

MAURITIUS TIMES

"Nature is revolting to reclaim her kingdom. If now we don't make peace with her what's the point of us!" -- Abhijit Naskar

Gestion de la crise



Photo: ION News

L'approche consensuelle est-elle possible?

“ L'approche consensuelle n'est pas le fort de la démocratie représentative. Le Gouvernement et l'opposition peuvent ne pas être d'accord sur les orientations fondamentales pour l'avenir, mais ils peuvent s'entendre sur les modalités de la reprise des activités pour que tout le monde revienne à ses occupations habituelles. Sous ce rapport, les consultations entre le Premier ministre et le leader de l'Opposition sont salutaires du point de vue de la trêve politique. L'appel à un gouvernement d'unité nationale lancé par certains est heureusement tombé sur des oreilles sourdes... ”

Par Aditya Narayan * Voir page 4

Interview: J. Soobagrah - Former President Ass. of IATA Travel Agents



"MK placed in good hands, not in voluntary administration, can still have a bright future"

* 'What will the Government do if State Bank were to face the same situation as MK? The answer will have to come from the Government of Mauritius. They had better act now'

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We are already in the 'new normal'!

How we are living now is much the scenario of our foreseeable future: better to accept and adjust if we value life and living

By Dr R Neerunjun Gopee
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A Glimmer of Hope or a False Dawn?

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Mauritius heads into coronavirus storm with strong social welfare buffers

Mauritius has not been spared from Covid-19. The country has been under national confinement since 20 March, a curfew since 24 March. As it is a globally interdependent economy, the impact on the country has been unparalleled. The first estimates point to a GDP contraction of 3% to 6% in 2020. The crisis is expected to spread well into 2021. Government has committed close to Rs.12 billion (US\$300 million) worth of measures in support of businesses and workers. A further fiscal stimulus will be necessary to weather the storm.

But Mauritius heads into the epidemic on a stronger footing than many sub-Saharan Africa countries. The country's solid social protection system provides a strong foundation which government can use to expand support to the most vulnerable Mauritian households.

By Myriam Blin * See Page 7



MK under Voluntary Administration

Is there more to it than meets the eye?

Following the debacle of South African Airways and Virgin Australia going into external administration on Tuesday (crushed by a \$4.8bn debt mountain and failing to secure a federal government bailout) in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, it was to be expected that sooner or later Air Mauritius would raise the alarm about its current financial predicament. Now we are shocked to learn that its board of directors has decided to place the company under voluntary administration.

Air Mauritius is strategically and economically important for Mauritius. Other airlines come and go depending on how much profit they can make or not make by serving the destination. The case of Air Mauritius is different. Other than being a company in its own right, Air Mauritius is the most dependable link we have to the rest of the world. Mauritius is out of the mainstream of global axes of movement of people and goods, and this is where a national airline operating with the finest competitive edge is both crucial and relevant to position us internationally.

After having held the Mauritian flag high for many years, somewhere down the road, things suddenly took a turn for the worse. The arguments put up to explain this state of affairs: international market conditions were not as supportive as they had been, or the rising cost of fuel. These things happen, no doubt, given fluctuating business cycles and fuel costs, which represent one of the most important expenses for airline industries. But what about the human resource?

Successive managements utterly failed to uphold the airline as they should have. Insiders and trade unionists connected with the airline say it had been turned into a playfield for power games in which management became some sort of a pawn in the hands of different political establishments. The finances of the company ceased to be brilliant despite a persistent increase in passenger and goods traffic. Tellingly, Air Mauritius had been losing out even before the financial crisis of 2008. In fact, the catastrophic fuel

hedging decision in the first year of the crisis spun the airline into huge losses. It confirmed that, apart from suffering for kowtowing to vested interests, there was a deep, persistent flaw in management itself. If a succession of 'brilliant CEO's', all putatively industry professionals, were not able to make Air Mauritius a viable company, can we expect that insolvency practitioners to do that?

This directly raises suspicions that there is more to the decision to place MK under voluntary administration than meets the eye. Are there private interests making a takeover bid, or is there a predator airline waiting around with blessings from some quarters to pounce on a prey being offered on a platter? It would be a monumental shame to sell the jewel in the crown through a disguised privatisation in the name of Covid-19 and its impact on the national economy.

Will its majority shareholder, the Government of Mauritius, do what it takes to save Air Mauritius, or will the current dispensation preside over the destruction of one institution that had been held out as one of the jewels of the Republic of Mauritius? The choice is entirely its own. People who are knowledgeable about the travel and airline business are of the view that things will rebound once the Covid-19 pandemic is contained; that view is also shared by major consultancy firms like McKinsey and specialists in this sector. Air Mauritius can still make it the less there is outside interference in its management and autonomous running. If such interference were to stop and the professional management given a freer hand and the company's board composition decided solely on the basis of strategic aviation and business expertise, Air Mauritius can revert back to the erstwhile status of a respected national airline.

This is not a matter for the government only to decide, never mind that it has the political mandate. It is a national issue and the opposition must be taken on board to share ideas on how not to let go of a company that is vital to our tourist industry and economy.

Leaders as healers: Ancient Greek ideas on the health of the body politic

Ancient Greek philosophers including Plato likened civic leaders to doctors, creating a healthy society through balance and moderation. Those ideas feed into what we expect from leaders today.

In the current health crisis, we might ask what needs to be cured more urgently: the virus itself or people's poor sense of moderation.

We have seen shocking footage of panicked citizens fighting over the last pack of toilet tissue, our politicians' exasperation at selfish stockpiling, and blasé disinterest from those who don't think social isolation rules apply to them.

The Athenian philosopher Plato outlines in his dialogues, especially the Symposium and the Laws, the practice of civic moderation - *sophrosyne* in Greek - in an ideal state.

Plato, drawing on ideas already developed by earlier Greek writers, saw justice and injustice in the soul as comparable to health and illness in the body. Although Plato eventually promoted philosophers as political leaders, many writers saw leaders as physicians curing diseased communities. These ideas feed into what we expect from politicians today.

First, do no harm

The therapeutic effect of politicians was already a powerful metaphor in early 5th century BCE poetry (alongside the idea of the leader as captain of the Ship of State).

In his Fourth Pythian Ode, written in 462-461 BCE, the lyric poet Pindar compares Arcesilaus IV, the king of Cyrene, with a physician. The king is entreated to "heal" the city which has been left wounded by the exile of a prominent citizen, Damophilus (whose name, conveniently, means "dear to the people").

In Aeschylus' tragic play Agamemnon, written in 458 BCE, the king, having just returned from Troy, announces to the Argive assembly his political agenda. He will maintain what is good, "but whenever there is need of healing remedies", he "will try by applying either cautery or the knife reasonably to avert the damage of the disease". In simple terms: cut out the bad bits with surgical means if necessary.

According to ancient historian Thucydides, Nicias, the general who warned the Athenians about the disastrous Sicilian expedition of 415-413 BCE, advised the city's executive council to act as physicians "in trying to do as much good as possible or at least no voluntary harm".

Both Nicias and his political opponent Alcibiades agreed that the Athenians needed to change their usual way of doing politics to deal with the crisis at hand. Nicias insisted on a radical, immediate change of habits. Alcibiades argued remedies ought to be proportionate.

By employing medical metaphors in their arguments, they sound very much like today's politicians debating approaches to the pandemic.

A healthy balance

The use of the leader-as-physician metaphor by ancient Greek poets and historians reflected the rising prominence of the Hippocratic Corpus, a collection of texts associated with Hippocrates and his teachings. The collection also highlights the tension between medicine, mainly preoccupied with curing symptoms, and philosophy, whose aim is that understanding nature and its causes.

The Hippocratic texts advocate the notion of health as a kind of balancing act: between ele-

ments in the body such as cold, hot, wet, dry, sweet, bitter or, in terms of bodily fluids, a balance between blood, phlegm, yellow and black bile.

Alcmaeon of Croton, an early medical writer and philosopher, described this balance as *isonomia* (equality). In addition, he called disease, which he understood as the prevalence of one of these elements or fluids, *monarchia* (monarchy), clearly borrowing his terminology from politics.

The body politic

Plato, a voracious reader, preoccupied with the ideal constitution, appreciated the leader-as-physician metaphor.

The Laws, Plato's last work, explores the ethics of government and law, including the notions of social responsibility and restorative punishment. Plato thought justice (Greek *dikaosyne*) secured a better life for the individual and made them more willing to obey laws. At a social level, "the union of justice, moderation, and wisdom" is proposed as the solution, or prescription, to ensure social harmony - like the balance the Hippocratics aspired to for the body.

Plato advocates moderation (*sophrosyne*) as a most excellent quality in the pursuit of justice and virtue. He also references mental health and civic moderation. Besides the clinically mad, he says, there are two other groups of people who may behave foolishly: the young who can be reckless as a result of naivety, and those unable to withstand pleasures and sorrows or control their fears, desires, and frustrations. Plato describes their disease as *anoia* (mindlessness).

His proposed "cure" is risky: to instil permanent bravery in the citizens, he argues, we may use a fear drug to artificially arouse fear in them, either fear of bad reputation or fear of the enemy. By applying a drug similar to wine as a medicine (*pharmakon*), the citizens would be purged of vice and a sense of moderation restored.

Like modern medicine, the process is allopathic: using remedies to produce effects different from those produced by the disease being treated. Bravery is produced by fear, moderation by excess.

Learning moderation the hard way

In Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War Greek history's bad boy, Alcibiades, makes a familiar call to arms:

... understand that neither youth nor old age can do anything without each other, but together the frivolous, the middling, and the very exact, when united, will have most strength. And that, by sinking into inaction, the city, like everything else, will wear itself out ...

In modern political parlance: we're all in this together.

The trouble might be today's citizens are getting mixed messages. On the one hand, they hear Alcibiades' rallying cry. But they also hear, via the mouths of political office holders, his political opponent Nicias' more drastic treatment approach for a sick society at war. Nicias asked the Athenians to vote to "Stay home." History proved him right.

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Dr R Neerunjun Gopee

We are already in the 'new normal'!

How we are living now is much the scenario of our foreseeable future: better to accept and adjust if we value life and living

To date the Covid-19 pandemic has affected about 2.7 million people in 193 countries, causing about 182,000 deaths, with the US having the largest number of deaths (47K), followed by Italy (25K), Spain (22K), France (21K) and UK (18K). They are among the richest countries in the world, with most advanced health systems. Someday when it is all *completely* over – maybe two years down the line *at least* (because a vaccine will not likely be available for large scale immunization for about 18 months according to the experts) – they will have to analyse why they were so battered, whereas a developing country like Vietnam (population: 97 million) has not reported a single death from coronavirus as of April 21, out of 268 infected cases.

But already, two explanations seem to be emerging: the delay in acknowledging the seriousness of the pandemic and initiating measures; the overdependence on a single supply chain, namely China, for everything needed from surgical masks to gloves, other protective equipments, ventilators, test kits, etc – this has been highlighted by Governor Cuomo of New York in his daily briefings.

On the other hand, a country like Singapore which had been held up as a model of efficient handling of the pandemic earlier on, suddenly started facing a surge in cases after lifting its lockdown – which had to be quickly reinstated, with stricter measures.

As our own lockdown lifting is approaching on May 4, we have to learn from the experience of other countries, not repeat mistakes made, humbly learn lessons that are emerging and apply them in our context. That is the only way forward if we do not want a repetition of the Singapore experience locally, and while it is true that it is becoming a pressing issue to start opening up so that the economy can get going again, that will necessarily have to be accompanied by conditions that will have to be spelt out and abided by.

One constant apprehension in all countries that are planning to lift restrictions is a second surge, and there is wide consensus that community testing is essential to assess the extent of spread of Covid-19 in the population, before taking the call on opening up and the modalities. It's definitely something we must seriously heed.

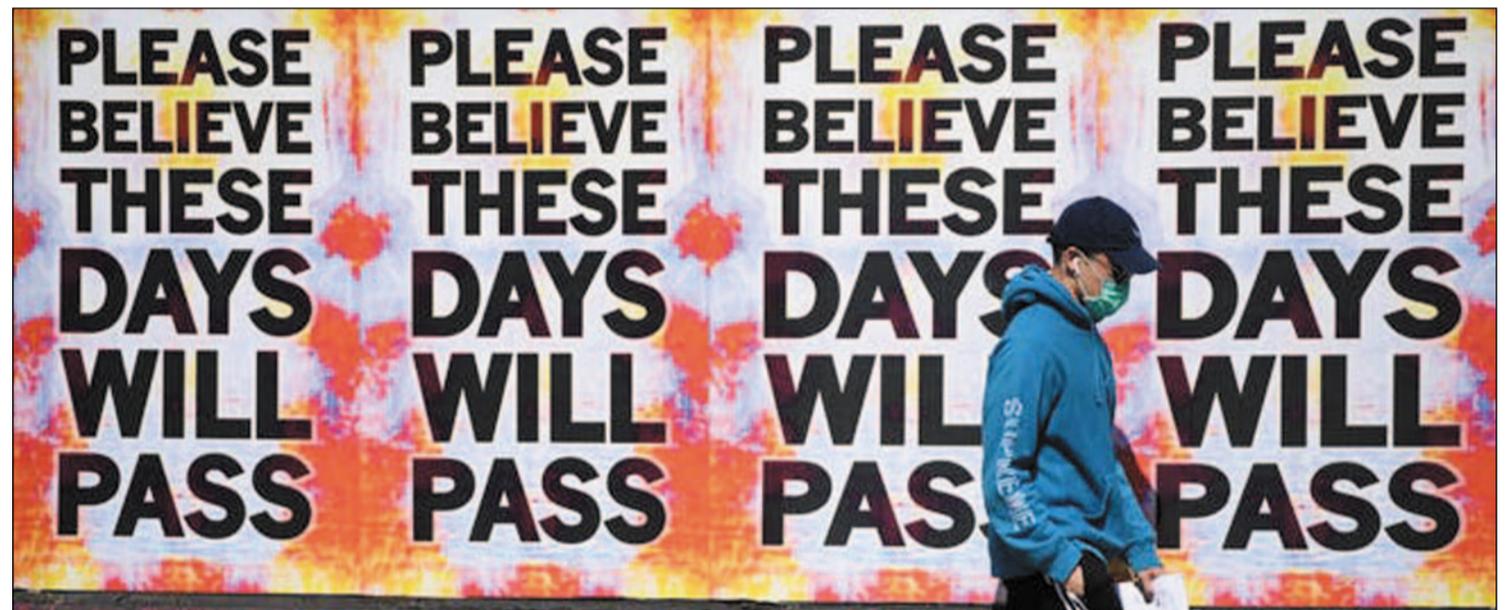
Assuming that our health system has

2020 will probably be etched in the memory of the present generation as deeply as cyclone Carol in 1960 is ingrained in ours, and it will surely figure in our history books as the event that determined the course of the rest of the 21st century.

However, as we prepare to face the inevitable shocks that await us, let us not forget that it is primarily a *health* issue that

tuation (such as this pandemic), with the authorities setting in place all the infrastructural and legal parameters required for this advice to be rigorously followed.

In fact, broadly we can say that as far as the lockdown goes locally, 'so far so good': people have in general been cooperating, and this explains why we have been able to slow the progression of Covid-19.



“In the years to come, Covid-19 year 2020 will probably be etched in the memory of the present generation as deeply as cyclone Carol in 1960 is ingrained in ours, and it will surely figure in our history books as the event that determined the course of the rest of the 21st century...”

everything in place to continue coping with the pandemic, the economic impact of the crisis is the next big concern that dominates thinking, and an article in the UK's *PROSPECT* magazine of April 17, by Tim Pitt reckons that 'the economic impact of this crisis will play out in **four phases**, with each one influenced by the choices made in the previous ones, culminating in a fierce debate about who pays for it all'.

We are in the **current phase**, an unprecedented one, with 'large swathes of the economy put into hibernation'. Here we are looking ahead, starting May 4 (hopefully!) to move into **phase two**: slowly rebooting the economy as the lockdown lifts. Next will come the **third phase**: the 'economy adjusts to the post-Covid-19 reality: supply chains may be transformed; people's travel and working habits will be different; and the government will want to build the resilience of the private and public sectors to future shocks. Because these will be long-term shifts, the government will need to move from a bailout mentality to letting the economy restructure...'

And then will come the **final phase**, when the reality to be reckoned with is that 'post-crisis our national debt will reach levels unseen since the aftermath of the Second World War... The structural deficit will also be bigger than pre-crisis... will therefore need to reduce borrowing'.

In the years to come, Covid-19 year

has triggered and precipitated the parallel *economic* crisis; the two are inextricably linked, and the fundamental logic is simple enough: a healthy economy depends on a healthy workforce.

To a large extent, keeping in good health is the responsibility of each individual – the experts are there to give the necessary advice based on current knowledge and the dynamics of any evolving si-

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All the indications are that well into **phase three** of the crisis, per the preceding definition, the sanitary precautions advocated and a significant portion of the general measures that have been implemented as part of the same framework will have to be maintained: in other words, we are now living the new normal.

It is not as if on May 5 we will go crazy and haywire like animals let out of a cage, and go back to the way we had been doing before: **much of how we are doing things now will have to continue**. Because **there a few stark realities to keep in mind**:

The lockdown is in place to slow the progression of the disease, NOT to eradicate it by end of May.

Flattening the curve means slowing down the disease so that hospitals can cope with the sick.

It does not mean eradicating the disease altogether.

No government will be able to eradicate the disease this year – because, as noted above, no vaccine will as yet be available. Unless a miracle happens.

But there are no miracles in medicine, alas.

How we are living now is much the scenario of our foreseeable future: better to accept and adjust if we value life and living.

Gestion de la crise

L'approche consensuelle est-elle possible?



« L'approche consensuelle n'est pas le fort de la démocratie représentative. Le Gouvernement et l'opposition peuvent ne pas être d'accord sur les orientations fondamentales pour l'avenir, mais ils peuvent s'entendre sur les modalités de la reprise des activités pour que tout le monde revienne à ses occupations habituelles. Sous ce rapport, les consultations entre le Premier ministre et le leader de l'Opposition sont salutaires du point de vue de la trêve politique. L'appel à un gouvernement d'unité nationale lancé par certains est heureusement tombé sur des oreilles sourdes... »

Aditya Narayan

La gestion de la pandémie du coronavirus dans tous les pays affectés, y compris Maurice, a posé des enjeux fondamentaux sur les plans sanitaire, économique et démocratique. Maintenant que ces pays envisagent un déconfinement progressif vers un retour à la normale, les débats continueront sur la justesse des mesures prises pour limiter les dégâts, sur les lacunes des systèmes en place, sur les réformes potentielles et l'avenir de la société post-pandémie. Maurice n'échappera pas à cette réflexion. Elle aura à tirer les leçons pertinentes, évaluer l'efficacité de ses politiques publiques et envisager de nouvelles orientations socio-économiques.

Santé publique

Sur le plan sanitaire, force est de constater que Maurice s'est en tirée passablement bien en comparaison avec d'autres pays qui ont été durement touchés (Italie, Royaume Uni, France), toutes proportions gardées. Malgré l'indiscipline de certains Mauriciens, les choses sont rentrées dans l'ordre à la faveur du couvre-feu. Il y a eu des couacs, des ratés et des signes d'impréparation à la crise, mais - dans l'ensemble - il n'y a pas eu de rupture de système ni de débordement.

Le confinement imposé pour endiguer la propagation du virus a fonctionné compte tenu du nombre de victimes humaines. Il est sans doute trop tôt pour crier victoire car le risque d'une seconde vague de contamination existe toujours. La vigilance demeure de mise.

On ne saurait nier l'importance d'un système de santé publique, financé adéquatement et équipé en ressources humaines et infrastructurelles, à l'abri de toute tentation de privatisation au seul motif du profit. La santé publique fait partie de l'Etat-Providence, dont les moyens de

financement seront mis à rude épreuve avec la capacité fiscale réduite de l'Etat. Toutefois, il faut garder le cap en décidant des choix d'investissement public et en ayant une vision claire des priorités.

Reprise économique

Tous les gouvernements sont confrontés au même dilemme : permettre une reprise graduelle des activités ou continuer le confinement pour deux semaines encore jusqu'à ce que la courbe de l'épidémie soit aplatie. C'est un choix difficile à faire (trade-off) si l'on veut éviter une résurgence du virus tout en permettant un déconfinement graduel par phases et par secteurs d'activité. Les scientifiques soucieux de santé publique et les politiques soucieux de santé économique sont aux pôles opposés de l'échiquier. Il reviendra au Gouvernement ultimement de décider des étapes de la reprise avec la pleine connaissance des risques tant sanitaires qu'économiques.

La reprise économique est vitale dans cette course contre la montre pour mitiger les dommages collatéraux subis par les employés et les entreprises, mais les décisions du Gouvernement seront déterminantes en ce qui concerne les futures orientations. Les plans d'aide financière aux employés mis en chômage temporaire et aux travailleurs indépendants ont été cruciaux dans l'effort d'éviter une catastrophe humaine.

Quant au plan de soutien aux entreprises, il est essentiel que le Gouvernement ne leur signe pas de chèque en blanc. Contrairement au plan de sauvetage d'entreprises mis en oeuvre en 2008, il faut que le Gouvernement ajoute des ficelles à l'aide publique.

Que les entreprises ne soient pas autorisées à empocher l'argent public tout en procédant à des licenciements. Que l'aide publique soit un prêt remboursable dans le temps ou une prise de participation

de l'Etat dans des entreprises, quitte à ce que les actions acquises leur soient revendues ultérieurement. Que les entreprises suspendent le paiement des dividendes jusqu'à ce que les bilans financiers soient positifs, comme certaines voix le réclament en Inde et en France. Plus que jamais la générosité publique sans contrepartie n'est pas acceptable.

Fonctionnement démocratique

En même temps que le Gouvernement prend des mesures d'urgence en se prévalant de pouvoirs d'exception, il faut éviter que la démocratie ne devienne un autre dommage collatéral de la crise. Certaines dérives autoritaires telles que la brutalité policière contre une famille ou la suspension temporaire d'une radio libre sont déplorables. Heureusement, la Cour suprême agit en rempart contre l'arbitraire.

En temps de crise, le droit à l'information libre et objective est essentiel tout comme l'analyse fondée sur les faits (*evidence-based analysis*). Contrairement aux pays ayant un système politique autoritaire (Chine, Turquie, entre autres), les citoyens dans les démocraties libérales tiennent à leurs libertés civiles. Ils veulent un gouvernement responsable et transparent et qui puisse rendre compte de l'argent public dépensé sous les différents plans d'aide.

C'est là que l'opposition parlementaire doit pouvoir jouer son rôle de chien de garde et d'interlocuteur crédible pour questionner le Gouvernement et faire des propositions. Le confinement ne devrait pas être le prétexte d'une mise en hibernation du Parlement. Dans certains pays (Grande Bretagne, Canada, par exemple), le Parlement fonctionne déjà avec un personnel réduit (les partis réduisent la présence d'élus à un quorum minimal en proportion de leur représentation) ou selon le mode virtuel (comités parlementaires en visioconférence) pour faire passer des lois

d'urgence. La majorité et la minorité ne seront jamais sur la même longueur d'onde, mais elles peuvent s'entendre sur la forme d'une sortie de crise.

L'approche consensuelle n'est pas le fort de la démocratie représentative, qui est un système fondé sur le débat contradictoire. Le Gouvernement et l'opposition peuvent ne pas être d'accord sur les orientations fondamentales pour l'avenir, mais ils peuvent s'entendre sur les modalités de la reprise des activités pour que tout le monde revienne à ses occupations habituelles.

Sous ce rapport, les consultations entre le Premier ministre et le leader de l'Opposition sont salutaires du point de vue de la trêve politique. L'appel à un gouvernement d'unité nationale lancé par certains est heureusement tombé sur des oreilles sourdes.

Problématiques fondamentales

Cette crise a mis en exergue des problématiques fondamentales qui sont liées au système économique, au dispositif de protection sociale, à l'éducation et au civisme, au logement social, aux libertés civiles et à l'exercice des pouvoirs d'exception. Elle a révélé au grand jour des inégalités de classe criantes telles que la précarité économique des groupes vulnérables et le manque d'accès aux services en ligne. Certaines familles peuvent faire des achats en ligne ou regarder des films sur Netflix alors que les enfants des familles pauvres n'ont pas d'accès à l'Internet pour suivre les cours en ligne. Certaines familles, vivant dans les taudis, ne peuvent demander l'aide sociale sans un encadrement ponctuel.

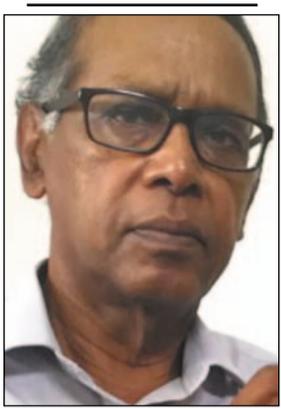
Les économistes auront beau prédire une reprise économique en forme V (signifiant une croissance rapide) ou en forme U (tassement suivi de croissance rapide), l'économie de marché sans transformation radicale restera sujette aux chocs

endogènes et exogènes dans l'avenir. C'est toute une nouvelle réflexion sur le modèle de société qui s'impose avec un accent particulier sur la redistribution des richesses, la production locale et les énergies renouvelables, les systèmes de distribution (vente/revente avec intermédiaires), l'efficacité du secteur public, la réforme des services publics, l'autonomisation économique des gens vulnérables, la fiscalité équitable, le changement climatique, et l'accès à l'éducation et à l'emploi.



Coronavirus en Chine: déconfinement progressif à Wuhan. Photo - s.rfi.fr/

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Sada Reddi

A Glimmer of Hope or a False Dawn?

In the past the active participation of the population was crucial when the country was faced with major challenges - elimination of malaria, overpopulation, economic diversification

We clung to a glimmer of hope when the number of confirmed cases of Covid-19 came down for a few days. At first, what came to our mind was that it could be another instance of Mauritian exceptionalism when the population rose to the many challenges it faced in the past and successfully overcame them. We still hope that, as in the past, it will again rise to the occasion. But there are so many concerns and unanswered questions about official figures, testing and the fluctuating infection rates in many countries which suggest that we may not be out of the woods yet. We will need more time, and more testing before we can confidently say that the situation is under control.

There is no doubt that an earlier and prompt response to the outbreak by closing our borders would have spared us an epidemic - as in Rodrigues where no cases of Covid-19 have been reported. All over the world, many countries, including China, several European countries and even the WHO had been late in responding to the crisis with all the terrible and tragic consequences in terms of galloping rates of infection and deaths.

On the other hand, an article in *The Hindu* of April 19 shows that many countries in South Asia have a relatively low infection rate, and the number of cases is increasing very slowly. Among these countries, India and Pakistan have large numbers - 14,651 and 7481 respectively, while Bhutan has only five cases. This may be due to insufficient testing although all of them have followed WHO guidelines on travel bans, lockdown, curfew, social distancing and testing. One study has sought explanations for this trend and put forward the possibility that BCG vaccination may be a contributory factor although this has not been validated by WHO.

There is also the case of many island-states with low number of cases. A report of WHO, issued on 19 April, indicates that these states have registered comparatively fewer confirmed cases of Covid-19. These include Mauritius with 321 cases, Fiji 17, Papua New Guinea 7, French Polynesia 55, Malta 34, Jamaica 163 and a few others. It seems obvious that island-states are better protected if borders are closed given that the virus can only come from outside by aircraft and ships.

In Africa too, there are at least 25 countries out of 45 that have fewer than 100 confirmed cases. There too we do not know how much time it takes for the virus to spread in a population of one million or the number of tests being done or required to be able to contain the pandemic, or whether the people will be hit harder in a second wave.

Any sense of security that we might have entertained during a few days has been dispelled by a number of factors which are coming to light daily in Mauritius and in other countries. Besides the fact that the number of tests being carried out is grossly inadequate as a measure of the real number of cases infected, many countries do not have sufficient testing kits and reagents and are compelled to curtail the number of tests being done to the minimum and keep some kits in stock in case the situation worsens. Now scientists in Britain are telling us that the testing operation is a delicate exercise; the diagnostic tests are not sensitive enough and many infected cases will go undetected. We are therefore left in doubt about the

prevalence of infections given that, besides those who are asymptomatic, there are also those presumed to have been infected and later tested positive and still carry the virus.

There is no solution until we get a vaccine sometime next year. In such circumstances, lifting the lockdown, even partially, although inevitable in the near future, would pose a great risk to the population. Some had advocated that we should increase our testing capacity and order more testing kits so that a maximum number of people get tested. The question remains about the availability of more testing kits on the world market at the present moment. It is time that our health professionals come together and work out the optimum number of people that should be tested in our present situation, even tentative. That should be made public with a view to reassuring the public that their health and safety come before everything else.

Only then can we confront the situation with confidence and take all the necessary measures to cope with the pandemic and even face a second wave in case that were to happen after the current lockdown has been partially lifted. A transparent blueprint for easing the lockdown should be communicated to the public with different scenarios and the rationale behind them explained so that the population can respond appropriately to the situation as it has done repeatedly in the past.

One should not underestimate the resourcefulness of the population to respond to a crisis if all the facts are laid before it. There are many flaws and weaknesses in dealing with a crisis that is unprecedented, and everywhere scientists are admitting humbly that mistakes have been made, they are still learning on a day to day basis how the coronavirus behaves and they therefore cannot reach firm conclusions at this stage.

Any sense of security that we might have entertained during a few days has been dispelled by a number of factors which are coming to light daily in Mauritius and in other countries. Besides the fact that the number of tests being carried out is grossly inadequate as a measure of the real number of cases infected, many countries do not have sufficient testing kits and reagents and are compelled to curtail the number of tests being done to the minimum and keep some kits in stock in case the situation worsens. Now scientists in Britain are telling us that the testing operation is a delicate exercise; the diagnostic tests are not sensitive enough and many infected cases will go undetected...



In the past the active participation of the population was crucial when the country was faced with major challenges. The people responded positively when DDT was introduced to combat malaria in 1945; within a decade, Mauritius was on the point of eliminating malaria in the island. Similarly when faced with the Malthusian nightmare of overpopulation, the problem was solved within less than a decade. In the 1970s, the country embarked successfully on the diversification of the economy and light industrialization, which eventually resulted in an 'economic miracle'...

In the past the active participation of the population was crucial when the country was faced with major challenges. The people responded positively when DDT was introduced to combat malaria in 1945; within a decade, Mauritius was on the point of eliminating malaria in the island. Similarly when faced with the Malthusian nightmare of overpopulation, the problem was solved within less than a decade. In the 1970s, the country embarked successfully on the diversification of the economy and light industrialization, which eventually resulted in an 'economic miracle'. Whenever many factors came into play, some fortuitous, the population had a crucial role in contributing to the economic success of the country.

Finally there is no durable solution to the pandemic unless the population is taken on board and not simply harangued from the top. For quite some time the 'people admirable' slogan has disappeared from political discourse. That usually happens when the authorities adopt a patronizing attitude towards the people. That also happens despite the fact that many of the measures implemented during the present crisis came from below, having been expressed by the people themselves in the media - social as well as print. For instance, one supermarket provided customers with tickets for their purchases at specific times to avoid wasting their time and to facilitate social distancing. It was the people who advocated markings for social distancing around shops and supermarkets long before they were implemented. There are many examples of such ideas coming from the grassroots.

Let us hope that the population and its many representatives will be given the role they deserve to fight both the pandemic and deal with the consequent economic crisis - particularly when unemployment can easily attain 90,000 and food security measures can no longer be avoided -- for not to do so would be at our peril. We can still turn that glimmer of hope into a new dawn but only with all our citizens participating in this great battle.

Covid-19 crisis India's best chance to attract foreign investment: Advocacy Group



Facebook's USD 5.7 billion investment in Reliance Jio in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic is a reflection of the faith that foreign companies have in the Indian economy's potential and future growth, a top US-based India-centric business advocacy group has said.

In an interview to Press Trust of India, US India Strategic and Partnership Forum (USISPF) president Mukesh Aghi said the Covid-19 crisis has offered India the best opportunity to attract foreign investment. "I strongly feel that once the Covid-19 crisis ends, India will have the best opportunity to attract hundreds of these (foreign) companies into the country," Mr Aghi said. It will not only create jobs but also bring in investments and keep the Indian economy's momentum going.

"The partnership between Facebook and Jio is a win-win value proposition for not only for both companies but also for citizens and consumers in India. It also reflects the faith

of foreign companies in the potential of India's economy and future growth," Mr Aghi said.

Because of the bitter experience that the US companies are having in China during this pandemic, wherein they cannot move their goods because of the many restrictions imposed by Beijing on them, the sentiment among these companies is: "We have to look beyond China and very fast," he said.

Observing that tensions between China and the rest of the world are going to rise in future due to the Covid-19 crisis, Mr Aghi referred to the USD 2 billion package announced by Japan for its companies to move their manufacturing base away from China. "You will see more and more of that happening," he said.

The Covid-19 crisis has shown that India can take up the role of global economic leader as it is taking care of its citizens while also helping its friends and people across the globe, he said.

The world at risk of widespread famines of "biblical proportions": UN



Millions across the world already rely heavily on food aid to survive. Reuters

David Beasley, head of the World Food Programme (WFP), said urgent action was needed to avoid a catastrophe. A report estimates that the number suffering from hunger could go from 135 million to more than 250 million. Those most at risk are in 10 countries affected by conflict, economic crisis and climate change, the WFP says.

The fourth annual Global Report on Food Crises highlights Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, Venezuela, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Nigeria and Haiti.

Addressing the UN Security Council during a video conference, Mr Beasley said: "We could be facing multiple famines of biblical proportions within a short few months," he said. "The truth is we do not have time on our side."

In an interview, he also expressed fear that 30 million people, and possibly more, could die in a matter of months if the UN does not secure more funding and food. But this is also a world where donors are reeling from the steep financial cost of their own Covid-19 crises.

The WFP's senior economist, Arif Husain, said the economic impact of the pandemic was potentially catastrophic for millions "who are already hanging by a thread".

"It is a hammer blow for millions more who can only eat if they earn a wage," he said in a statement.

"Lockdowns and global economic recession have already decimated their nest eggs. It only takes one more shock - like Covid-19 - to push them over the edge. We must collectively act now to mitigate the impact of this global catastrophe."

Coronavirus latest: at a glance

Global deaths pass 175,000

The Guardian reports that at least 177,445 people have died in the coronavirus pandemic so far, according to data from Johns Hopkins University. There are more than 2.5 million confirmed cases worldwide. The number of cases in the US - the country hardest hit by the virus - exceeds 788,000 and there have been more than 42,000 deaths there. The UK has more than 125,000 cases and more than 16,500 deaths.

Global recession could be prolonged

The prospect of a prolonged worldwide impact has hardened after a survey of thousands of business leaders warned of a drawn-out recession, with many companies likely to fold. Around 60% of chief executives surveyed are preparing for a U-shaped recovery - a long period between recession and an upturn. "We have not seen a crisis like this for over a hundred years, and some household names will not survive," said Glenn Keys, executive

chairman of Aspen Medical, a Singapore-based health services firm.

Trump lays out parts of US immigration ban

Donald Trump has announced a 60-day ban on immigrants seeking to live and work in America permanently, and said he could extend it depending on the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic. The US president framed the executive order, which, as an effort to protect American workers from foreign competition.

US state sues China's leaders over virus

The US state of Missouri sued China's leadership over coronavirus, seeking damages over what it described as deliberate deception and insufficient action to stop the pandemic. Eric Schmitt, the state's Republican attorney general, said in a written statement that the Chinese government lied about the dangers of the virus and did not

do enough to slow its spread. It is unclear whether the lawsuit will have much, if any, impact.

South African president unveils \$26bn virus relief plan

South African president Cyril Ramaphosa on Tuesday announced a \$26bn relief package - equivalent to 10% of the country's GDP - to support the economy and the vulnerable during the coronavirus pandemic.

Italy look at easing lockdown after first significant fall in infections

The country's prime minister said the government would unveil plans for the gradual reopening from lockdown before the end of this week. Italy reported 534 new deaths on Tuesday, 80 more than on Monday, bringing the death toll to 24,648. But the number of people currently infected with the virus fell by 528 to 107,709, the first significant fall since the outbreak began.

Mauritius heads into coronavirus storm with strong social welfare buffers

Mauritius preserved its social welfare system even during structural reforms in the 1970s. It is now better prepared than most nations for the health and economic impact of Covid-19



Myriam Blin

Head of the Leadership Centre,
Charles Telfair Campus

The global economic costs of the Covid-19 pandemic will be massive, with the International Monetary Fund forecasting the worst global recession since the 1929 Great Depression. In Africa, the epidemic is gaining momentum. The continent is bracing itself for an unprecedented sanitary and economic crisis.

The World Bank estimates that the continent's pace of economic growth may drop from 2.4% in 2019 to -2.1% to -5.1% in 2020, the first recession in 25 years.

The continent could face a

balance of payments shortfall in excess of \$100 billion in 2020. A balance of payments records a nation's transactions with the rest of the world. These transactions include imports and exports as well as capital inflows and outflows.

The nations at the centre of the pandemic - China, the UK, continental Europe and the US - are grappling with both supply and demand shocks. These are Africa's major trading partners. Countries in sub-Saharan Africa are therefore seeing a huge drop in demand for their primary commodities. Their manufacturing and tourism industries have also seen substantial disruptions due to restrictions on the transportation of goods and people.

Many African countries are dependent on food and pharmaceutical imports. Some also rely on overseas remittances and tourism for foreign exchange earnings. This means more hardship is yet to come.

Mauritius has not been spared from Covid-19. The country has been under national confinement since 20 March, a curfew since 24 March. As it is a globally interdependent economy, the impact on the country has been unparalleled. The first estimates point to a GDP contraction of 3% to 6% in 2020. The crisis is expected to spread well into 2021. Government has committed close to Rs.12 billion (US\$300 million) worth of measures in support of businesses and workers. A further fiscal stimulus will be necessary to weather the storm.

But Mauritius heads into the epidemic on a stronger footing than many sub-Saharan Africa countries. The country's solid social protection system provides a strong foundation which government can use to expand support to the most vulnerable Mauritian households.

Stronger welfare buffers

Mauritius had a strong Fabian socialist inspired leadership at independence. It is therefore one of the few countries that successfully preserved its welfare state throughout its stabilisation and structural adjustments programmes in the 1980s. Today the country boasts a social protection system that is broad and relatively extensive in coverage.

Mauritius' entrenched social protection culture meant that government promptly acted to minimise job losses from the 2008 global financial crisis. Its welfare system enabled timely policy responses, helping minimise the socio-economic impact of the crisis.

Mauritians benefit from universal and free health coverage, free education from the age of five, free higher education, an unemployment benefit scheme that embeds



provisions for informal labour, a minimum wage (US\$258 per month), a 13th month salary, a range of social assistance schemes for the most vulnerable and a universal pension scheme (US\$228 per month).

The latest available data shows that Mauritius allocated 9.3% of its GDP to social protection measures. The average across sub-Saharan Africa is 4.5%. Only South Africa, Botswana, Djibouti and Lesotho spent more than 6% of GDP on social protection.

With 3.4 hospital beds per 1,000 population, Mauritius is better equipped than the UK (2.8 beds per 1,000 population) and this contrasts with the sub-Saharan Africa average of 1.2 beds per 1,000 population. The fight against Ebola and HIV/AIDS enabled some countries to accumulate valuable expertise in containing the spread of contagious diseases. Nevertheless most health systems in sub-Saharan Africa remain deeply fragile and massively underfunded.

Primary commodity exporters with limited social protection and limited cash transfer programmes in central and western Africa will probably be the hardest hit. With limited fiscal space they will urgently require international funding and support in implementing immediate COVID-19 targeted solutions.

With the pandemic still unfolding, African finance ministers have called for international fiscal support and a coordinated policy response to address the sanitary and economic impacts.

Calls for reform

There is debate as to whether the Mauritian welfare state should have undergone more fundamental reform in terms of quality of delivery, especially in the areas of health and education. The government's vision of becoming a high-income economy by 2030 may have obstructed the need to focus on sustainable outcomes rather than quantitatively measurable growth objectives. These concerns are legitimate and will need to be addressed.

But for now, Mauritius can count on its existing welfare system as it crosses the coronavirus desert. As it battles the health and economic impacts of the pandemic:

- the sick will be systematically treated for free, irrespective of socio-economic class, by the national health care system;
- the unemployed will receive unemployment benefits for up to a year;
- pensioners will receive a guaranteed income through the universal pension; and
- fiscal stimulus measures will be manageable and easier to implement given the systems and institutions already in place.

Post-Covid-19

Will the welfare state be enough to save Mauritius from increased inequality post-Covid-19?

Probably not. But it will help save lives across social classes and will cushion the social impact for the most vulnerable, with obvious knock-on effects for social cohesion and the local economy. All else being equal, it also means Mauritius will require less incremental spending per head for an equivalent health and economic impact, compared to countries with less social protection.

What the Mauritius experience indicates is that an economic policy anchored on capital accumulation and growth alone cannot protect people from the impact of global exogenous shocks. What's needed is systemic social protection that reaches the most vulnerable.

As countries rebuild their economies post Covid-19, they will need to ensure that social welfare lies at the heart of their strategies. Each country will need to find the social protection system that suits its specific situation.

The prevalence of self-employment and informal economic activity in some countries might call for welfare solutions that are flexible and agile. Technology and artificial intelligence could be useful tools to allow welfare to reach the most vulnerable, in the same way that mobile banking enabled wider access to basic financial services.

Countries will need more fiscal space and transparency. But whatever reconstruction plan is in place, universal access to quality health care and education must be at the heart of any strategy.

Interview: J. Soobagrah – Former President Ass. of IATA Travel Agents

“MK placed in good hands, not in voluntary administration, can still have a bright future”



Mauritius Times: After what has happened to South African Airways (which may be grounded for good) and Virgin Australia going into external administration on Tuesday (after being crushed by a \$4.8bn debt mountain and failing to secure a federal government bailout) in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, it was to be expected that sooner or later Air Mauritius would raise the alarm about its current financial predicament, but we now learn that its board of directors has decided to place the company under voluntary administration. Are you nevertheless shocked?

J. Soobagrah: I am as much shocked with the Covid-19 as with the decision to place our national airline under voluntary administration! With the difference that with Air Mauritius, we are dealing with tangible assets and therefore manageable.

To come to the point, I must emphasize that Air Mauritius (MK) has had its glorious days as well as its gloomy ones. It was clear, with the departure of the last CEO in February 2020, that operational and financial troubles would be awaiting us at MK. Without going too much into the details for the time being, I will quote from the MK's balance sheet for the nine months of the financial year 2019-2020 as at 31 December 2019: “interest bearing loans and borrowings” amounted to Rs 27 billion. That confirmed all the fears! But Covid-19, portrayed as

“It is clear that Air Mauritius, alone, will not be able to remain afloat. The help of a strategic partner, a strong airline, will be inevitable. But this partnership needs to be on a strong footing and at the same time recognizing the true and genuine contributions of each party. No Big Brother syndrome and no overinflated superstructures!”

For having worked for Air Mauritius for numerous years as Personnel Manager and witnessed our national airline grow, before he went on together with his wife Leckrani to set up Bonny Air Travel & Tours Ltd in 1987, and also for having been the President of the Association of IATA Travel Agents and the Association of Inbound Operators in Mauritius, Jeenarain Soobagrah is well placed to give us his views on the unenviable situation in which Air Mauritius has been catapulted. He is frank and unsparing in his analysis – but nonetheless, he does not feel that the plight of Air Mauritius is irreversible. He is more than hopeful that our flagship national airline company can proudly take to the skies again – provided that the right decisions are taken.

an invisible enemy, came as another nail in the coffin of MK. Government can print money but not MK.

* The announcement in relation to voluntary administration was made by the company's board of directors by way of a communiqué. We have not heard anything as yet from the company's main shareholder – the Government of Mauritius. What does that mean to you?

I will not be surprised to learn that the instructions came from the main shareholder itself. For such a major decision that will have repercussions at the national level and the choice of the Administrators leave no one in doubt that the Board of MK merely provided a rubber stamp for the Government's decision.

* Air Mauritius had for long been the pride of the country and looked up to, together with State Bank and Mauritius Telecom, as the jewels in the country's crown – that is so long as they held the flag high. One would therefore have expected the Government to step in and save the national airline even though its finances are facing stress with significant debts, isn't it?

The example of South African Airways shows that its debt had reached a point of no-return whereby the SA government had to put an end to its generosity towards the airline. The main shareholder of MK, i.e. the Government of Mauritius had already been very generous by subsidizing the Africa-Asia Corridor project, the China operations, the Rodrigues route, among others.

It is the responsibility of the main shareholder to step in and do whatever is required instead of digging the hole further for MK. The Government as the major shareholder of MK will have to bail it out, taking into consideration the national importance of our national airline. Unless there would be something sinister lurking with sharks around already at work and lobbying for the sale of MK's headquarters...

* Social media has since the announcement gone hyperactive with comments like qualifying MK's board decision as a “slaughter” of the national airline. Questions are being raised, like the one that follows: ‘If the Government cannot save Air Mauritius, what will it do when and if other big companies fail? Will it refuse to bail them out, especially the ones that deserve to be bailed out?’ What's your take on that?

Let us take the example of the State Bank of Mauritius. What will the Government do if the latter faced the same situation as MK? But the real question is where to find 10 to 15 billion rupees to save MK? Forget about India or the Bank of Mauritius. The answer will have to come from the Government of Mauritius, and from nobody else. They had better act now. According to my information, the blue-eyed chaps recently nominated on the board of MK were already on the lookout for five billion rupees from the Government, pre-Covid-19. They should keep looking around...

* Another one from social media: ‘If MK cannot meet its

“We are allowed to dream of an MK devoid of all those miscreants who have in succession put MK in the present state. I must here make exception of one professional, the late Nash Mallam Hasham, the Chairman & Managing Director from 1997 to 2001, who was a thorough gentleman and steered MK without fear or favour. Megh Pillay was the CEO who also tried his best for MK but he was operating on a turf where even angels would fear to tread...”

obligations today, so are all the airlines of the world. Govt has guaranteed all the debts of MK, so where is the problem? Big Money will soon start talking... What a shame! Legitimate question, isn't it?

This reminds me of the attempts made by the Big Money to create situations for take-overs of companies in the doldrums but with a high “Hollywood” scenario recuperation afterwards. Examples are many in Mauritius.

* There is also the comment about the appointment of Sattar Hajee Abdoula, who had been earlier appointed chairman of SBM, as one of the administrators of Air Mauritius as allegedly constituting a conflict of interest. How to you react to that?

What more can I say than state that some are indeed born lucky. To earn 26 million rupees for some days of work is a feat beyond the reach of any reckless star. But that may be well deserved fees! This reminds me of Malvolio in William Shakespeare's ‘Twelfth Night’ reading a letter from Maria, extract as follows: “Some people are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them”.

* Do you suspect that there is more to the decision to place MK under voluntary administration than meets the eye? The selling of the jewel in the crown through a disguised privatisation in the name of Covid-19 and the havoc it's wreaking on national economies, including Mauritius'?

Any person devoid even of all common sense would not venture to surrender to such a temptation. MK is a jewel of the Republic of Mauritius and has to remain so for the Mauritian nation. Any usurper or party to such a traitorous act will earn him the infamy notoriety. MK placed in good hands, not in voluntary administration, can still have a bright future and will no doubt rebound once the Covid-19 is subdued and the right conditions prevailing at the right time.

'What will the Government do if State Bank were to face the same situation as MK?'

The answer will have to come from the Government of Mauritius. They had better act now'

● Cont. from page 8

* To be fair, the current predicament of Air Mauritius is not the doing of only the current or the previous governments; according to insiders, it's also a long tale of political interference, mis-management, schemes and turf battles within the Company since decades, isn't it?

Amedee Maingard and Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, the co-founders of MK must be turning in their graves.

Having known them and followed the trail of MK to date, I am pained that our national airline has been unfortunate to have fallen in the hands of some dubious characters whose only objectives were power and money.

In short, the answer has been replied in your question itself. However we are allowed to dream of an MK devoid of all those miscreants who have in succession put MK in the present state. I must here make exception of one professional, the late Nash Mallam Hasham, the Chairman & Managing Director from 1997 to 2001, who was a thorough gentleman and steered MK without fear or favour. Megh Pillay was the CEO who also tried his best for MK but he was operating on a turf where even angels would fear to tread...

“Let us take the example of the State Bank of Mauritius. What will the Government do if the latter faced the same situation as MK? But the real question is where to find 10 to 15 billion rupees to save MK? Forget about India or the Bank of Mauritius. The answer will have to come from the Government of Mauritius, and from nobody else. They had better act now...”

* Given the constraints face by Air Mauritius in the pre-and post-Covid-19 situations, what could be the way forward?

MK has around 3,000 employees.

It will have over and above its present fleet of 15 aircraft, two more Airbuses which, once purchased brand-new, had to be leased to South African Airways, through which MK was able to pay the monthly payments to Airbus. With the demise of SAA, it will now have to find between 40 to 45 million Euros monthly for the payment of the leases.

I understand that the monthly wage bill of MK is around Rs 360 million including the perks, according to its published accounts. MK commissioned reports during a span of 15 years from renowned consultancy firms such as McKinsey and Seabury from the USA and CAPA operating from Australia. Where are those reports? To my understanding, the Board granted considerable leeway to the Executive Directors whose interests unfortunately, it is alleged, would differ from those of the Board at certain times. As an example, one department in MK dealing with fleet planning has five Managers excluding the boss! Confusing themselves for airlines manning hundreds of aircraft, they have oversized structures and terms. On the same subject, it is common knowledge that MK is overstaffed by, sorry please fasten your seat belt, over 15%.



That is only on one item! There are many offices overseas which can be closed down which will have no negative effect on the revenue of the company. If we continue to probe on cost cutting in MK, the company can easily save one billion rupees yearly.

The abuse of free air tickets in Business Class by the Directors, Senior Staff and the Technical Crew. As an example, Emirates offers three times the number of seats in Business Class as compared to MK and has a rigid system of upgrading for strictly commercial reasons. One Technical Crew can make a firm booking months ahead for his spouse and children for them to travel in Business Class. This is also the case for other categories mentioned above. Leave alone the number of passengers with economy class tickets who just hop onto Business Class before take-off. An airline makes premium revenue from its Business Class, but in the case of MK there is no economic consideration given to this issue.

A colossal amount is paid to Amadeus, the Global Distribution System which is used by MK for all its travel reservations. The figure of nearly Rs 1 billion rupees paid yearly can easily be halved provided the Board and Executives of MK use their grey matter appropriately.

We should remember the famous hedging contract for fuel purchase in 2008. The Government did bail out MK to the tune of Rs 8 billion.

Finally, it is clear that MK, alone, will not be able to remain afloat. The help of a strategic partner, a strong airline, will be inevitable. But this partnership needs to be on a strong footing and at the same time recognizing the true and genuine contributions of each party. No Big Brother syndrome and no overinflated superstructures!

“It is the responsibility of the main shareholder to step in and do whatever is required instead of digging the hole further for MK. The Government as the major shareholder of MK will have to bail it out, taking into consideration the national importance of our national airline. Unless there would be something sinister lurking with sharks around already at work and lobbying for the sale of MK's headquarters...”

“Air Mauritius has had its glorious days as well as its gloomy ones. It was clear, with the departure of the last CEO in February 2020, that operational and financial troubles would be awaiting us at MK. Without going too much into the details for the time being, I will quote from the MK's balance sheet for the nine months of the financial year 2019-2020 as at 31 December 2019: “interest bearing loans and borrowings” amounted to Rs 27 billion. That confirmed all the fears!”

“There is always a silver lining in every dark cloud. I am full of optimism for the tourism and travel sector. We have been knocked down, no doubt about it. The world has survived two world wars and a great depression. We will bounce back. But the cyclone is here in another form and hitting all nations. We are resilient enough to overcome all hurdles...”

* "Covid-19 has impacted travel and tourism like no other event before in history. With tourism suspended, the benefits that the sector brings are under threat... Millions of jobs could be lost, said World Travel Organization's Secretary-General, Zurab Pololikashvili, recently. We also will not be spared. Is it too early to speculate on the shape of things to come in the tourism and travel sector in Mauritius?"

There is always a silver lining in every dark cloud. I am full of optimism for the tourism and travel sector. We have been knocked down, no doubt about it. The world has survived two world wars and a great depression. We will bounce back. But the cyclone is here in another form and hitting all nations. We are resilient enough to overcome all hurdles. I remember Voltaire saying “Lord, protect me from my friends; I can take care of my enemies.” We might perhaps need that kind of protection from the enemies of the public interest at this stage.



Niranjana Karthigai Rajan

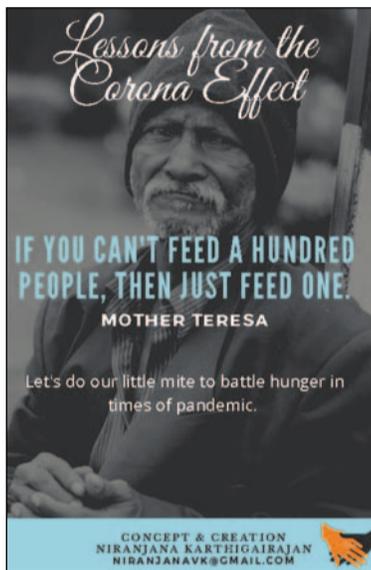
Time for Introspection

This quarantine period is the time for us to introspect and make positive changes in our life for the betterment of our society and the environment we are living in. As Aristotle said, "Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim

and end of human existence." But is it sane to be happy at the cost of the environment or other's suffering?

Have we ever thought about how our day-to-day activities or actions affect others' feelings and also pollute Mother Nature?

Is it right on our part to slay animals merely to satisfy our taste buds; cut down our forest cover in the name of development which is home to mil-



lions of habitat; hurt fellow human beings emotionally and damage nature for our comfort and happiness?

What demarcates us from rest of living beings is the ability of the human brain to think and make out the good from the bad, and to act accordingly. So isn't it our responsibility to follow the path of righteousness?

"Very little is needed to make a happy life; it is all within yourself, in



your way of thinking," said Marcus Aurelius. Our life span is short and uncertain, so let's learn to live a minimalist, self-sustainable and a simple lifestyle. With that in mind, I have designed a few posters to help create awareness of the higher purpose of life, and to help us to introspect and bring about the necessary positive changes in our lives for the betterment of the environment.



COMMUNIQUE

COVID-19

EXTENSION OF THE GOVERNMENT WAGE ASSISTANCE SCHEME AND THE SELF-EMPLOYED ASSISTANCE SCHEME

The Government of the Republic of Mauritius has decided to extend the following:

- the **Government Wage Assistance Scheme (GWAS)** to cover the period **1st of April 2020 to 30th of April 2020**, and
- the **Self-Employed Assistance Scheme (SEAS)** to cover the period **16th of April 2020 to 30th of April 2020**.

GOVERNMENT WAGE ASSISTANCE SCHEME (GWAS)

The aim of the **Government Wage Assistance Scheme** is to provide financial support to employees of the private sector who became technically unemployed during the COVID-19 lockdown/curfew period.

Since the COVID-19 lockdown period has been extended up to 04 May 2020, the Government has decided to extend the Scheme for the month of April 2020. A business will thus be eligible to receive an additional funding equivalent to one month's basic wage bill for its employees drawing a monthly basic wage of up to Rs 50,000 subject to a cap of Rs 25,000 of assistance per employee.

An employer would be debarred from the Scheme if he has benefitted from funds under the Scheme and has not paid his employees for the months of March and April 2020 or he has laid off even one employee during the lockdown/curfew period. The Scheme is applicable in respect of Mauritians in full-time or part-time employment, and expatriate employees working in Mauritius.

For the Government Wage Assistance Scheme, employers will have to apply again because there could be changes in the number of employees/wage bill. A new online application form will be made available on MRA website: www.mra.mu soon.

SELF-EMPLOYED ASSISTANCE SCHEME (SEAS)

The Self-Employed Assistance Scheme gives financial support to the informal sector. Under the Scheme, eligible self-employed individuals were entitled to receive an amount of Rs 5,100 for the one month period, 16th March 2020 to 15th April 2020.

For the fortnight 16th of April 2020 to 30th of April 2020, an additional amount of Rs 2,550 will be paid to the self-employed individuals.

For the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme, there is no need for a fresh application.

Payment regarding the extension of both GWAS and SEAS will be effected as from Thursday 23 April 2020.

For further information, applicants are kindly requested to visit the website of the MRA: www.mra.mu or by calling on **207 6000**.

MAURITIUS REVENUE AUTHORITY

18 April 2020

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Tahir Wahab

Keeping the Helicopter Grounded

Covid-19 has today created much hype around helicopter money, and the idea of flying the helicopter by making the central banks become the magic money tree is tempting..

Some economists say that central banks should fund the fight against the coronavirus by printing money and giving it to governments or other government-related agencies and state-owned enterprise like Air Mauritius. The reasons advanced for such a policy is that it would not need to raise taxes that much either now or in the future, nor would government debt need to increase; it is also a way of defeating deflation.

Helicopter-money can sometimes take different shapes and could be the purchase of zero-interest-rate government bonds that will not be repaid, either because they are perpetual bonds or because they are rolled over every time they mature. According to the conventional view, helicopter money is newly printed cash that the central banks distribute out, without booking corresponding assets or claims on its balance sheet. It can come in the form of cash transfers to the public or as the monetization of government debt. As Milton Friedman often said, in economics there is no such thing as a free lunch, and here in all possible scenarios this becomes a permanent loss for the central bank.

There are better ways to finance emergency packages to protect people and companies during pandemic lockdowns. So-called "monetisation" risks fuelling inflation and undermining economic discipline. It should be used only as a last resort.

All forms of monetary stimulus, from quantitative easing to negative interest rates carry risks. But helicopter money is particularly dangerous. Indeed, there is no realistic scenario in which such a policy could apply.

Undoubtedly, it's crucial to get money to people in need. But before rushing to start the printing of currency notes, we should consider what the risks are in the long run.

First, it is inflation. Some may say with the economy crashing into a deep recession, there's no risk of that. And it's true that there's no sign of inflation right now. While the prices of some basics like food may go up, the prices of commodities such as oil have plummeted. What's more, if central banks create helicopter money, people will probably save much of it, rather than circulating it in the economy.

But what happens when the world comes out of Covid-19 hibernation?

Many people will leave their homes and spend their helicopter money. Now, unless the supply side of the economy can match at the same speed the demand, there might be less stuff to buy on the market. The combination of an increase in demand and a reduction in supply could boost prices. Whether this is just a one-off

increase in the cost of goods, or the start of a new inflationary cycle depends on how forcefully populations push for increased wages and pensions to compensate for the price hikes in the future and how strongly governments and central banks would resist.

Second, Friedman, who never suggested a cash drop as a serious policy proposal, imagined that it would be a "unique event which will never be repeated".



Success in containing the virus comes at the price of slowing economic activity.

Photo: Reuters - Aly Song

The irony in today's world is that, once governments discover how easy it is to fund their spending plans, it will be hard for politicians to put this genie-like magical habit of printing notes back into its bottle.

Additionally, politicians might not want to make tough economic choices and decisions if they can just turn on the printing press of central banks which in a word would be hyperinflation.

Of course, there's absolutely no sign of that now. But hyperinflation along with the devaluation of money and massive dislocation of economies would be the result of continual monetisation wave within which Central banks would lose their independence and all economic discipline would be thrown to the wind.

It would, of course, be possible to stop such an inflationary virus through harsh fiscal and monetary measures. But the longer that goes on, the harder it will be to suppress it. And even then, confidence within the banking system and credibility of governments would have been damaged, what with in addition the long-term costs.

It is time to recognize, once and for all, that governments and not the central banks are responsible for generating long-term employment and growth, by ensuring favourable investment conditions, a high-quality education system, and open, competitive markets.

The coronavirus crisis is indeed terrible but governments should be able to fund the economy through less drastic means; quantitative easing remains a bazooka that is proportionate to the crisis as compared to helicopter money which is a weapon of mass destruction. Monetary policymakers and proponents should therefore ensure that the helicopters remain grounded.

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Jaya Ramchurn

How Fickle is the Mauritian mind?

World history recalls episodes of flu, plague destined to ruin others but not us, zilwas. My brother sends me '500 Positive Philosophical Thoughts' tonight; indeed a bit of Plato or Aristotle could do me some good during these dark times. But, honestly speaking, how dark is this period?

There's no comparison to what other countries have known in the past or to the misery faced by Afghans, Syrians, Congolese. According to UNICEF, in 2019 more than 16 million cases of malaria were reported in Congo, making them more vulnerable to this outbreak. Yet we feel that what we're going through is the worst of all.

Since Mauritius has been lucky enough to be spared atrocities of the kind faced by the people mentioned above, our incapacity to face such situations can be understood. Our liberties, often taken for granted, are highly endangered in times like this. And the possibility of losing them due to the confinement is to anyone, myself included, daunting.

I recently read in the Atlantic that whenever a nation is faced with an epidemic, the mob translates its fear into violence. Nowhere else has this been truer than in Mauritius. Riots have been almost inexistent in the island since its independence. No war was waged against us in more than a century. The lust for blood and violence has however always been there. An island that has never known real violence should have brought calm and thoughtful citizens; instead individualism has turned each one of us into selfish beings who would do whatever it takes to survive and win the race, often resulting in turning a blind eye to the real solution. This time things were different, the jungle were the supermarkets, grocery stores, gas stations where one would indulge in hoarding so that if it were really the end, he alone would survive.

Stubborn by nature, the Mauritian refuses to go home - I wonder how this was not anticipated by the authorities when images around the world had clearly shown that people didn't always abide by the confinement laws. Sitting comfortably in our homes, we lash upon those who were verbally or physically abused by the law enforcers. Why? I guess it can only be blamed upon our love for the misery of others - d'ou le mot merveilleux "Schadenfreude", that is pleasure derived from somebody else's misfortune.

NO, it should not make us laugh when the first words uttered by a law enforcer is "G...." or "L.....". It should instead make us ponder how power is utilized when one is in a position of authority. And power is no joke, but a fatal weapon. There's no denying that Mauritians should stay in and respect the curfew, but let's not pretend that law enforcers in Mauritius will stop the virus, when they themselves are often unprotected and in regular contact with the population.

"How fickle is the Mauritian mind?" I constantly ask myself.

A few months back, law enforcers were accused of many a thing and now they are perceived as saviours. Is it the fault of social media that constantly dictates our feelings? The sudden shift in emotions towards them makes us think that Mauritians do not have a stand as such when it comes to matters of importance and can easily be carried away by trends. Yes, our law enforcers are working day and night, yet crimes are committed even during this lockdown, almost as if it didn't matter anymore because one day during the confinement, law-enforcers were able to keep the invisible enemy at bay with batons and insults, thanks to which Mauritians were sent back to their homes.

Times like these reveal our true nature and let us not forget that our worst ia. Our usual aversion and lack of respect towards law-enforcers changed into making them the heroes of the pandemic, as if they could cure the infected.

We switched from caring about each other to taking selfishness to another level, often leaving nothing for the less fortunate. It's not about the virus. We have a worse disease taking possession of us, stopping us from expressing ourselves clearly, often leading to confused views attributable to our constant exposure to viral videos and this is highly vicious for a multiracial island. Fear is instilled in each of us, fear of death, fear of not abiding by the rules, fear of not being in line with the rest, fear of having differing opinions regarding the current issues. The crucial often gets erased, fear and popular opinion get the best of each one of us.

Live Longer! Cut Cholesterol, Blood Pressure, Cigarettes

Individuals without risk factors for heart disease and strokes live longer and healthier, according to long-term findings from several large studies that are analyzed in the Dec. 1 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*.

Jeremiah Stamler, MD, and colleagues assessed death rates of five large groups of young-adult and middle-aged individuals. The men were first evaluated in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Those individuals defined as "low-risk" for heart disease or stroke -- only about 5-10% of each group -- had low cholesterol levels and blood pressure, did not smoke, and had no history of prior treatment for diabetes or of hospitalizations due to heart attack.

People at "low risk" reaped significant rewards for their perfection, including a sizably longer life expectancy than the others, from roughly six years more for women aged 40-59 to almost 10 years more for men aged 18-39.

The low-risk individuals also had much lower rates of heart disease. For example, the heart disease rate fell about 90% for low-risk young adult men, and almost 80% for the low-risk older populations studied.

Individuals without risk factors also enjoyed fainter odds for fatal stroke and all cancers. Death rates for all causes were over 50% lower for low-risk men and 40% lower for low-risk women.

The message in all this is clear but not easy: Americans should stop smoking, eat better, and exercise more.



Stamler, an emeritus professor of preventive medicine at Northwestern University School of Medicine in Chicago, tells WebMD, "You can't solve these kind of problems without social policy and societal commitment of resources." He and his co-authors called for a national effort to encourage "favorable behaviors, beginning in early childhood, in regard to eating, drinking, exercising, and smoking."

Claude Lenfant, MD, director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, took a similar tack. "Risk factors can be controlled ... we know what to do," he said. "It really is a national responsibility for all of us."

In an editorial in the same issue of *JAMA*, Lenfant wrote that impressive research advances in the area of heart disease and stroke are not making enough difference in real life. "Translation of these research results into lifestyle changes, public health interventions, and clinical practice

remains a major challenge," he wrote.

Lynn Smaha, MD, president of the American Heart Association, tells WebMD, "This article brings solid concrete evidence to the fact that we know what we should be doing, and the next challenge is to apply what we know." He acknowledges, "That's the real challenge, and it's multifactorial."

"We need to change a lot of things in the system," Smaha says. "We're set up in our medical system for acute care. There's very little incentive or reward for doing preventive care; we're not really set up to sit down and spend 45 minutes with each patient talking about what things they can do in their daily life."

Stamler agrees that physicians don't have the time or knowledge for the detailed preventive interventions necessary. "You have to spend hours. You have to teach them how to shop in the supermarket, to read labels. Teach them how to cook differently." And he says there should be greater numbers of nutrition counselors: "We need thousands of them around the country, like we need public health nurses."

Sean Martin

Arthritis: Take Care of Your Mental Health

It can be tough to live with a long-lasting condition like osteoarthritis. Joint pain and other symptoms can affect how well you can do work, everyday tasks, and things you enjoy. That may make you feel stressed, sad, or angry.

But there are many steps you can take that can make living with arthritis easier. Make sure you give your emotional health as much as care and attention as your physical symptoms.

Effects of Arthritis

With arthritis, pain and fatigue may become a regular part of your day. The disease can also affect how your body looks, which may make you feel self-conscious. Over time, those kinds of symptoms can make you feel frustrated, angry, anxious, and, at times, depressed.

On the other hand, depression or anxiety about your condition can make your arthritis symptoms worse.

How Can I Make My Life Better With Arthritis?

The most important step you can take is to get help as soon as you feel your arthritis is taking a toll on your mental health. There are many kinds of



support that can help you find ways to manage the stress of living with a condition like arthritis. That will help you keep a positive physical, emotional, and spiritual outlook on life.

Many types of help are available for people with long-term conditions like arthritis. A doctor or therapist can design a

treatment plan to meet your specific needs and help you feel more in control of your life.

Support groups are also great places to learn new ways of dealing with your illness. You can talk about problems you're facing with others and get their advice and understanding. They can also offer tips

that have helped them deal with similar issues. Plus, it feels good to know that you're not alone.

On the other hand, you may feel more comfortable talking about some issues in a one-on-one atmosphere. In individual counseling, you can talk about sensitive or private feelings you have about your illness and how it affects your lifestyle and relationships.

What If I Am Feeling Depressed?

The most important thing to do is to reach out for help as soon as you feel the disease is affecting your emotional health. If you feel depressed or that arthritis is too much to handle, talk to a mental health professional. He can design a treatment plan to help with your specific troubles. You might be able to take medications for a little while to ease depression and lift your mood.

Everyone deserves to live the best life they can and feel in control of their health. Make sure you take care of your mental health while you manage the symptoms of arthritis.

Reviewed by David Zelman,
WebMD

Coronavirus pandemic: 10 Netflix web series releasing in April 2020 that are perfect to binge-watch during lockdown

From Money Heist and Tigertail to Extraction and The Last Kingdom; here are 10 Netflix web series and web movies releasing (or already released) in April.



The lockdown has extended in India till 3rd May, and you're now running out of options of what to do at home? Well, fret not...because we've got your back. Or rather, should we say that Netflix has got your back, and we're just the messenger. As the perils of the coronavirus pandemic exacerbate daily, it's best that you stay put at home and catch up on some good web series that will not only help you wile away the time with some quality content, but also be addictive enough to prevent you from stepping over the threshold of your main door. So, without further ado, here are 10 Netflix web series and web movies releasing in April 2020.

1.) Money Heist (part 4) The smash hit Spanish con show is currently the no. 1 pro-duct on Netflix, and the way things ended with the Professor and his bank robbers the last season, it's impossible not to blow through season 4 at one go. However, if you haven't watched the erstwhile seasons, then we'd advise you to get cracking before diving into the fourth part.

2.) The Big Show Show (season 1)

Legendary WWE superstar The Big Show has swapped the wrestling ring (smart, since he's at the flag end of his career) for an adorable sitcom where the 7-foot giant realises that his inti-midating frame and victories over the toughest opponents don't hold a candle to raising three daughters.

3.) The Main Event (Netflix film)

Another WWE-based product for Netflix, this movie follows an 11-year old, diehard wrestling fan, who becomes a sensation when he enters a competition for the next, big WWE superstar, after discovering a mask that bestows him special powers.

4.) Tigertail (Netflix film)

This slice-of-life dramedy that has already earned pretty good reviews, explores a man's journey from Taiwan to America as he seeks a better life, but loses his once vibrant self through the course of a monotonous existence.

5.) Code 8 (Netflix film)

Set in a world where 4% of the population are marginalised and forced to live in for being born with superpowers, this exciting sci-fi film, revolves around one of those super-humans joining the gang of the city's most notorious drug lord to help pay for the treatment of his severely ailing mother.

6.) Hasmukh (season 1)

Vir Das is returning to Netflix (he's a regular now), though this time not with a standup comedy special, but as a fictional standup comedian in a thriller web series that'll have him balancing comic acts with acts of murder. The trailer has everyone hooked, and we can't wait for the actual show.

7.) The Willoughbys (Netflix film)

Netflix is banking a lot on this animated film, and the fun, family friendly yet quirky vibe of the trailer makes us understand why.

8.) Extraction (Netflix film)

Starring Thor (Chris Hemsworth) himself, this action-packed thrill ride (at least the trailer has promised one) is set in India, and follows the a black-market mercenary's mission to rescue the abducted son of an international crime lord. Written by one-half of the Avengers Director, Joe Russo, the film also stars our very own Pankaj Tripathi and Randeep Hooda.

9.) The Last Kingdom (season 4)

Anybody who has watched the first three seasons of the exploits of Uthred son of Uthred's, knows that the fourth season of this pocket dynamite (they're never more than 6-8 episodes in a season) of a web series has to be consumed at one shot. If you haven't watched the previous seasons and love shows like Vikings and Game of Thrones).

10.) Dangerous Lies (Netflix film)

A wealthy geriatric leaves his entire estate to his caregiver



before dying, which draws her into a web of lies and murder. Fans of Netflix's Riverdale would be pleased to know that this thriller stars Camila Mendes.

So, there you have it. We have sorted out your April to-do list. Now, it's time to 'Netflix and Chill'.

YOUR STARS

Sagittarius: Nov 22 - Dec 21

This astral environment will reinforce the need for many natives to reflect calmly, calculating and patiently elaborating strategies or laying down plans for the future. In this way, many things will be in embryo and will come out in a few months.

Capricorn: Dec 22 - Jan 19

You'll know success in an activity related to politics, advertising, hotels, or tourism. One of your friends will attempt to harm you by distributing falsehoods about you everywhere; but the stars will help you find the means to protect yourself.

Aquarius: Jan 20 - Feb 18

Try not to give in to carelessness, muddling, or discouragement if certain of your undertakings do not meet with success. In love, even though destiny puts charming persons on your way, you may very well discourage them.

Pisces: Feb 19 - Mar 20

You'll accept to use your intuition instead of founding everything on reasoning, and this will open new horizons to you. You may let yourself be easily swayed by anger; try to control yourself so as not to harm your relationships with your near ones.

Aries: Mar 21 - Apr 19

Despite the nature and number of your problems, make all the necessary efforts to dominate them. Take your problems for what they are effectively, that is, not for catastrophes, but for challenges which life sets up for you to meet.

Taurus: Apr 20 - May 20

The humdrum of everyday life will seem profoundly boring to you. This feeling of monotony will be dangerous as it might incite you to flee from routine by more or less foolish means. It will be in your interest to scent the good wind in financial affairs.

Gemini: May 21 - June 20

Some changes on the family or professional front will prove indispensable and you cannot shirk them. Discuss your problems with competent people and follow their counsels. You'll feel capable of lifting up mountains!

Cancer: June 21 - July 22

Single folks, profit by each moment; go out as much as possible. You'll be so lucky that you should fall upon your soulmate, without having had to look for him/her. As for already formed couples, conjugal disputes, sometimes stormy.

Leo: July 23 - Aug 22

If you live as a couple, the ties that bind you two will be more solid than ever. Also, it will be in your interest to let your spouse act as he/she likes, and to intervene the least possible in the decisions concerning your home.

Virgo: Aug 23 - Sept 22

Your family life will be dependent upon your career concerns, and you'll have much difficulty installing a barrier between the two. If you show goodwill, the astral climate will help you to put an end to the eternal affective blackmails of which you were the object.

Libra: Sept 23 - Oct 22

You'll clash with certain co-workers, and the family ambience will be awful! In your life as a couple, the atmosphere will be electric, and you'll probably do nothing to ease the tension; a dialogue of the deaf may therefore settle in.

Scorpion: 23 Oct - 21 Nov

The moment will be well chosen to grapple frontally with the various health problems which have annoyed you since a long time. You'll work in the good direction so as to realize your dreams. This time beware of the counsels of your near ones.

Nia Sharma: I was obsessed with my weight... I have even starved to look a particular way

She is hot and sexy, but not many know that actress Nia Sharma has battled eating disorders. In a candid chat with BT, she talks about her obsession with body weight, how her love life is not for social media and why she is finally happy to do a woman-centric show. Excerpts:

In showbiz, there's a lot of pressure on actors to look their best all the time. How do you cope with it?

People have always seen me as someone who is fit and has a good figure because I have maintained myself well. But, with time, there are physiological factors that make you put on weight. For the past few years, I have suffered from the fear of getting out of shape. I was obsessed with my weight and if I put on even one kilo, I would start fretting and fuming over it. So much so, that my conversations with my friends were all about my weight worries. And in order to look a particular way, I ended up starving myself. While I never had cheat days and followed a strict diet, there were times when I just let myself go and overindulged in food. And when I ate a lot, I would feel extremely guilty. So, I would try to throw up what I ate. This was a practice for many years, but I now realise that it is one of the worst things I did to myself. My friends Arjun (Bijlani) and Ravi (Dubey) sat me down and explained that this was not healthy. Even when I suffered from slight bloating, I would throw up deliberately. Finally, it left me feeling very weak. I would like to tell women to stop doing this, if they suffer from such fears. In fact, the fear of gaining weight led me to skip my lunches and dinners. I used to only have protein shakes and work out like mad. But I do believe that working out is not the only solution to maintain a healthy weight. You need a healthy diet along with it. I have suffered from this eating disorder, but thankfully, I am now over it.

You have always kept your personal life under wraps. So, are you in a relationship?

I have never spoken about my personal life because I feel that my love life is not for Instagram. I am nervous to share private pictures on my social media accounts. In the last few years, a couple of relationships ended abruptly. I now feel that if I am with someone, I'd rather make it work than talk about it to people.

Who is your ideal guy?

I want someone who is educated and when I say educated, I mean someone who is mature enough to respect a woman irrespective of her profession. I can't be with a guy who is fighting with me over what I wear. A relationship can't be about the clothes that a girl wears. I am what I am today because of my sheer hard work and discipline. Even my mother tells me, 'Nia, we are happy for your success and you have the freedom to follow your desires'. So, I can't allow a guy to dictate what I should wear to a party. Having said that, I am very accommodating and adjusting in a relationship. I want a guy who will let me pursue my ambitions, stand by my side and have full faith in me. That's why I find it very funny when actors say that they don't want to marry someone from the industry. Why not? Actually, an actor will exactly understand the pressures of the trade, your sense of fashion and the erratic working hours. I would love it if I have a handsome actor by my side.

You have always been vocal about what you feel. In an industry where diplomacy is the norm, does this pose a problem for you?

I don't feel that I owe anyone anything. My journey has been organic and over the years I have picked my own set



of friends and have never been to a party to just 'network'. I respect people and they should respect me back. Everyone knows that I am not here to lick anyone's ass. I have been often termed as being rude but what is wrong in asking for what is rightfully yours. If you don't give my remuneration on time, you can't expect me to be nice to you. I will never compromise on bad working conditions. In the past, I have worked so many extra hours and suffered health issues for months. I have decided to not work for more than the required number of hours and live a healthy life. I might be termed as someone who is fiesty and speaks her mind, but at least, I am called professional and disciplined.

Are you happy that with 'Naagin', you will now play the title role?

I don't think anything can be better than being part of 'Naagin'. I have enjoyed my previous work, too, but for the first time, I will be the title character in a television show.

TV SERIAL

Kulfi Kumar Bajewala

Friday 24 April: Bhola pacifies an annoyed Pakhi while Nandini looks on with guilt. Later, a shocking connection between Bhola and Sikander comes to light.

Monday 27 April: Bhola and Pakhi trouble the landlord while Loveleen is suspicious of Sikander's moves. Later, Sikander threatens Kulfi and asks her to practice singing.

Tuesday 28 April: Bhola dreams about Kulfi while the fake Sikander is rude to her, leaving the family shocked. He gets afraid of having his identity exposed.

Wednesday 29 April: Chandan makes a plan to get the family's support while Kulfi is shocked by his changed behaviour. Later, Kulfi is in a dilemma with her friend's suggestion.

Thursday 30 April: Loveleen tries to explain the situation to Kulfi. Later, the fake Sikander's reaction during the song recording leaves Kulfi speechless.

Yeh Un Dinon Ki Baat Hai

Friday 24 April: After Sameer's uncle throws him out of the business, he and Naina are in a tough spot. Bela gives this news to her husband who is shocked to hear this. Sameer's mother offers him and Naina to come live with her in Delhi.

Monday 27 April: After the mishap in Naina and Sameer's life, Anand gives some advice to Naina and Sameer regarding what to do next in business. He asks Sameer to take up a job as an insurance policy seller and asks Naina to open up a boutique.

Tuesday 28 April: Sameer and Naina set up a Saree exhibition with their family. Sameer tries to control his anger when his uncle comes in at the exhibition. His uncle tells him that if he can sell more than two dresses he himself will come and work as a salesman for him.

Wednesday 29 April: When the day after the exhibition no one shows up at Naina and Sameer's boutique they both get tensed. Finally, when two customers show up at their boutique the volcano of happiness erupts for both Naina and Sameer, but when they get to know that both of those customers were sent by Kamlesh, things go downhill fast.

Thursday 30 April: Naina is upset because of Sameer and she doesn't even eat food. When Sameer pressurizes her to eat she gets even more upset and tells him that she won't eat. Sameer tells her that he will keep standing there until and unless she doesn't eat, Naina tells him to keep standing. Sameer stands there for 2 hours.

Ek Deewaana Tha

Friday 24 April: Akash and Krish fight for Radhika's attention and some mean comments are exchanged between them. Rajan and Madhavi still doubt Akash as they think Shivani's safety might be compromised.

Monday 27 April: Akash falls to the ground and suffers a head injury. After treatment, Akash regains consciousness. When Shivani insists that they leave the house, Akash, Radhika, and Krish disagree. Then, Akash meets Radhika and Krish and shares them the last minute details before his fall.

Tuesday 28 April: Radhika, Akash, and Krish discuss the strange things happening in Bedi house and Radhika tells them that they need to stick together in order to get to the truth. Shivani is in trauma after someone grabs her arm from the window in her room.

Wednesday 29 April: Shivani overhears Akash talking about his closeness with Radhika. Shivani's doubts about Akash trying to cheat on her comes true. Radhika sees a reflection on the bathroom mirror. Krish dreams about a past life.

Thursday 30 April: Shivani is furious after she finds out an old photograph of Sharanya and Vyom's marriage and mistakes them for Radhika and Akash but when she shows the photograph to Akash and confronts him, the picture goes blank. Krish shows Radhika the painting he made of her even before meeting her.

CINE 12

Vendredi 24 avril - 21.15

The Arrival

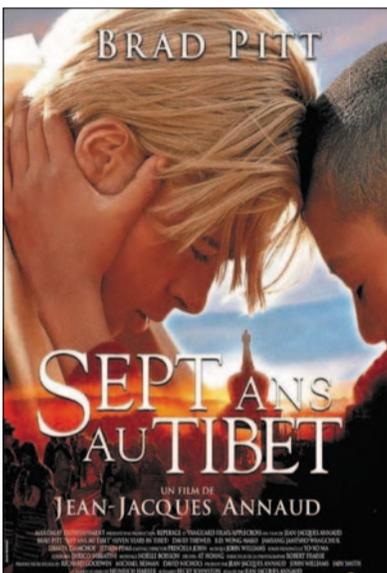
With: Charlie Sheen, Lindsay Crouse and Richard Schiff



CINE 12

Samedi 25 avril - 17.44

Avec: Brad Pitt, David Thewlis, Jamyang Jamtsho Wangchuk



WARCRAFT

THE OFFICIAL MOVIE PREQUEL

DUROTAN

Dimanche 26 avril - 21.15

CINE 12



	MBC 1	MBC 2	MBC 3	Cine 12	Bollywood TV
vendredi 24 avril	06.35 Local: Encounter 07.05 Dessin Anime 10.31 Mag: Origami 11.15 Entrepreneuriat Au Feminin 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Local: Autour Des Valeurs 12.35 Doc: Wildlife Heroes 13.30 Local: Saver Kil Tirel 14.00 Local: Wellness By Trilo 14.30 Serial: Magic Mania 14.40 D.Anime: Back To The Moon 15.04 D.Anime: Kuu Kuu Harajuku 16.28 D.Anime: Polly Pocket 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 Journal 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 India 06.44 Mag: Shift 07.00 Mag: Border Crossing 07.27 Doc: A Question Of Science 07.32 Mag: Tomorrow Today 08.50 World Stamps 09.02 Live Educational Program... 14.05 Doc: 360 Geo 14.56 Mag: Strictly Street 15.22 Doc: Pioneers Of The Skies 16.05 Mag: Eco India 16.31 Mag: Urban Gardens 16.38 Mag: Sur Mesure 17.02 Mag: Border Crossing 18.00 Doc: Like Flowers Or Salt 18.42 Mag: Urban Gardens 18.47 Mag: Arts And Culture 19.03 Mag: Global 3000 19.34 Mag: Euromaxx 20.02 Serial: Mah-E-Tamaam 20.41 Serial: Karb	03.25 Serial: NCIS - Los Angeles 05.31 Tele: Amanda 06.14 Serial: When Calls The Heart 06.56 Film: The Zookeeper's Wife 09.00 Serial: The Good Fight 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: Witchslayer Gretl 13.30 Tele: Amanda 14.41 Film: The Zookeeper's Wife 16.45 Serial: The Good Fight 17.25 Serial: When Call 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 21.15 Film: The Arrival 23.06 Tele: Amanda	09.30 Film: Kashmir Ki Kali 12.05 / 19.54 - Ek Deewana Tha 12.23 / 20.11 - Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 12.44 / 20.32 Radha Krishna 13.06 / 21.09 - Kaleerein 13.28 / 21.24 - Zindagi Ki Mehek 13.50 / 21.46 - Bade Acche Lagte Hai 14.12 / 21.59 - Chhanchhan 14.34 / 22.25 - Ishqbazz 15.03 Film: Krish 3 Stars: Hrithik Roshan, Vivek Oberoi, Priyanka Chopra, Kangna Ranaut 17.30 Live: Samachar 18.00 Yeh Hai Mohabbatein 18.30 Kumkum Bhagya 18.51 Piya Albela 19.13 Mere Angne Mein 19.34 Yeh Un Dinon Ki Baat Hai
samedi 25 avril	06.00 Dessin Anime 09.50 Serial: Grandpa In My Pocket 10.43 Heidi, Bienvenida A Case 11.15 Local: Intinerer Rodrig 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Local: Rodrig Prog 14.05 Local: Pause Cuisine 14.15 Local Prod: Fee Main 14.30 Serial: Magic Mania 14.42 D. Anime: Bugsted 14.43 D. Anime: Croque Nuage 15.04 D. Anime: Kuu Kuu Harajuku 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: Inna In Concert 21.35 Serial: Chicago Med 23.00 Le Journal 23.35 Local: Rodrigues	04.30 Aastha TV 07.00 Film: 11.40 Good Morning Shanghai 12.00 Nanda Saukhya 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 Journal 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 Mag: Like Flowers Or Salt 07.00 Mag: Global 3000 07.27 Doc: A Question Of Science 08.03 Doc: Secret Worlds 08.50 Doc: World Stamps 09.01 Doc: La Cuisine Des Papes 11.11 Doc: Like Flowers Or Salt 14.07 Doc: World Stamps 15.44 Doc: On Route 7 Into The Heart Of Patagonia 17.18 Mag: Arts And Culture 17.29 Mag: Global 3000 18.00 Mag: Horizon S 03 18.54 Doc: Set One 19.30 Mag: Mixeurs, Les Gouts... 20.02 Doc: Wildlife Heroes 20.57 Other: The Vienna's Philharmonic 23.27 Doc: Horizons 03 00.19 Doc: Olivia's Garden 00.45 Mag: Mixeur, Les Gouts 01.11 Doc: Wildlife Heroes	00.34 Tele: Peau Sauvage 01.34 Film: The Arrival 03.23 Serial: The Bletchley Circle 04.09 Film: Le Zoo Enchante 05.33 Tele: Destiny 06.17 Serial: Midnight, Texas 06.58 Film: Le Retour De Mon Ex 08.30 Serial: Mike Hammer 09.16 Film: Bring It On 10.47 Film: Royal Matchmaker 12.14 Serial: The Bletchley Circle 13.45 Tele: Premiere Dame 14.32 Mag: Close Up 15.05 Film: Le Zoo Enchante 17.00 Serial: Midnight, Texas 17.44 Film: Sept Ans Au Tibet 20.05 Tele: Totalment Diva 20.30 Serial: Midnight, Texas 21.15 Film: The Perfect Guy 22.45 Tele: Eva Luna	04.05 Ek Deewana Tha 04.26 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 05.28 Zindagi Ki Mehek 05.47 Bade Acche Lagte Hai 06.07 Chhanchhan 06.29 Ishqbazz 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: Badrinath Ki Dulhania 15.00 Kaleerein 17.30 Samachar 16.00 Pavitra Rishta 18.30 Film: Naam Hai Akira 20.45 Serial: Siya Ke Ram 21.28 Serial: Naagin Season 2 22.12 Serial: Zindagi Ki Mehek 00.01 Serial: Mere Angne Mein
dimanche 26 avril	06.00 Dessin Anime 09.50 Serial: Grandpa In My Pocket 10.40 Local: Nu Rasinn 11.30 Local: Couleur Marine 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Local: People 14.30 Serial: Magic Mania 14.43 D. Anime: Croque Nuage 14.52 La Famille Blaireau-Renard 15.27 D.Anime: Petit Creux 15.28 D.Anime: La Famille Passiflore 16.30 D.Anime: Polly Pocket 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 Film: The Pirate 23.00 Le Journal 23.55 Local: 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 Journal 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 S 03 06.51 Doc: Olivia's Garden 07.17 Mag: Mixeur, Les Gouts... 07.43 Doc: Wildlife Heroes 08.38 Doc: World Stamps 08.42 Other: The Vienna's Philharmonic 12.07 Musical Concert Rihanna 14.00 Doc: World Stamps 16.37 Doc: Horizons S 03 17.29 Doc: Olivia's Garden 18.00 Doc: Zenith 18.29 Doc: Garden Party 18.59 Doc: Builders Of The Future 19.30 Mag: Mixeur, Les Gouts... 20.01 Doc: Master Of Engineering 20.53 Doc: World Stamps 20.56 Le Volcan Que A Ebranlé Le Monde 21.48 Doc: La Guerre Du Sable 22.38 Doc: The Bridge Of Small...	00.20 Tele: Peau Sauvage 01.31 Film: The Perfect Guy 03.03 Serial: Hawaii 5-0 03.44 Film: La Passion En Heritage 05.33 Tele: Destiny 06.01 Serial: Midnight, Texas 06.43 Film: Supercollider 08.30 Serial: Mike Hammer 09.22 Film: Psych: The Movie 10.47 Film: La Passion En Heritage 12.13 Serial: Hawaii 5-0 13.00 Tele: L'esclave Blanche 15.05 Film: Sos Fantômes 17.00 Serial: Midnight, Texas 17.45 Serial: Hawaii 5-0 18.30 Serial: Mission: Impossible 19.34 Mag: Close Up 20.05 Tele: Totalment Diva 20.30 Serial: Counterpart 21.15 Film: Warcraft 23.13 Film: Psych: The Movie	02.43 Kaleerein 04.13 Pavitra Rishta 05.35 Film: Naam Hai Akira Starring: Sonakshi Sinha, Konkona Sen Sharma, Anurag Kashyap, Rose J Kaur 08.11 Chhanchhan 10.02 Itna Karo Na Mujhe Pyaar 12.30 Film: Khullam Khulla Pyar Karen Starring: Govinda, Preity Zinta, Prem Chopra 15.15 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 17.30 Samachar 18.30 Film: Shubh Mangal Saavdhan Starring: Ayushmann Khurrana, Bhumi Pednekar, Seema Bhargava 20.09 Motu Patlu

Vendredi 24 avril - 15.30

Stars: Hrithik Roshan, Vivek Oberoi, Priyanka Chopra, Kangna Ranaut



Dimanche 26 avril - 18.30

Stars: Ayushmann Khurrana, Bhumi Pednekar, Seema Bhargava



Waging war without firing a single bullet

Lives have been destroyed, economic activities are disrupted, massive lay-offs will follow... If anything, the current situation gives a glimpse of the widescale damages that can be caused by a bacteriological warfare without firing a single bullet



U.S. President Donald Trump speaks at a daily briefing on the coronavirus at the White House on April 7.

Photo - Mandel Ngan/AFP Via Getty Images



Nita Chicooree-Mercier

Deep suspicions on the circumstances surrounding the deadly virus that continues to wreak havoc across the world have been aired for some time. China responded by dismissing any possibility that experts working on viruses in a laboratory in Wuhan might have accidentally let out the virus fabricated within its precincts. Right from the outset, Chinese doctors challenged the director of the lab to explain the origin of the virus on biological grounds; she failed to convince them in denying any responsibility of the laboratory. Reportedly, she has since disappeared from public space. The most chilling allegation up to now from Chinese citizens' sources is that the wild animals used for experimentation in the lab were put back for sale in the Hubei market. That remains to be proved.

Early in March, China's state television accused four Americans, who were in Wuhan in October 2019, of propagating the virus, and claimed that the US administration was hiding the matter from the public and challenged the US President to divulge the number of deaths since November last year. Any attempt at equating the epidemic with China itself led, as usual, to a rise of adrenaline. More precise than the 'Chinese virus' was 'Wuhan virus' by Taiwan much earlier on as the tiny country immediately brought back its citizens from Wuhan and closed its frontiers with China last year. China retaliated by sending warships in the seas near Taiwan in a show of muscle-flexing.

WHO-China nexus?

With the rising death toll on a daily basis around the world, particularly in the West, the responsibility of the World Health Organization (WHO) for failing to report on the epidemic in its early stage has come under criticism and drawn attention to the appointment of its director, a controversial former Minister of Health in Ethiopia, as the head of WHO owing to China's lobbying with quite a number of countries with a pro-China slant for ideological and

commercial reasons. Fierce criticism comes mainly from the public on the internet while mainstream international media outlets mildly question the responsibility of China and WHO. On the contrary, Western media with leftist tendencies have chosen to praise the Chinese authorities for their "effective and quick handling" of the epidemic in China.

This kind of support encourages the Chinese government to pose as an indispensable player in the fight against the pandemic at the international level, and to come forward in a most cynical manner to suggest a change in political structures worldwide for an effective handling of viruses and future pandemics by WHO. In other words, a shift from democratic régimes to iron-fisted authoritarian régimes for a world health strategy to be effective under the supervision of WHO - itself controlled by China. Never mind that Taiwan, South Korea, Germany and New Zealand have displayed great efficiency in tackling the pandemic; these are democracies and three of them are governed by women. With a population of 1.3 billion, India is doing remarkably well by using modern high-tech in contact tracing despite difficulties of containing migrants' movements.

Someone had to come up on the world stage to denounce all the masquerade and voice the serious concerns raised from all parts of the world. US President Donald Trump does not mince his words and calls a spade a spade. His direct address to China in clear terms and his demand that light be shed on its strategy and WHO's role opened the way for other leaders to speak up. The European Union does not have a common health policy written in its charter, hence its lack of response to the terrible situation faced by Italy. Moreover cowardice and a bit of realpolitik silence many leaders on key international issues and muzzle media outlets. Tied by commercial contracts with China, French President Macron's mild statement to the *Financial Times* is no big deal. Like the US, France failed to assess the real danger of the pandemic in the early stage and to impose strict measures. The issue of a pandemic was not on the agenda despite regular reports over the last years from the French Ministry of Defence on external security threats, which also included the possibility of a virus let out accidentally from a laboratory.

Britain toes the line in support to the US President, and Australia demands an independent committee to investi-

gate into the circumstances of the pandemic which has sent more than one third of world population into confinement, contaminated around 2.9 million people, and taken the lives of almost 170,000 others, with 42,000 in US alone.

Questions needing answers

Many questions demand answers. Why was the young doctor, the first whistleblower, silenced and his warning not made public? Can China claim that it was not aware of the extent of the threat to public health be taken seriously? Was it for economic reasons that China kept silent and continued to open its frontiers to international transport and trade?

On what grounds did the WHO director underestimate the danger of the epidemic? What made him think that he had the legitimacy to rail against the US for stopping flights to and from China? His professional background and record as former Minister of Health in Ethiopia should have raised doubts about his competence to head the WHO. Supporters of China's candidate for the WHO top job might undertake some introspection and come out with an honest explanation to the world. In all likelihood, these countries are highly indebted to China, and their leaders are corrupt autocrats, dictators and tyrants.

Whatever be the nationality, French or American, of the other experts working with their Chinese virologists, the role of one and all calls for transparency. 'Not in My Backyard' is the principle which makes rich countries conduct toxic and lethal tests in far-away places but rather near other people's villages and towns - for instance France's nuclear tests in Polynesia, Europe's nuclear wastes shipped off to India and handled with bare hands by poor workers, factories pouring toxic wastes in underprivileged areas in many countries.

Lives have been destroyed, economic activities are disrupted, massive lay-offs will follow and the world has to brace up for a devastating recession. If anything, the current situation gives a glimpse of the widescale damages that can be caused by a bacteriological warfare without firing a single bullet.

Accountability for the global impact

China must be made accountable for what has happened on its soil. People in China and the world cannot be taken for a ride and gulp down any trumped-up version which suits the whims and fancies of the Communist government. Taking advantage of its position as chairman of the UNSC in March, China forbade all discussions on the pandemic. It is a very serious fault, indeed, and China should be brought to task. The pandemic highlights China's influence at the UN in the election of candidates at the head of key UN bodies, in the stance taken by its Secretary General who found time in the middle of the epidemic to travel to South-East Asia in January and pontificate on India's internal matters.

It is in China's long term interest to cooperate with an independent external committee to investigate and tell the truth to the world. There is no denying that the pandemic has thrust the world in a futuristic scenario of disasters that are only shown in films. Dependence on imports and rare metals from the world workshop which China cannot follow the same course, and there will be demands from several countries to relocate industries back home.

In the coming months, the state of world economy is bound to be paved with upheavals. Address trade deficits, re-assess consumer habits and real needs, and reduce imports. Big bully and muscle-flexing military postures with a thumbs-up approval from comrades of dubious integrity may not be the right strategy to bring a degree of serenity to the world.