

# MAURITIUS TIMES

"There are two types of people who will tell you that you cannot make a difference in this world: those who are afraid to try and those who are afraid you will succeed." -- Ray Goforth

**Interview: Vinaye Ancharaz, Economist**

## "The Post-Lockdown Recovery Will Be Slow and Painful"

'In 2009, Mauritius was spared only because of its low degree of financial integration in the global economy. But this time around, the economic crisis is different'

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**After Air Mauritius**



## SBM - Another case of bad governance?

If a banking group that doubles its payroll cost by Rs 1 billion in two years cannot leverage its bloated personnel to perform all the due diligence required in its operations, then it has a major problem on its hands

By Aditya Narayan ☞ See page 4

## The Covid-19 pandemic is of our making



Prof Frank Snowden advises that 'we have to reconfigure our cities, reconfigure our relationship with the environment, reconfigure our health care systems', though he adds, 'None of that will happen soon'.

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## Another Failure: Can it be an opportunity?

As if it were not enough to stay locked up under the threat of Covid-19 and having to reconcile with the prospect of seeing the erstwhile jewel in the country's crown - Air Mauritius - almost going under, we have now been served with yet another depressing piece of news: the current predicament of the State Bank Group following the publication of its financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2019. The Bank has seen its profit going down year after year (from Rs 2.6 billion in 2017 to Rs 1.2 billion in 2018, to Rs 15 million in 2019) for different reasons, but mostly due to non-performing loans running into hundreds of millions of rupees granted in past years to dubious businessmen, based locally and abroad.

All this has been happening under different governments with their appointees on the board of the Bank in different capacities, with its payroll increasing by Rs 1 billion from 2018 to 2019. There's no citizen who wouldn't recoil in shame at the Bank's profit of Rs 15 million compared to what allegedly has been pocketed by the board members: Rs 32 million. The poor performance of yet another profitable State enterprise might send another signal that public enterprises eventually are bound to fail - when this need not be so - thereby defeating the purpose for which they had been set up.

It must be reckoned that the absence of state enterprises in certain strategic areas of activity has led to the emergence of private monopolies on the hooks of ultra-liberalism to the detriment of the 'public interest'. The state enterprise, it was thought at the time of their inception, was to serve the 'public interest' by breaking the hold of monopolies on the local economy whilst also running on commercially sound lines. It is deplorable that most of these institutions have been unable to live up to their mission - either due to political interference in their running, or because latterly their top brass have been wanting in the moral and mental fibre that occupants in such positions are expected to possess. As a result, there has been a clear failure on their part to fulfil their duty of protecting the national interest as it ought to have been

done.

It is practically self-evident that having or not having efficiently functioning institutions can make the difference between a country which achieves and one which does not. We need go no further than the favourite and oft-quoted, by our leaders themselves, of the example of Singapore, which has derived a lot more strength and thus acquired a much more trustworthy image on the international stage because of the efficient operation of its institutions. Alas, we can't even begin to compare our own country with it. Regardless of whether their institutions belong to the public or private domain, Singapore and a few others have consistently and successfully aimed to pitch themselves to the highest and very best levels of performance, not forgetting the ethical dimension. The outcome is a Singapore that can justly vaunt the image of a reliable place wherein to do business, which in turn has contributed to lift the country to the level of the top rankers of the world. Can we say of Mauritius that it has been benefiting from this kind of drive and efficiency from all its institutions?

The downfall of what were considered these two jewels in the crown gives a damning answer.

And yet they did have their years of glory, when they were headed by professionals motivated with a sense of national purpose, supported by political leadership that would not meddle in their running.

Unfortunately, that era was followed by one where gradually political interference became the norm, and despite regime change down the years and promises to the contrary it appears that the rot was too deep for the trend to be halted. It now falls to the present dispensation to take a call that confronts it squarely: what is the legacy, let alone image, that it wants to leave? If that is clear in its long term view, the next query is whether it can rise to the challenge of turning these institutions around and restore the trust that they have once been associated with, so that the gain made by the so far successful management of the Covid-19 pandemic is enhanced rather than being diminished.

## Face masks: what the Spanish flu can teach us about making them compulsory

*Over 30 countries today are making people wear masks in public, despite serious doubts from scientists*

Should people be forced to wear face masks in public? That's the question facing governments as more countries unwind their lockdowns. Over 30 countries have made masks compulsory in public, including Germany, Austria and Poland. This is despite the science saying masks do little to protect wearers, and only might prevent them from infecting other people.

Nicola Sturgeon, the Scottish first minister, has nonetheless announced new guidelines advising Scots to wear masks for shopping or on public transport, while the UK government is expected to announce a new stance shortly. Meanwhile, US vice president Mike Pence has controversially refused to mask up.

This all has echoes of the great influenza pandemic, aka the Spanish flu, which killed some 50 million people in 1918-20. It's a great case study in how people will put up with very tough restrictions, so long as they think they have merit.

### The great shutdown

In the US, no disease in history led to such intrusive restrictions as the great influenza. These included closures of schools, churches, soda fountains, theatres, movie houses, department stores and barber shops, and regulations on how much space should be allocated to people in indoor public places.

There were fines against coughing, sneezing, spitting, kissing and even talking outdoors - those the *Boston Globe* called "big talkers". Special influenza police were hired to round up children playing on street corners and occasionally even in their own backyards.

### Shifting science

There was scientific debate from the beginning about whether the masks were effective, but the game began to change after French bacteriologist Charles Nicolle discovered in October 1918 that the influenza was much smaller than any other known bacterium.

The news spread rapidly, even in small-town American newspapers. Cartoons were published that read, "like using barbed wire fences to shut out flies". Yet this was just at the point that mortality rates were ramping up in the western states of the US and Canada. Despite Nicolle's discovery, various authorities began making masks compulsory. San Francisco was the first major US city to do so in October 1918, continuing on and off over a three-month period.

Alberta in Canada did likewise, and New South Wales, Australia, followed suit when the disease arrived in January 1919 (the state basing its decision on scientific evidence older than Charles Nicolle's findings). The only American state to make masks mandatory was (briefly) California, while on the east coast and in other countries including the UK they were merely recommended for most people.

Numerous photographs survive of large



Red Cross nurses in San Francisco, 1918. Wikimedia

crowds wearing masks in the months after Nicolle's discovery. But many had begun to distrust masks, and saw them as a violation of civil liberties.

### Disobedience aplenty

San Francisco saw the creation of the anti-mask league, as well as protests and civil disobedience. People refused to wear masks in public or flaunted wearing them improperly. Some went to prison for not wearing them or refusing to pay fines.

England was different. Masks were only advised as a precautionary measure in large cities, and then only for certain groups, such as influenza nurses in Manchester and Liverpool. Serious questions about efficacy only arose in March 1919, and only within the scientific community. Most British scientists now united against them, with the *Lancet* calling masks a "dubious remedy".

These arguments were steadily being bolstered by statistics from the US. The head of California's state board of health had presented late 1918 findings from San Francisco's best run hospital showing that 78% of nurses became infected despite their careful wearing of masks.

Physicians and health authorities also presented statistics comparing San Francisco's mortality rates with nearby San Mateo, Los Angeles and Chicago, none of which had made masks compulsory. Their mortality rates were either "no worse" or less. By the end of the pandemic in 1919, most scientists and health commissions had come to a consensus not unlike ours about the benefits of wearing masks.

Clearly, many of these details are relevant today. It's telling that a frivolous requirement became such an issue while more severe rules banned things like talking on street corners, kissing your fiancé or attending religious services - even in the heart of America's Bible belt.

Perhaps there's something about masks and human impulses that has yet to be studied properly. If mass resistance to the mask should arise in the months to come, it will be interesting to see if new research will produce any useful findings on phobias about covering the face.

Samuel Cohn  
University of Glasgow

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# The Covid-19 pandemic is of our making



Dr R Neerunjun Gopee

*Prof Snowden admonishes that 'what happens in the long run depends on us'. If we don't take this seriously and act accordingly, we will have to face the dire consequences*

In the plethora of views expressed on various aspects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the collateral damages that it is causing in the social, economic and global political spheres, one of the common remarks made is that nature is taking its revenge on us. The implication is that we are apart from nature; nature is as if the 'other', to be treated as such. In fact, since the advent of science - for all the good that it has done and continues to do --, technolo-

shows that it is mightier than our vulnerable and frail bodies.

But we invited it in our midst, didn't we, creating the conditions for it to jump from the animals in which it was coexisting: bats and pangolins.

And that is the point that is made by Frank Snowden, professor emeritus of history and medical history at Yale University, in his book published in 2019, after four decades of research, *Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to the Present*. In an

"We cannot deny that as modern humans, we inhabit the earth and destroy it for our pleasure. Similarly, a virus that gets into our body considers it as just a host to inhabit and reproduce. Unlike humans, it doesn't consciously destroy the host. There are millions of viruses inside our body, happily living and co-existing. However, the body reacts to certain types of viruses only - those that have been uprooted from their natural environment that then allows them to cross over to humans, as in the case of Covid-19. When aggressive reaction of the human body towards the external object creates the problem, we fall sick..."

gy, and industry, the ruling mindset has been in line with the belief that we humans have the right to exert dominion over nature, to exploit it for our benefit. Which indeed we have been doing ruthlessly since then.

As a result, we have created the conditions for disrupting and destroying the natural habitats and ecosystems of other living beings, which have thus been forced to find ways to continue existing. In other words to survive, in line with the Darwinian theory of survival of the fittest. Covid-19 exemplifies this very well, for it has overturned our notion of our biological supremacy. Clearly, the fact that it can render ill millions of humans and kill by the hundreds of thousands

interview to Rudraneil Sengupta of *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi, May 01), he alluded to what he had said in his book, 'we have a ticking time bomb, because we live in a world of microbes and we create channels, because of the way our societies are structured, that microbes can exploit'.

In fact he was speaking from Rome, where he had gone to do research - and got infected! But luckily he was a mild case of Covid-19, and had recovered after three weeks of quarantine. He pointed out that -

'The 19th century was the era of industrial revolution and it created diseases transmitted via the oral/fecal route, cholera and typhoid, because industrializa-



Photo - www.weforum.org

Prof Frank Snowden advises that 'we have to reconfigure our cities, reconfigure our relationship with the environment, reconfigure our health care systems', though he adds, 'None of that will happen soon'

tion meant the sudden flooding of European cities by populations from the countryside for whom no preparations had been made and who overwhelmed the urban infrastructure. There was no clean water supply, no sewer systems, and dangers of contaminated water or food. Society at that time created an environmental niche for diseases like cholera and typhoid to exploit.'

And Covid-19, which he defines 'as the first pandemic of globalization', found its niches: 'massive population growth, crowding and mega cities; an industrial model that encourages rapacious growth without counting the environmental cost. By destroying biodiversity and animal habitat, we are bringing humans into relationships with animal reservoirs of disease that humans hardly encountered in the past'.

Further on, he goes on to say: 'Then there is 24-hour transport by air across the world. So, let's say if there is a new virus in Jakarta in the morning, it can be in Los Angeles by nightfall. These are not vulnerabilities put upon us by god or nature. This is not a random event, not something out of the blue or a Biblical plague. **Humans provide the conditions for epidemics to flourish.**'

We cannot deny that as modern humans, we inhabit the earth and destroy it for our pleasure. Similarly, a virus that gets into our body considers it as just a host to inhabit and reproduce. Unlike humans, it doesn't consciously destroy the host. There are millions of viruses inside our

body, happily living and co-existing. However, the body reacts to certain types of viruses only - those that have been uprooted from their natural environment, that then allows them to cross over to humans, as in the case of Covid-19. When aggressive reaction of the human body towards the external object creates the problem, we fall sick.

Usually, viruses are very specific, infecting only one species, one organ or one type of tissue in the body. However, COVID-19, despite targeting the lungs primarily, has been reported in studies done Europe and the US, to have caused disease in other organs too: the heart, kidneys, brain, eyes, skin. A few days ago, a particular type of multi-organ inflammation has been described in children as young as 15 months old suffering from COVID-19, but since it resembles another condition known as

would be expected, leading almost 80% of patients so treated in New York, for example, to die. On the other hand, another observation that is being noted is that Covid-19 affects all age groups, though it predominates in the elderly.

This means that its disease impact is vastly more complicated than was initially thought, so that treatment also is going to be difficult. Added to the timeline about the availability, affordability and access of a vaccine by the billions who will be requiring it, this makes the probability of the pandemic impact to last until even 2022 a real one.

And so, as Prof Frank Snowden advises, 'we have to reconfigure our cities, reconfigure our relationship with the environment, reconfigure our health care systems', though he adds, 'None of that will happen soon'.

Besides, the lung infection Covid-19 is causing in many cases is not responding to oxygen administration through ventilators as would be expected, leading almost 80% of patients so treated in New York, for example, to die. On the other hand, another observation that is being noted is that Covid-19 affects all age groups, though it predominates in the elderly.

This means that its disease impact is vastly more complicated than was initially thought, so that treatment also is going to be difficult..."

Kawasaki disease that affects blood vessels, more research is required before it can be causally linked to COVID-19.

Besides, the lung infection it is causing in many cases is not responding to oxygen administration through ventilators as

More tellingly, he admonishes that 'what happens in the long run depends on us'. If we don't take this seriously and act accordingly, we will have to face the dire consequences.

RN Gopee

## After Air Mauritius

# SBM - Another case of bad governance?

*If a banking group that doubles its payroll cost by Rs 1 billion in two years cannot leverage its bloated personnel to perform all the due diligence required in its operations, then it has a major problem on its hands*

Aditya Narayan

After Air Mauritius (now placed under voluntary administration following a loss of Rs 868 million in 2018-19), another government-owned entity is in the spotlight for its balance sheet written in red ink. This time it is the State Bank of Mauritius (SBM) Group of Companies, which has posted a paltry profit after tax of Rs 15 million for the financial year 2019 due to a credit loss of Rs 3 billion. Like Air Mauritius, SBM has the reputation of being the jewel in the crown of public assets. How did SBM Group fare so badly in 2019 in terms of financial results?

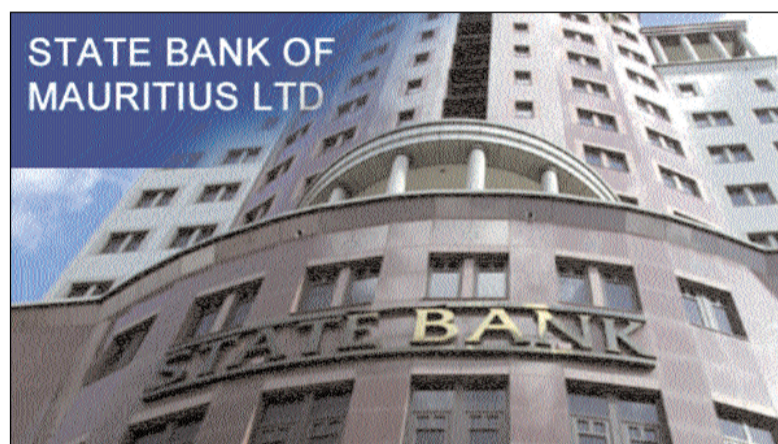
A comparative analysis of the financial results of SBM Group and Air Mauritius shows that the two entities have some common features:

- They are both government-owned enterprises where the State is the majority shareholder;
- They are both listed on the Stock Exchange as public companies that are required to abide by the rules of good corporate governance;
- Government appoints the chairmen and directors who sit on various boards;
- Chairmen and directors are entitled to a highly generous package in terms of fees, salaries and other benefits;
- The personnel cost is very high compared to the size of the business.

## Complex corporate structure

To better understand the situation, it is important to know how SBM Group is set up. The SBM Group is a conglomerate that is headed by a holding company, the SBM Holding Ltd. The latter controls two holding companies in different lines of business:

- Banking sector: The SBM (Bank) Holdings Ltd, which owns the SBM Bank (Mauritius) Ltd and wholly-owned subsidiaries in India, Madagascar, Seychelles and Kenya.
- Non-banking sector: the



The more fundamental question is whether the credit losses are the results of a lack of transparency and accountability in the convoluted structure of SBM Group with a holding company and subsidiaries, which altogether form an obscure landscape where nobody seems to take responsibility for what is going on. Bank clients and investors are confused and shocked by the apparent mismanagement of SBM Group where high-level officials stepped down and a new CEO was appointed last year following the discovery of abnormal banking practices...

SBM (Non-Financial Cluster) Holdings Ltd, which owns a number of companies in fund management, capital markets and insurance.

Over the years, the banking sector in Mauritius has been hit by various financial shenanigans. Years ago, the Mauritius Commercial Bank was involved in a scandal whereby the National Pension Fund was defrauded of Rs 800 million in its deposit account to the benefit of a third party. It was an absolute failure of internal control in a major commercial bank. Lately, the SBM Group hit the headlines for (a) the notorious euro-loan of Rs 40 million granted to an ex-minister without sufficient collateral, (b) the purchase of land for Rs 95 million from a private party at overvalued prices, (c) financial losses arising from bad debts written off, and (c) provisions for doubtful debts made due to the insolvency or delinquency of big foreign clients who defaulted on their loans.

## Disturbing results

The SBM Group's results in the banking sector for 2019 are quite disturbing. The abridged audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2019, which were published on 29 April 2020, disclose the consolidated results for SBM Holdings Ltd ('the

Company') and its subsidiaries altogether ('the Group'). The SBM Group, as such, ended up with a net profit after tax of Rs 15 million in 2019 compared with Rs 1.2 billion in 2018 and Rs 2.6 billion in 2017 as shown in the table below. The low profit for 2019 is due to the large credit loss expense of Rs 3 billion, of which Rs 1.7 billion (\$50 million) is attributed to a non-performing loan granted to an Indian businessman in the United Arab Emirates, who is now insolvent and under investigation on fraud charges.

One of the core values of the SBM Group, as listed in its annual report, is being prudent in taking risks with shareholder and depositor funds. However, over the last three years, SBM Group has accumulated credit losses of Rs 7.6 billion. This raises several critical questions as regards operational due diligence, credit approval and accountability. Is the bank following all the criteria of prudential credit risk management before approving large loans to foreigners. Are the KYC (Know Your Client) rules being applied rigorously? What amount of collateral is required for large loans to foreign applicants? Who recommends and approves the loans – Credit Management Committee or board of management?

The more fundamental question is whether the credit losses are the results of a lack of transparency and accountability in the convoluted structure of SBM Group with a holding company and subsidiaries, which altogether form an obscure landscape where nobody seems to take responsibility for what is going on. Bank clients and investors are confused and shocked by the apparent mismanagement of SBM Group where high-level officials stepped down and a new CEO was appointed last year following the discovery of abnormal banking practices.

## Association and control

Those who are familiar with the concept of Association and Control in corporate law and tax legislation know that a holding company has a *de jure* control over its wholly-owned subsidiaries and can issue shareholder directives for the proper management of affairs. Furthermore, considering the related-party relationship between parent and child companies, directors of the holding company can exercise *de facto* control over the subsidiaries by influencing their decision-making. This is specially true in Mauritius where corporate governance rules are not strictly followed in terms of independent boards of management.

Suspected government interference through board members appointed by the responsible minister seems to have blurred the boundaries between professional, independent management and oversight boards. Between the chairman of SBM Holdings Ltd (a non-government employee) and the chairman of SBM Bank (Mauritius) Ltd (the head of Cabinet), who wields how much power over decision-making in respect of large loans. Under a previous Bank of Mauritius (BOM) directive, the SBM Bank (Mauritius) Ltd as a separate entity was required to operate independently of the holding company.

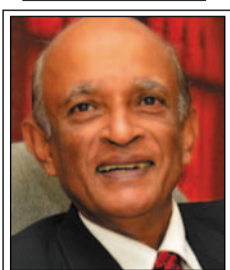
However, when something went wrong at SBM Bank (child), people looked to SBM Holdings Ltd (parent) for an explanation as, in the mind of the layman, both are the same as they belong to the same family. Last year, the BOM issued a new directive whereby SBM Holdings Ltd as the parent company was allowed to exercise some oversight on SBM Bank (subsidiary) by having its representative on the board of SBM Bank. However, the new oversight powers granted to the holding company have not prevented the bad loans provided to dubious businessmen.

It is obvious that SBM Group needs a major shake-up in its upper management ranks and a complete overhaul of its management practices. There is a lot of room for improvement from the credit risk assessment of major clients applying for loans to securing adequate collateral, to monitoring loan repayment, and to ensuring effective internal controls over loan approval and disbursement procedures. The SBM Group is accountable to its shareholders, employees and taxpayers (through the State as stockholder). People who are guilty of dereliction of duty should be held accountable as amateurism is not tolerable in the banking business. A lower profit means a lower dividend and a lower Return on Equity for shareholders. Investors, including the NPF, are watching with bewilderment the free-fall in SBM's stock price on the market, which impairs the value of their assets.

SBM Group's payroll increased by Rs 1 billion from 2018 to 2019. If a banking group that doubles its payroll cost in two years, which implies either a higher number of employees or a substantial increase in emoluments across the board, cannot leverage its bloated personnel to perform all the due diligence required in its operations, then it has a major problem on its hands.

Selected indicators	Y/E Dec 31, 2019	Y/E Dec 31, 2018	Y/E Dec 31, 2017
<b>A: Personnel expenses:</b>	Rs 000	Rs 000	Rs 000
- Group	2,883,912	1,951,225	1,525,027
- Company	82,994	104,253	18,843
<b>B: Profit after tax:</b>	Rs 000	Rs 000	Rs 000
- Group	15,035	1,245,794	2,574,923
- Company	763,477	627,235	1,254,013
<b>C: Credit loss:</b>	Rs 000	Rs 000	Rs 000
- Group	(2,996,142)	(3,559,350)	(1,115,280)
- Company	1,085	(1,646)	0

# About burden-sharing, frontliners and babus



S. Callikan

*Equitable burden-sharing, national solidarity or leading by example in difficult times should not be esoteric concepts*

**T**he situation of the Covid-19 pandemic seems to have settled down with only a wary watch-out for overhasty unlocking and the risks of a second wave to guard against. The bell-shaped curve of active cases is testimony to the professionalism, dedication and bravery of our health and sanitary personnel and their handling of the health dimension, even under conditions of intense public and political pressures and scrutiny while their own safety and that of their families was on the line. The nation owes them a formidable debt of gratitude for, in this pandemic of unprecedented proportions and acuity, they were not merely doing their job with commitment, discharging their duties selflessly or honoring their Hippocratic oaths with quiet pride.

From the cleaners, ward and charge nurses, the laboratory personnel, through the GPs to the specialists or the hospital administrators, they were among our most exposed frontliners and countless numbers in their anonymity walked the extra mile for our collective safety. There were other exposed frontliners at varying degrees, including the cops on the beat, the scavengers, the vegetable growers, the supermarket cashiers and placers, the essential services and those tending to pharmacies or service stations.

If the health sector professionals and administration, despite some early hiccups and lack of testing tools or protective gear, can be lauded for their handling of the worst stages of the pandemic curve, through weeks of painstaking contact tracing, testing and isolation or quarantine, another Ministry, that of Education, can be commended for having taken the decision to postpone all classes and school attendances to the first of August (at best). The prospect of students and teachers loosed onto public transport and classrooms while maintaining all sanitary and safety precautions would have been hair-raising for stakeholders and parents. It also provides the Education authorities ample time to plan and organize teaching, exams, pedagogical and corollary matters with a maximum of advice and input from all concerned quarters. That would be a welcome spirit.

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## Dominant narratives

In a crisis of such unprecedented proportions, jeopardizing lives and livelihoods, there was no doubt an early disarray visible at many levels (delayed reactions, unpreparedness, sloppy quarantine management, stranded travellers, misfiring commu-

nication, etc). The unpreparedness was largely attributable to the dominant political narrative for two long months, from mid-January onwards, that "all was well and under control" and other messaging of the same ilk. They were religiously repeated by all Government babus, MPs, PPSes and Ministers at the National Assembly and on every platform. All top administrative echelons obviously take their cue from government's dominant narrative. No PAS, PS nor even the most foolhardy Minister, would have started an isolated planning process in case the waves were indeed an impending tsunami. Such rash action would have been tantamount to high treason deserving of banishment! Any forward or what-if planning stood powerfully reined in. And in the tsunami, some Ministers might have found an opportunity to shine, but most were floundering with stranded Mauritians abroad or aboard cruise ships, helpless and unresponsive embassies abroad, local bottled gas or distribution nightmares, the potato and onion rackets or the plight of vegetable planters, breeders and fishermen.

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## Risk allowances

Our frontliners deserve praise and gratitude even though a risk or special duty



“The bell-shaped curve of active cases is testimony to the professionalism, dedication and bravery of our health and sanitary personnel and their handling of the health dimension, even under conditions of intense public and political pressures and scrutiny while their own safety and that of their families was on the line. The nation owes them a formidable debt of gratitude for, in this pandemic of unprecedented proportions and acuity, they were not merely doing their job with commitment, discharging their duties selflessly or honoring their Hippocratic oaths with quiet pride...”

allowance for the critical month would not be, in most minds, unjustified. We read some days ago that most major names in the French "grande distribution" sector, the super and hypermarkets, had decided to grant their exposed employees a one-off allowance of 1000 Euros to undertake work during the lockdown period with Covid-19 risks high on people's minds.

*"Carrefour a aussi choisi de privilégier*



“Our frontliners deserve praise and gratitude even though a risk or special duty allowance for the critical month would not be, in most minds, unjustified. We read some days ago that most major names in the French "grande distribution" sector, the super and hypermarkets, had decided to grant their exposed employees a one-off allowance of 1000 Euros to undertake work during the lockdown period. Among our supermarkets and hypers, some are quite profitable even if not at French scales. With even a token one-off risk gesture of Rs 5000 to their say 1500 frontline employees, neither Winners nor any of the big names would suffer irreparable financial losses...”

*les salariés sur le terrain. 85 000 employés des magasins, drives et entrepôts se verront attribuer une prime de 1 000 euros sur leur salaire du mois de mai*" goes a quote in *Le Monde* (of 27 April).

Among our supermarkets and hypers, some are quite profitable even if not at French scales: Super-U had posted pre-tax profits of Rs 220m in 2016 and probably since then. Winners, Jumbo/Spar and Winners stood at around Rs 70m each. With an average rise of prices of 25-30% alluded to during lockdown, they may not have suffered financially from the pandemic, may not require government salary

tors would, in any case, seem far more deserving than the host of allowances which Ministers and PPSs have enjoyed over the same period, the shocking scale of which has been revealed by former Minister Bhadain. Of course, our MPs and Ministers should receive a fair emolument and benefits package, and we also note that we are not in Nigeria's league where Ministers earn a miserly \$ 2000 monthly salary and a guaranteed \$ 35,000 per month of diverse allowances. Neither are we in Singapore's league where an ingenious old formula of aligning MP salaries on a percentage of top private sector salaries has in recent years boomed out of control to the extent that starting MPs earn a shocking \$ 880,000 annual salary.

Barring such extreme oddities, we could more usefully compare notes with annual salaries and benefits in other places. From \$ 22,000 for President Xi, the leader of one of the world's richest economies, to some \$ 33,000 for Polish, Turk or Spanish MPs, \$ 75,000 for nearby leaders in Kenya or South Africa, our jaunty Ministers are miles ahead.

At some \$ 100,000 package of pay, self-styled allowances and benefits, our Ministers float in the category of best-paid EU Ministers (\$ 98,000 in France, \$ 105,000 in UK, Netherlands or Ireland). Even when allowance is made for GDP or purchasing power differentials or the expenses incurred during election campaigns, those are substantially generous terms. Successive governments may have turned a blind eye during normal times but in post-pandemic dire times, painful reconstruction and social hammerings the Minister of Finance warns about, he would be entirely justified in sending a strong signal about those outlandish gratifications at various top levels, including armies of advisers. Equitable burden-sharing, national solidarity or leading by example in difficult times should not be esoteric concepts.

assistance and, with even a token one-off risk gesture of Rs 5000 to their say 1500 frontline employees, neither Winners nor any of the big names would suffer irreparable financial losses.

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## Burden-sharing

A one-off risk allowance for employees of super and hypermarkets and other sec-

## Coronavirus: Tanzanian president promises to import Madagascar's 'cure'



The president of Tanzania says he will send a plane to Madagascar to import a herbal tonic which has been touted as a cure for coronavirus by the country's president. Congo-Brazzaville's president has also promised to import the drink, which is produced from the artemisia plant - the source of an ingredient used in a malaria treatment.

The World Health Organization has said there is no proof of any cure and has advised people against self-medicating, reports BBC News.

The drink was launched as Covid-Organics and was being marketed after being tested on fewer than 20 people over a period of three weeks, the president's chief of staff Lova Hasinirina Ranoromaro

told the BBC.

In response to the launch of Covid-Organics, the WHO said that it did not recommend "self-medication with any medicines... as a prevention or cure for Covid-19".

It reiterated earlier comments by WHO head Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus that there were "no short-cuts" to finding effective medication to fight coronavirus.

International trials were under way to find an effective treatment, the WHO added.

In March, the US-based National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health warned against purported coronavirus remedies, including herbal therapies and teas - saying the best way to prevent infection was to avoid exposure to the virus.

The drink has been picked up in other African countries. On Saturday Madagascar delivered a shipment to Guinea-Bissau. The Malagasy president also tweeted that the special envoy to Equatorial Guinea picked up a shipment of the drink.

Speaking on TV, Tanzania's President John Magufuli said he was already in contact with the government of Madagascar and would despatch an aircraft to the island nation to collect the medicine.

## India's tally of coronavirus cases: 42,500; death toll 1,373



Migrant workers board a special train to return to Agra, at a railway station in Ahmedabad

India registered a jump of 72 deaths and 2,553 cases in the last 24 hours, ending Monday morning, as the number of coronavirus-related fatalities rose to 1,373.

According to the Union health ministry, the total coronavirus cases in India climbed to 42,533 on Monday morning.

The number of active coronavirus cases in India stood at 29,453, while 11,707 people have recovered and one patient migrated, the ministry said. The total number also includes 111 foreign nationals, reports India Today.

At 548, Maharashtra accounts for the maximum of the nationwide deaths due to coronavirus. Gujarat comes second with 290 deaths, followed by Madhya Pradesh 156, Rajasthan 71, Delhi 64, Uttar Pradesh 43, and West Bengal 35.

According to the health ministry data updated on Monday evening, the highest number of confirmed cases in the country is from Maharashtra at 12,974, followed by Gujarat at 5,428, Delhi 4,549, Madhya Pradesh 2,846, Rajasthan 2,886, Tamil

Nadu 3,023 and Uttar Pradesh 2,645.

The number of coronavirus cases has gone up to 1,583 in Andhra Pradesh and 1,082 in Telangana. It has risen to 963 in West Bengal, 1,102 in Punjab, 701 in Jammu and Kashmir, 614 in Karnataka, 500 in Kerala and 503 in Bihar.

Haryana has reported 442 coronavirus cases, while Odisha has 162 cases. A total of 115 people have been infected with the virus in Jharkhand and 94 in Chandigarh. Uttarakhand has reported 60 cases, Chhattisgarh 57 and Assam 43 cases. Ladakh has registered 41 cases and Himachal Pradesh 40 so far.

Thirty-three Covid-19 cases have been reported from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Meghalaya has reported 12 cases, Puducherry eight, while Goa has seven Covid-19 cases.

Tripura has registered 16 cases, while Manipur has two cases. Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have reported a case each.

## New lows for deaths in France, Spain and Italy

France, Italy and Spain have registered the lowest daily death tolls for weeks as they prepare to ease restrictions.

France reported 135 deaths; Spain's 164 were the lowest since mid-March; and Italy's 174 was a two-month low.

Meanwhile, a French doctor has claimed new tests on samples from patients show the virus was present in the country last year - weeks before the first officially recorded case.

In Russia the virus appears to be advancing, with 10,000 new infections.

But Russia's mortality rate remains low relative to other countries. On Sunday it recorded 58 deaths, taking its total to 1,280, reports BBC News.

The UK recorded 315 new deaths and has the third-highest number of deaths behind the US and Italy. However British officials say the outbreak has peaked and the number of new hospital admissions is declining.

Globally the pandemic has seen nearly 3.5 million people infected and nearly 250,000 people have died.

### Was the virus in France last year?

The number of new recorded deaths is

the lowest since late March, when only deaths in hospitals were being recorded. The new figures include deaths in care homes and have been declining for several days.

Meanwhile, an intensive care chief in the Paris region has told local media that the virus was present in France on 27 December - a month before the first cases were confirmed.

Yves Cohen told broadcaster BFMTV that his team had revisited negative tests for flu and other coronaviruses on 24 patients who had been in hospital with respiratory symptoms in December and January.

"Of the 24 patients, we had one positive result for Covid-19 on 27 December when he was in hospital with us," he said, adding that the test had been repeated several times to confirm the result.

Dr Cohen said he had reported the case to the regional health authorities and called for other negative tests from the same period to be re-examined.

France is planning to lift its lockdown on 11 May, when children will return to school in phases, some businesses will reopen and people will be able to travel within 100km (60 miles) of their homes without the need

for a document giving a reason for their movement.

However, on Sunday Health Minister Olivier Véran said this would depend on further falls in the number of new infections, particularly in the worst-affected areas like the Paris region and northeast France.

France also clarified that a rule requiring anyone entering the country to go into isolation for two weeks did not apply to people arriving from EU countries, the Schengen area or the UK.

### What's happening in Spain?

Spain's death toll of 164 was the lowest for a month-and-a-half and was more than a hundred down on Saturday's figure.

On Saturday adults were able to exercise outdoors for the first time in seven weeks. The lockdown was eased for children under 14 a week ago.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said Spain was reaping the rewards of the sacrifices made during the lockdown, one of Europe's strictest.

On Monday masks will become compulsory on public transport and some small businesses such as hairdressers will open for individual customer appointments.

### What about in Italy?

Italy registered the lowest daily number of coronavirus-related deaths since just after its lockdown started two months ago. Both the numbers of new infections and patients in intensive care have continued to fall.

The country is relaxing its lockdown from Monday, when Italians will be able to exercise as long as they respect rules on maintaining physical distance. They will also be able to visit relatives - but not friends - within their region.

However schools, cinemas and most shops will stay shut. Bars and restaurants are due to start allowing customers to sit at tables in June.

Italy's death toll stands at 28,884 - second only to the US where more than 68,000 people have died.

The UK's death toll is 28,446 while in Spain and France 25,100 people and 24,729 people respectively have died.

The UK government is expected to announce the next steps in its response to the pandemic next Sunday.

Compiled by  
Doojesh Ramlallah

# The Price of Silence

By Somduth Bhuckory

That's news indeed! The Labour Party is holding a meeting at the Champ de Mars and it has invited the public "*pour entendre les principaux orateurs du Parti traiter de la question constitutionnelle*".

So the oppressive silence all around us is going to be broken at long last. We were wondering if there existed another British colony where silence was at such a premium.

We have been expecting eagerly the Labour delegates to the London Conference to give the people an account of their mission. Only this week we saw the Singapore delegation going back home and telling the people immediately about their talks and achievements.

The silence of the Labour delegates and of the Labour Party was driving us to think that politics here was assuming the nature of freemasonry. The headquarters of the Labour Party were getting so much shrouded in silence and mystery that one would soon have started looking upon them as a masonic lodge.

'No public meetings and no statements in the press? Is that the way to deal with people who until yesterday had high hopes in Labour? Do Labourites deserve such a shabby treatment?' people had started to ask themselves when the Labour Party communique appeared.

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More reaction will follow the day the Legislative Council will be silent for want of an Opposition. This is bound to happen when we get the proposed Executive Council. The members elected on the Labour ticket will be silent or sing the praise of their Ministers. And the Ministers will be silent or sing the praise of Government. Ministers will always support Government because of the doctrine of ministerial responsibility and members will always support ministers because of Party discipline. There will be harmony in the Executive Council and silence in the Legislative Council.

At what price silence? At what price silvery speech is making room for golden silence?

And the platform will cease resounding with the fiery speeches of leaders. There will not be speeches then but friendly fireside chats. Politics will cease to be an element of popular mass movement. It will become a pipe-and-armchair business.

By seeking too much harmony we are heading for chaos. By trying to appease and satisfy all shades of opinion we are running counter to established rules of

parliamentary democracy. And by remaining silent we will leave the future of Mauritius to drift on the waves of uncertainty.

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It is as a result of our silence that the British press ignores us so much. The name of Mauritius does not mean much because how long would you expect the dodo and the blue penny stamp to be on the stage? Our silence is leading us into oblivion. Here is a fresh example.

In the March number of the **Socialist Commentary** there is a study of contemporary England entitled '*The Future of John Bull*'. The article is divided into eight parts and one of them is '*The End of Imperialism*' in which the socialist approach to British colonialism has been outlined. That part is illustrated by a map showing the Commonwealth and the British Colonies and Protectorates. That map contains even Seychelles but not Mauritius. At least the temporary exile to the Seychelles Islands of Archbishop Makarios has focussed the attention of the world on our neighbours. We are doing next to nothing to bring Mauritius in the news. Is it odd then that we don't exist practically on the map of the British colonial empire?

We are glad to find a passage in '*The End of Imperialism*' which echoes our contention of last week that everywhere colonialism is under fire. This is the passage: "The old imperialism is everywhere under attack, and everywhere on the retreat. Everywhere there is a drive towards self-government, a status of equality and a rising standard of living. Wherever the imperialist powers have clung on, there has been trouble." Had the **Socialist Commentary** known of the quiet haven of colonialism that Mauritius is, it would naturally have qualified the sweeping statement.

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At this crucial stage of our history when the political future of the island looks so dark, we cannot help quoting another passage from '*The Future of John Bull*'. It is the opening paragraph and it runs thus: "It is in times of crisis that nations choose their destiny, for better or for worse. Much of the time politics run their course with the politicians in charge. No more, perhaps, than a small minority of people take an active interest in their decisions. Then suddenly there comes a crisis; the nation finds itself split and confused. A choice must be made in which everyone is involved, and the whole future may depend on the outcome."

Such a crisis is at our door. The people

must think and speak their mind. And the people must break their silence to tell whomsoever it may concern: '**Down with the London Agreement!**'

A serious question arises when we have to consider the fate of the London Agreement: Can the Labour Party reject it? It is certain that the Labour delegates are bound by the Agreement. Now, there is a general feeling that the delegates have gone beyond the mandate given to them. If such really is the case, the Labour Party can surely repudiate the Agreement. But will the delegates be frank enough to admit their mistake?

We don't know what the principal ora-

tors of the Labour Party are going to tell us but we suppose that the meeting is not intended to reveal the presence of any Bevan in the Party. We hope, however, that the meeting will reveal what part, if any, the offer of ministries has had to play.

Let the leaders speak and let the people speak. We want to know what has happened and how it has happened. The leaders must surely like to know the opinion of the people.

Silence, either now or in future, will do us harm by breeding doubts and hypocrisy. Its price can only be political suicide.

## Food for Thought

### This is just the beginning...

For those who are arguing on both sides that we must open now or it is too soon to open, this is the most important thing you need to know.

Here's the most asked question to answer: When will it be SAFE to end the lockdown?

May 1st? Or May 15th? Or June end? Or July end? Or August?

Here's the real answer: Never. It will never be SAFE.

Why? Social distancing, staying at home, all of these measures... were these not meant to "cure" Covid-19?

No, at all! These were measures to slow it down, so as to not overwhelm our healthcare system.

For the most part, so far we've done that.

However it should be clearly understood that it does not change the virality of Covid-19; or how it spreads from one person to another.

Nor does it have any effect on the mortality rate. It was intended to just delay it until we find a permanent cure.

A very important point to note here is that as soon as we re-emerge, the virus will spread again, and the people with weak immune systems will still succumb to it in large numbers.

This is a harsh fact which all of us have to realise.

The people who missed it this time, may eventually get it - regardless of whether we re-emerge on May 1st or September 30th...

What is it that we need to do now?

We need to protect our healthcare system in every possible way to handle the load, but we don't need to mislead

ourselves over the outcome of this quarantine.

Hard Truth of life now is -

It is slowing it down, but not curing it.

E.g. : If you're driving to Souillac from Cap Malheureux at 50 miles an hour or 100 miles an hour, the distance doesn't change, isn't it?

Therefore the need of the hour now is -

If your lifestyle is causing you to have a weakened immune system, use this lockdown time to correct that. This should be one of our major resolutions/actionables now without any doubt!

Otherwise, you've placed a "heavy target" on your own back which will be very difficult to carry.

Youngsters as well as older people should understand and make sure that this is not the time for indulging in comfort food - but it's a time to give ourselves the healthiest, most robust immune system our body is capable of.

How can this be achieved?

1. By having healthy, nutritious food.
2. Compulsory 8-hour night sleep.
3. Drink lime water (warm water) daily morning without fail.
4. Not having refrigerated or aerated drinks.
5. Detox yourself everyday maintain social distancing for next couple of weeks/even months until we have a vaccine or definite, standardized, proven medicine that ensures rapid cure.

It's as simple as this!

Hope you all understand that this is just the beginning and not the end.



Interview: Vinaye Ancharaz, Economist

## “The Post-Lockdown Recovery Will Be Slow and Painful”

**E**conomist Vinaye Ancharaz takes a bird's eye view of the economic dimensions of the Covid-19 pandemic. Unsurprisingly, he sees the chances of any recovery taking place in 2020 as receding, so that we will have to wait until 2021 for an economic upswing. He feels that the Wage Assistance Scheme should have been better targeted instead of being applied to all private sector entities indiscriminately, and this can still be reviewed, along with taking a longer term view of seriously considering much needed tax reforms, as well as taking the drastic steps required for greater efficiency of public sector organizations like SBM, Air Mauritius, etc.

**Mauritius Times:** What are your feelings could be the most likely scenario over the short term? Covid-19 vanishes and our economy recovers but rather tepidly, or it lingers and we are in for a deep recession?

**Vinaye Ancharaz:** There's no clear answer to your question. The economic evolution here in Mauritius and globally will, of course, depend on the duration of the pandemic. In Mauritius, the number of cases seems to have levelled off, and we haven't had any new cases for several days in a row.

“We brag ourselves as a modern country, and we have big cars and luxury malls to show off for that. But easy lease facilities are causing young employees to sink in debt while exorbitant rents for stalls in our shopping malls are choking life out of small businesses. I believe it is time for government to come up with some form of rent control...”

I was therefore puzzled by the government's decision to extend the lockdown until June 1st. Like many, I wonder if there's more to it than meets the eye. Perhaps time will tell...

There are multiple scenarios, but two of them stand out. One is that the worst is over, and that we should prepare for a gradual return to economic activity — as envisaged by the Government's plan. The other — rather extreme if we were to subscribe to the view of some experts who have studied past pandemics — is that a second wave, perhaps deadlier, could be around the corner.

I certainly don't want to sound as a prophet of doom — quite to the contrary. I look forward to the economy picking up in the months to come, slowly but surely. However, one thing that the pandemic has taught us is that we can never be too prepared. So, while we try to return to 'business as usual' — if that is possible — we should be ever conscious of how fragile life and livelihoods could be, and we should try harder to be resilient in the broad sense of the term.

**\* What are the odds for a quick economic recovery post-lockdown? Will it be wholly dependent on how the global economy will recover, or do you subscribe to the view expressed here and abroad that 2020 is wasted anyway, and we'd rather wait for better days in 2021?**

The post-lockdown recovery will be slow and painful. The IMF forecasts that GDP in Mauritius will contract by 6.8% in 2020. However, I believe this is a best-case scenario. The actual contraction will be in excess of 10%! As you hinted in your question, the

pace of economic recovery will depend to a significant extent on how the global economy responds in the aftermath of the Covid-19 crisis. The US, the world's biggest economy, has borne the brunt of the pandemic, and no end is in sight yet. Europe, our prime export market, has also been severely hit, and growth in the Euro Area is expected to top — 7.5%.

Mauritius will not be able to escape from the tentacles of the global recession in 2020. What is interesting to note about the current recession is that it will hit Mauritius harder

than many other economies, unlike the recession induced by the 2008 financial crisis. In 2009, for example, while the world economy contracted by 1.7%, Mauritius registered a respectable GDP growth of 2.5%. But this is nothing to cheer about: the country was spared only because of its low degree of financial integration in the global economy. But this time around, the economic crisis is different and the Mauritian economy, weakened by years of mismanagement and bad governance, will have little cover.

Our merchandise exports, or whatever remains of them, will fall sharply; tourist arrivals are not expected to pick up until much later in 2021; and, locally, economic activity will remain subdued as the retail sector, construction and a host of other services, including restaurants, entertainment, transportation and education services pick up timidly, subject to Government directives. What I worry more is that we may never quite return to normalcy as the pandemic would have left deep scars and a permanent fear of crowds. This will condemn businesses to operate below capacity for months, if not years to come, with attendant consequences on output and employment.

So, while we wait for better days in 2021, we have to endure the pains of a full-blown economic recession in 2020. However, this is not to say that the year is wasted. The alternative scenario could have been far more dramatic than what we have witnessed. While every loss of life is deplorable, I think it's safe to say that, at the end of the day, we came out of the pandemic relatively

unscathed. As I've said before, the priority should be to save lives — for without life, there is no livelihood, and without people, there is no economy. On that count, Mauritius did rather well.

**\* Is it too early to talk about how our economy might be transformed or how it will have to evolve to avoid the weaknesses noted in the context of the pandemic?**

No, it's never too early to talk about the economic weaknesses that were exposed by the coronavirus pandemic and what we need to do to avoid them in the future — with or without such pandemics.

I think the most important lesson we learned is the urgent need for the country to be self-sufficient in food. Food imports amounted to Rs 36 billion in 2019, representing 18% of the country's total import bill. Of this amount, Rs 4 billion was spent on fruits and vegetables, and a similar amount on dairy products. While I agree that we cannot produce everything we consume, it is inconceivable that, at a time when we are lamenting the death of King Sugar, we cannot find ways to use our agricultural lands more judiciously.

We imported some 12,000 tons of potatoes and over 15,000 tons of onions last year! And we saw the chaos that the ongoing

“I fail to understand how large sugar estates could be granted all kinds of tax concessions when they convert agricultural land into luxury villas while small owners are threatened with stifling taxes when they want to move out of unprofitable cane cultivation. It is this kind of deranged incentives that have encouraged some activities to flourish at the expense of productive sectors...”

pandemic has created around the sale of these products! Can't we grow more of these staples locally? Even chicken that we claim as 100% locally-bred is fed with imported maize. We imported over 100,000 tons of this cereal in 2019!

Seriously, I think there is a major mismatch between our needs and our capabilities in the agricultural sector. I believe it is high time that we came up with a food security bill to encourage greater local production of basic commodities and reduce our reliance on imports. This is not just to protect ourselves at times of disruption in global supply chains, it also makes good economic sense.

Globally, countries are waking up to their

agricultural potential. A robust and efficient agricultural sector is the hallmark of a modern economy. But in Mauritius, incentives for agricultural production have been distorted — either in favour of sugar production or in favour of non-agricultural activities, such as IRS, RES, PDS, etc., that are competing land away from primary agricultural use. There is urgent need to take a holistic look at the agricultural sector and enact critical reforms to boost and diversify local food production.

Beyond food security, the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the virtues of a well-diversified economy, whether in terms of sectors or markets. Mauritius is a services-oriented economy, dominated by tourism, financial services and retail trade. But tradable services are extremely vulnerable to twists and turns in the global economy. While we rethink our diversification strategy, it is important that we also look regionally. African and other emerging economies are more resilient to global crises and provide a much-needed cushion.

There are several other lessons that need to be debated in the months to come — such as the need for a robust public health sector, alternative modes of teaching and learning, flexitime and working from home — as well as new opportunities emerging in the wake of the pandemic, such as home delivery services, online courses, etc.

Last, but not least, we cannot be ready enough for a pandemic! It is important for the government to constantly build its war chest and keep a Plan B at hand at all times. Just like it is important for people to rethink their priorities and save for rainy days.

**\* The cost to the country of 40 days into the lockdown has been estimated to be around 10% of GDP. That was stated by the Finance minister last week in the wake of the extension to 1 June 20. Another month of confinement will add up to the cost to the country of the pandemic even if some sectors will see a partial easing of the lockdown mid-June. The questions of who will and how to pay for the pandemic will sooner or later have to be addressed. What's your take on these questions?**

I believe there will be a 2-digit contraction of the economy this year before we start picking up in 2021. But while it is true that the

lockdown has been extended to 1st June, the economy has started opening up gradually, and the confinement will not be as rigid as it was in the first 5 weeks. As much as I believe in protecting human life, I believe also in preserving livelihoods. So, it is imperative that economic activity is allowed to resume sooner rather than later, subject, of course, to sanitary norms and other precautionary measures.

I say this because I am aware of the hardships sustained by thousands of families who run small businesses or operate in the informal sector. While many of them are receiving Rs 5,200 as government support, this is clearly not enough.

# 'In 2009, Mauritius was spared only because of its low degree of financial integration in the global economy.

But this time around, the economic crisis is different'

☞ Cont. from page 8

The best way to help them is by letting these people return to work.

The government had earmarked Rs 2.6 billion in the Wage Assistance Scheme to provide for the payment of salaries in the private sector. I understand that this amount covered the month of March 2020. With the lockdown extended until 1st June, I doubt if there are enough funds to cover two more months of wage support.

But, as an economist, I wonder also where the money will come from. The government has acted in extremely irresponsible ways over the past 5 years, borrowing as if there was no future and squandering public finances to make good on its electoral promises. Several large-scale investment projects that guzzled up billions of rupees are of dubious economic value, and some will probably be left in decay. Borrowing has reached alarming levels, and will likely entail a downgrading of the country's credit ratings. Ploughing out Rs18 billion from the coffers of the central bank was an ill-inspired move.

“A robust and efficient agricultural sector is the hallmark of a modern economy. But in Mauritius, incentives for agricultural production have been distorted — either in favour of sugar production or in favour of non-agricultural activities, such as IRS, RES, PDS, etc., that are competing land away from primary agricultural use. There is urgent need to take a holistic look at the agricultural sector and enact critical reforms...”

All of this has severely limited the government's fiscal space. Tax revenues will dwindle as economic activity remains subdued, and the government cannot borrow without trespassing the budget deficit ceiling of 65%. And, as if these troubles were not enough, the government will have to grapple with two state companies, Air Mauritius and SBM, in dire straits largely due to its own mismanagement down the years.

**\* How is Government doing so far with its assistance measures directed towards the self-employed and to private sector employers? Is it doing the best it could, or not nearly enough? Or is it misdirected in some sectors?**

As I said before, the Wage Assistance Scheme is underfunded and it isn't clear where additional funds will come from. Will it be from the Covid-19 Solidarity Fund? Maybe. But it is clear that the government is not doing the best it could. In other countries, governments are pumping out billions of dollars to support livelihoods and to stimulate the economy. The Rs 9 billion fund that the government announced earlier will not be enough. It only shows that the government has run out of money!

On the other hand, the Wage Assistance Scheme is designed to cover the entire private sector! It does not distinguish between small and large enterprises; essential and non-essential sectors; firms in difficulty and companies making billions in profit, etc. In my view, this is an inefficient use of scarce funds. The Scheme would achieve more if it was targeted to the needy. But I can understand the political motives underlying the current design of the Scheme. By paying part of the private sector's wage bill, the government seeks to ensure that jobs are preserved. For it will have a legitimate right to query companies that took money from the Scheme and still closed down or downsized. We certainly don't want a repeat of the 2009 stimulus package saga!

**\* A possible second wave and non-recovery of world trade could work against our economic recovery efforts, but what about the major factors on our side that may help a quick turnaround? A proactive central bank? Decisive political leadership, or financial assistance from the IMF and/or the much talked about Soodhun-negotiated loans?**

All of what you mention will have a role to play in the post-pandemic economic recovery. The Bank of Mauritius has slashed the repo rate by 1% and proposed measures to support cash-strapped companies. When it comes to financing, several proposals have been floated by people in the government as well as self-proclaimed pundits outside the corridors of power. There is much talk about 'helicopter money' — basically, the idea that the central bank puts into circulation billions of rupees of newly printed money. The argument is that this will boost purchasing power at a time of low inflation. But the argument is flawed. True, inflation is currently low, but it is ridiculous to assume that it will remain so. Already, the IMF has forecast an inflation of 8.5% this year; my take is that the inflation rate will move into double-digit territory. With helicopter money, along with the continued depreciation of the rupee, we may well be looking at inflation of the kind we last saw in the early 1980s.

I am not in favour of what you call 'Soodhun-negotiated loans' — for one simple reason. We don't know the real terms on which such loans are given to the country. Personally, I would prefer getting a loan from the IMF. It will surely come with conditionality, but I believe we need it to start some critically-needed reforms.

Almost all sectors of the economy are crying out for reform. We have become a nation of entitlements. The Welfare State has reached a breaking point. The public service is over-staffed and underproductive. Government interference in parastatals and public companies in which the State is a major shareholder has resulted in a culture of 'laissez-aller', largesse and inefficiency galore! There is hardly any state-run company earning a profit. Governance finances need to be revamped. The list goes on...

**\* What do you think could be the other**

**(best) possible steps to speed up recovery? A revision of our flat tax system, tax cuts, a special Covid budget with amongst others the introduction of a Covid tax?**

It will be a combination of different things — a comprehensive package spanning the short-term to the long-term. Immediate measures include restoring the government budget. I welcome the government's call for a 10% cut across Ministries' budgets and a freeze on recruitment in the civil service. (Recall that during the 2019 electoral campaign, the same government had promised to create 10,000 jobs in the public sector!) But, in light of the wastages publicized by the National Audit Office each year, I believe there's scope for more.

On the financing side, I think it's high time that we revisited our income tax system. When the government proposed changes in the tax bands in the last Budget, I was hoping to see a more progressive tax system. Instead, the reforms went backwards: the previously 15% flat rate was retained while a lower band at 10% was introduced! It is clear that this was a populist measure aimed at winning votes, rather than a fiscally responsible act that would secure the country's finances.

Tax rates in Mauritius are among the lowest in the world. At current trends, the welfare state is unsustainable, but past governments have shied away from politically difficult tax reforms. Now is the time to rethink the tax system. I believe there is room to introduce a 25% income tax rate for both individuals and companies.

“While we wait for better days in 2021, we have to endure the pains of a full-blown economic recession in 2020. However, this is not to say that the year is wasted. The alternative scenario could have been far more dramatic than what we have witnessed. While every loss of life is deplorable, I think it's safe to say that, at the end of the day, we came out of the pandemic relatively unscathed...”

**\* Once Covid is gone and economic recovery is well underway, what should be the priorities of the Government?**

Over the longer term, the government should revisit a number of shortcomings that became glaringly clear during the pandemic. I talked about the need for greater food security, which requires that the government rethinks its incentives across sectors to restore balance. I fail to understand how large sugar estates could be granted all kinds of tax concessions when they convert agricultural land into luxury villas while small owners are threatened with stifling taxes when they want to move out of unprofitable cane cultivation. It is this kind of deranged incentives that have encouraged some acti-



vities to flourish at the expense of productive sectors.

On the other hand, we brag ourselves as a modern country, and we have big cars and luxury malls to show off for that. But easy lease facilities are causing young employees to sink in debt while exorbitant rents for stalls in our shopping malls are choking life out of small businesses. I believe it is time for government to come up with some form of rent control.

We are a small economy infested with monopolistic practices. When markets fail, economists recommend government intervention to correct market failures. I am one of those economists, and I believe in the virtues of free markets and free trade. But economic liberalization in Mauritius has been pursued to its very limits, leaving businesses dangerously exposed to external competition and to excessive profiteering by unscrupulous traders and investors. In a small country like ours, we cannot expect competition to be fair.

The Competition Commission of Mauritius, supposed to be a vanguard against market power, has failed lamentably. It is imperative that the government empowers the institution to fully play the role it is designed to play. At the same time, the government should consider extending price controls to a larger number of goods and services to provide relief to both consumers and small businesses that use those products as inputs. The price controls introduced during the pandemic are a welcome start; they should not be the end!

The pandemic also revealed the size and precariousness of the informal sector. Informality makes it hard for the government to propose targeted support measures. There is need, more than ever before, for businesses to register duly. For those that prefer to remain informal for fear of paying taxes, the government should consider a nominal tax rate that could encourage them to comply.

We can't be thankful enough for the sacrifices of frontline workers who helped combat the pandemic. Luckily, Mauritius managed to flatten the curve, preventing our healthcare facilities from being overwhelmed. But the pandemic highlighted the crucial importance of a modern, efficient and capable healthcare sector. Over the long term, the government should consider how this sector could be strengthened and empowered to deliver more effectively. Free healthcare should not mean cheap health care!



Kul Bhushan

A few weeks into corona pandemic and nature is rejoicing in its long neglected, own existence. The sky is blue. Stars are gazing at the all beautiful earth. Once again recognising it. No layers of pollution to block the view.

Waters have turned clear. Birds have come alive, replacing the shrill alarm clocks. The unity of nature produces musical cacophony that can beat any Mozart and Rehman.

Animals, big and small, have begun to reclaim what was originally theirs. And man in turn, has gone into hiding, having caused shameful damage and destruction! Bravo! Does one cut the very hand that feeds us? Think.

### Gang-raped Earth

Is mankind bereft of basic intelligence? The term, 'Mother Earth' sounds so romantic but have we not repeatedly gang-raped it? Chopping trees, destroying mountains, polluting rivers... who are we? Human beings or greedy, blood-thirsty monsters? The only species with gluttony hunger... more is less for most of us.

Our pious river, the Ganges, has finally come alive. It finally got a chance to bathe itself, to clean itself of all the muck ruthlessly thrown into it by us, the so-called civilised species!

Why must we want to spend endless amounts of money on cleaning our otherwise clean, vibrant rivers? Wonder how nature managed to take so much cruelty from us? Finally, the universe conspired to step in and say, 'Enough is enough!'

Knowing man's evil mind, it transported an invisible enemy and failed the combined might of the armies, air forces and navies. The virus is not racial or religious by nature, nor does it favour the rich and powerful!

It cannot be bribed. It has no ambition. It is a courier sent from the skies carrying a clear message, 'Stop in your tracks man and wake up before it is too late! Or continue to pay the heavy price you are paying now!'

### Overkill suicidal

While I deeply mourn the precious human lives lost, must we continue to chop flourishing forests of lush green trees to cause landslides and further devastation?

In the race to outdo each other, we adorn our homes with the most expensive wood, items of ivory, tiger skin, all at the cost of universe that wants to maintain its delicate balance and protect our planet from dying a slow, poisonous death. Man is essentially a hunter, enjoys a good kill. In the process of overkill, he becomes suicidal.

Mahatma Gandhi was so right when he said, "The earth had enough for everyone's need but not enough for everyone's greed!"

I, for one, am very happy for the exhausted mother-nature to have got a breather after a long spell and is



# Finally, Ganges took a bath... Let's celebrate and care for earth

Our pious river, the Ganges, has finally come alive. It finally got a chance to bathe itself. Photo - [learnodo-newtonic.com](http://learnodo-newtonic.com)

*The eco-benefits of current coronavirus lockdown for cleaner, greener and vibrant nature needs to be preserved, writes Dr Lavlin Thadani, a film-maker, dramatist and poet, in addition to being a fervent Osho disciple*

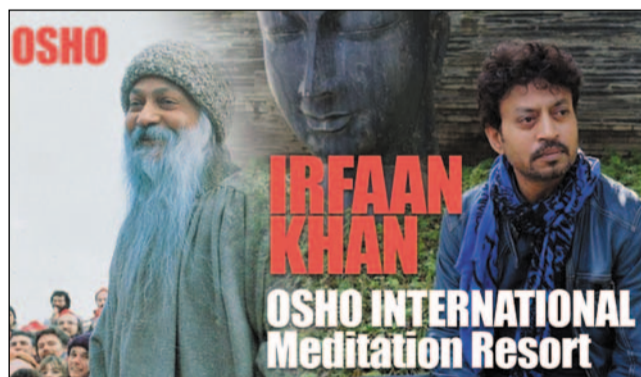
finally celebrating its own wonderful existence, if not its unparalleled, unique, exotic identity.

Thank God during the lockdown period, we dare not interfere! No wonder, to remain safe, we have been advised to maintain distance, a clear message to maintain the same distance from all our life givers, be it trees or rivers. Applaud them without messing around with them. We should be thankful to coronavirus for teaching us the most valuable lesson of respecting nature. Give respect and get respect - that is what our ancestors had taught us. In order to become smart, let us please not outsmart ourselves.

Osho says, "May be the earth does need a rest, but I feel bad about the way things are going. The earth is beautiful. If you start living its beauty, enjoying its joys with no guilt in your heart, you are in paradise. If you condemn everything, every small joy, if you become a condemner, a poisoner, then the same earth turns into a hell - only for you."

-- Osho, *The Book of Wisdom*, Talk #11

\* \* \*

Photo - [i.ytimg.com](http://i.ytimg.com)

## Hollywood's Love for Bollywood Superstar Irrfan

Double whammy. Two mega Bollywood film stars left this earth and started shining in the skies: Irrfan Khan, aged 53, on 29 April; and Rishi Kapoor, aged 67, on 30 April. Both died of cancer. While both had ton-loads of tributes from Indian film stars, celebrities and millions of fans, Irrfan elicited superb tributes from Hollywood as well.

After his brilliant work in Bollywood, he moved to Hollywood to act in *The Warrior* (2001), *The Namesake* (2006), *The Darjeeling Limited* (2007), the Academy Award winning film *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), *New York,*

*I Love You* (2009), *The Amazing Spider-Man* (2012), *Life of Pi* (2012), *Jurassic World* (2015) and *Inferno* (2016).

Thus, Hollywood paid radiant tributes. No less than the Academy of Motion Picture Arts, the Oscars organization, declared, "Irrfan Khan left his imprint on global cinema. An inspiration to millions, he will be greatly missed."

\* \* \*

## 'Osho Resort was like when I saw the ocean for the first time' - Irrfan

It's not widely known that the late Irrfan Khan was an ardent Osho lover. He regularly read Osho books and said he had been inspired by Osho's vision.

After visiting Osho International Meditation Resort in Pune, he said in an interview published in Hindi in *Osho Times*, "It was the first time I stayed at Osho's energy field. It reminded me of the moment when I came to Bombay and saw the ocean for the first time. It was a hypnotic, inviting and magnanimous experience. This experience was also an invitation. It had a vastness.

"I felt that Osho Meditation Resort is like a school where one can learn about oneself. For me, the greatest education in life is to know oneself at the deepest level. The biggest lesson for me is to know myself at the deepest level. This brings freedom and discipline. This Osho resort is an experimental laboratory where you can experiment with your internal and external forms.

"Think of it like a *hamam* (Turkish bath) where you can wash away all the dust of previous conditionings and emerge squeaky clean. This is a fertile land where a seed is planted in you and you can wait until it germinates and blooms," he said. "At one time when I was really in love with Osho, I read every Osho book I came across," he added.

The greenery of the resort, the pure energy, the intensity of meditation, is deeply felt in every picture of Irrfan. A great soul, sensitive, and creative artist full of humour and playfulness, Irrfan's eyes shine in every picture during his visit to Osho Meditation Resort. He said many parts of the resort had a special energy which attracted him.

**Kul Bhushan**

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



Krishan Deeljore

# Are you ready for business unusual?

**A**s the dust is starting to settle around us, there is a strong feeling of Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (VUCA) when we think about what is awaiting us after the lockdown is lifted completely and when will we be able to resume business as usual. In fact, what does business as usual even

mean anymore?

This article aims to provide some constructive thoughts and ideas on how to go about devising immediate, medium- and long-term strategies over the next weeks and months with particular focus on people strategies.

## 5 changes we can expect to see in the workforce

- **Employee engagement** levels have most likely dropped quite significantly due to prolonged social isolation, increased levels of anxiety and lack of team interactions.
- **Employees' priorities have changed.** After this long stretch of remote working and home sheltering, many people have shifted their priorities and will be asking for more flexibility in their work patterns.
- **Where and when to work.** With strict social and physical distancing measures, commuting to and from a physical office at least five times a week and having all employees turn up in the same location all at the same time will not work.
- **Technostress** has or will most likely become a new amplified form of work-related burnout in the post Covid-19 era caused by the phenomenal increase in the use of digital technologies and devices (ref - 'The Technostress: definition, symptoms and risk prevention' by Marta Chiappetta, 2017).
- **Value of talent.** The pressure on companies to retain key talent has never been more critical.

## 10 ways of shaping the future workforce

"Our future will depend on the decisions that we make now!"

### 1. Take stock of lessons learnt

A relatively easy starting point is to start with lessons learnt from this crisis. What did we learn as an individual, team, organisation? What went well? What steps should we take to avoid same mistakes in the future? What behaviours were adopted during the pandemic that we want to preserve? How can we restructure to manage our costs today, and position our organization for success in the future?

### 2. Engagement = Productivity

Running an employee engagement survey to assess the state of mind of your people, their fears as well as their expectations. This will help you identify as accurately as possible the soft spots and weak areas which should be prioritised. For example, one of the hot topics can be assessed: Is your workforce ready to perform productively at home?

### 3. Provide flexibility

Flexibility for some could mean re-assigning more time for self and family. For others it could mean flexibility to have a secondary source of income. Consider introducing a voluntary special leave policy on a temporary basis, shorter working week or other flexible arrangements in the immediate to short-term.

### 4. Create an elastic workforce

Many firms are already experimenting with different work patterns such as rotating schedules, split shifts and 'hybrid' teams (mix of onsite and online) in order to accommodate the transportation and movement restrictions. Adopt and adapt workforce models from the software, consulting and BPO industries which have been operating in an elastic manner for many years.

### 5. Lose fat, keep muscles

For companies who will trigger a restructuring exercise, more weightage should be given to people's technical skills and behavioural competencies and more particularly how critical and relevant they are or will be for the core activities of the business.



Cartoon - www.jigidi.com

### 6. Anticipate future skills

Experts predict that tech savviness, data literacy and coding skills will become extremely valuable in the new world of work. In order to further mitigate the risks of losing key talent and expertise, organisations must start anticipating the skills which will be critical in their new business model.

### 7. Accelerate digitalisation

People's relationship with technology and internet has radically changed during this crisis. Organisations must start exploring the use of digital collaboration tools and virtual solutions on a wider scale. However, as most of the workforce shifts to work remotely and as other critical operations begin to rely more heavily on virtual connections, make sure that your IT systems and your cybersecurity are both up to the challenge.

### 8. Embed Virtual Learning culture

The way people at national scale have used techno-



Photo - worldgbc.org

logy for remote learning, distance education and online learning during the pandemic is quite staggering. This trend will continue as long as physical distancing and travel restrictions prevail. Companies should therefore invest time in cross-training, upskilling and re-skilling of their workforce by leveraging on existing learning platforms and online resources.

### 9. Get closer to your customers

This is the right time to value and nurture relationships with your customers, suppliers, sub-contractors and third party service providers. Turn them into strategic partnerships, even if there is no business deal at stake. If there is one lesson to be learnt from Covid-19, then it is about being more human in the way we do business.

### 10. Corporate citizenship

While focusing on all these internal and external aspects, businesses should not forget the community. More than ever before, we should show our support to the less privileged people in our society. Simply choose a good cause and make it count!

Whatever you decide to do remember that everything starts and ends with leadership. Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic is the most difficult time humanity has experienced in the last 100 years, it can also be a time of unprecedented innovation and creativity. If anything, it would have helped us - to quote from 'How the Coronavirus Crisis Is Redefining Jobs', Harvard Business Publishing, April 2020 - "build greater resilience and efficiency in our organizations, and help our people live healthier, more sustainable lives".

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For people in business, 2020 is really just a year for staying alive. Don't even talk about your dreams or plans. Just make sure you stay alive. If you can stay alive, then you would have made a profit already.

-Jack Ma  
Alibaba Group

Read, Love and Learn

# 5 ways parents can motivate children at home during the pandemic - without nagging or tantrums

*A psychologist specializing in parenting offers tips to help children self-motivate while at home during the coronavirus crisis*



Involving children while setting up family schedules gives them ownership over behavior.  
Sebastien Bozon/AFP via Getty Images

Parents have always helped with homework and made sure their children fulfill responsibilities like chores, but the extended and often unstructured time families are spending together during the current crisis creates new challenges.

After a disaster like a hurricane or fire, establishing structure is important to keep consistency and maintain a sense of control for both parents and children. This includes creating a schedule and communicating clear expectations and guidelines on things such as screen time.

But how do parents get children to follow the schedule and fulfill responsibilities without nagging and in a way that prevents blowups and tantrums?

Wendy Grolnick, a psychologist and parenting expert who has worked with parents in disaster situations, has studied how parents can help children become more self-motivated and decrease conflict in the family. In this piece she shares some strategies to make the house run more smoothly during the coronavirus crisis.

## 1. Involve children in setting schedules

When children participate in creating guidelines and schedules, they are more likely to believe the guidelines are important, accept them and follow them.

To involve children, parents can set up a family meeting. At the meeting, parents can discuss the schedule and ask children for their input on decisions like what time everyone should be out of bed and dressed, when breaks from schoolwork would work best and where each family member should be during study time.

Not every idea will be feasible - children may feel being dressed by noon is fine! But when parents listen to a child's ideas, it helps them own their behavior and be more engaged in what they are doing.

There may well be differences in opinion. Parents can negotiate with their children so that at least some of the children's ideas are adopted. Resolving conflicts is an important skill for children to learn, and they learn it best from their parents.

## 2. Allow children some choice

Schoolwork has to be done and chores need to be completed, but having some choice about how they are accomplished can help children feel less pressured and coerced, which undermines their motivation.

Parents can present some chores around the house, and children can choose which they prefer. They can also pick when or how they complete them - do they want to do the dishes before or after watching their TV show?

Parents can also give children choice about what fun activity they would like to do at the end of the day or for a study break.

## 3. Listen and provide empathy

Children will be more open to hearing about what they need to do if they feel that their own perspectives are understood. Parents can let children know that they understand, for example, that it is not fun to be in the house and that they miss being with their friends.

Parents can begin requests with an empathetic statement. For example, "I

know it seems like getting dressed is silly because we're in the house. But getting dressed is part of the routine we have all decided upon." Even if they might not agree with their child's perspective, when parents show that they understand, cooperation is enhanced, as is the parent-child relationship.

## 4. Provide reasons for rules

When parents provide reasons for why they are asking for something, children can better understand the importance of acting in particular ways. Reasons will be most effective when they are meaningful to the children in terms of the children's own goals. For example, a parent can say that dividing up family chores will help everyone have more time for fun activities after dinner.

## 5. Problem-solve together

Not everything will go according to plan - there will be times of frustration, nagging and yelling. When things aren't working out, parents can try engaging in joint problem-solving with their children, which means employing empathy, identifying the issue and finding ways to resolve it.

For example, a parent might state, "You know how I've been nagging you to get up in the morning? It's probably really annoying to hear that first thing in the morning. The problem is that even though we decided we'd all get up at 8 a.m., you are not getting out of bed. Let's put our heads together to see what we can do to make morning time go more smoothly. What are your ideas?" I have seen this take the stress out of mornings for working parents who need to take their children to school before going to work, and I believe it could help during the pandemic, too.

All of these practices can help children to feel more ownership of their behavior. That will make them more likely to cooperate.

However, these strategies require time and patience - something that is hard to come by at times of stress. Research studies show that parents are more likely to yell, demand and threaten when time is limited, they are stressed or they feel worried about how their children are performing. That's why it's important for parents to find time for their own self-care and rejuvenation - whether it be by taking a walk, exercising, meditating or writing in a journal. A pandemic or other disaster presents challenges for parents, but using motivational strategies can help parents provide a calmer and more effective environment that also facilitates a positive parent-child relationship.

**Wendy Grolnick**  
Professor of Psychology,  
Clark University

## In A Light Vein

## 'Lockdown lingo'

Are you fully conversant with the new terminology? Here are a few terms to get you in the groove:

**Coronacoaster** - The ups and downs of your mood during the pandemic. You're loving lockdown one minute but suddenly weepy with anxiety the next. It truly is "an emotional coronacoaster".

**Quarantinis** - Experimental cocktails mixed from whatever random ingredients you have left in the house. The boozy equivalent of a store cupboard supper. Southern Comfort and Ribena quarantini with a glacé cherry garnish, anyone? These are sipped at "locktail hour", i.e. wine o'clock during lockdown, which seems to be creeping earlier with each passing week.

**Blue Skype thinking** - A work brainstorming session which takes place over a videoconferencing app. Such meetings might also be termed a "Zoomposium". Naturally, they are to be avoided if at all possible.

**Coronials** - As opposed to millennials, this refers to the future generation of babies conceived or born during coronavirus quarantine. They might also become known as "Generation C" or, more spookily, "Children of the Quarn".

**Furlough Merlot** - Wine consumed in an attempt to relieve the frustration of not working. Also known as "bored-eaux" or "cabernet tedium".

**Coronadose** - An overdose of bad news from consuming too much media during a time of crisis. Can result in a "panicdemic".

**The elephant in the Zoom** - The glaring issue during a videoconferencing call that nobody feels able to mention. E.g. one participant has dramatically put on weight, suddenly sprouted terrible facial hair or has a worryingly messy house visible in the background.

**Quentin Quarantino** - An attention-seeker using their time in lockdown to make amateur films which they're convinced are funnier and cleverer than they actually are.

**Covidiot** - One who ignores public health advice or behaves with reckless disregard for the safety of others can be said to display "covidioty" or be "covidiotic". Also called a "lockdown" or even a "Wuhan-ker".

**Goutbreak** - The sudden fear that you've consumed so much wine, cheese, home-made cake and Easter chocolate in lockdown that your ankles are swelling up like a medieval king's.

**Antisocial distancing** - Using health precautions as an excuse for snubbing neighbours and generally ignoring people you find irritating.

**Coughin' dodger** - Someone so alarmed by an innocuous splutter or throat-clear that they back away in terror.

**Mask-ara** - Extra make-up applied to "make one's eyes pop" before venturing out in public wearing a face mask.

**Covid-10** - The 10lbs in weight that we're all gaining from comfort-eating and comfort-drinking. Also known as "fattening the curve".



## Alicia Silverstone says she was called 'fatgirl' for 'Batman and Robin' role

Actor Alicia Silverstone has opened up about the body-shaming remarks she was subjected to when she starred as Batgirl in Joel Schumacher's 'Batman and Robin'. The 43-year-old actor said she was nicknamed 'Fatgirl' by paparazzi and throughout the 1997's film press tour was mocked for her body.

"They would make fun of my body when I was younger. It was hurtful but I knew they were wrong. I wasn't confused. I knew that it was not right to make fun of someone's body shape, that doesn't seem like the right thing to be doing to a human," Silverstone told.

She also recalled being asked about her bra size during an interview.

"That definitely wasn't my (favourite) filmmaking experience," she said of 'Batman & Robin', which also featured George Clooney, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Uma Thurman.

"There were working circumstances that were less than (favourable) in terms of how things went down. And no, I didn't ... come out like a warrior but I would just walk away and go, OK, I know what that is and I'm done. I'm not going near that again."

Silverstone said that she "stopped loving acting for a very long time", after her experience with 'Batman & Robin', but has matured since then.

Her next movie is indie project 'Valley Girl'.



## 'Venom' sequel gets official title, release delayed due to COVID-19 crisis

The next sequel of the superhero film 'Venom' will now be released in theatres in summer 2021, because of the coronavirus crisis.

'Venom 2', that was earlier scheduled to hit the big screens on October 2, this year has been pushed ahead, giving a new summer release date June 25, 2021.

The information was shared on the Twitter handle of Entertainment company.

The studio also announced the upcoming movie's official title - 'Venom: Let There Be Carnage.'

This change in the release date makes the movie the latest one to move out of 2020 scheduled dates due to the ongoing coronavirus crisis.

The upcoming sequel will see actor Tom Hardy reprise his role as the journalist who joins with an alien symbiote.

'Venom' is based on the famous Marvel comic character. The cast list of the 2018 movie included Michelle Williams, Riz Ahmed, Woody Harrelson and Jenny Slate.

## Scarlett Johansson: I've made a career out of being second choice

Los Angeles, Hollywood star Scarlett Johansson confessed that she was "rejected constantly" in her professional life, adding that she has "made a career out of being second choice".

In an interview with Parade, the "Avengers" actress looked back at her career, reports dailymail.co.uk.

"Since a very young age, I've been rejected constantly ... the best call you can receive is after you are rejected for something and then you get it. You appreciate it more. I've basically made a career out of being second choice," she added.

Johansson became a household name with her role as *Black Widow* in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, but she wasn't originally cast in the role. She got the part after Emily Blunt had to drop out due to scheduling reasons.

In the past, the Oscar nominee has expressed frustration at roles she had to turn down. She also stepped down from the project "Rub And Tug" after criticism that a transgender actor should have been cast as the trans character.

At that time, in an interview to As If magazine in 2019, she said: "You know, as an actor I should be allowed to play any person, or any tree, or any animal because that is my job and the requirements of my job. There are a lot of social lines being drawn now, and a lot of political correctness is being reflected in art."

Johansson's next release will be "Black Widow", which is slated to release on November 6.



## Gina Rodriguez to lead comedy 'Aliens are Stealing Our Weed'

Actor Gina Rodriguez will be headlining Paramount Pictures' upcoming comedy 'The Aliens are Stealing Our Weed'. Ryan Firpo, who co-wrote the Marvel Studios' upcoming superhero saga 'Eternals', has penned the screenplay of the comedy.

The story follows Candice (Rodriguez) and Izzy, two hapless pot growers who, after their entire crop of weed inexplicably goes missing, uncover an alien conspiracy to steal the planet's marijuana supply.

Rodriguez, 35, will also produce the movie through her company *I Can and I Will*, alongside Kaz and Ryan Firpo's Badlands.

Molly Breeskin will serve as executive produce.



## Barun Sobti Opens Up on How He Hopes For 'Iss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon' Rerun During Lockdown

Recently, we also witnessed the return of *Geet Hui Sabse Parayi* starring Gurmeet Choudhary and Drashti Dhami. Considering one of the most popular shows is now re-running, one might wonder that arguably amongst the most successful shows can be back for another run?



The trend of reruns has certainly turned out to be the most positive and at the same time, extremely successful too.

The numbers of shows like *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat* speaks for itself while there is a range of other reruns that are doing well too. One of them is the 2013 version of *Mahabharat* currently re-running on Star Plus.

Recently, we also witnessed the return of *Geet Hui Sabse Parayi* starring Gurmeet Choudhary and Drashti Dhami. Considering one of the most popular shows is now re-running, one might wonder that arguably amongst the most successful shows can be back for another run?

We are talking about the extremely loved show, *Iss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon*

starring Barun Sobti and Sanaya Irani. The show, as we know has spawned a web sequel, a sequel with new leads, and even a reboot already. But the original indeed remains a favourite for may even today, so we wonder if the show is up for another re-run.

Recently, none other than Sobti was asked about it by Iwmbuzz and he said, "That would be great. We made *Iss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam* with a lot of heart and it gives a deep insight into the value of love and family ties. I think it's a great time for people to watch such content. I hope everyone likes it."

Well, Sobti would love it and we are sure all the millions would too.

## I have evolved as an actor from *Kaleerein* to *Yehh Jadu Hai Jinn Ka*: Aditi Sharma

Aditi Sharma talks about her shows and life during lockdown period...

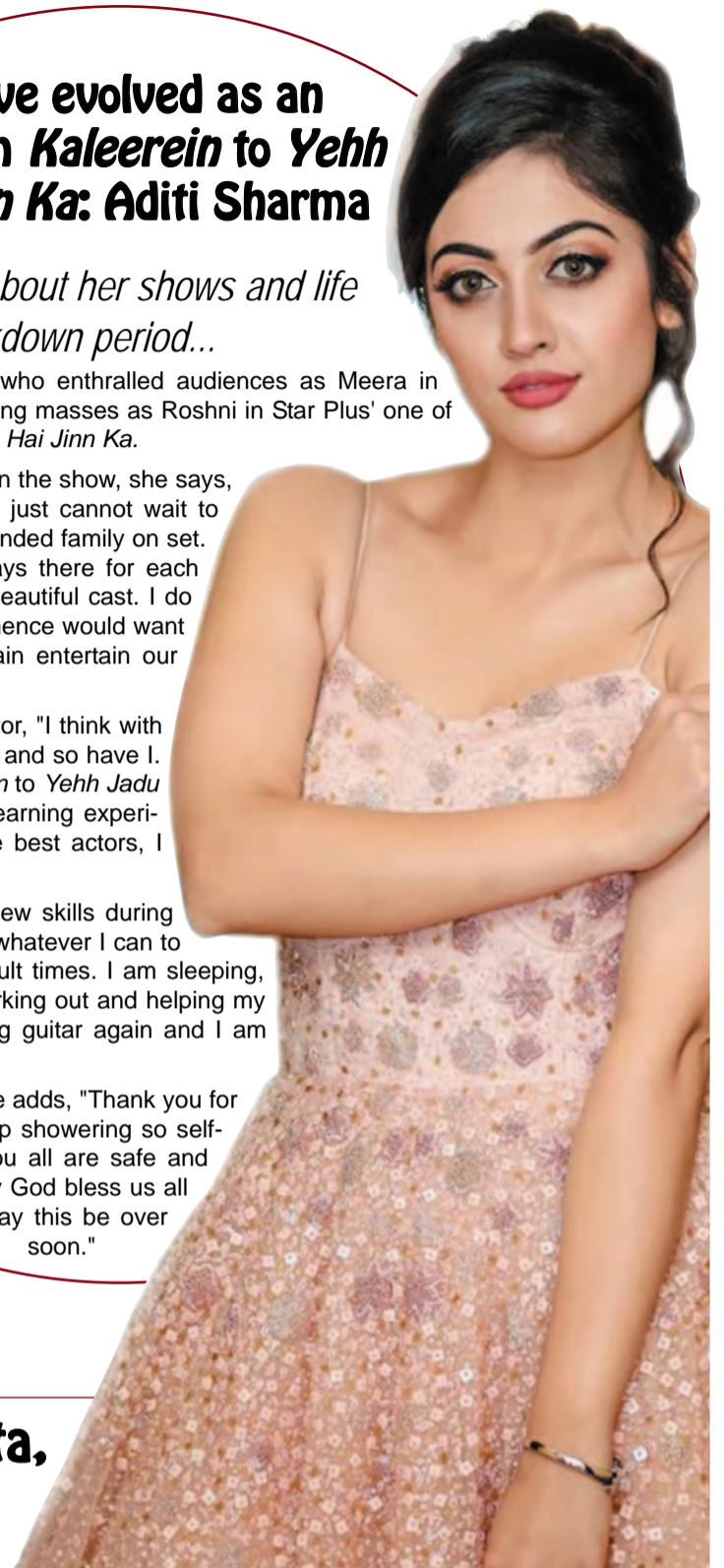
Beautiful actress Aditi Sharma, who enthralled audiences as Meera in *Kaleerein*, is currently entertaining masses as Roshni in Star Plus' one of the top-rated fiction-drama *Yehh Jadu Hai Jinn Ka*.

Talking about her work experience in the show, she says, "It has been absolutely amazing and I just cannot wait to start shooting again. We all are like extended family on set. We all hang out together and are always there for each other. I am so blessed to have such a beautiful cast. I do miss shooting now during the lockdown hence would want things to get better so that we can again entertain our fans."

Aditi feels she has evolved as an actor, "I think with time you eventually evolve and improve and so have I. I have grown as an actor from *Kaleerein* to *Yehh Jadu Hai Jinn Ka*. It has been a beautiful learning experience while working with some of the best actors, I have learnt a lot from my co-actors."

The actress is trying to learn new skills during the lockdown period. "I am doing whatever I can to keep myself sane in these difficult times. I am sleeping, watching shows on Netflix, working out and helping my mother. I also started playing guitar again and I am learning Spanish."

On an end note, she adds, "Thank you for all the love you keep showering so selflessly. I hope you all are safe and healthy. May God bless us all and may this be over soon."



## Rhea Sharma, Sriti Jha, Surbhi Chandna, Munmun Dutta, Divyanka Tripathi: Check Out What Are The Beauty Secrets Of These Actresses

Take these beauty secrets of these actresses to look stunning



Let's start with simple yet elegant and beautiful Mishti Laka Rhea Sharma from *Yeh Rishtey Hain Pyaar Ke*. Yes, she is a sweet and loving character but, it is her beauty that stole our heart and we are in awe of her. She simply doesn't have any beauty secret as she has natural beauty skin.

From the days of *Dhoom Machao Dhoom* to *Kumkum Bhagya*, Sriti Jha has always managed to grab our attention not only with her flawless acting but her beauty too. To be honest, she never applies too much makeup on her skin except those little brush and eyeliner.

with her daily soap *Yeh Hai Mohabbatein*. Yes, it's Divyanka Tripathi. She is now more known for her beauty and fashion than her acting. She also has some tips. She told that it is essential that at the end of the day, make sure you remove your makeup and have a good sleep.

Oh, here you are! Anika aka Surbhi Chandna from *Ishqbaaz* and Dr. Ishani from *Sanjivani 2* is here to share some beauty tips. With her natural glowing screen, be it on-screen or off-screen, she always won the hearts of millions. All she has to say is to drink a lot of water and have homemade food.

Our Babita Ji from *Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah* has looked beautiful with Jethalal always flirting about her beauty. She offered the best and short tip that is if you are at home, exercise, and have a lot of water.

She managed to win our hearts

## CINE 12

Mardi 5 mai - 21.15

## Premuim Rush

Avec: Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Michael Shannon, Dania Ramirez



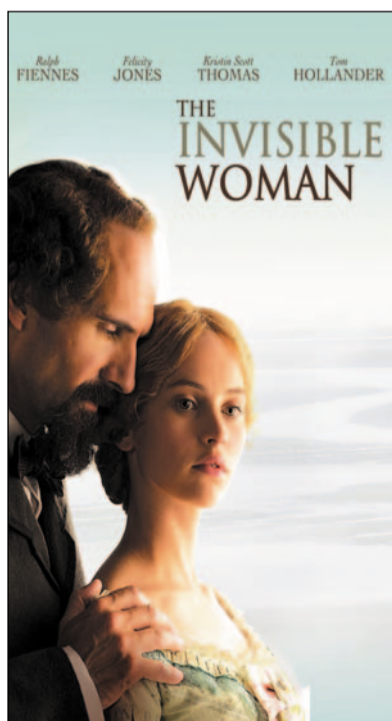
Wilee est sans doute le plus doué et le plus rapide des coursiers à vélo de New York. Son quotidien consiste à traverser la ville en tous sens en évitant les taxis qui foncent, les voitures, et huit millions de piétons... Pourtant, lorsqu'il prend en charge un mystérieux pli, le danger va être d'un autre genre. Certains sont prêts à tout pour s'emparer de ce qu'il transporte. Ce qui avait commencé comme une course express ordinaire va vite se transformer en un contre-la-montre mortel à travers les rues de Manhattan

## CINE 12

Mercredi 6 mai - 21.15

## The Invisible Woman

Avec: Ralph Fiennes, Felicity Jones, Kristin Scott Thomas



## MBC 1

06.33 Local: Encounter  
07.00 Dessin Anime  
10.26 Mag: Origami  
10.45 Mag: Zoboomafoo  
12.00 Le Journal  
12.25 Local: Autour Des Valeurs  
12.35 Doc: Comme Un Poisson...  
13.30 Local: Passerelles  
14.00 Local: Wellness By Trilo  
14.30 Serial: Magic Mania  
14.42 D.Anime: Astrolology  
15.04 D.Anime: Kuu Kuu Harajuku  
16.28 D.Anime: Polly Pocket  
17.00 Live: Live Press Conference  
18.00 Live: Samachar  
18.30 Jamai Raja  
18.55 Local: Yaadein  
19.30 Journal & La Météo  
20.00 Local: Press Conference  
20.30 Local: The Dodo Who Wanted to Fly

## MBC 2

04.30 Aastha TV  
07.00 DDI Live  
10.00 Serial: Tumhaari Natasha  
11.19 Serial: MOL  
12.04 Film:  
15.00 Live: Samachar  
15.20 Honaar Soon Mee Hya...  
15.43 Mooga Manasulu  
16.03 Apoorva Raagangal  
16.30 Serial: Ki Jaana Mein Kaun  
16.53 Serial: Gangaa  
18.00 Serial: Dr. Quin  
18.30 Tele: Mariana Et Scarlett  
19.00 Zournal Kreol  
19.30 DDI Magazine  
19.50 Local: Yaadein  
20.20 Serial: Mah-E-Tamaam  
21.25 Local: Anjuman  
21.26 Local: Urdu Programme  
22.37 DDI Live

## MBC 3

06.00 Mag: Eco@Africa  
06.44 Mag: World Stories  
07.00 Mag: Voa Connect  
07.29 Doc: A Question Of Science  
07.32 Mag: In Good Shape  
08.45 World Stamps  
09.00 Live Educational Program...  
17.00 Mag: Voa Connect  
17.29 Doc: A Question Of Science  
17.34 Mag: In Good Shape  
18.00 Mag: Rev: The Global Auto  
18.26 Mag: Urban Gardens  
18.35 Talk On Ramadan 2020  
19.00 Mag: Check In  
19.26 Doc: A Question Of Science  
19.32 Mag: Made In Germany  
20.00 Special Sittirai Cavadee  
20.21 Film: Kandana Karunai  
22.45 Mag: Rev: The Global Auto  
23.11 Mag: Urban Gardens  
23.17 Doc: Builders Of The Future

## Cine 12

01.33 Tele: Esmeraldas  
02.57 Serial: NCIS  
03.38 Film: Effie Gray  
05.23 Tele: Amanda  
06.47 Film: The Man Without A Face  
09.00 Serial: The Good Fight  
09.47 Tele: Au Nom De L'Amour  
10.11 Tele: Mariana Et Scarlett  
10.35 Serial: NCIS  
11.25 Tele: Dulce Amor  
12.00 Film: Effie Gray  
13.36 Tele: Amanda  
14.45 Film: The Man Without A Face  
16.40 Serial: Scorpion  
17.20 Serial: Dynasty  
18.07 Tele: Au Nom De L'amour  
18.31 Tele: Mariana Et Scarlett  
19.10 Tele: Dulce Amor  
20.05 Tele: Totalment Diva  
20.30 Serial: Dynasty  
21.15 Film: Premium Rush

## Bollywood TV

09.30 Film: Dil Tera Diwana  
12.06 / 19.54 - Ek Deewana Tha  
12.24 / 20.11 -  
Kulfi Kumarr Bajewala  
12.45 / 20.32 Radha Krishna  
13.06 / 21.09 - Kaleerein  
13.35 / 21.24 - Zindagi Ki Mehek  
13.56 / 21.46 -  
Bade Acche Lagte Hai  
14.24 / 21.59 - Chhanchhan  
14.45 / 22.25 - Ishqbaaz  
15.03 Film: Partner  
Stars: Salman Khan, Govinda, Lara Dutta  
17.30 Yeh Hai Mohabbatein  
18.00 Live: Samachar  
18.30 Kumkum Bhagya  
18.51 Piya Albela  
19.13 Mere Angne Mein  
19.36 Yeh Un Dinon Ki Baat Hai

mardi 5 mai

mercredi 6 mai

jeudi 7 mai

07.00 Dessin Anime  
10.27 Mag: Origami  
10.45 Mag: Zoboomafoo  
11.15 Local: Itinerer Moris  
11.30 Local: Nu Lakwizin  
12.00 Le Journal  
12.25 Local: Autour Des Valeurs  
13.30 Local: Saver Kil Tirel  
14.00 Local: Wellness By Trilo  
14.10 Local: Coin Jardin  
14.30 Serial: Magic Mania  
14.40 D.Anime: Croque Nuage  
17.00 Live Press Conference  
17.30 Local: Chikitsa Aur Swastya  
18.00 Live: Samachar  
18.30 Serial: Jamai Raja  
19.30 Journal & La Météo  
20.00 Local: Press Conference  
20.35 Local: Tam Tam  
21.50 Serial: The Enemy Within  
22.35 Serial: Madam Secretary  
23.20 Le Journal

04.30 Aastha TV  
07.00 Film:  
11.40 Good Morning Shanghai  
12.00 Nanda Saukhyia Bhare  
12.30 Serial: Mooga Manasulu  
12.48 Serial: Brundavanam  
13.10 Serial: Annakodiyum Ainthu  
13.35 Serial: Anu Pallavi  
14.05 Entertainment: Dil Hai Hindu  
15.00 Live: Samachar  
15.20 Film: Imtihaan  
18.00 Mag: Check In  
18.30 Mag: Eco@Africa  
19.00 Zournal Kreol  
19.30 DDI Magazine  
20.05 Serial: Vikram Betaal Ki Rahasya Gatha  
20.21 Serial: Bitti Business Wali  
21.00 Film:  
23.15 DDI Live

06.00 Mag: Rev: The Global Auto  
07.00 Mag: Check In  
07.29 Mag: Made In Germany  
07.57 Doc: Horizon S  
08.50 Doc: World Stamps  
09.01 Live Educational Program...  
17.00 Mag: Check In  
17.26 Doc: A Question Of Science  
18.04 Mag: Motorweek  
18.25 Mag: Urban Gardens  
19.00 Doc: Arts.21  
19.26 Doc: A Question Of Science  
19.30 Doc: Garden Party  
20.02 Programme In Marathi  
20.27 Film: Blackboard  
22.31 The Legacy Of Courage  
23.14 Mag: Motorweek  
23.39 Mag: Urban Gardens  
23.44 Doc: Olivia's Garden  
00.11 Mag: Arts.21  
00.37 Doc: A Question Of Science  
00.41 Doc: Garden Party

00.20 Tele: Peau Sauvage  
01.31 Film: Premium Rush  
03.39 Film: Flower Shop Mystery  
05.14 Tele: Amanda  
06.43 Film: La Double Vie De Tommy Cooper  
09.00 Serial: The Good Fight  
09.48 Tele: Au Nom De L'amour  
12.05 Film: Flower Shop Mystery  
13.30 Tele: Amanda  
14.45 Film: La Double Vie De Tommy Cooper  
16.40 Serial: Scorpion  
17.21 Serial: Dynasty  
18.00 Tele: Au Nom De L'amour  
20.05 Tele: Totalment Diva  
20.30 When Calls The Heart  
21.15 Film: The Invisible Woman  
Stars: Ralph Fiennes, Felicity Jones, Kristin Scott Thomas  
23.00 Tele: Amanda

09.30 Film: Sharada  
12.06 / 19.54 - Ek Deewana Tha  
12.24 / 20.11 -  
Kulfi Kumarr Bajewala  
12.45 / 20.32 Radha Krishna  
13.06 / 21.09 - Kaleerein  
13.25 / 21.24 - Zindagi Ki Mehek  
13.47 / 21.46 -  
Bade Acche Lagte Hai  
14.24 / 21.59 - Chhanchhan  
14.45 / 22.25 - Ishqbaaz  
15.03 Film: Chandni Chowk To China  
Stars: Akshay Kumar, Deepika Padukone and Chia Hui Liu  
17.30 Yeh Hai Mohabbatein  
18.00 Live: Samachar  
18.30 Kumkum Bhagya  
18.51 Piya Albela  
19.13 Mere Angne Mein  
19.36 Yeh Un Dinon Ki Baat Hai

07.00 Dessin Anime  
10.24 Mag: Origami  
10.45 Mag: Zoboomafoo  
11.30 Local: Mangeons Veg  
12.00 Le Journal  
12.25 Local: Autour Des Valeurs  
14.30 D. Anime: Raju The Rickshaw  
14.43 D. Anime: Astrolology  
14.52 La Famille Blaireau-Renard  
15.27 D.Anime: Petit Creux  
15.32 D.Anime: La Famille Passiflore  
16.30 D.Anime: Polly Pocket  
17.30 Local: Prakriti Ki God Mein  
18.00 Live: Samachar  
18.30 Serial: Jamai Raja  
19.30 Le Journal  
20.05 Local: Press Conference  
21.30 Film: Sanam Teri Kasam  
23.00 Le Journal  
23.35 Serial: Madam Secretary

04.30 Aastha TV  
07.00 Film: Paapi  
10.00 Local: Shree Durga...  
11.00 Serial: Oru Kai Osai  
12.00 Film:  
15.00 Samachar  
15.20 Serial: Mooga Manasulu  
15.40 Serial: Eka Lagnachi Teesri  
16.06 Apoorva Raagangal  
16.28 Local: Yaadein  
16.54 Serial: Mahakali  
18.00 Lettre Pastorale Careme  
18.30 Local: Tipa Tipa Nu Avance  
19.00 Zournal Kreol  
19.30 DDI Magazine  
20.00 Serial: Maharakshak  
20.42 Serial: Naagin  
21.28 Serial: CID  
22.15 Serial: Piya Rangrezz

06.00 Mag: Motorweek  
06.30 Doc: Olivia's Garden  
07.25 Doc: A Question Of Science  
07.29 Doc: Garden Party  
07.57 Doc: Better Brain Health  
08.39 Doc: World Stamps  
08.45 Mag: Shift  
09.00 Live Educational Program...  
16.04 Doc: Visite Guidee  
16.41 Mag: Focus On Europe  
17.07 Doc: The Legacy Of Courage  
17.50 Mag: Set One  
18.00 Mag: Eco India  
18.27 Mag: Urban Gardens  
18.35 Talk On Ramadan 2020  
19.00 Mag: Initiative Africa  
19.26 Doc: A Question Of Science  
19.32 Mag: Tomorrow Today  
20.00 Film: Fury In The Shaolin Temple  
21.22 Mag: Strictly Street

04.11 Film: Surprise Me!  
05.37 Tele: Amanda  
06.46 Film: She's The Man  
06.19 Serial: When Call The Heart  
07.04 Chevauchee Avec La Diable  
09.00 Serial: The Good Fight  
09.48 Tele: Au Nom De L'amour  
10.12 Tele: Mariana Et Scarlett  
10.37 Serial: NCIS  
11.25 Tele: Dulce Amor  
12.04 Film: Surprise Me!  
13.30 Tele: Amanda  
14.45 Chevauchee Avec Le Diable  
16.45 Serial: Scorpion  
17.25 Serial: When Calls The Heart  
18.12 Tele: Au Nom De L'amour  
18.36 Tele: Mariana Et Scarlett  
19.00 Tele: Dulce Amor  
20.06 Tele: Totalment Diva  
20.31 Serial: When Calls The Heart  
21.15 Film: Think Like A Man Too

09.30 Film: Sawan Ko Aane Do  
12.06 / 19.54 - Ek Deewana Tha  
12.24 / 20.11 -  
Kulfi Kumarr Bajewala  
12.45 / 20.32 Radha Krishna  
13.06 / 21.09 - Kaleerein  
13.25 / 21.24 - Zindagi Ki Mehek  
13.47 / 21.46 -  
Bade Acche Lagte Hai  
14.24 / 21.59 - Chhanchhan  
14.45 / 22.25 - Ishqbaaz  
15.03 Film: Student Of The Year  
Stars: Sidharth Malhotra, Alia Bhatt, Varun Dhawan  
17.30 Yeh Hai Mohabbatein  
18.00 Live: Samachar  
18.30 Kumkum Bhagya  
18.51 Piya Albela  
19.13 Mere Angne Mein  
19.36 Yeh Un Dinon Ki Baat Hai

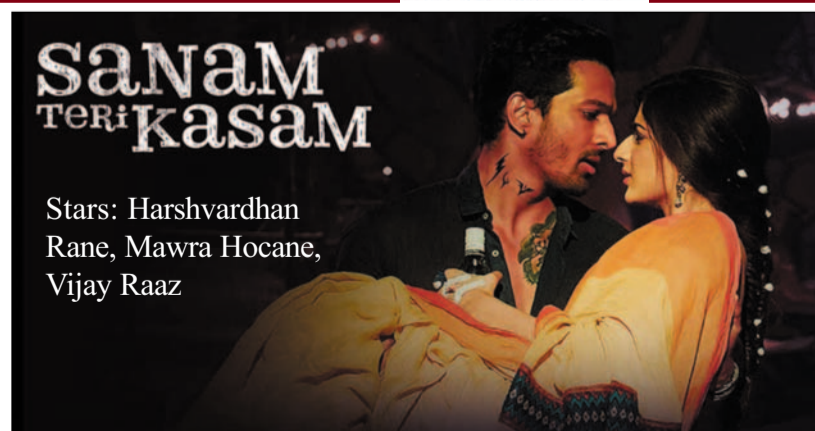
Jeudi 7 mai - 12.30



Jeudi 7 mai - 20.35



Stars: Sidharth Malhotra,  
Alia Bhatt, Varun  
Dhawan



Stars: Harshvardhan  
Rane, Mawra Hocane,  
Vijay Raaz



Nita Chicooree-Mercier

**H**ard times come with a string of apprehensions, anxieties and fears; but they are also a catalyst factor for introspection and awakening of what is best in society. For a few months, appearances, showing-off and false ideas of self-worth are allowed to rest. Self-importance based on material acquisitions, lengthy titles of diplomas and status take the back seat. Because all display of superficial features in language, behaviour and social interaction needs a public.

And the public is just not there. It has been told to stay indoors.

The current situation relieves the social atmosphere of unnecessary stress that pushes folks to be on the move in all directions so as not to miss out on something that is catching attention and that others are not likely to miss. It creates less psychological strain and physiological discomfort that comes with it. The collateral benefit is an awareness of channeling energy in the right direction, of using precious time in the best possible ways - in talks and actions, and in giving attention to what matters. A quest for what is natural and genuine in oneself and in social interactions, with a renewed interest in the purity and beauty of the natural environment.

Calls for help from the most underprivileged groups of society are met with compassion and empathy. A surge of solidarity and generosity reaches out to all nooks and crannies of the island. The confined space of radios has become the echo chamber of voices from everywhere and a social medium for finding ways and means to sort out things. Some of them are doing a good job in coordinating a team of volunteers to scour kilometres across the island to bring help to the needy.

NGOs are active in fulfilling their part as intermediaries in the chain of solidarity.

Solidarity Mauritius is the name given to a particular programme on a private radio, and apparently, not only does it put in practice what it preaches by galvanizing volunteers in a social aid plan but it also shows interest in promoting a philosophical outlook and instilling positivity. Go ahead and keep it up!

Doctors, officials, radio presenters and all do not mince their words in certain circumstances. The right language at the right time when it comes to driving in recommendations that should be taken seriously. Straightforward, no polished language or whatever in admonishing people to adopt the right conduct. What we hear is : Come on folks, no fooling and hanging around, get that into your *cocovides*, no negative cases is not a signal for *Al vang vang*, *al vacarné ek tréné* and such like. A community instinct for collective survival. At the end of the day, this is what it is all about : survival.

\* \* \*

## A Transcendental Experience

The world of culture, art and music not only responds to a genuine need in human beings to have a break with daily materialist preoccupations but also offers a transcendental experience in the quest for what is pleasing to the eyes and ears. Musicians, singers and actors become endearing figures to the public during their lifetime; their demise leaves admirers aggrieved and sad.

Sometimes it is more because of what they stand for, what they embody and represent than who they really are. And often, their personality or their commitment to certain causes reflected in their art find a favourable echo in the public. They encapsulate the mood of the moment and gives it artistic expression - just as a writer is a story-teller, a spokesperson for the society which provides the organic substance and matter for expressing feelings, thoughts



# A Touch of Authenticity

Calls for help from the most underprivileged groups of society are met with compassion and empathy. A surge of solidarity and generosity reaches out to all nooks and crannies of the island: Members of Rameshwarnath Toolsee Krith Hanuman Mandir and Indian Folk Music Academy distributing food packs to needy families of Chitrakoot



and ideas.

The feeling of loss when it comes to musicians, singers and actors is something special. They appeal to a sense of aesthetics, beauty and magic which echo deepest yearnings and intimate wishes nestled in the minds and hearts of people. Sometimes a projection of desires and phantasms, and sometimes, an identification with facets of their personality. In all cases, they are iconic figures in a country, with some of them transcending countries and cultures.

How the public mourns their demise differs from one country to another, depending on cultural factors. For instance, the tribute paid to Johnny Hallyday by the French, the procession all along the Champs Elysées and the funerals attended by the President himself, former presidents and topmost stars is unimaginable in Britain, and that feeling was voiced by a British musician. It is an expression of the sentimental attachment French people have in respect of their intellectuals, artists, musicians and actors.

India is country where the public connects in a very special way with film stars, singers, musicians and key national figures. The recent demise of two actors at two days' interval has happened in a social context of confinement that forbids gatherings would have drawn huge crowds in normal times. Instead, fans overflowed the internet in an outpour of grief and pain.

Irfan Khan, gone at the age of 53, was an original actor

who was given original roles which fit his personality as 'a man of few words and of silent expressions' as described in a tribute in the Indian press. *Mumbai Meri Jaan*, *The Namesake*, *The Lunchbox* are a few of his films that come to mind. Not the hero-chasing-heroine type of role, no absurd eve-teasing and bursting suddenly in romantic songs amid nowhere. Deep-set eyes, bushy eyebrows, speaking little, his tall figure moving elegantly on the screen, he was the sexiest actor in Hindi cinema in recent years. If anything, his demise is an irreparable loss to the Hindi film industry. As to us here in Mauritius, we will really miss him.

The Kapoors are a legend, indeed. A legacy left by grand-father Prithviraj, himself a stage actor in dramas, who applied in films the technical art of facial expressions used on stage. *Rampur Ka Laksman* is a film casting three generations - grandfather, sons and grandsons - in which Rishi Kapoor made a debut as a young adult in the exuberance of youth. The very name of Kapoor summons a vision of the bigger picture of the whole family, of their performance and handsome figures. However unequal the performance from one generation to another may be, the dynastic family of actors gives a sense of continuity in the film industry and to the public in their relation with the icons they cherish in a lifetime.

In India, the public relates to artists, musicians, singers, actors and actresses in a way that reflects something deeper. It is a way of cherishing, loving, showering praises and garlanding unparalleled in the world. May be, it is part of the devotional *bhakti* tradition of offering gratitude and flowers to a myriad of deities. It reflects an Indian way of loving, the understanding and loving hearts of the people who raise icons to the status of demi-gods and goddesses. A form of worship which encompasses the land, its rivers and mountains, all regarded as sacred. In certain circumstances, the love and trust put in the rulers of the country reflect the same spirit of adoration. Then, it creates an overarching sense of unity in the country.