



Weekend People



EDITED BY
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Bharti Mittal swaps numbers

Sunil Bharti Mittal, chief executive of Bharti Enterprises, swapped telephone numbers with Cherie Blair QC, who received generous promises of support for her foundation's effort to help Indian women set up businesses from the billionaire who could soon be running the world's third-largest mobile group.

Speaking at the FT's Doing Business in India dinner and forum at the British Museum, Mr Bharti Mittal raised the unexpected topic of social exclusion in India, warning that the country's growth trajectory depended on including all the "people who will soon be knocking at our door".

The colourful event, sponsored by HSBC as part of its Indian Summer series, drew bank chairman Stephen Green, the urbane Swiss-Austrian Franz Humer, chairman of Diageo and Roche, FT Group chief executive Rona Fairhead, Land Securities chairman Alison Carnwath and Lady Barbara Judge, chairman of the UK Atomic Energy Authority and of the School of Oriental and African Studies.

Charismatic Lord Meghnad Desai, from the London School of Economics, rounded off the event with a large glass of

red wine on hand as he delivered the final speech, concluding with a warning to western businessmen expecting the red carpet for their Indian investments. "Remember, you need them. They don't need you," he said with flourish.

Indo-chic summer

It was a week for Indian billionaires on the London summer events circuit, with Lakshmi and Usha Mittal attending the inaugural Pratham Indian summer garden party at the Chelsea Conservatory, in aid of illiteracy support among Indian children.

The dress code was "Indo-chic", complementing the snake-charmers and dancers, with the UK chapter of Pratham chaired by Brevan Howard partner Vilas Gadkari. The Indian chapter includes among its trustees Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani, Keshub Mahindra of Mahindra & Mahindra, and ex-ICICI chairman N. Vaghul.



Sunil Bharti Mittal



Summer party circuit: Sir Stuart Rose, Lakshmi and Usha Mittal and Lady Bottomley

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Chelsea scene

Voted the best summer garden party of the week by a party regular was the annual affair held by Sir David Frost in the lush Chelsea garden square in front of his home. It drew a mix of media, political and business celebrities among the crowd of about 500 on Thursday night. Lloyds outgoing chairman Sir Victor Blank was in company with former BP chairman turned private-equity player, Riverstone's Lord John Browne, and his Tory head-hunter friend Lady Bottomley, who was also a guest at the Tate Britain summer party during the week.

The forever partying M&S boss Sir Stuart Rose was snapped by the paparazzi hovering outside

the square. Elsewhere were Reading Football Club chairman and entrepreneur John Madejski, erstwhile Arsenal investor David Dein, plus former BBC honchos Greg Dyke and John Birt. They rubbed shoulders with everyone from Prince Andrew, his daughter Princess Beatrice and her boyfriend Dave Clark, who works for Virgin Galactic, to politicians David Cameron and Lord Mandelson, stars Joanna Lumley and Bob Geldof, and older stagers such as Ronnie Corbett and Lord Lloyd-Webber.

Other peers on hand were Lord Leon Brittan and Lord Lamont, who has chosen in the recessionary climate to become adviser to a small turnaround fund backed by personal and business insolvency experts.

Centre caught

A climatic week of tennis for Andy Murray at Wimbledon had the seats in the royal box filled, with possibly among its most knowledgeable occupants being big tennis fan and Bank of England governor Mervyn King.

Amid the "Andymonium" for Monday night's historic first closing of the Centre Court roof, was also cabinet secretary Sir Gus O'Donnell.

The board of the Lawn Tennis Association enjoyed the perks of the job, led by president Derek Howorth, with independent directors including Val Gooding, the Standard Chartered and J Sainsbury director. Sir Bob Phillis, the former Guardian Media Group chief, is also a director. Joining in August as LTA finance director is sporty Mark Donnelly, who will no doubt have more fun than in previous roles as finance director at O₂ and an Apax Partners start-up called Street Broadcast.

New star babies

Former New Star chief executive Howard Covington has a suitable distraction from the woes of the financial crisis, after the birth of son Max, 7lb 4oz, this week. Meanwhile, John Duffield, his ex-chairman has his own new baby, setting up under the name of Brompton Asset Management, after he was forced to abandon its previous Hyde Park brand amid a legal dispute.

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