपड़े पर दो रंगों में उँ की आकृति को उकेरा जा रहा है। इस विशेष प्रकार की आकृति के लिए हाथों का इस्तेमाल किया जा रहा है।

डिजाइनर से मिला है ऑर्डर : इस कार्य का ऑर्डर साउथ अफ्रीका में बसे भारतीय मूल के डिजाइनर राजदीप से मिला है। वे कपड़े की बुनाई के लिए 5 हजार रुपए प्रति नग दे रहे हैं।

महेश्वर में तैयार हैंडलूम के विदेशी की प्रदर्शनी में शामिल होने से बुनकर उद्योग को और बढ़ावा मिलेगा। इस प्रकार की कारिगरी से बुनकर उद्योग में नए आयाम खुलेंगे। निगम इस तरह के कार्य को बढ़ावा देने के हरसंभव प्रयास करेगा। - **श्यामरंजन सेनगुप्ता, सहायक प्रबंधक, माप्र हस्तशिल्प व हथकरघा विकास निगम, महेश्वर**

Stitching up the US market with measured moves

Women's apparel retailer eShakti.com offers off-the-shelf as well as customised clothes

N RAMAKRISHNAN

Being able to pivot and tweak the business is what entrepreneurs are known for.

That is exactly what BG Krishnan did with his online venture, eShakti.com Pvt Ltd. He was selling lifestyle products to Indians living abroad, particularly in the US. The merchandise included Indian clothes like *salwar-kameez*. The *salwar-kameez* was also custom-tailored to turn them into tunics and pants. "We found a lot of Americans were buying them," says Krishnan.

This roused Krishnan's interest, who tried to understand why Americans were buying these clothes. He also tried to figure out what American fashion was all about. To his surprise, he found that there was a lot of variation in size and shape, and not all Americans were able to get the exact fit. This was a huge market and, gradually, eShakti dropped all Indian lifestyle products - films, movies, food and books - and started hawking only clothes.

"The idea of clothing became stronger because it was a high margin product and was serving Indians as well. Suddenly, the market expanded when we looked at clothing," says Krish-

nan, in his office located on Chennai's arterial Anna Salai.

Western line

Simultaneously, eShakti launched its western line of clothes. This business grew and accounted for a fourth of the company's total revenues. Krishnan wondered why Americans preferred to buy Indian clothes, rather than the western clothes that were on sale. "I felt that our entire branding was obviously not clear. We dropped the Indian clothing line one fine day. In 2008," he recalls. This change in

nues? For an entrepreneur, it is not such a difficult decision to make, according to him. Entrepreneurs go where the opportunity is; he was starting from a 25 per cent base rather than a zero base. The market size also played a role. The Indian market in the US was about 1.8 million, while the US market was 300 million. "I felt that the 75 per cent was holding my other 25 per cent from grow-

ing. I wanted the larger market to be the one we served. I didn't want to be seen as someone selling ethnic clothes, because the market then would be limited," says Krishnan.

Change in strategy

As if to approve eShakti's change in strategy, venture capital firm IDG Ventures invested \$3 million in the company in 2011. From then, the numbers have multiplied ten-fold, Krishnan says, without divulging details. Further endorsement of the business model came in September 2014 when eShakti raised another \$5 million, the bulk of it coming from IvyCap Ventures with IDG also participating.

So, what does eShakti do? It is an online women's apparel retailer that sells to customers in the US. It sells, what Krishnan describes as, day-to-evening wear clothes, kind of smart casuals. eShakti offers both off-the-shelf and customised outfits and competes with the best brands in the most competitive market in the world, says Krishnan.

Almost half the customers are those who buy without any customisation. This, Krishnan says, is an important index, as it means that the fashion is competing with other brands in the market.

eShakti offers a full-size selection, which means it pretty much guarantees a woman that her size will be available. Custom styling includes changing the size to fit that particular customer's requirements, be it in the upper body cut or the sleeve length or to suit that person's height.



"The idea of clothing became stronger because it was a high margin product and was serving Indians as well. Suddenly, the market expanded when we looked at clothing."

BG KRISHNAN,
Managing Director, eShakti.com

The standard garments in the US are for an average height. "In our case, we go by the exact height of the customer," says Krishnan.

He says even though customisation is the company's USP, he prefers to tell his customers to buy from him because "we make clothes that make you look your absolute best."

They are not buying customisation; they are buying clothes that give them a far better shot at good fit and fall.

In terms of pricing, there are the budget brands, the moderately priced ones and the premi-

um brands and eShakti, says Krishnan, has plonked itself a notch above some of the moderately priced brands, say, a notch above a JC Penney.

eShakti was earlier stitching the garments on its own, but has now outsourced it to a company in Gurgaon. eShakti has a design director based in New York and a design team in India. It will expand the design team and increase the number of products on its site. It has a large pattern studio. For all practical purposes, all garments are made once virtually. Money will go into fabrics, designers, sampling and strengthening the top management team.

Fund raising plan

eShakti will look to raising the third round of institutional capital in the first quarter of the next financial year, something upwards of \$20 million.

Krishnan believes that eShakti has built both scalability of the business and competitive barriers and what it needs to grow the business is enterprise - vision, strategy, capital and team.

"We would ideally like to measure twice and cut once. At the same time, we don't have the luxury of going too slow. Merely because we don't have any major competitors now doesn't mean someone is not showing up tomorrow. We have to get ourselves to be the king of the heap as quickly as possible," says Krishnan, a physics graduate from Loyola College, Chennai, and an MBA from Jamnalal Bajaj Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai.



NEIRON PHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Himatsingka Seide arm in pact with fashion brand 'kate spade new york'

OUR BUREAU

Bengaluru, March 9

Himatsingka Seide Ltd said its subsidiary DWI Holdings has signed a licence agreement to manufacture and distribute the 'kate spade new york' brand of bedding and bath products in North America and certain other geographies.

Shrikant Himatsingka, Executive Director, said, "In line with our strategy to augment our brand portfolio, the new

licence with 'kate spade new york' is an extremely positive development. It will significantly contribute to expand our reach in branded home textiles space".

Himatsingka shares closed 2.42 per cent higher in a weak market at ₹86.90 on the BSE on Monday.

The Himatsingka Group operates over 12 brands globally in the home textiles space. Its brand portfolio includes marquee brands such as Calvin

Klein Home, Barbara Berry, Esprit, Bellora and atmosphere.

During 2013-14, the group generated over ₹600 crore from brands. The Himatsingka Group is exploring various initiatives to augment its brand portfolio and deepen its distribution network of these brands. These initiatives should potentially steer revenues from brands to approximately ₹1,200 crore over the next two years, the company said in a statement.

Remy Martin Maker May Shut India Office

Vijaya.Rathore
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Remy Cointreau, maker of Remy Martin cognac, is shutting its India office and is working on a new distribution model to make its products available in the country. The French premium drinks maker has already served notices to over 30 employees of its five-year-old wholly-owned Indian subsidiary, several people familiar with the development told ET.

Remy Cointreau did not respond to specific questions sent by ET about closing of its India unit, but said that it is working with a long-term global vision in mind.

Laetitia Delaye, head of investor relations for the company, in an e-mail response said that the company is studying various scenarios to improve its presence in India and certainly not intending to "move away". "India remains a strategic market for us and has great potential, especially in the untapped premium and luxury segment," she said. Besides Remy Martin, its prestigious brands include Louis XIII luxury cognac, Cointreau liqueur, Mount Gay rum and Bruichladdich Scotch.

According to an employee who did not wish to be identified, Remy Cointreau's duty free business in India was doing well, while its retail sales had failed to pick up, largely due to high import duty.

While its future plans for the country is not clear, sources expect Remy to focus on duty free business in the country.

Remy Cointreau India had in 2013 announced a joint venture with Nashik Vintners, owner of the country's top wine producer Sula Vineyard, for launching India-specific brands.

WILLIAMSON MAGOR GROUP

Deepak Khaitan dies at 59

By ANIEK PAUL
aniek.p@livemint.com

KOLKATA

If wishes were horses, Deepak Khaitan would by now have lit up every rural household in India with battery-operated lights and thoroughbreds would have charged down Kolkata's racing turf under floodlights.

Neither is likely to happen in the foreseeable future, but Khaitan, who died on Monday aged 59 at his Queen's Park home in Kolkata, left for his successors several unrealised dreams to pursue.

A second generation entrepreneur, the vice-chairman of the **Williamson Magor Group** had inherited his father Brij Mohan Khaitan's passion for horses. Kolkata's Royal Calcutta Turf Club used to be Deepak Khaitan's second home.

Popularly known as DK, he didn't take kindly to media reports on his interest in horses back in the 1990s—not surprisingly, because it is said that Khaitan senior had to acquire what is now **Eveready Industries India Ltd** to persuade his elder son DK to take a greater interest in the family businesses.

The apparent gamble paid off.

Paying \$96.5 million, or close to ₹300 crore at that time, the Khaitans in September 1994 acquired a controlling stake in the erstwhile Union Carbide India Ltd (now known as Eveready) from its US owners, outbidding several keen contenders such as the Wadias of **Bombay Dyeing and Manufacturing Co. Ltd.**

It was at that time the biggest corporate takeover in India, and a leap of faith for the Khaitans. Led by B.M. Khaitan, who is now



Sharp negotiator: Deepak Khaitan.

OBITUARY

Deepak Khaitan

1955-2015

87, the group was on a buying spree, snapping up engineering firms and tea plantations.

Eveready Industries soon became the group flagship as the group merged into it some of its key businesses, including tea. While B.M. Khaitan quietly worked out of 4 Mangoe Lane—the group's headquarters—DK started to take a keen interest in the new horse in the stable: Eveready.

By the late 1990s, the Khaitans were trying to stabilize the operations of the companies they had taken over amid mounting debt and differences with their partners in the plantation business—the Magors based in tony London suburbs. By 2001, they had separated their business interests. The Khaitans slowly turned the corner, and in June 2005, DK pulled off what was perhaps as big an acquisition as that of Eveready: he managed to

persuade the Magors to sell their plantations in India to him.

Quietly, DK had also inherited from his father an ability to negotiate with estranged partners. The acquisition of McLeod Russel India Ltd from the Magors catapulted the group to pole position in tea production globally.

His brother Aditya Khaitan, who now looks after the business, has since added more heft by adding plantations in Africa and South East Asia.

People who have known DK closely, both at the turf club and at Mangoe Lane, say he pursued many dreams. One such was to leverage Eveready's core household battery business to sell light bulbs where electricity hadn't penetrated.

At one point, he was of the view that light bulbs could in the long run turn in more profits than batteries. His son Amritanshu Khaitan has long taken over the reins at Eveready, while DK in the past few years worked in a supervisory role, partly because of prolonged illness.

Another of his dreams was to create a new generation sporting property out of racing under floodlights. DK steered the turf club out of financial difficulties by cashing properties that it could dispense with, but the floodlights never arrived because the ministry of defence, which controls Kolkata's racing grounds, wouldn't play ball.

Around two decades ago, a business newspaper reported that DK and his brother were to partition their business interests. Till Monday morning, they lived in the same house and ran their businesses together—unlike many illustrious neighbours who parted ways generations ago.

STRATEGY EVALUATION

Arvind Lifestyle shutters Debenhams stores in India

BY SAPNA AGARWAL &
SUNEERA TANDON

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

Arvind Lifestyle Brands Ltd, a unit of **Arvind Ltd**, has closed Debenhams department stores in India as it evaluates its strategy for the British retail chain, said a senior executive.

Arvind Lifestyle acquired the franchise for Debenhams in September 2012 along with the business of Nautica and Next from **Planet Retail Pvt. Ltd**. At the time of acquisition, the company proposed to open six new Debenhams stores in the country by 2017 and said the acquired business would grow to ₹500 crore from ₹70 crore over five years.

With the closure of Debenhams, the acquired businesses of Planet Retail is now expected to grow to ₹250 crore by 2017, said J Suresh, managing director and chief executive of Arvind Lifestyle Brands.

Since the acquisition, Arvind Lifestyle had not opened any new Debenhams stores.

"Debenhams had very steep price points and it was difficult for us to make any changes in the supply chain to bring down the prices. The (store) locations were also not right," explained Suresh.

Arvind Lifestyle Brands is now in talks with the British multinational retailer to rework the strategy for the Indian market, which includes reducing prices and sale through e-commerce portals like Flipkart and **Amazon.com Inc**. "The ball is in their court.. They have to come back to us," said Suresh.

In November, **Timberland Ltd**, the maker of hiking boots and other outdoor gear decided to exit from India after it failed to make a dent in the market due to the presence of a similar local brand, Woodland. By the end of March, Timberland which had 14 stores in India at its peak, will have shuttered all its stores, *Mint* reported in November.

Marks & Spencer (M&S) India had a rocky start when it first set up franchise shops in India in 2001. Prices were high and sales were far from robust. "We got positioned, incorrectly, as a very expensive brand," Venu Nair,

managing director, M&S India said in an interview in November to *Mint*. In 2008, M&S scrapped the franchise model, and formed a joint venture (JV) with Reliance Retail. The JV now has over 40 stores. It also reworked its pricing strategy.

As online retail gains steam in India, brick and mortar retailers have been rethinking their strategy. To be sure, some global fashion brands like Dorothy Perkins, Desigual and Miss Selfridge are available only online and not in stores.

"Every retailer is looking for an online and offline presence either through omni-channel or through market place e-tailers," said Amitabh Mall, partner and director, **Boston Consulting Group**, a global management consulting firm.

Earlier this year, **Shoppers Stop Ltd**, India's oldest department retail chain started selling its private labels across most major e-commerce platforms. Likewise, Future Group has an exclusive partnership with Amazon. The retailers are also working on their omni-channel sales strategy.

Even the Arvind Group has set up Arvind Internet Ltd and is in the midst of launching an online custom clothing brand Creyate and a multi-brand site by October. "In three years, online retail which is 3-4% of our revenue now will grow to 10%," said Suresh.

In the next five years, the e-commerce market is expected to grow in India. "The share of e-commerce is expected to jump from 2% in 2014 to 11% in 2019, while the share of physical, organized or modern retail is expected to fall from 17% to 13%," said *Think India. Think Retail*, a February report by the property consultant **Knight Frank India Pvt. Ltd** and the lobby group Retailers Association of India. The rest of the business, 76%, will be accounted for by India's traditional retailers.

Arvind Lifestyle has licensing relationships with international brands such as Gant, Arrow, Izod, Energie, US Polo Association, Elle, Cherokee, Mossimo and Geoffrey Beene.

sapna.a@livemint.com