

MAURITIUS TIMES

"An intelligent lockdowns the problem and a genius lockup the solution, it needs acquiescent and perseveres to move in the opposite direction" -- P.S. Jagadeesh Kumar



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Wake-up call post Covid-19



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Le télétravail, un nouveau phénomène ?

Par Aditya Narayan * Voir Page 5

Post Covid-19

It is said that all crises represent a wake-up call, and allow countries to push and get things done that would not take place under 'normal' circumstances. Crises cause starkly visible hardships and bring to the surface festering gaps in the system that hit people very hard, in terms of the essentials they need and the usual conveniences that make for decent living and socialisation. People are able to more freely express their dissatisfactions and real difficulties, through the widespread media networks, and the authorities have no option but to pay attention and find quick solutions so as to avert social unrest.

Even while the crisis is still unresolved, analysts and opinion leaders are prompted into thinking about 'what next', with views being articulated on an almost daily basis. As regards the current pandemic, it's being said that it provides us with a once in a 100-year chance to shake up the system, revisit the economic structures and policies, be it as regards our flat rate tax system, distribution of wealth, the focus on real estate development to the detriment of food production, and so on. Fundamentally, the so-called neoliberal capitalistic model is deemed to have failed the people at large, and echoes of socialism are being heard in the very bastion of this model, the US, from Democratic candidates.

The Mauritius Labour Party, founded on socialist principles, had come up in 2005 with a democratisation of the economy agenda, namely the 'Framework for a Labour Party Economic Democratisation Policy', which constituted its main electoral plank for that year's general election. The authors of the Policy Framework emphasized that the agenda would serve "to bring reforms to the national economic structure that will result in democratising the latter and open the doors of economic opportunities to the majority of the population in order to mobilise the overall competitive advantage of the whole population endowed and/or to be endowed with resources, in order to attain optimal international competitiveness. This is not only an ethical consideration – which in itself is a justifiable end – but it also responds to the need to bring rationality and a greater dynamism and efficiency to the national economy."

Some progress has since been achieved in certain sectors of the economy. However, there is no doubt that we could have travelled much further towards broadening the scope of economic opportunities if proper attention had been given to fixing the issues of teamwork, synergy and shared vision among the stakeholder ministries. This Agenda might also have suffered from a weakening of the political resolve in anticipation of alliances to be contracted for general elections, thus the care taken not to unnecessarily ruffle the

feathers of the prospective ally. Too bad that this was not pursued with the seriousness and persistence that such a ground-breaking agenda required.

Mauritius being a market economy, in practice there is a dense network of interconnections in the way business is done across sectors with the result that the same persons who have, historically, captured the heights of the economy do so over and again each time they sense an interesting big new opportunity to do profitable business. Others are incapacitated right from the start. The resulting status quo means that none other than the existing big players make inroads into business in any meaningful sense, effectively excluding potential "intruders". Worse, this style of economic development has nurtured a business-foreclosing and rent-seeking mentality among the handful comprising our established business class.

To be fair, a government can do so much and no more if it is serious about enabling more and new players to create or seize new economic opportunities if serious initiatives from existing other players are not forthcoming. Bringing more and newer entrepreneurs to do business presupposes that the businesses should be viable and sustainable over time. The need for serious and disciplined management from aspiring newcomers is a sine qua non, especially in light of past experience when a large number of relatively small loans given to SMEs by the DBM had to be written off due to mismanagement or failure to evolve with market demand.

However, not only will persistence of the current situation of guarded and protected business turfs not unleash the entrepreneurial dynamism we should have been fostering to make new breakthroughs, it will also widen the already yawning inequality gap, as French economist Thomas Piketty has demonstrated in his book 'Capital in the 21st century'. The big question remains, therefore, which political-cum-economic philosophy will prevail post-Covid-19.

Economic democratisation makes much economic sense, and should in no way be sacrificed for reasons of political expediency, or through State capture by questionable means, including alleged commissions on major infrastructure projects and others, the financing of political parties/politicians and election campaigns. Will the current government pursue what was left wanting by previous governments in order to ensure that potential players be given a fair chance and be empowered to overcome the obstacles which prevent them from contributing to increase the potential of the economy? If this can be one of the collateral fallouts from Covid-19, perhaps coming generations may even be thankful that the crisis occurred. But this remains to be seen...

Coronavirus support packages

We need to scrutinise fiscal support because it's money we're borrowing from future generations

Governments across the world have rolled out extensive financial packages to support individuals, businesses and large corporations affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Equally, central banks have decreased their lending rates to almost zero, and have announced extensive and previously untested direct lending to private corporations and financial companies.

In many wealthy countries, the support packages are record-breaking in their size and scope, such as the US\$2.2 trillion stimulus package for the US economy.

The US and Australian stimulus packages each represent about 10% of GDP. New Zealand's program is about 5% of GDP, but each country is experiencing the economic shock differently, has different existing safety nets and priorities, and different mechanisms to deliver this assistance.

These support packages will play a significant role in shaping our world for many years, and we should not allow the clear emergency of the situation to stop us questioning their design.

Goals for financial support

Our work on economic recovery following natural hazards and disasters defines a set of build-back-better goals, and how they should be assessed.

To achieve the first goal of making sure people can meet their basic needs, many high-income countries - including the US, Greece, the UK and France - are either providing direct payments to all citizens (as in the US) or targeted support to those who lost income or jobs.

These payments are sometimes a fixed proportion of each recipient's previous income, up to a cap (as in the UK), or are identical for everyone who has lost income (as in New Zealand).

From an economic perspective, it is clearly more efficient to provide support only to the people who really need it - those who have lost income and would not be able to support themselves and their dependants.

But these programs are also shaped by politics and ethics, and different countries chose different ways to distribute this assistance, not always based on need.

Restarting economies

Even better are programs that provide the wage subsidies through

existing employers, such as Germany's famed Kurzarbeit program (which translates to "work with shorter hours") which was implemented during the 2008 global financial crisis.

New Zealand's wage subsidy package is a similar program. It supports businesses to continue paying their staff even if they are unable to work.

Details of payments to businesses are posted online, to make sure employers comply and transfer these funds to their employees. This initiative was trialled after the 2011 Christchurch earthquake.

A similar support was also implemented in Australia.

Generally, wage subsidies allow for continued employment of individuals who would otherwise be let go, and they will also assist in achieving the second goal of re-summing economic activity once restrictions are relaxed. Such programs have been shown to be effective in Germany and New Zealand in ameliorating unexpected shocks.

While employees need support, directly or indirectly, it is also important that small and medium-sized businesses are propped up so they are ready to forge ahead once it is possible to do so. They should receive grants and subsidised loans to pay their costs, other than wages. Otherwise many businesses will fail, and the recovery will be slow and hard.

Whether large corporations need to receive support depends partly on the longer-term importance of their sector. It is easier to justify support for national airlines, which are an important linchpin in many countries' global ties, than to support fossil fuel producers, for example.

Nor are there many reasons why taxpayers (present and future) should bail out wealthy individual owners of large businesses, when these businesses could be restructured in bankruptcy proceedings that should not lead to their shutdown.

Finally, it is important that we scrutinise these programs carefully now, rather than only once the public health emergency has passed and they have been entrenched. The sums involved are incredibly large and we will be remiss if we mis-spend what we are now borrowing from our children and grandchildren.

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Dr R Neerunjun Gopee

Wake-up call post Covid-19

Need for a Robust Public Health System

Even before the Covid-19 saga is over, there is a fear that another pandemic is probably in the making.

Jeffrey Sachs, Professor and director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University, lamenting the failure of his country (USA) to mount a coherent response to the epidemic, had this to say: 'Why did the Asian countries succeed while the US and many in Europe failed so badly? The answer is **national leadership** and **public health readiness**.'

It may be noted that Prof Sachs chaired the WHO Commission on Macroeconomics and Health, and the Report was submitted to the Director General, Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, in 2003. It showed that 'investments in health can be a concrete input to economic development', effected through 'well-trying interventions that are known to work'.

Does Mauritius have the requisite Public Health Readiness to face a future pandemic?

The answer is yes and no.

Yes, because our Public Health System (PHS) has a solid track record in the control of infectious diseases, in particular malaria, which WHO certified as far back as 1972 that we had eliminated. Since then, in all missions to promote the country as a healthy and safe destination, besides other advantages flagged, the fact that we were malaria-free has always been a very strong point.

No, because its PHS has not modernized and its staff have not been accorded the status nor given the incentives they deserve as specialists in their own right, effectively discouraging more doctors from choosing the specialty.

Both the bureaucracy and the medical profession must share the blame for relegating them to a secondary role,



Photo: www.vh.ma/actualite-news-express-maroc

“The project of setting up a National Health System Laboratory has been in the pipeline for over a decade. A site was already identified. This project needs to be reactivated and completed at the earliest. The Virology division must be upgraded in terms of equipment and staff, with enough technicians to carry out the hundreds of tests that will be inevitably required, and at least two full time virologists...”



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by not according them specialist status and authority, when in fact they have a primary, fundamental role as frontliners of the country's health system. For, in fact, it is the discipline of Public Health which ensures the enabling environment (salubrity, quality of water and air, freedom from infectious diseases, food safety, health and safety of occupations) for human existence and a country's development.

The starting point for a robust PHS are bold and forward looking policy decisions that are urgently needed to drive the structural reforms that will ensure our **Public Health Readiness**. Amongst others, public health infrastructure needs to be strengthened. The key elements that ought to be looked into are:

1. a capable and well-qualified, well-motivated work force, with staff trained in public health research methodology;
2. a strong data and information system;
3. a strong public health laboratory for disease surveillance.

The critical issues to be addressed are:

1. Grant specialist status to doctors with Public Health qualifications and create a career pathway that is on a par with clinical specialties.

(a) This starts with amending the Medical Council Act's criteria for registration as specialist. Currently it is a one-size fits all **biased** towards clinical specialties, with a minimum duration of training of three years. Public Health must be registered as a *non-clinical specialty*. The standard duration of training post the basic degree (MBBS or MD) is one year leading to a Diploma or a Master's in Public Health.

(b) The current *career pathway* should likewise move through to Senior Specialist and Consultant levels, and from the latter grade the Regional Public Health Superintendents (RPHS) can be selected.

Once appointed as specialist, scholarships must be granted for further training of interested candidates in infectious disease epidemiology, NCD epidemiology (offers for the latter were made by Prof Paul Zimmet of Melbourne, but stifled by bureaucratic red tape), biostatistics.

A must is regular updating and upgrading by attendance at appropriate international forums – there is no dearth of offers (WHO and other organizations).

The Mauritius Institute of Health and the University of Mauritius are resources that are underutilized for overseeing such training, that can include fieldwork locally; they are networked and have experience of international collaboration, organisation and certification.

The same remarks about specialist recognition pertain to Occupational Health, the difference being the fields of further training/upgrading.

2. Strengthening of laboratory services – the project of setting up a

National Health System Laboratory has been in the pipeline for over a decade. A site was already identified. This project needs to be reactivated and completed at the earliest. The Virology division must be upgraded in terms of equipment and staff, with enough technicians to carry out the hundreds of tests that will be inevitably required, and at least two full time virologists.

The project includes a dedicated public health laboratory, as mentioned above.

3. **Setting up of a Health Intelligence Platform**, headed by an infectious disease epidemiologist and comprising virologist, health statistician, health economist, demographer and information system specialist. This unit can meet quarterly at a conducive venue (e.g. MIH as secretariat, away from the crisis-driven MOH environment) and its task will be to track local, regional and global disease surveillance & population data and trends in infectious diseases, decide on the appropriate tests, and advise MOH accordingly. At the slightest indication of an impending epi- or pandemic, this platform will morph into an Epidemic/Pandemic Management Cell and meet as often as the situation demands.

4. **Mandatory accreditation of all laboratories**, public and private, by MAURITAS which, by virtue of its affiliation to ILAC, guarantees the quality of testing and reliability of results, for Covid-19 – as the pandemic is likely to be protracted - and new viruses that may surface in future.

It is then up to the authorities to put in place the framework to instrumentalise this assurance about tests, as was done in the case of malaria, to again market the country as a safe and healthy destination for international visitors and tourists. A necessary condition will of course be the rigorous implementation of legally enforceable norms for epidemiological surveillance (screening, contact tracing, etc) of the latter, and working out the arrangements that must be planned for isolation, quarantine and treatment if indicated. Similarly for the workforce, upon whose sound health depends the opening up of economic activity - as Covid-19 has forced us to realise.

RN Gopee

Former Director General Health Services



Mrinal Roy

Choosing lives over livelihood

The daily rat race now seems so irrelevant. Lives are more important than livelihoods. Our outlook and the world will not be the same again

The confinement of people in their homes has now been extended by two and a half weeks till 4 May in the country. The strict confinement of the population at home is a determinant factor in the world's battle against Covid-19. It is not an end in itself. If we want to move forward and win the battle against Covid-19, we need to clearly spell out the objectives that the country must try to achieve by 4 May 2020 in order to rid the country of Covid-19. For example, shouldn't the people of the country be mobilized to more rigorously apply the rules of confinement, social distancing and hygiene instructions in order to ensure that there is, as has been the case this week, a continued trend

returning residents were quarantined and tested for Covid-19. The tests showed that none of them were carriers of the virus. They were thus released after the quarantine period. In order to stem any risk of contamination, goods and supplies sent to Rodrigues are discharged at the port in accordance with a strict protocol and rigorous sanitary precautions. With no carrier of the virus in its midst, Rodrigues, being an island, is safely protected from Covid-19.

As no Covid-19 has been detected in Rodrigues, the government has agreed that the curfew order in Rodrigues lapse on 15 April to allow economic and other

infection. Despite police controls and curfew conditions in the country, it is flagrantly evident that there are still an inordinate number of cars, motorcyclists, vehicles of every kind and pedestrians on the roads. The onerous Safe City project should attest to this unacceptable and irresponsible level of traffic and movement of people on our roads in a context of strict lockdown. Such condemnable indiscipline enhances the risk of a spread of Covid-19 through person to person contact and delays the prospects of eliminating the virus from the country.

related stress is worsening chronic health problems and mental health conditions. It has also increased the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. The ailing elderly patients are particularly vulnerable. There are also reports of a 25% increase in cases of domestic violence during the lockdown in the UK. Other countries are also reporting a similar surge in domestic abuse during the Covid-19 lockdowns. In Mauritius, we also need to be alert to these adverse consequences of confinement and be proactive in ensuring that these health and social issues are addressed in a comprehensive and efficient manner.

Double standards

Covid-19 crisis has also underscored the importance of agriculture and the imperative need for Mauritius to be as self sufficient in fresh and preferably organic domestic agricultural produce as possible to meet the country's basic food requirements. Vegetables are essential to a wholesome and balanced diet. The availability of an abundant domestic supply of fresh vegetables to meet the essential food requirements of people is a key element of the country's ability to tide over the present unprecedented crisis. As the vegetable markets of the country are closed and hotels which are an important outlet of local agricultural produce are inoperative during the lockdown, the vegetable growers who are one of the most entrepreneurial economic actors of the country are basically left high and dry to fend for themselves to market their produce.

The promised infrastructure, modern storage facilities, cold rooms and direct sale options to consumers to maximize their revenue by cutting out intermediaries are yet to materialize. It is totally unacceptable that the only outlet for access to vegetables during the lockdown are the supermarkets when there is robust consumer demand from the larger public for the plethora of fresh agricultural produce. Isn't it time to end such double standards?

In the absence of concrete actions to support their dedicated hard work undertaken through thick and thin despite the vagaries of the weather, many growers have set up shop in front of their vegetable gardens and are briskly selling their produce in Covid-19 safe conditions fueled by the buzz on social media and the grapevine. Isn't it also time for the planters to get organized to sell and deliver their agricultural produce through an innovative and consumer friendly marketing platform?

New dawn

Covid-19 has caused a pervasive turmoil across the world and shaken the foundations of the established order. The daily rat race now seems so irrelevant. Lives are more important than livelihoods. Our outlook and the world will not be the same again. It will be reshaped with a more equal, human and environment friendly vision of the world. This heralds a new dawn.

“The IMF has this week forecast that the 'Great lockdown' enforced to fight Covid-19 will cause the world economy to shrink by 3% in 2020. This will be the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression of the 1930s. In a best case scenario, the IMF estimated that the world is likely to lose a cumulative \$9 trillion in output over two years. The prospects of a rebound in 2021 will however be highly dependent on the state of the pandemic...”

Covid-19 cannot therefore be eliminated in the country by pious hopes but through a well-couched and thought out strategy tailored to the specific Covid-19 situation prevailing in the country. As Mauritius is a small island, the task of eliminating the virus from the country is in principle less daunting. Across the world, countries are implementing their own strategies to fight Covid-19 and minimize the number of casualties. The scale of the challenge faced by each country is determined by its geographic area, population size and the extent of infection afflicting the country.

Far-reaching consequences

The Covid-19 pandemic has not only dire economic consequences but also far-reaching social and medical fallouts. The IMF has this week forecast that the 'Great lockdown' enforced to fight Covid-19 will cause the world economy to shrink by 3% in 2020. This will be the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression of the 1930s. In a best case scenario, the IMF estimated that the world is likely to lose a cumulative \$9 trillion in output over two years. The prospects of a rebound in 2021 will however be highly dependent on the state of the pandemic.

Covid-19 has also brought its load of adverse health and social fallouts. It is obvious that not all people can serenely cope with the rigours of confinement at home. Fear and anxiety about Covid-19 and the safety of close ones can be stressful. There are reports that Covid-19



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of no new cases of Covid-19 detected in the country during the new period of confinement till 4 May and an agreed double safety period?

In this context, the Covid-19 situation in Rodrigues is quite revealing and indicative of the way forward towards normality if we eliminate the virus from mainland Mauritius. The timely measures put in place by government to ring fence Rodrigues and Agalega from the risk of contamination ensured that no carriers of Covid-19 entered Rodrigues and Agalega. Thus, all flights into Rodrigues were banned on 22 March. All passengers and

activities to resume. However, schools will remain closed for the time being and obviously passenger flights to the island will not be allowed until further notice.

Condemnable indiscipline

The first step towards a staggered plan to normality is therefore an elimination of the virus from the country. A single undetected carrier of the virus can rapidly spread the virus if people relax and do not strictly abide by rules of confinement, social distancing or prescribed norms of hygiene such as regularly washing their hands with soap to minimize the risk of

Impact de la pandémie

Le télétravail, un nouveau phénomène?

Beaucoup de Mauriciens ont découvert le télétravail, ou le travail à domicile, à la faveur du confinement imposé par les autorités dans la foulée de l'épidémie du coronavirus.

Aditya Narayan

Est-ce un nouveau phénomène dans le monde du travail? Pas vraiment. C'est une pratique qui existe dans beaucoup de pays où la technologie de communication a fait un progrès immense, révolutionnant les rapports traditionnels entre l'employeur et ses employés, et la façon dont ces derniers s'acquittent de leur tâche.

Ce qui est nouveau, c'est que la pratique du télétravail prend de l'ampleur partout, dans le secteur public comme dans le secteur privé, grâce à une épidémie qui a bousculé nos routines et nos vieilles certitudes. Puisqu'une crise est une opportunité de se réinventer et de faire mieux, le télétravail est destiné à un avenir glorieux si le patronat et les syndicats partagent la même vision d'un monde du travail renouvelé, et au diapason de nouvelles exigences en matière de sécurité sanitaire et d'interactions sociales.

Les pays avancés technologiquement sont les pionniers du télétravail parce qu'ils réunissent sur leur sol toutes les conditions favorables à l'émergence d'un nouveau mode de travail. Ils ont installé à travers villes et villages une bande passante extensive, puissante et capable de connecter tout le monde à l'Internet. Les frais de connexion à l'Internet y sont relativement

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Photo LP/Aurélié Ladet

“Le télétravail lui-même n'est pas un droit statutaire pour l'employé mais plutôt un privilège que l'employeur peut éventuellement lui retirer à son gré. L'employeur fait confiance à l'employé travaillant à domicile et s'attend à ce qu'il soit aussi assidu, performant et discipliné que s'il travaillait au bureau. C'est cette relation de confiance qui est primordiale dans la poursuite de cette nouvelle expérience. Ainsi, on s'attend à ce que l'employé, qui travaille selon un horaire fixe ou flexible, soit responsable en tout temps...”

abordables en raison de la présence d'une multitude de fournisseurs de services en ligne qui se livrent à une compétition coupe-gorge pour attirer les clients. Divers bouquets combinant le service Internet, la télévision par câble, le téléphone portable et le téléphone fixe sont offerts avec un escompte aux consommateurs, qui y trouvent définitivement leur compte puisqu'ils peuvent varier la combinaison de services selon leur bourse.

En effet, le télétravail a des bienfaits pour les employeurs, les employés et la société en général.

Avantages pour l'employeur

D'abord, il faut souligner que le télétravail est offert à un employé à la discrétion de l'employeur. Il n'y a rien dans la loi du travail qui prévoit cette pratique.

Cependant, il faut au préalable un accord mutuel entre les deux parties et, une fois que ces dernières s'accordent sur les conditions du télétravail, le contrat d'emploi (dans le cas d'un employé individuel) ou la convention collective (dans le cas

périence. Ainsi, on s'attend à ce que l'employé, qui travaille selon un horaire fixe ou flexible, soit responsable en tout temps et résiste à la tentation de s'occuper de ses affaires personnelles pendant ses heures de travail.

un réseau privé virtuel (*Virtual Private Network*).

Depuis, l'expérience a été étendue à d'autres catégories d'employés dans la mesure où les entreprises peuvent réduire leur espace disponible afin de baisser les coûts de location du bureau et les frais d'entretien. La réduction des coûts fixes d'exploitation est toujours un objectif dans la gestion de l'entreprise.

Avantages pour l'employé

Les employés tirent des avantages appréciables du télétravail. Dans les grands pays où la distance entre le domicile et le bureau est relativement longue, ils n'ont pas à voyager, ce qui leur économise du temps, de l'essence s'ils roulent en voiture ou des frais de transport public. Une autre économie importante est la dépense sur l'habillement. Il ne faut plus avoir une abondante garde-robe dernier cri si l'on ne va pas au bureau tous les jours.

Avec moins de stress dû à une réduction des trajets quotidiens, les employés deviennent plus performants. S'ils sont confinés (pas de jeu de mots) à leur domicile et se sentent isolés, ils peuvent toujours communiquer avec leurs collègues par divers moyens. Ce qui est beaucoup plus important, c'est que chaque employé ne roulant pas une voiture, c'est autant de réduction de l'empreinte carbonique de l'individu. Quand on fait l'agrégation de toutes les voitures mises en dehors de la circulation, on constate une baisse significative des émissions à effet de serre dans l'environnement.

Certains pays offrent une incitation fiscale au télétravail. L'employé à domicile a notamment droit à une déduction fiscale pour les frais d'un bureau à domicile (utilités comme eau et électricité, frais d'entretien, taxe immobilière, loyer, etc.). La déduction est calculée selon une formule pro rata: si le bureau à domicile est une pièce dans une maison de 3 ou 4 chambres, un tiers ou un quart des dépenses admises sera déduit de l'impôt sur le revenu, selon le cas.

Le travail à domicile est toute une culture qui a besoin de supports divers pour s'enraciner dans les mœurs. Une fois que l'on s'y habitue, c'est difficile de revenir en arrière.

d'un groupe d'employés syndiqués) sera amendé pour introduire le nouveau mode de travail.

Qu'il s'agisse du travail au bureau ou du travail à domicile, les exigences de présence, de responsabilité, de performance et d'imputabilité pour l'employé ne changent pas. Le cadre physique du travail peut changer, mais l'employé a les mêmes droits en termes de salaire et de congés, et les mêmes devoirs.

Le télétravail lui-même n'est pas un droit statutaire pour l'employé mais plutôt un privilège que l'employeur peut éventuellement lui retirer à son gré. L'employeur fait confiance à l'employé travaillant à domicile et s'attend à ce qu'il soit aussi assidu, performant et discipliné que s'il travaillait au bureau. C'est cette relation de confiance qui est primordiale dans la poursuite de cette nouvelle ex-

La technologie aidant, l'employeur a toujours les moyens de communiquer avec l'employé par téléphone, courriel ou visioconférence en utilisant différentes applications informatiques (Business Skype, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp ou Zoom). Les mêmes applications sont des outils formidables pour tenir des conférences en groupe entre les collègues, avec des partenaires extérieurs ou des clients.

Au début, ce sont les employés qui travaillent normalement en dehors du bureau la plupart du temps (tels que les représentants de vente, les auditeurs et autres techniciens fournissant des services chez des clients) qui s'étaient mis en mode télétravail. Entre deux visites chez des clients, ils n'ont pas à se rendre au bureau pour déposer leurs rapports. Ils peuvent les communiquer en ligne à l'employeur de façon sécurisée sur

India provides Hydroxychloroquine tablets to Mauritius

As a mark of our long-standing special friendship, the Government of India today provided half a million tablets of Hydroxychloroquine to the Government of Mauritius.

Vice PM Mrs Leela Devi Luchoomun-Dookun received the consignment that arrived Wednesday evening in Mauritius through a special Air India cargo flight from Delhi. The shipment was made possible as a "special gesture" although a restriction on its export from India continues to be in force in view of the unprecedented prevailing diffi-

cult situation because of Covid19 global pandemic.

Mauritius is one of the first countries to receive supplies of this medicine after a special exemption was granted for a few countries. The consignment is part of the 13 tons of essential lifesaving medicines that have been sent for Mauritius. This is the first such consignment of essential medicines and a second consignment will follow in coming weeks.

"India is a proud partner of Mauritius and remains committed to contributing to the public health and welfare of all people



of Mauritius. A recent example of this continuing decades' long partnership in building health infrastructure is the ENT Hospital that was e-inaugurated jointly by PM Pravin

Jugnauth and PM Narendra Modi on 3 October 2019. India will continue to work closely with Mauritius in these difficult times," says the Indian High Commissioner Tanmaya Lal.

Trump suspends funding to WHO and blames agency for coronavirus deaths



Photo: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/>

The United States is suspending funding to the World Health Organisation (WHO), Donald Trump has announced, while his administration reviews what he described as the body's "disastrous" role in "covering up" the outbreak of the coronavirus in China. "The reality is the WHO failed to obtain, vet and share information in a timely fashion," the US president said, reports The Independent. "It failed in its basic duty and must be held accountable." Mr Trump himself has received

widespread criticism for the slow federal response to the crisis, which he initially dismissed as a "hoax" and then spent several weeks insisting was "under control" without taking decisive action.

The president's highly controversial decision to withhold capital from the WHO at the height of the global pandemic came as the US death toll from Covid-19 increased to 25,700, according to a Reuters tally. Tuesday's single-day increase of 2,082 set a grim new record, surpassing the previous high of 2,069 deaths set on 10 April. There are now 600,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus in the US, three times more than any other country.

Relying on science and politics, Merkel offers a cautious virus re-entry plan

German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Wednesday set in motion a plan for Germany to begin lifting social and economic restrictions in place because of the coronavirus, even as she warned that the road ahead would look less like a return to normal than a way to live with a pandemic that has overturned ordinary life, reports the New York Times.

It adds: 'The chancellor, a physicist by training, was typically restrained and focused on the science as she announced the government's cautious step-by-step plan, for which she had won the agreement of regional leaders in Germany's diffuse federal system.

Shorn of any bravado, her announcement seemed again to make Germany, Europe's biggest economy, a de facto leader on the Continent and something of an example for Western nations looking to

navigate the tricky course of rebooting economic activity and fighting the virus.

Her approach stood in stark contrast to the fraught political divisions in the United States, where state authorities have often been at odds with President Trump, who has made forceful but erratic predictions about the virus.

"We have achieved something," Ms. Merkel said at a news conference, "something that by no means was a given at the start — namely that our doctors and carers, all those in the medical field, in the hospitals, were not overwhelmed."

But she added: "What we've achieved is an interim success — no more, no less. And I stress that it is a fragile interim success."



Parents and students waiting to get inside a school near Copenhagen on Wednesday. Credit: Olafur Steinar Gestsson/Ritzau Scanpix, via Agence France-Presse
Photo: Getty Images

An economic lockdown will remain largely in place for an additional 20 days, Ms. Merkel cautioned, and strict social distancing rules will remain in force.

But some shops will be allowed to reopen beginning next week — although only those with the necessary protections in place to allow strict social distancing to continue, she said.

* * *

Latest news on social media

“It's easier to find Covid19 cases than potatoes and onions in Mauritius...”

As cases top 2 million worldwide, some countries ease lockdowns and others brace for worse

The coronavirus pandemic passed 2 million confirmed infections and 130,000 deaths worldwide on Wednesday — bleak markers that experts say vastly understate the true spread and toll of the contagion because of a lack of testing, comments the New York Times.

The figures have roughly doubled in 13 days and continue to grow steadily.

The actual number of cases is much higher than the official figures suggest, with countries varying in how much they are testing people.

Even as some European countries, including Germany, hopeful that the worst is behind them, begin to take careful steps to lift restrictions imposed to slow the virus, outbreaks in many parts of the world are still considered far from their peaks.

In India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has extended a nationwide lockdown for nearly three more weeks, leaving more than one billion people under severe restrictions and urging Indians not to "let our guard down."

In the United States, the lack of testing capacity has emerged as a signature failure of the Trump administration's response and now threatens to hamper efforts across the country to plan for an eventual reopening of the economy.

On Wednesday, during the first conference call of President Trump's economic advisory council on reopening the economy, several business executives echoed a cry that health officials and state and local leaders have been making for weeks, according to one participant: The country needs more testing.

* * *

Right to say goodbye

British Health secretary Matt Hancock has announced a new "right to say goodbye" rule as he admitted to weeping at the death of a 13-year-old boy whose family had not been allowed to be by his bedside in his final moments. As the father of a young teenager himself, Mr Hancock said he wanted, wherever possible, for people to be able to see their loved ones one last time. The minister introduced the plan as part of moves to respond to the rising death toll in the country's care homes. A new badge for social care workers will also allow the public to express their gratitude to them as they have towards NHS workers throughout the crisis, he said.

Compiled by
Doojesh Ramlallah

From the Pages of History - MT 60 Years Ago

4th Year No 142

MAURITIUS TIMES

Friday 26 April 1957

• *Great knowledge, if it be without vanity, is the most severe bridle of the tongue. - Jeremy Taylor*

Fighting TB in Mauritius

By Peter Ibbotson

It is welcome, but overdue, that the World Health Organization (WHO) has sent a team of specialists to Mauritius to help the fight against tuberculosis (TB). It is true that deaths from TB are fewer progressively from 1949 to date, but the incidence of TB in the island is increasing. The number of cases reported in 1955 was 26% higher than in 1954: 368 cases, one a day, in 1955, reports the *'Yearbook of Statistics of Mauritius'*. TB is of course a disease commonly met with in underdeveloped and colonial countries; its incidence is always accompanied by widespread malnutrition and anemia; this latter caused 457 deaths in Mauritius in 1955.

Protein malnutrition simply means that the children are not getting enough to eat of the right sort of food. The best source of protein is meat; and few Mauritian children get meat to eat. How many labourers and even artisans can afford to buy meat for themselves and their families when prices are Rs 3.00 to Rs 4.50 for beef, Rs 4.00 to Rs 4.50 for goat and mutton; Rs 4.00 to Rs 6.00 for pork (all per kilogram).

A diet of little salt fish and a lot of rice is all that most workers' families can afford; and such diet of salt fish and rice is deficient in protein. In fact, the diets of most workers' families is deficient and does not provide a balanced intake of protein, calcium, iron, vitamins which are essential to good health and proper growth. Malnutrition leads to TB, so does bad housing. And malnutrition and bad housing are found wherever the workers do not get enough wages to enable them to eat and house themselves properly.

Few people in Mauritius can be said to be fed and housed adequately. Many workers have to live in tin shanties; or straw huts packed round with dung. Many cannot afford more than one meal a day. Many children have to go off to school breakfastless; or perhaps with a small bottle of milkless tea inside them. Many a man goes to work with not enough food in his stomach to sustain him for his work-shift. When he comes home, he still does not have enough to eat properly to build him up, after using a day's energy, ready for another day's work.

Yet there are people in Mauritius who are well-fed. Too well-fed, some would say. Indeed, it is a fact that different social groups in Mauritius, as elsewhere, are not equally fed. This inequality means that there is consequent inequality in the matter of health. Yet all people are equal as persons. The inequality as individuals means that some are getting more than their just share of the wealth of the country, while many are being denied a fair share. It



Photo: Raj Boodhoo

should be the job of the government to iron out the inequalities of wealth and health and nutrition, but this involves a social change.

Yet a man is a social animal and it should be the duty of the more fortunate members of society to ensure that the less fortunate members are helped to avoid the evils arising from the mal-distribution of wealth.

We were reminded in the Speech from the Throne, "No man is an island"; in other words, no man can live for himself alone. All men must help others, especially the less fortunate.

As the eminent French doctor and scientist Professor Andre Mayer has pointed out, "The quality of the diet depends largely on income. In a poor nation or group, the diet will contain less meat or milk than in a wealthy group... Meat and milk are expensive foods, sometimes inaccessible to the poor. In the case of milk, this can be serious."

How far are milk and meat inaccessible for the Mauritian workers? Father Dethise revealed the family budget of a "well-paid" worker with Rs 176 a month for himself, his wife, and their nine children. How much meat and milk does this family consume? Two pounds of meat, five pounds of fish (some fresh, some salt), and 30 pints of milk - a month. Is that enough for good health? Of course not. That family lived mainly off rice: 7 pounds every day.

Another family budget concerned a husband and wife and three children, who

could afford 120 pints of milk a month, 9 pounds of meat and 12 pounds of fish. Their diet was just "satisfactory" according to the Health Department - but when we recall the few Mauritian families have only three children, and few workers can afford Rs 134 a month of food alone (as the man could), we realize how few families can be having satisfactory diets.

Vaccination and WHO teams and BCG campaigns are only scratching the surface of the problem of TB. What is needed is an all-out campaign to raise living standards of the people. Wages must be raised so that people can afford the kind of food they should having. Better housing must be provided; I have in a past article showed the connection between bad housing and bad health. And more strict measures to prevent the sale of adulterated or dirty food are needed.

I suggest a five-point programme which, if adopted, would do much to raise the standard of living and combat TB.

1. Full employment, at proper wages. Until employment for all is possible, unemployment benefits must be provided.
2. Adequate houses must be provided at rents which the workers can afford.
3. Overcrowded houses must be eradicated. People in overcrowded houses must be rehoused.

It would be a good thing to have an island-wide survey of housing: number of houses, number of rooms, number of

persons per room, etc., then we would have an idea of the size of the housing problem.

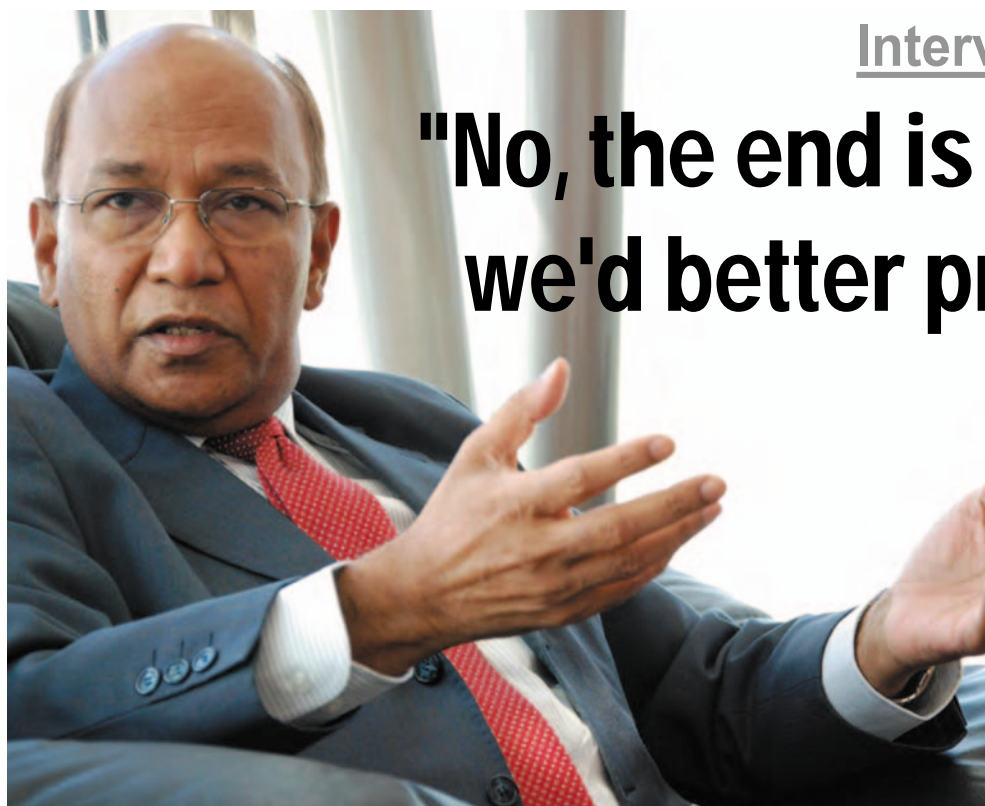
4. Drastic measures to reduce the sale and consumption of rum and locally made wine which is often made from acidic fruits in unhygienic conditions. I recommend the WHO team to sample the local wines and test their fitness for human consumption.
5. No cooked foods, cake, bread, etc., should be exposed for sale and shops stalls, markets, where it is exposed to dust and vermin.

For the children, I would add a sixth point. Every child should be provided with a breakfast on arrival at school. This meal should be free, and should be based on the "Oslo breakfast" provided free to all Norwegian schoolchildren. A balanced meal at school, to start the day, would benefit the children physically as well as putting them in a better condition to benefit from their schooling.

But the biggest single advance would be, of course, for the workers to have decent wages to be able to feed and house themselves and their families properly. It is however doubtful if this advance can be achieved except under the Socialist Government; so that the Mauritius Labour Party has a great responsibility towards the people of Mauritius. The 1958 elections will give the Party the opportunity to grasp their responsibilities; the people of Mauritius will surely afford the Party that opportunity.

Interview: Manou Bheenick

"No, the end is not for any time soon... so we'd better prepare for the long haul"



Mauritius Times: We are still in the midst of the storm, and with the recent virus surge in Singapore - one of the best managed countries of the world, whether in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic or otherwise -- it does not seem we'll get out of the woods any time soon. What do you think?

Manou Bheenick: How right you are about Singapore! A gutsy little nation transformed itself within one generation from a Royal Navy fleshpot into a thriving modern nation that offers a master class in how to develop and manage a country for the benefit of all its citizens. In the present, unprecedented health crisis, Singapore has done it again: the WHO strongly commends its strategy to combat the sanitary crisis and the rest of the world can well learn from it. At last count, it had a total of 6 deaths to deplore for a population more than four times our size. Lessons there for our current leaders, don't you think?

"We, like every other country, must do all it takes to minimize the death toll and help our people to keep body and soul together. We cannot fail our people at this hour. This is a war we absolutely must win. The duration of the lockdown is not the point at issue here: it must last as long as it takes to flatten the curve and prevent any flare-up..."

We are really in uncharted territory here, with a virulent health crisis of global proportions bringing in its train as the secondary effects of its possible immediate remedial measures (e.g. lockdown, etc) an economic crisis that in turn weakens the capacity to combat the sanitary crisis which triggered it in the first place. If we now (1) factor in second-order, third-order, and higher order effects, (2) take on board the asynchronous spread of the virus

across countries, and (3) the possible resurgence/recontamination of the kind witnessed in Singapore despite its state-of-the-art management, then I'm very much afraid that Covid-19 will be with us for quite some time.

No, the end is not for any time soon. Maybe we can glimpse the beginning of the end when the promised vaccine, on which work is proceeding at a frantic pace, is finally here. The end will come from a combination of herd-immunity and a global vaccination program. It'll be a brave man who can put a time-frame to all this... so we'd better prepare for the long haul.

*** Have we reached a point where we can already anticipate what's going to be its impacts on the Mauritian economy generally and on different sectors of economic activity, or is it too early to tell the shape of things to come post-Covid, both here and abroad?**

I would venture to suggest that the need of the hour is not guesstimates of how many trillions it will cost, or how much it is costing per day in lost output or whatever, etc. What is of utmost importance is to ensure that there is enough international goodwill and cooperation left -- after the gruelling fight against the virus and possible mutual recrimination among some nations about its origin -- to repair, restructure, and rebuild from the ashes and the wreckage a new working and fair international order.

There are some mind-boggling figures about the economic fallout being bandied about which is the bread-and-butter of an army of technocrats and professionals in leading global players, such as international institutions, banks, think tanks, investment firms, risk managers and so forth. Don't get me wrong! Numbers are useful here; it is good that impact assessments and scenario-planning are used to inform policy globally for everyone, including for the small bit-players like us.

Not to quote Bill Clinton, "It's the people, Stupid!" It's a case of The People ver-

Manou Bheenick, former Minister and former Governor of the Bank of Mauritius as well as an astute political observer and analyst, takes a deep look at the unprecedented sanitary crisis caused by Covid-19 and its very serious economic fallouts. He is of the view that the government, like governments in many other countries, has the responsibility to both save lives and livelihoods by using all the monetary and fiscal instruments at its disposal, and that it must hesitate to resort to the legislation that allows the central bank, with approval from the Minister of Finance, to finance development projects - and there can be no greater one than saving our nation.

sus The Virus. The people should rightly be the priority of the moment. Quite possibly, for the first time in human history, all countries -- big or small, rich or poor - can look in the same direction and subscribe to the same overarching objective of saving our people. What countless global conferences and innumerable UN resolutions, spanning over several decades since World War II, have signally failed to achieve, Covid-19 did in one fell swoop since it struck in Wuhan only a couple of months ago.

We, like every other country, must do all it takes to minimize the death toll and help our people to keep body and soul together. We cannot fail our people at this hour. This is a war we absolutely must win. The duration of the lockdown is not the point at issue here: it must last as long as it takes to flatten the curve and prevent any flare-up.

The time will certainly come, when Covid-19 is behind us, to take stock, assess the damage, reckon up the positive impact - yes, it's not all negative -- of the lockdown on the global commons, and pick up the pieces to get on with the day-to-day business of existence such as, for the individual, putting food on the table and, for the country, earning our keep in the post-Covid world.

*** There is no doubt that the focus and priority of the authorities should be on preventing the spread of the pandemic in the country and saving lives, but we'll sooner than later will have to address the question of how long can we shut down the economy. What's your take on that?**

As a very small economy, exporting a restricted range of specific goods and services to survive and actually, even at the best of times, running twin-deficits in our fiscal and external balances, it should be obvious that the decision of when to end the lockdown and to try to kick the export economy back into gear is most certainly not in our hands.

The changing dynamics of the spread of the virus, within and across countries, will determine when different countries progressively wind down their internal lockdown and then restore external access to the *status quo ante*, at least selectively for those countries that no longer pose health risks.

"It will not be business-as-usual. The demand side will be severely affected as consumer purchasing power will take a hit. There may be successive rounds of job losses and business closures- including the self-employed, taxi drivers, jobbers, hawkers and others- which may rip through our economy and ravage our society. Some in the travel and recreation sector... will place staff on furlough or lay some off altogether..."

Only when this happens can international trade flows of goods expect to pick up, and that too only in a no-change-in-trade-patterns scenario. It is more likely that the severely-disrupted global supply chain, where China was effectively the factory of the world for a wide range of products, will not be among the first to recover and may never recover.

I would heavily discount any chances of a prompt recovery in the air transportation and tourism sector. Hotel operators could share data of forward bookings to help any assessment and better gauge recovery prospects. The offshore sector will feel the knock-on effects of global economic slowdown and quite possibly run into headwinds of its own as cash-starved governments across the world ramp up taxes and weigh down on tax-planning arrangements.

'It will not be business-as-usual. The demand side will be severely affected as consumer purchasing power will take a hit'

● Cont. from page 8

Tele-commuting and working from home has kept our virtual economy going through the lockdown and it may get back to speed quite fast provided its business model is not undermined in the aftermath of Covid.

*** Ending the lockdown is not really in our hands, right?**

I just do not believe that we are the kind of country and economy where executive fiat can legislate the end of the lockdown and signal the restart of the economic machine. Any premature end of the lockdown and reopening of our frontiers to even a trickle of tourists still brave enough to travel- do not expect the hordes required to fill our hotels - exposes us to serious risk of rekindling the spread of the virus.

There is, of course, little hindrance to kick-starting the domestic agricultural production sector as soon as health risks abate. Indeed, domestic agricultural production should become the object of tailor-made policy measures not only to fill some of the vacuum created by a shortfall of fresh food imports but also to branch out in new directions - medical cannabis, anybody?

“We do not know the nature of the changes awaiting us. Whatever they turn out to be, we must restructure our economy and adapt to them to prevent our resource-poor country from turning into a new basket case. That is why, when I was in the governing and policy team running our economic affairs for so long we exercised our brains so much on fiscal and debt sustainability, building national reserves, and building resilience...”

*** When the Government does decide to re-open and reboot the economy, do you expect that things will be business as usual?**

Make no mistake about it: lockdown fatigue will set in and it will become progressively more difficult to keep it in place. We dragged our feet in introducing it. We proved particularly clumsy in applying it. The civic sense of our people proved wanting. Our law-enforcement people, with their insensitive policing and flowery language fit for the gutter, must be sent to re-education training camps once we roll up the shutters. Our stop-go approach to open and close selected supermarkets and food stores smells of rank amateurism, with an added whiff of corruption.

But, when all is said and done, it is true that the lockdown-cum-social distancing is our best rampart against the spread of the disease, critical to prevent our health services from being overwhelmed and to saving lives. So let's not focus unduly on when we are ending the lockdown - it's only the best means available to achieve the basic objective of all living things on the planet: our survival.

*** What happens after the lockdown is terminated?**

Most of us will pick up the threads and try to get on with the humdrum of daily life that we were used to. Some, having lost loved ones, may be disoriented and take some time to grieve their loss. There may be a Covid trauma in localized heavily-affected communities with large losses of human lives, e.g. Wuhan, parts of Italy and Spain and others we haven't yet heard of, and possibly among medical personnel who are in the front line in this war.

Profiteers will spring into action in the shortage economy; indeed I have been warned against scammers who

are already active here in the online food supply sector where you pay your money and wait interminably before realizing you have been scammed. There will always be smart-alecks around to exploit human misery. It is the business of a proactive government to protect its people against them. Is ours up to the task?

It will not be business-as-usual. The demand side will be severely affected as consumer purchasing power will take a hit. There may be successive rounds of job losses and business closures -- including the self-employed, taxi drivers, jobbers, hawkers and others -- which may rip through our economy and ravage our society. Some in the travel and recreation sector, where prospects of quick recovery now look dim, will place staff on furlough or lay some off altogether.

On the supply side, the picture is not comforting either. The spread of globalization - that, despite some glaring inequities - has done so much to improve human health and welfare across the world since the cataclysm of World War II, may rapidly grind to a halt. Changes in global supply chains will follow, as indeed will international trade and payments arrangements and the institutions supporting and underpinning them.

One of the key institutions, with a special war chest to help member-states, has just run into a US veto to extend its financial support to Iran, reeling from the double-whammy of Covid-19 and the oil-price collapse which has decimated its revenues. Yes, I believe our international institutional infrastructure, built by the victors of World War II and still heavily influenced by them, as shown in the Iran example during this crisis, is up for some rejigging. A root and branch reform may be even better! I am speculating and my crystal ball is no better than the next person's.

But, speculation apart, the external trade environment - to which we had adapted so well after our structural adjustment at the turn of the 70s and early 80s to carve out our competitive advantage- may be quite different for both our exporters and importers. We do not know the nature of the changes awaiting us. Whatever they turn out to be, we must restructure our economy and adapt to them to prevent our resource-poor country from turning into a new basket case. That is why, when I was in the governing and policy team running our economic affairs for so long we exercised our brains so much on fiscal and debt sustainability, building national reserves, and building resilience in what was, and still is, a potentially poor country.

All of these, you will note, are singularly difficult concepts to sell to the common man or to the run-of-the mill politician of the type that swarms over our political landscape. What we took several decades to build, our successors blew away within the short space of five years. We were the ants to the grasshoppers pretending to have won the people's vote at the last elections while we still await the Supreme Court to pronounce on a slew of cases contesting the results. In the meantime, we find ourselves with the grasshoppers fully in charge.

*** Will the economic circumstances force the Government to change tack?**

Of course, the government will have to change tack. Yesterday it was spending as if there was no tomorrow. Sooner or later, it had to awake from its reverie inside its bubble when it finally woke up to the reality of runaway public deficits, growing external imbalances, disappearing reserves buffers, declining productivity and slowing growth, all of which we can tot up to its credit.

With or without Covid, this government would have had to wake up to the unsustainability of its fiscal and spending trajectory and acknowledge the sheer bankrupt-



cy of its policies across entire swathes of economic and social activity as it proceeded with alacrity to hollow out all public institutions, including watchdogs and regulatory bodies, while stifling dissent and spin-doctoring to make the people believe they were on the way to nirvana. The day of reckoning was looming with the coming budget.

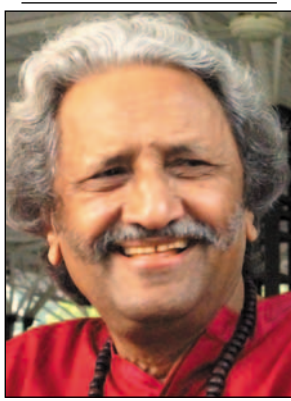
“With or without Covid, this government would have had to wake up to the unsustainability of its fiscal and spending trajectory and acknowledge the sheer bankruptcy of its policies across entire swathes of economic and social activity as it proceeded with alacrity to hollow out all public institutions, including watchdogs and regulatory bodies...”

The cynic in me sees the Covid crisis as a providential opportunity for this government to escape any paternity charges for the economic crisis which they have brought without any help from the virus. It provides a fig-leaf to hide incompetence and serial bungling. Having frittered away reserves, having never bothered to build up fiscal buffers, having exploded social transfers, the grasshoppers in Government House, were among the first countries, in our part of the world, to run to the IMF, cap in hand, for lending support from the Rapid Credit Facility. The extent of our mismanagement can be judged from the fact that only Madagascar, which is a gold medallist in the economic mismanagement stakes, beat us to it! And Madagascar also qualified for a parallel direct budget-support loan from the World Bank. A country is also judged by the company it keeps.

A small reminder may be in order here for those who may have forgotten it. In pre-Covid times, when the biggest post-war economic/financial crisis spread across the world, the so-called sub-prime crisis of 2008-2010, we had confidence in our own management and weathered the storm, with hardly a blip in the economy and without having to go to the IMF for liquidity support. Before, we were often an exception in many things.

This government has quietly buried this Mauritian exceptionalism. Now we are very much part of the pack - one of 90 countries lining up for IMF support.

● More in our next issue -- Tuesday 21st April 2020



Kul Bushan

The woman who gave India an important weapon to fight against coronavirus

-- Minal Dakhare Bhosale



Hours before she gave birth to a daughter...

The discussion on India's fight against coronavirus has been limited to only a few people.

But it is hoped that there will be a change in this situation. The hope for such a change has arisen thanks to the efforts of a virologist. This woman virologist worked continuously despite being pregnant. She worked till the last few hours before the delivery to prepare the first functional test kit for India.

It's believed that with the help of this kit, the patients of Covid-19 will be tested in the backdrop of increasing suspected cases.



Pune's Mylab Discovery is the first firm to get permission for the development and sale of this testing kit. It has since sent its first batch of 150 test kits to Pune, Mumbai, Delhi, Goa and Bangalore. The director of the medical unit of Mylab Discovery, Dr. Gautam Vankhede, said on BBC, "Our manufacturing unit is working on this weekend as well, we'll send the next batch on Monday."

This molecular diagnostic company prepares testing kits for HIV, Hepatitis B and C and many other diseases as well. The company claimed to supply one lakh (100,000) Covid-19 testing kits within one week and if necessary, will be able to prepare another 2 lakh kits.

Each of the Mylab kits can test for 100 samples. The kit is quite cheap for Rs 1200, compared to the imported kits that cost Rs 4500.

The chief virologist of the research and development of Mylab Discovery, Minal Dakhare Bhosale says, "Our kit can test for the infection in 2 and a half hours, while the kit from abroad takes about 6 to 7 hours."

Minal is the chief of the team that prepared the coronavirus testing kit or the patho detect, in such a short time. The time needed to make this kit is around 3 to 4 months, but this team did it in a record time of 6 weeks. It is interesting that Minal herself was facing a deadline during this time, giving birth to a baby girl last week itself. During her pregnancy, she started working on the kit project in February. Minal told BBC, "It was a time of emergency, so I took it as a challenge. I also want to serve my nation." According to Minal, a team of 10 scientists worked very hard for the success of this project.

Just a day before delivery, she submitted the testing kit to National Institute of Virology (NIV) for its examina-

tion. That evening, before going to the hospital, Minal sent the kit to India's Food and Drugs Control Authority for professional approval.

Dr Vankhede says, "We had very little time. Our reputation was at stake. But everything went well in the first go. Our efforts were led by Minal."

Before sending the kit for testing, the team checked it for various parameters so that the results were accurate. Minal Bhosale says, "If you want to test 10 samples, the results should be consistent for all 10 samples. We attained this perfection. Our kit is perfect."

The Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) of the Indian government approved the Mylab kit. National Institute of Virology (NIV) works under the Indian Council for Medical Research.

ICMR said that Mylab is the sole company of India whose results are 100% accurate.

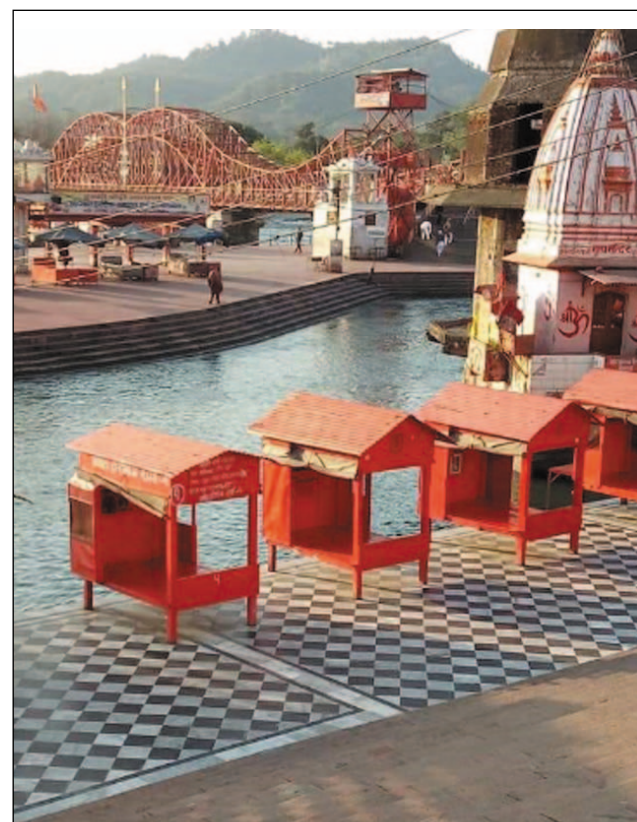
The tests for testing corona virus cases have been really low. For every 10-lakh people, only 6.8 tests have been conducted, the lowest level of testing as compared to all the other countries of the world.

In the beginning, only those people were tested in India who were returning from high risk countries, or had come in contact with some infected person or a person attending to infected person. Later, the government said that in the wake of serious respiratory problems, patients admitted in the hospitals will also be tested.

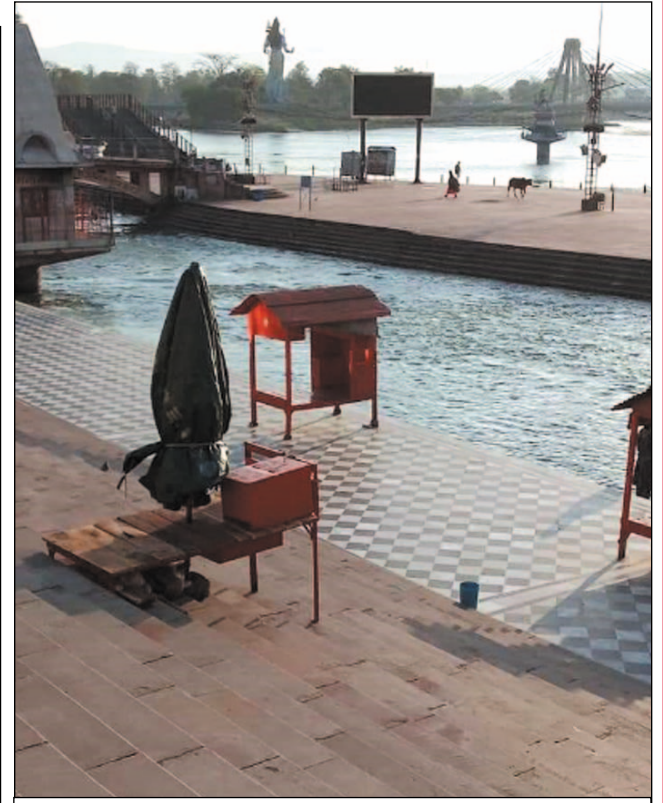
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Bustling with thousands of pilgrims year-round, Haridwar is silent and deserted

With the current coronavirus lockdown in India, the silence of the mountains has descended on the bustling Haridwar city at the foothills of the Himalayas



Normally bustling with jostling pilgrims, the bridge and the temple are empty of all human traffic



The sole desk of a priest is waiting for the absent pilgrims

where the river enters the plains. Thousands of Hindu pilgrims from all over India are joined by overseas Hindus round the year to bathe in the holy river Ganges at this city to wash away their sins. Plus, devout Hindus carry the ashes of their departed relatives to be immersed in the holy river for the salvation of their souls. The priests or the pundits are always busy performing these rites and rituals. The markets are busy selling holy rosaries and trinkets.

Not now. An eerie silence envelops the entire city. The banks and the temples are silent. The hotels and rest houses are locked up. The banks or Ghats (bathing steps) are deserted. The shops are closed. The streets are empty.

The most famous Ghat called Har ki Pauri (Steps of the Divine) hosts the daily Ganga Aarti which is a major attraction here. Hundreds of pilgrims set float tiny boats made of leaves carrying flowers and a flickering lamp every evening to create a divine experience. Now this Aarti or worship is performed by a sole priest.

Shops selling groceries, medicines and milk open from 7 am to 1 pm. Banks open from 7 am to 10 am. After 1 p m, the city seems to go into a coma. The local hospital examined 95 persons of which 72 were negative for the virus. The others are being treated, reported *Jagran* newspaper on 1 April 2020.

About seven or eight cases of virus infection have also been reported in the city. These people arrived from abroad before the lockdown and have been confined to their homes in self-isolation. Daily checks are carried out by the police and health officials on their infection and movements.

As its sole means of income, the pilgrims, have vanished, a silent Haridwar has been hit hard with lockdown.

Kul Bhushan

worked as a newspaper Editor in Nairobi for over three decades and now lives in New Delhi

Freedom Child



Manchester: Ghost Town. Photo - manchestereveningnews.co.uk



Anya Foster

What has our world come to? It's crazy to think that only a few months ago, we were all allowed outside, and we were able to roam freely. But now, we aren't even allowed to leave the house. This has taken a toll on many of us, and the vast majority of people are now stuck in a prison-like house.

Not being able to leave the house to see my friends has had a huge impact on me because I'm very close to them and they're pretty much family. Seeing the same room day in and day out is enough to drive anyone crazy, but we've got a job to do, to keep everyone safe. Even though I'm tired of being stuck at home, my heart breaks knowing that there are people who are unable to go out food shopping, and the homeless who are unable to be in quarantine.

With everyone panic buying products, the elderly are unable to obtain the basic necessities to live on. Those

who don't have much money are unable to provide for their families due to the high prices of basic necessities as extortionists prey on people's misery. It's utterly heart-breaking to hear about the number of deaths rising every day.

Being in lockdown is going to challenge everyone both mentally and physically, but I believe that if we all work together and stay inside, we can beat the virus. However, people are still going outside and this is why the virus is spreading. If we had stricter laws in place, less people would be going outside which will stop the spread and lower the death toll.

Just over a month ago, I was going outside almost every day and going out to concerts. What is happening to our world? Little did I know that the last time I went shopping with my mum was actually going to be the last time going out for months. People doing everything they can to stay inside will make a huge difference to stopping the spread of the virus, which is bound to happen. Though everyone is trapped and we're slowly suffocating in our own homes, freedom will soon come.

I'm Anya Foster, I've just turned fifteen, I live with my older brother and my mum, I'm from Yorkshire.

Silent Adolescence



Anthony Foster

Im Anthony, I am 17 years old and I live with my mum and sister in the UK.

It's 5.00 am, currently sitting on my bed listening to music and watching time fly by because that's all you can do when your country is put in lockdown. Being in lockdown really gets you contemplating about how the UK as a whole cannot be trusted to stay indoors, as Covid-19 begins to spread rapidly causing havoc around parts of England. At first I believed it was a just the flu but as the death toll rises the so-called flu becomes a silent killer as symptoms show up weeks after getting the virus. Covid-19 has not just affected people physically but mentally too; many people having anxiety over the virus has led to a national crisis: everyone is panic buying, leaving impecunious families vulnerable and this is a growing predicament.

Covid-19 is affecting people in different ways, putting people in gruelling situations and turning towns and cities

into ghost towns. The virus has impacted my life as I am not able to use cash at stores with shops being closed down, and I am not being able to socialise with friends and family in person which is difficult. At 17, being out and about with friends and socialising is what you want to do, but doing this now could lead to the spread of the virus and putting peoples' lives at risk. This has caused many arguments around the house, changing my perception on the virus and leading me to put peoples' needs before my own.

The virus crisis is only getting worse, it's affecting friends and family around us. I believed it was the flu at first, being young and naïve I didn't think much of it until I read posts on Facebook about how old friends have contracted the disease which was a real eye opener for me. This made me realise how catastrophic this disease is and made me want to act upon it almost instantly. Being in lockdown has made me realise how important it is to stay inside and stay away from people, doing this can slow down the loss of lives and the spread of the virus.

Anthony Foster is 17 and lives with his mum and sister in Huddersfield.

An Obituary printed in the
London Times

The Mourning of Common Sense

Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, Common Sense, who has been with us for many years. No one knows for sure how old he was, since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape. He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as:

- Knowing when to come in out of the rain;
- Why the early bird gets the worm;
- Life isn't always fair;
- And maybe it was my fault.

Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies (don't spend more than you can earn) and reliable strategies (adults, not children, are in charge).

His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned but overbearing regulations were set in place. Reports of a 6-year-old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate; teens suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch; and a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student only worsened his condition.

Common Sense lost ground when parents attacked teachers for doing the job that they themselves had failed to do in disciplining their unruly children.

It declined even further when schools were required to get parental consent to administer sun lotion or an aspirin to a student; but could not inform parents when a student became pregnant and wanted to have an abortion.

Common Sense lost the will to live as the churches became businesses; and criminals received better treatment than their victims.

Common Sense took a beating when you couldn't defend yourself from a burglar in your own home and the burglar could sue you for assault.

Common Sense finally gave up the will to live, after a woman failed to realize that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled a little on her lap, and was promptly awarded a huge settlement.

Common Sense was preceded in death by

- his parents, Truth and Trust,
- his wife, Discretion,
- his daughter, Responsibility, and
- his son, Reason.

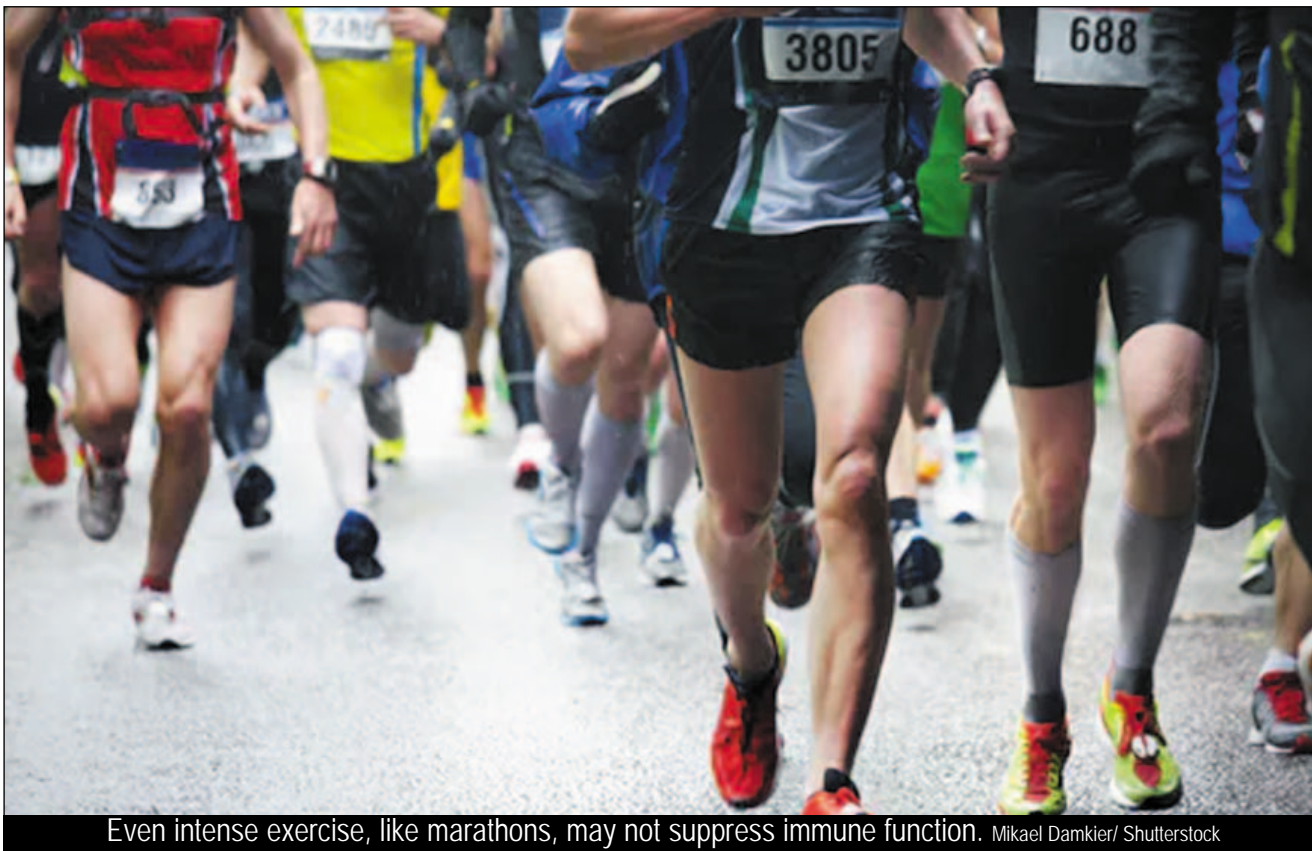
He is survived by his 5 stepbrothers:

- I know my rights
- I want it now
- Someone else is to blame
- I'm a victim
- Pay me for doing nothing

Not many attended his funeral because so few realized he was gone.

Regular exercise has long-term benefits for immunity - it's important to stay active

Research shows that most forms of regular exercise can help your immune system to work its best



Even intense exercise, like marathons, may not suppress immune function. Mikael Damkier/ Shutterstock

People around the world are staying at home as part of social distancing measures to limit the transmission of the novel coronavirus. In some countries people are being encouraged to exercise once a day.

However, there's long been a public misconception that some forms of exercise can suppress the immune system, reducing the body's ability to deal with outside threats, like the novel coronavirus. But there's a substantial body of research that shows exercise actually benefits our immune system. In fact, acute and chronic exercise of almost any type has been found to improve the way people respond to vaccines.

And epidemiological studies show that people who are active get significantly fewer upper respiratory tract infections per year than less-active people. Our research agrees that exercise doesn't suppress immunity - instead, it may help the immune system function better.

At a basic level, the immune system has three main lines of defence. Exercise helps maintain the normal function of each of these.

The first line of defence is comprised of physical barriers, like the skin, which stops pathogens like viruses from entering the body. Research has shown that skin wound healing is faster in people who exercise regularly compared to sedentary people. Faster wound healing reduces the risk of bacteria and virus entry in people who are active.

The second line of defence is comprised of "innate" (or natural) immunity, which is mainly made up of cells like neutrophils and natural killer cells which are the first immune cells to respond to infections.

Exercise has a profound effect on these cells. For example, during a bout of exercise, natural killer cells move into the bloodstream in vast numbers. Following exercise, these cells migrate to sites of inflammation to seek out pathogens, and damaged cells. This process

might even help our immune system detect cancerous cells.

The third line of defence is "adaptive" (or memory) immunity, which is mainly comprised of cells called T and B lymphocytes. Exercise also has a profound impact on these cells. It has been shown that lifelong regular exercise may help maintain healthy numbers of young T lymphocytes as we age, which may help the immune system better identify pathogens and cancer as we reach older age.

But for the last four decades, it's been thought that strenuous, prolonged exercise such as marathon or ultra-marathon running temporarily suppresses immune function leading to an "open-window" whereby infection risk is increased. We recently looked at the strengths and weaknesses of the "open-window" theory - and as we discussed in a previous article, there's not much evidence to support it.

Better immune function

To test immune function, many studies have used vaccines. Vaccines are one of the best ways to see how the immune system works because it tests the combined ability of many different immune cells to coordinate and produce antibodies. Research administering vaccines after both prolonged exercise and marathon running shows that antibody responses are not suppressed. There's even evidence that elite athletes who train regularly have higher antibody responses to vaccination than people who do not exercise.

Experts have recently debated whether the immune system can change in a negative or positive way after exercise - and whether events, such as marathons, can increase the likelihood of infections. They concluded that the few confirmed infections that happen in people after heavy exercise are more likely to be linked to inadequate diet, psychological stress, and insufficient sleep.

Exercise, on its own, does not seem to suppress immunity. It's generally agreed that the greatest risk factor for any form of viral or bacterial infection is exposure at mass gatherings. In particular, public transportation increases risk, probably via exposure to crowds or by touching surfaces that have become contaminated. Airline travel over long distances can also lead to sleep disruption which increases infection risk.

These findings reinforce the present guidance about social distancing, minimising travel and exercising at home, if possible. Regular moderate intensity aerobic exercise - such as walking or jogging - is beneficial for maintaining normal immune function. You should aim to do about 150 minutes of these types of exercise a week.

More vigorous aerobic exercise - such as running or cycling - is also beneficial for immune function. However, if your ability to exercise is limited by health conditions or disability, moving more and doing some type of exercise is better than nothing.

Resistance exercise such as weightlifting also has clear benefits for health and wellbeing in general - such as alleviating psychological distress, and reducing the risk of chronic diseases - and in particular maintaining strength, balance and coordination.

Given the current circumstances, it's important to exercise in isolation and maintain good personal hygiene, including thoroughly washing hands following exercise. Using alcohol-based hand gels may also help prevent viral spread, and avoid touching your mouth, eyes, and nose. In addition to regular exercise, you should also pay attention to getting a good night's sleep and maintaining a healthy diet to give the body its best chance at fighting off infections.

James Turner & John P Campbell,
University of Bath

A woman went to a psychiatrist



Woman: I don't want to marry. I am educated, self sufficient and satisfied with myself. But my parents are asking me to marry. What should I do?

Psychiatrist: You will not doubt achieve great things in life. But sometimes things won't go your way. Sometimes your plans will fail. Then whom will you blame? Will you blame yourself?

Woman: "NO."

Psychiatrist: "yes.. that's why you need a husband.."

Rubina Dilaik: 'You have to keep the passion and spark constant'



pics and I had shared them. After a while I saw such horrifying comments and I was like, 'Oh my God, kya hogaya'. It is my personality, my body, my choice. But social media has instantaneously given power to people to comment anything. So, either you reply to them and come to their level or ignore. I have learnt to ignore. I am doing it as it is my platform and not expecting a reaction out of it.

I am the planner

I would take all credit to all our activities together. But when it comes to photography and film making, I would give Abhinav the entire credit. Most of the times, I surprise him with our travel destinations. I just let him know a few days or a few months in advance to keep himself free. Now, he is so used to my surprises, he has given me an ultimatum to discuss the places with him. I had planned our anniversary travel too but now that has gone for a toss. We had disco-vered long back, when we were dating that we are two different personalities. Talking about travelling, he is adventurous and I am an exotic traveller. So, we have to find our mutual grounds. I pick up the best resorts and scenic side and he picks up the activities.

Be the wind beneath each other's wings

Change is the only constant. We all change as per time and relationship also changes and you need to adapt. You need to grow together. We have seen each other grow as a person and also acknowledge it.

You need to embrace it. If you say that 'I love you like the way I used to love 5-6 years back' then you are heading for doomsday. Either you or your partner will change and you won't be able to relate to them. You have to let the other person change and evolve. Be the wind beneath each other's wings. It's not 'Rabb Ne Bana Di Jodi' and 'Happily ever after'. You have to keep the passion and spark constant and that requires work.

Abhinav is responsible and enthusiastic

Abhinav is responsible and enthusiastic when it comes to sharing household duties. If I am cooking, he would volunteer to do the dishes; if I am mopping and brooming, he would take up dusting. We share responsibilities and when you do so, this lockdown period becomes breathable.

'Shakti' has been a turning point

After *Choti Bahu* I did so many shows nobody even know about it. I have done 5-6 shows as protagonists but nobody noticed. But then came *Shakti*. Steve Jobs once said, "When you look back, you connect the dots." Had my earlier shows not happened to me, I won't have grown up enough to take up such a challenging character."

From playing the role of a demure Indian girl in *Choti Bahu* to a transgender in *Shakti- Astitva Ke Ehsaas Ki*, Rubina Dilaik's 12-year-long journey in television has been a learning experience. In an exclusive live chat session with ETimes TV spoke about missing her work, co-stars and also handling social media trolls. The actress also said she has been learning new things about herself and also spoke about her relationship with husband Abhinav Shukla during this lockdown period.

Have been busier than ever

This period has been an intimate time with me. I am really working towards getting to know myself and my relationship with Abhinav. I am giving my home a touch of my own. Can't tell you how time flies away. I have been busier than ever. I used to think that shooting for 10-12 hours and then travelling for 3-4 hours is too much. But now I feel managing household duties are more difficult. Now I realise how grateful we should be to our mothers and our house-helps. This period has been an eye-opener.

I have learnt to ignore trolls

I don't have the habit of checking my comments. For me, it isn't a bikini... for me it is a moment and I am letting my fans and friends know about it. I am not looking for any instant gratification. I am not saying that it doesn't matter. Abhinav had shot some of my bikini

TV SERIAL

Kulfi Kumar Bajewala

Friday 17 April: Mahinder tells Sikander about his relation with Kulfi while she reunites with her gang. Later, Loveleen is shocked by Sikander's changed attitude.

Monday 20 April: Kulfi gets a clue about Sikander's accident and investigates with her gang. Later, Sikander pushes a suspicious Kulfi away and pulls Loveleen closer.

Tuesday 21 April: Kulfi implements a way to expose Sikander's lies while Loveleen's suspicion grows. Later, Amyra gets furious with Kulfi's constant questioning.

Wednesday 22 April: Loveleen thinks twice before answering to Sikander's question. Later, Kulfi sets out on a mission along with her friends.

Thursday 23 April: Rocket tells Sikander about Kulfi's suspicion while she meets Pakhi. Later, after returning her toy, Kulfi asks Pakhi about Bhola.

Yeh Un Dinon Ki Baat Hai

Friday 17 April: Naina's chacha comes to pick Naina up from Sameer and her house to take her to his place. Sameer and Naina are both upset by that fact but are also angry and upset with each other.

Monday 20 April: As Manoj and his father with Sameer and one other friend have gone to the girls house for Manoj's marriage proposal, they find the girl very cute. But the twist in the story is that the girl says yes for Sameer.

Tuesday 21 April: Sameer before arriving at party becomes emotional upon thinking about Naina. But later both meet at party and have short conversation and in between that Sameer notices the zip of Naina's dress was open and he helps her closing well.

Wednesday 22 April: The confrontation starts amongst the two of them and they start arguing. Manoj scolds Sameer and tells him about how people used to praise their love and now. Both, Sameer and Naina go their respective houses and open up in their confidants.

Thursday 23 April: Naina is worried because she left Sameer when he needed her the most. While she is searching for a rickshaw to go back to her house, a car hits her on the road. Sameer's mother tells him that he is incomplete without Naina and he must tell her everything that happened at the factory truthfully.

Ek Deewaana Tha

Friday 3 April: Radhika sees Madhvi and Rajan dragging Suvarna from the basement to a car and follows them until someone holds her from behind and calls her Sharanya. Shivani catches Radhika and Akash in the kitchen in the middle of the night and gets furious. Radhika and Krish decide to find out the truth.

Monday 6 April: "Radhika is sure that someone is trapped inside the house and she is making a compelling accusation against Rajan and Madhavi. As Radhika speaks to Akash about this Shivani overhears and gets furious. As off this happens someone is seen to be peaking from the walls.

Tuesday 7 April: Madhavi tells Shivani that she disagrees of her relationship with Akash. Krish and Radhika come together to solve the mystery behind who, Radhika had seen the other night.

Wednesday 8 April: Krish and Radhika decide to uncover the truth that Madhvi and Rajan have been trying so hard to hide. Radhika asks Shivani's forgiveness after Radhika accused her parents of hiding something. Akash warns Krish to stay away from their family matters or he'll face the consequences.

Thursday 9 April: Krish shares with Akash that he feels like there's always someone watching them or listening to them in this house but Radhika interrupts him before he speaks too much as she doesn't trust Akash. Shivani tells Akash to maintain a proper distance with Radhika.

Abhimanyu Dassani divulges inside scoop on his next, *Nikamma*: It's a coming-of-age film and I'm a nikamma to everybody in it

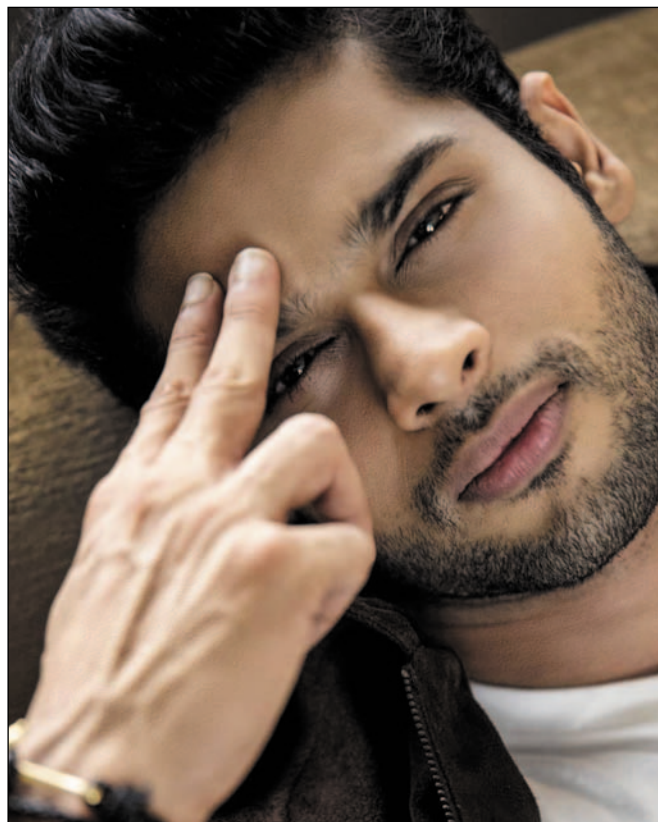
Recently, *BollywoodLife* thoroughly enjoyed a fun and fabulous Insta live chat with the cool and charming actor, where he graciously divulged some tasty treats about his sophomore outing on the big screen, *Nikamma*

Mard Ko Dard Nahi Hota, though not a money-spinner at the box office, has gradually accumulated a cult following ever since premiering online. In fact, it'd be safe to say that the popularity of its debutant leading man, Abhimanyu Dassani, has soared manifold ever since the film saw its digital premiere, so much so that interest in his sophomore venture, *Nikamma*, has risen by several notches. With the lockdown in effect through due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and with no end in sight, his and several others' film shoots have been indefinitely brought to a screeching halt, which has subsequently curbed any new developments about them being released by way of Bollywood news.

Fear not though, as we have our regular live chat sessions on Instagram to fill the void. Recently, *BollywoodLife* thoroughly enjoyed a fun and fabulous Insta live chat with the cool and charming actor, where he graciously divulged some tasty treats about his second outing on the big screen.

Opening up on what *Nikamma* is all about, his role in to and how his character impacts the others on the film, Abhimanyu Dassani said, "It's a coming-of-age film where I'm playing the 'Nikamma' — a complete nikamma, an out-and-out nikamma. And I'm a nikamma with everyone, be it friends, family, at the workplace, just about anybody. Looking at my character, everybody will relate to it or at least to some of the things I do on screen, they'll say, 'Yeah, I've done this or that either with me family or a friend at some time or another.' However, at its heart, it's a coming-of-age film, and my character eventually realises that my actions shouldn't hurt others. The film also has some amazing music. One song of Amaal Mallik in it will be played at every wedding, I assure you. Even the title track is so good that I injured myself while working out on it."

Beside, Abhimanyu Dassani, *Nikamma* also stars Shilpa



Shetty, who's making her comeback after 13 years, and marks the debut of internet sensation Shirley Setia on the big screen. Sabbir Khan of *Heropanti* and the first *Baaghi* fame is in charge of the directorial reins.

Student of the Year 2: When Ananya Panday's first day on the set of Karan Johar's film was almost ruined

Though it has been more than 2 years since she started working on a film set, it was only recently that the actress opened up about her first day on the sets of Karan Johar's *SOTY2*



Ananya Panday, who made her debut with *Student of the Year 2*, alongside Tiger Shroff and Tara Sutaria, is taking one step at a time to climb the ladder of success. The young girl's performance in her first well was not widely appreciated, but she impressed the masses with her act in *Pati Patni Aur Woh*, her sophomore effort. Though it has been more than 2 years since she started working on a film set, it was only recently that the actress opened up about her first day on the sets of Karan Johar's high-school drama. Talking to *Mumbai Mirror*, Ananya revealed how her first day on *SOTY2*'s set was almost ruined.

Going down memory lane, the actress said, "My first day on the set was two years ago, on April 7. Punit took me and Tara (Sutaria) to Mussoorie (where the film was shot) a few days earlier than everyone else. It was our first film and he wanted us to ease into it instead of feeling ambushed on the film's set. Our first shot was supposed to be before the song, 'Jatt Ludhiyane Da'. Punit had individually promised the three of us (Tiger Shroff, Tara and her) that all our first shots will be solo so that each one of us gets to savour it."

Ananya went on to explain that Tiger's first shot was a dance step, whereas Tara's first shot was a beauty one. When it was her turn to give the first shot of her life, it suddenly started raining. Looking at the sudden change in the weather, the newbie got upset thinking that the first day of her shoot was ruined. However, director Punit Malhotra managed to save her day by changing her outdoor shot into an indoor one. And later, everything worked out as planned.

That was an interesting tale by AnanyaPanday, wasn't it?

YOUR STARS

Sagittarius: Nov 22 - Dec 21

A greater efficiency in your way of working will allow you to put your affairs into due order. You must at the same time try to solve the pending small problems concerning your entourage. You must be extremely cautious about weight-reducing drugs.

Capricorn: Dec 22 - Jan 19

Your near ones will need your counsels, which are wise and extremely useful. But since there's always in the best counsels something that can displease, give them with much tact and humility.

Aquarius: Jan 20 - Feb 18

Already formed couples can't help to let themselves go to reciprocal suspicion capable of causing their frightened imagination to do much damage. As for free persons, they'll be well advised not to hurry and to tone down their possessiveness.

Pisces: Feb 19 - Mar 20

You may play with the sentiments of someone who loves you sincerely. Don't be so much grieved about the problems which seem to stick to you; in fact, of what the fabric of life is made if not of an uninterrupted string of problems to be solved?

Aries: Mar 21 - Apr 19

For God's sake, don't put your beloved one on a pedestal; that's what's the most dangerous. Indeed, if you do that, the week when you become conscious that your mate has defaults like everybody else, you'll then be stunned.

Taurus: Apr 20 - May 20

You must be careful about which way you turn; mistrust will do you less evil than confidence at this moment. If you must take risks, these should be perfectly calculated. Also think to assure your rear so as to give yourself a good falling back in case of hard blows.

Gemini: May 21 - June 20

Profit by the favourable planetary ambience to take daring initiatives and to forge ahead in your work; you'll have nothing to fear. Don't mingle sentiments or love intrigue with work, for this could push you far on a slippery road.

Cancer: June 21 - July 22

You must devote all your care to your professional activities even if the profits do not seem proportional to the efforts to be made. Heart wise, single people will have to beware of all liaisons abroad or with strangers: as things now stand, these liaisons can only come to a bad end.

Leo: July 23 - Aug 22

You'll know how to put yourself forward and to harvest a just reward for your merits. Also, your inhibitions and complexes will be driven away; as a result, you'll have much less difficulty than usual finding your good affective balance.

Virgo: Aug 23 - Sept 22

You'll recover your beautiful self-confidence, your certitudes, your natural ascendancy. Some people may complain about this, but certainly not you. Also, the work on yourself, which you've been obliged to do since so long time, should begin to bear its fruits.

Libra: Sept 23 - Oct 22

You may hurt certain persons by your lack of caution in your utterings; therefore it will be in your interest to turn your tongue within your mouth seven times before speaking. Some chance in competitive examinations for admission is possible.

Scorpion: 23 Oct - 21 Nov

Even for natives who're the most wrapped up in their work, love will be highlighted. They won't have difficulty finding the rare bird. This astral climate will tend to render all natives more available, less centred on their personal or material ambitions.



Vendredi 17 avril - 21.15

E.T.**L'Extraterrestre**

Avec: Patricia Arquette, James Van Der Beek, Ted Danson, Peter MacNicol, Charley Koontz, Shad Moss, Hayley Kiyoko



Samedi 18 avril - 10.44

Avec: Sharlto Copley, David James, Jason Cope

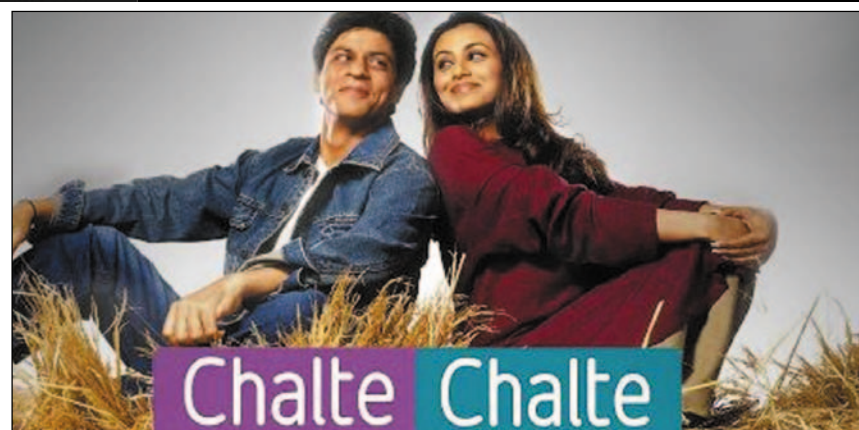
Violence ensues after an extraterrestrial race forced to live in slum-like conditions on Earth finds a kindred spirit in a government agent exposed to their biotechnology.



	MBC 1	MBC 2	MBC 3	Cine 12	Bollywood TV
vendredi 17 avril	06.30 Local: Encounter 07.05 Dessin Anime 10.29 Mag: Origami 11.15 Entrepreneurat Au Feminin 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Local: Autour Des Valeurs 12.30 Doc: Une Nuit, Orsay Avec Charles Berling 13.30 Local: Saver Kil Tirel 14.30 D.Anime - Teenie Weenies 14.40 La Famille Blaireau 15.04 D.Anime: Kuu Kuu Harajuku 16.28 D.Anime: Trollhunters 17.00 Local: Mati Ke Mol 17.30 Local: Bhakti Saagar 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Serial: Siya Ke Ram 19.30 Journal & La Meteo 20.00 Local: Press Conference 20.35 Local: Groov'in 21.35 Local: Arabesque	04.30 Aastha TV 07.00 DDI Live 10.00 Serial: Tumhaari Natasha 11.19 Serial: MOL 12.04 Film: 15.00 Live: Samachar 15.20 Honaar Soon Mee Hya... 15.43 Mooga Manasulu 16.03 Apoorva Raagangal 16.30 Serial: Ki Jaana Mein Kaun 16.53 Serial: Gangaa 18.00 Serial: Dr. Quin 18.30 Tele: Mariana Et Scarlett 19.00 Zournal Kreol 19.30 DDI Magazine 19.50 Local: Yaadein 20.20 Serial: Mah-E-Tamaam 21.25 Local: Anjuman 21.26 Local: Urdu Programme 22.37 DDI Live	06.00 Mag: Eco@Africa 06.44 Mag: Shift 07.00 Mag: Border Crossing 07.29 Doc: Tomorrow Today 07.55 Doc: Comme Un Poisson... 08.50 Doc: World Stamps 09.02 Live Educational Program... 14.05 Doc: 360 Geo 14.52 Mag: Strictly Street 15.15 Doc: The Climate Covers Up 16.00 Mag: Eco India 16.26 Mag: Urban Gardens 16.31 Mag: Sur Measure 17.05 Mag: Border Crossing 17.25 Doc: A Question Of Science 17.28 Mag: Tomorrow Today 18.00 Doc: Fascia-The Mysterious 18.42 Mag: Urban Gardens 19.03 Mag: Global 3000 19.37 Mag: Euromaxx 20.05 Local: Urdu Programme	03.12 Serial: NCIS - Los Angeles 05.19 Tele: Amanda 06.00 Serial: When Calls The Heart 06.43 Film: Jurassic Park 08.51 Mag: Zoom In 09.00 Serial: Les Experts 09.45 Tele: Au Nom De L'Amour 10.10 Tele: Mariana Et Scarlett 10.35 Serial: NCIS 11.25 Tele: Dulce Amor 12.00 Film: La Passion En Heritage 13.30 Tele: Amanda 14.41 Film: Jurassic Park 16.45 Serial: Les Experts 17.25 Serial: When Calls The Heart 18.09 Tele: Au Nom De L'amour 18.33 Tele: Mariana Et Scarlett 19.00 Tele: Dulce Amor 20.05 Tele: Totalment Diva 20.30 Serial: Midnight, Texas 21.15 Film: E.T. L'Extraterrestre	09.17 Film: Shakti 12.00 / 19.54 - Ek Deewana Tha 12.20 / 20.11 - Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 12.41 / 20.32 Radha Krishna 13.06 / 21.09 - Kaleerein 13.35 / 21.24 - Zindagi Ki Mehek 13.56 / 21.46 - Bade Acche Lagte Hai 14.24 / 21.59 - Chhanchhan 14.45 / 22.25 - Ishqbaaz 15.18 Film: Namaste London Stars: Akshay Kumar, Rishi Kapoor, Katrina Kaif 17.30 Live: Samachar 18.00 Yeh Hai Mohabbatein 18.19 Kumkum Bhagya 18.39 Piya Albela 19.01 Mere Angne Mein 19.22 Yeh Un Dinon Ki Baat Hai
samedi 18 avril	06.00 Dessin Anime 09.37 Magazine: Origami 09.50 Serial: Grandpa In My Pocket 10.20 Heidi, Bienvenida A Casa 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Local: People - No 12 - Invite 13.05 Local: Groov'in 14.00 Local: Pause Cuisine 14.10 Local: Fee Main - No 5 14.30 D.Anime: Teenie Weenies 14.40 La Famille Blaireau-Renard 17.00 Local: Kal Aaj Aur Kal 17.30 Local: Bhakti Saagar 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Entertainment: Dance 19.30 Journal & La Meteo 20.00 Local: Press Conference 20.35 Local: Kenzi Bar Fet Lamizik 22.27 Serial: Chicago Med 23.10 Local: Le Journal Televisé 23.45 Local: Rodrigues	04.30 Aastha TV 07.00 Film: 11.40 Good Morning Shanghai 12.00 Nanda Saukhyia Bhare 12.30 Serial: Mooga Manasulu 12.48 Serial: Brundavanam 13.10 Serial: Annakodiyum Ainthu 13.35 Serial: Anu Pallavi 14.05 Entertainment: Dil Hai Hindu 15.00 Live: Samachar 15.20 Film: Imtihaan 18.00 Mag: Check In 18.30 Mag: Eco@Africa 19.00 Zournal Kreol 19.30 DDI Magazine 20.05 Serial: Vikram Betaal Ki Rahasya Gatha 20.21 Serial: Bitti Business Wali 21.00 Film: 23.15 DDI Live	06.00 Doc: Fascia-The Mysterious 07.00 Mag: Global 3000 07.27 Mag: Euromaxx 07.53 Doc: Secret Worlds 08.45 Doc: World Stamps 09.41 The Great Lead Forward 13.56 Doc: Wallis Le Peuple... 15.31 Doc: Displaced: Drought... 16.16 Doc: Fascia- The Mysterious 16.59 Mag: Urban Gardens 17.02 Mag: Global 3000 17.28 Mag: Euromaxx 18.00 Doc: Horizon 19.00 Doc: Olivia's Garden 19.30 Mag: Mixeur, Les Gouts... 20.02 Doc: Wildlife Heroes 20.54 Doc: World Stamps 21.00 42eme Festival Internationale du Cirque de Monte Carlo 23.00 Doc: Horizon S 23.51 Doc: Olivia's Garden	00.35 Tele: Peau Sauvage 01.20 Film: E.T. L'extreterrestre 03.20 Serial: The Bletchley Circle 03.55 Film: Jurassic Park 3 05.23 Tele: Destiny 06.12 Serial: Midnight, Texas 06.54 Film: Le Monstre De L'ocean 09.12 Film: L'incroyable Equipe 11.01 Film: Chair De Poule 12.36 Serial: The Bletchley 13.30 Tele: L'esclave Blanche 14.01 Tele: Premiere Dame 15.05 Film: Jurassic Park 3 17.03 Serial: Midnight, Texas 17.45 Film: Central Intelligence 19.45 Mag: Hollywood News Feed 20.05 Tele: Totalment Diva 20.30 Serial: Midnight, Texas 21.15 Film: District 9 22.58 Tele: Eva Luna	04.05 Ek Deewana Tha 04.26 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 05.24 Zindagi Ki Mehek 05.47 Bade Acche Lagte Hai 06.07 Chhanchhan 06.29 Ishqbaaz 06.55 Kumkum Bhagya 06.15 Piya Albela 07.36 Mere Angne Mein 08.00 Zindagi Ki Mehek 10.02 Yeh Un Dinon Ki Baat Hai 12.00 Ek Deewana Tha 12.30 Film: Chennai Express 15.00 Kaleerein 17.30 Samachar 18.30 Film: Hum Dil De Chuke... Starring: Salman Khan, Ajay Devgan, Aishwarya Rai 21.29 Serial: Siya Ke Ram 22.16 Serial: Naagin Season 2 23.00 Serial: Zindagi Ki Mehek
dimanche 19 avril	06.00 Dessin Anime 09.40 Serial: Grandpa In My Pocket 10.35 Local: Nu Rasinn 11.30 Local: Arsiv MBC 12.00 Le Journal 14.30 D. Anime: Teenie Weenies 14.31 D. Anime: Croque Nuage 14.40 La Famille Blaireau-Renard 15.27 D.Anime: Petit Creux 16.14 D.Anime: The Garfield Show 16.30 D.Anime: Trollhunters 17.00 Local: Chatkar Pakwan 17.30 Local: Bhakti Saagar 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Local Prod: Safar 19.30 Le Journal 20.05 Local: Press Conference 20.35 Local Prod: Gold Face 2018 23.00 Le Journal 23.35 Local Prod: Rodrigues	04.30 Aastha TV 07.00 Film: Paapi 10.00 Local: Shree Durga... 11.00 Serial: Oru Kai Osai 12.00 Film: 15.00 Samachar 15.20 Serial: Mooga Manasulu 15.40 Serial: Eka Lagnachi Teesri 16.06 Apoorva Raagangal 16.28 Local: Yaadein 16.54 Serial: Mahakali 18.00 Lettre Pastorale Careme 18.30 Local: Tipa Tipa Nu Avance 19.00 Zournal Kreol 19.30 DDI Magazine 20.00 Serial: Maharakshak 20.42 Serial: Naagin 21.28 Serial: CID 22.15 Serial: Piya Rangrezz	06.00 Doc: Horizon 06.51 Doc: Olivia's Garden 07.18 Mag: Mixeur, Les Gouts Et... 07.47 Doc: Wildlife Heroes 08.39 Doc: World Stamps 08.42 42eme Festival Internationale du Cirque de Monte Carlo 10.44 Mag: Shift 11.00 Doc: Horizon S 11.51 Doc: Olivia's Garden 12.18 Mag: Mixeur, Les Gouts... 12.47 Doc: Wildlife Heroes 13.39 Doc: World Stamps 13.45 42eme Festival Internationale du Cirque de Monte Carlo 15.44 Mag: Shift 16.00 Doc: Horizons S 16.52 Mag: Mixeur, Les Gouts Et... 17.44 Doc: World Stamps	00.25 Tele: Peau Sauvage 01.31 Film: District 9 03.15 Serial: Hawaii 5-0 03.57 Film: Cop And A Half 05.22 Tele: Destiny 06.12 Serial: Midnight, Texas 06.48 Film: Love Blossoms 08.30 Serial: Seal Team 09.12 Film: Labyrinthus 10.43 Film: Cop And A Half 12.15 Serial: Hawaii 5-0 13.00 Tele: L'Esclave Blanche 13.40 Tele: Premiere Dame 15.05 Film: Honey 3 16.38 Mag: Close Up 17.04 Serial: Midnight, Texas 17.46 Serial: Hawaii 5-0 18.31 Serial: Mission: Impossible 19.15 Hollywood Best Film 20.05 Tele: Totalment Diva 21.23 Film: Passengers	00.35 Yeh Hai Mohabbatein 02.39 Kaleerein 03.36 Pavitra Rishta 04.57 Film: Hum Dil De Chuke... 08.00 Serial: Motu Patlu 08.11 Serial: Chhanchhan 10.05 Itna Karo Na Mujhe Pyaar 12.30 Film: 3 Idiots 15.21 Ek Deewana Tha 16.00 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 17.03 Serial Punar Vivaah 17.30 Samachar 18.30 Film: Chalte Chalte Starring Shah Rukh Khan, Rani Mukherjee, Jas Arora, Satish Shah 21.14 Entertainment: Dance 21.56 Bade Acche Lagte Hai 23.55 Ishqbaaz

Samedi 18
avril- 15.30Stars: Salman Khan,Ajay
Devgan,Aishwarya Rai

Dimanche 19 avril - 20.35

Stars: Shah Rukh Khan, Rani
Mukherjee, Jas Arora, Satish Shah

Re-thinking issues that matter in everyday life



Nita Chicooree-Mercier

As humans leave the stage of frenzied activity where they rush around, fret, fume and fidget around all day long, and are becalmed before sunset, other animals, wondering what on earth is going on, venture out of the premises allotted to them and take a few steps on grounds usually occupied by pedestrians, bikes and cars. Roosters and hens gladly leave the bushes and penned courtyards to stroll right on the road. A newly-found freedom. Dogs take an afternoon nap in the middle of the road. A monkey which has lost its way for more than a year now and lives in the bushes nearby, frightening the hens now and then, comes out at night and helps itself to bananas in the neighbourhood. So when you hear it walking on the roof and heading to the bananas a bit earlier before total darkness, you feel like leaving your distant cousin to have its feast. Of all the winged visitors, *myenas*, *condés* and sparrows, the cardinals are less timid in hopping a few steps further right into the kitchen to peck on the food we put down for them. Pereybere beach vacated by bipeds speaking Creole, French, English, Italian, German and so on, got an unusual visitor, a curious goat wading into the turquoise-blue water of the lagoon, enjoying all the scenery alone. A rare sight. Why, Trou aux Biches used to be a haven of tranquility with green grass, shrubs and scattered coconut trees where goats roamed freely decades ago.

A strange silence befalls the roads, the trees and the cluster of houses around. Different shades of green leaves hanging on the mango trees, *neem* trees, *ashoka* and *gulaychee* trees along the road, a stillness that stretches to the blue sky and the stranded clouds further away, all swathed in a pervasive stillness. White *paille-en-queue* birds glide in droves above, veering in a joyful ballet. A species that is commonly seen hovering in the air near the islands off the coast.

Vacant space and the hushed atmosphere embolden animals to explore new frontiers and enjoy more freedom while humans are begged



to stay indoors. Confinement of humans raises the life expectancy of animals waiting their fate in slaughterhouses.

Ups and downs in the general mood of the public can be observed in conversations in front of the *laboutiks* while customers patiently queue up. Stress followed by acceptance of compulsory regulations, worry again and wait-and-see attitude. High prices, shortage of food items, job insecurity, unemployment and the deep fear of catching the virus are what pop up in the few words exchanged while queuing up.

Someone comes forward and asks if there is any flour left. *Oui*, a young man answers, *alle serse to brouette*. Everyone is amused by the remark. To keep the mirth up, the other young man decides to sing a song for everyone. *Mo sant ene sante pou zot*. And there he goes with a song from *Sangam*, *Mein kya karoun Ram mujhe budha mil gaya*. A welcome initiative which causes general hilarity.

Smilingly, the policeman, comfortably seated on a chair, makes out a call for order to those assembled near an electric pole: Please,

"Lucky enough for inhabitants of some coastal regions which have re-created a village atmosphere of knowing your neighbours, getting fresh vegetables from fields in a most residential area, and better still, where vegetable vendors call at your gate to sell off their produces in normal times. Currently, one gets *bringels*, *lalos*, beans, chillies, etc., right on the field and has a chat with planters as it has always been in the villages for decades. In Triolet, Vale, Fond du Sac, fresh milk is always available; cows cannot wait for the end of confinement to be milked..."

keep some distance, *colonne la pa pou tombé li*. Another round of laughter. One-metre distance is not always observed inside where customers forget to take items, come back and walk at hardly 30 cms away from others, passing by busy shop employees and all. At the cashier's, the old habit of impatience for one's turn prompts customers to forget the one-metre distance.

Lucky enough for inhabitants of some coastal regions which have re-created a village atmosphere of knowing your neighbours, getting fresh vegetables from fields in a most residential area, and better still, where vegetable vendors call at your gate to sell off their produces in normal times. Currently, one gets *bringels*, *lalos*, beans, chillies, etc., right on the field and has a chat with planters as it has always been in the villages for decades. In Triolet, Vale, Fond du Sac, fresh milk is always available; cows cannot wait for the end of confinement to be milked anyway.

Nevertheless, most folks have clearly understood that the best way to break the virus chain is to stay indoors. Everyone agrees that Mauritius has never gone through such a pandemic. A lot of deep reflection is going on.

First, it is bound to be centred on the catalogue of endless needs which, on normal days, keep one and all on the move to leave their house everyday, head to their workplace, earn a salary, keep aside some savings for the future needs of their children, build a house or buy property, and ensure a decent living standard for years to come. Barring public sector employees, the questions that worry others are: Will my employer close his business? Will he downsize the personnel? How to refund loans and pay rents? Independent self-employed citizens are reduced to relying on State aid. Not their cup of tea. Already, queues in front of supermarkets are slimming down. Is that an indication of purchasing power taking the down-

ward trend?

Inevitably, much deeper thought is given to the economic policies and choices, future development, the fragile tourism industry, too much reliance on imported products, local money flowing out to other countries, superfluous needs, shopping addiction of some folks, the quality of what we buy and consume, the tendency to mimic others in buying trendy items and publicized international brands of food, drinks and clothes. Can there be a profound questioning on production, imports and consumerism? A deep awareness on the earth's resources and consumption of local products? Can Mauritian hope for a dynamic and active contribution from universities in the field of technology to meet various needs?

In Beijing, confinement has reduced pollution by millions of tons of CO2 usually unleashed into the atmosphere. The sky in Shanghai is permanently clouded with a thick layer of pollution which is said to reduce life expectancy by ten years. Pollution-related respiratory diseases are common occurrence in Delhi and Mumbai. Imagine the scale of reduction in pollution at international level. With climate change topping the list of challenges facing humanity worldwide and a pandemic threatening the very survival of populations on a global scale, there must be more than one way of re-thinking the implications of a man-centred universe, the basics of economic growth and the terrible consequences of world demographic explosion.

Covid-19 jolts governments and populations into re-thinking issues that matter in everyday life. Is it going to be business as usual after goats go back to their penned territories and birds stop hovering where it pleases them once the green light is given to the resumption of human activities outside their homes? Hopefully, we can bet on the cathartic effect of Covid-19 as it sweeps across the world.

Protecting ourselves from the virus

M. Aujayeb, Microbiologist

It is called the coronavirus and in the scientific world it is named SARS COV 2 (*Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2* of the genus *Betacoronavirus*). It is the causative agent of Covid-19.

It is a microorganism, not seen by the naked eyes, not even with the help of a light microscope. We need a sophisticated electron microscope to view its spherical shape with spikes/suckers. A virus, unlike a bacterium, is not an independent entity. It requires a living host to survive and reproduce by invading its host cells and taking over the system to live and replicate. Outside the host cell, the virus can hardly survive for long, may be some hours on surfaces: chairs, benches, door-knobs, bathroom, toilet seats, papers, plastics, etc., but it cannot reproduce outside the host cell.

That's why the objective of the virus is to continually look for new hosts so that it continues to survive. It moves from one host (human or animal) to another by direct contact or by aerosols/droplets in air. Its endgame is to be spread as much as possible, which ensures its survival.

Our objective in turn is not to get infected, to break the chain of transmission and kill the virus when it is outside the host. To note: the virus is a RNA virus and it has a capsule made up of

lipids (fats) and proteins. Soap, alcohol and other similar disinfectants disintegrate the capsule and kill the virus. Hence the campaign of hand washing and confinement.

The problem of controlling the viral spread is accentuated by the fact that the virus comes from wildlife - bats and pangolins (both animals facing extinction). It can be transmitted where humans and wildlife interact, like the live animal market in China. The virus may find humans an easier host.

There is also a limit to vaccines and developing immunity. The virus like many other RNA virus mutates enormously i.e. random changes occur as they replicate. Antibodies that would kill the virus would be ineffective against the mutated ones. The virus is labelled intelligent, aggressive, lethal, and it is here to stay if we do not stop its spread through social distancing, proper hygiene, and isolation.

Protecting ourselves

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is a term used to describe all items utilised to provide a protective barrier between you and potential harmful objects. These can range from UV, X-rays, chemicals, heat, cold to microbes. In the majority of the cases, they are not visible to the naked eyes. In our current state of affairs, PPE is a *sine qua non* to shield health care personnel from being infected by the coronavirus. The public at large can also use PPE to protect themselves.



Facial masks offer a barrier from outside contaminants. It can be a medical mask, the locally knitted one or a good piece of linen tightly fit over the mouth and nose. There will definitely be a considerable filter of the microbes.

In wearing a facial mask coupled with the social distancing, regular hand washing, use of sanitizers the risk of transmitting or getting infected by the coronavirus is considerably reduced. It should become mandatory for everyone in public places to wear a mask or to cover their mouth and nose appropriately.

Another lesson from foreign jurisdictions is the general disinfection/sanitisation of areas (outside) in supermarkets, hospitals, banks, and other offices where there is regular influx of visitors and where surfaces are likely to harbour the virus.

Let's play safe.