

# MAURITIUS TIMES

"A man who has never gone to school may steal a freight car; but if he has a university education, he may steal the whole railroad." -- Theodore Roosevelt



Interview: Dharam Gokhool - Former Education Minister

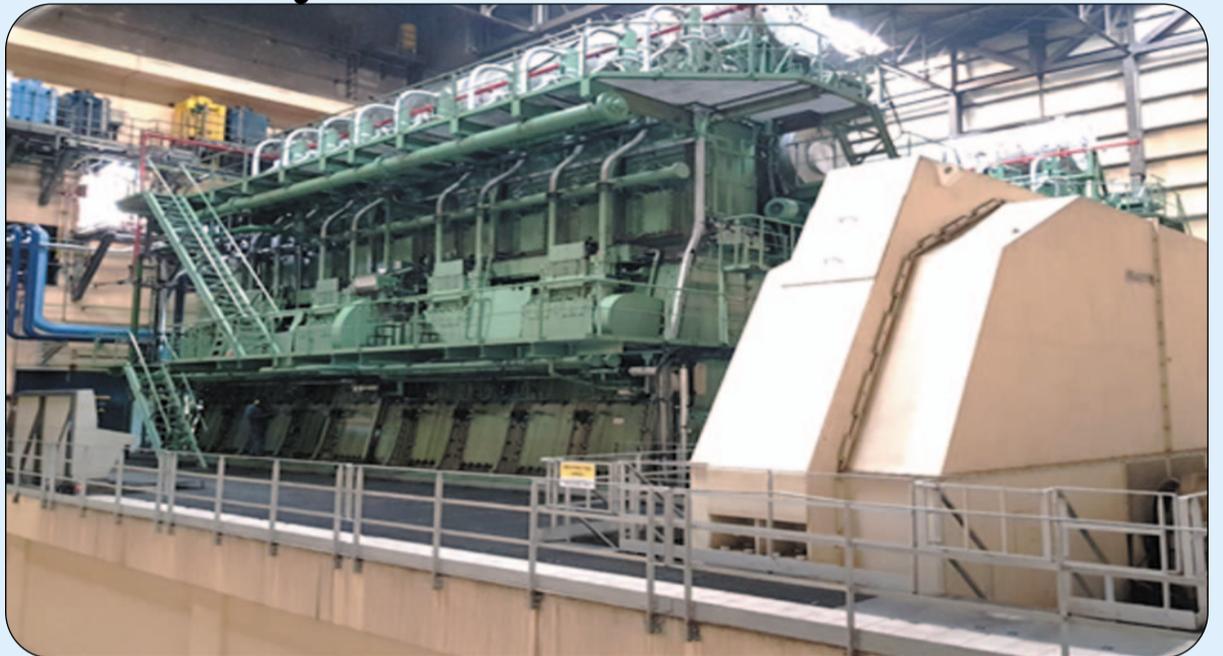
**"We have to brace ourselves for some difficult days ahead"**

'The longer the pandemic stays around, the greater the risk of a delayed recovery'

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Analyse

## Le soupçon est dans l'air du temps



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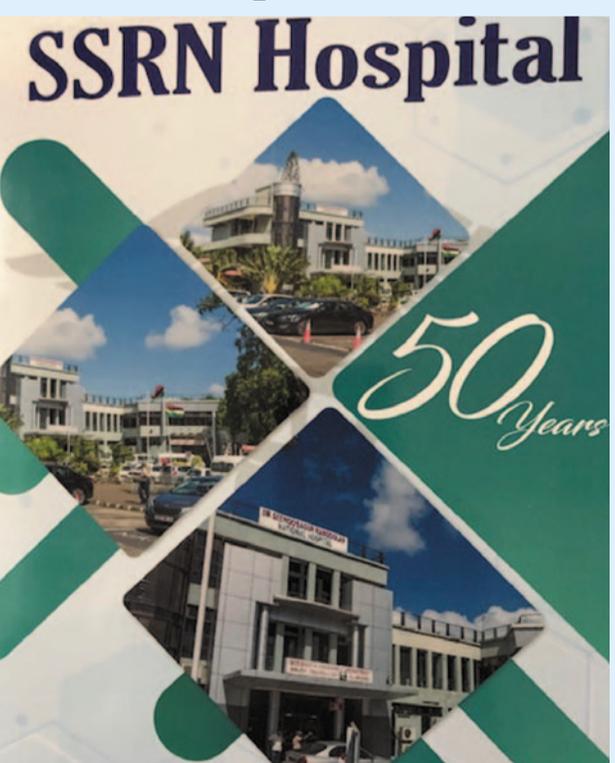
## Chronicle of a Budget Exercise Foretold



Before proposing costly support measures in a context of strapped financial resources, the government must first ascertain whether the sector or activity being helped is viable or not

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## SSRN Hospital: A white elephant?



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## Mauritius takes the flak, again

**A**fter the European Commission's decision to include Mauritius in its revised list of "high-risk countries with strategic deficiencies" in their anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing frameworks, here comes another piece of depressing news relating to alleged corrupt and fraudulent practices unfolded by the African Development Bank (ADB) and relating to the tender for the redevelopment of the CEB's St Louis Power Station.

In a press release, dated 8 June 2020, the African Development Bank Group announced, pursuant to a settlement agreement, the debarment of Burmeister & Wain Scandinavian Contractor, for a period of 21 months, for engaging in "sanctionable practices" in a power generation project financed by the Bank in Mauritius.

In 2014 and 2015, Burmeister & Wain participated in tenders for the redevelopment of the Saint Louis power plant in Mauritius, a project financed by the Bank. An investigation conducted by the Bank's Office of Integrity and Anti-Corruption has concluded that "it is more likely than not that the company engaged in fraudulent and corrupt practices in the context of this project".

It further states that "evidence supports a finding that Burmeister & Wain, on a balance of probabilities, financially rewarded members of the Mauritian administration and others, through the intermediary of third parties, for providing access to confidential tender-related information which allowed them to tailor the technical specifications of the tenders to its offering, thus gaining an undue competitive advantage over other tenderers". Burmeister & Wain would have also concealed the arrangements it had entered into with the third parties, in breach of the rules governing the tenders.

The ADB however adds that by imposing a debarment of 21 months, the Office of Integrity and Anti-Corruption recognizes Burmeister and Wain's extensive cooperation with the investigation, the company's transparency in dealing with the sanctionable conduct and the efforts that it has made to enhance its integrity compliance program since uncovering the sanctionable practices.

Responding to the PNQ of the Leader of the Opposition yesterday, the Prime Minister revealed that the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development requested on 9 June 2020, a copy of the report on the investigation; this was turned down by the ADB given that investigation reports compiled by its Office of Integrity and

Anticorruption are, as per its guidelines and policies, "confidential in nature and cannot be shared outside of a referral process to law enforcement authorities". Hon Jugnauth also stated his government has adopted "a zero-tolerance policy against corruption" and that the Central Electricity Board has referred the matter to the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) on 9 June 2020. Tough and stringent actions as may be warranted by ICAC will be taken against any person who is found to be involved in any of the alleged acts of fraud and corruption, stated the Prime Minister.

This is serious matter, since it does not emanate from the ranks of a hostile opposition bent on pulling down its adversaries, but from the ADB - a "respected guide" in the development of banking and financial standards as well as the strategic partner of the African Peer Review Mechanism. It behoves the Government to walk the talk given its track record of fighting corrupt and fraudulent practices. Not much has come out from the inquiries conducted by the ICAC into allegations of corruption/fraud slapped on ministers of the previous MSM-led government. Mauritius' reputation as a country that abides by the rule of law, transparency, good governance is increasingly at stake, the more so when it gets tarnished by respected multilateral agencies and regulators in Europe and India, and now Africa.

The inclination towards corruption had been apparent since quite some time - whether it's under the present or previous governments. Contracts have repeatedly been awarded to certain specific beneficiaries for public works, sometimes by splitting them in order not to fall under the scrutiny of the central procurement agency. In other cases, favours have been granted to specific persons or bodies through acts of coercion and collusion, influencing public bodies to do so. It is the power politicians and bureaucrats give themselves, as well as loose rules and regulations and laws they themselves make that facilitate acts of corruption.

Strong public institutions headed by persons of high integrity - and backed by an equally credible political leadership - standing in the way of corrupt administrative and technical cadres as well as politicians have the power to stop this abuse. We've got to get back in our public institutions in particular regulators as well as parastatal bodies strong-willed individuals endowed with a better vision of where Mauritius should be and determined to arrest the corruption that has crept into the entire system.

## The Conversation

### Coronavirus destroys jobs and worsens inequality, with or without full lockdown

**C**oronavirus plunged the world into the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Many governments are trying to revitalise their economies by gradually lifting lockdown measures.

But reopening may not rescue their economies to the degree they hope. Evidence from South Korea, which never shut private businesses, tells a cautionary tale. Rushing to reopen without the proper measures in place may not only jeopardise public health, but economic recovery may also be limited.

UK consumer spending has already stalled since the gradual lifting of lockdown measures in May. And earlier evidence from other countries shows people spend less in the midst of a pandemic - lockdown or no lockdown. For example, Sweden decided against a severe lockdown, but still experienced economic contractions of similar magnitudes to its European neighbours.

Taiwan and South Korea are also in midst of an economic downturn, although not as severe as the UK's. But since these countries are highly export dependent, some have argued that they experienced economic contagion from their trading partners, most of whom did shutdown.

However, my new research with colleagues Sangmin Aum and Yongseok Shin comparing regions within South Korea shows this is not the case. Despite the fact that the country successfully contained the virus and did not impose a blanket lockdown, Covid-19 still led to employment losses nationwide and caused even more losses in the sole region in South Korea that did experience a major outbreak.

South Korea's large, early outbreak of coronavirus was isolated to a single region, Daegu-Gyeongbuk (DG), and traced to a religious sect. While South Korea is now lauded for its test-and-trace policy, this was born out of the need to contain this outbreak to DG. Consequently, we can study the economic effect of coronavirus by comparing what happened in DG, with 1.6 infections per 1,000 to date, with the rest of the country, with only 0.23 infections per 1,000 to date.

#### Job losses and inequality

From the outbreak in February to the end of March, total employment in South Korea fell by 2.5% from its month-to-month trend since 2017. This was unlikely due to a downturn in international trade: imports and exports during this timeframe actually increased, possibly because South Korea was one of the few major industrialised countries to stay in business at the time.

But better evidence comes from DG, which is no more exposed to the international market than the rest of the nation. Employment in DG dropped by 3.8% by the end of March, 1.3 percentage points more than the nationwide drop. And nationwide, but much more so in DG, the drop in employment was concentrated in more or less the same sectors as in other countries, especially food services and accommodation.

The main reason for the fall in employment levels was due to hiring freezes rather than



increased layoffs or people quitting. Plus, job losses resulted in people giving up or holding off on looking for new work entirely, rather than higher unemployment (you need to be actively searching for work to be recorded as unemployed). These patterns are the same as what we are observing in the UK.

More alarmingly, job losses were focused on disadvantaged groups. Virtually all stemmed from small businesses with fewer than 30 employees, while businesses with 300 employees or more saw marginal rises in their employment, on average. The job losses primarily fell on those with less formal education, the young, and workers on temporary contracts.

The same groups were hardest hit in the UK economically and also by Covid-19 deaths. Moreover, these groups were more vulnerable across the board. They didn't just lose their jobs because they worked at restaurants or hotels - they lost the most jobs within every sector.

#### Lessons for elsewhere

While the additional 1.3% employment loss in DG is much smaller than the UK, where 15% of workers have been furloughed and 3% have lost their jobs, the outbreak has also been much larger in the UK. Here, there have been more than four confirmed infections per 1,000.

It turns out that the ratio between employment drops and cumulative Covid infection counts in DG is roughly half of that for the UK or the US. This suggests that roughly half of the employment losses in the UK may be due to private businesses and consumers voluntarily curtailing their economic activities out of fear of infection, and not the lockdown. And the fact that disadvantaged workers were harmed the most even without a lockdown means that lifting the lockdown won't improve inequality either.

Our study offers a cautionary tale as Britain reopens for business: unless social distancing measures keep infections low for a sustained period of time, lost jobs will return only slowly. And in the unfortunate scenario of a second wave in the autumn, the economic crisis is bound to only get worse, even if it doesn't trigger a second lockdown.

This is not to say lockdowns should be the policy of choice: broadening the new NHS test-and-trace scheme is a promising route. But in another research paper, my colleagues and I found that quarantine enforcement was just as imperative as testing and tracing for South Korea's successful containment of the virus.

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# Le soupçon est dans l'air du temps

Aditya Narayan

L'attribution des marchés publics pose toujours problème à Maurice, qu'il s'agisse d'un contrat de fourniture de produits ou de services, d'un contrat d'installation d'équipements lourds ou d'un contrat de construction pour le compte du Gouvernement central, ses organismes parapublics (CEB, CWA) ou ses entreprises publiques (SBM, Air Mauritius). Vices de procédure, avis d'appel d'offres taillé sur mesure, surévaluation des soumissions, conflits d'intérêts entre soumissionnaires et adjudicateurs - tous les ingrédients de la mauvaise gouvernance sont réunis pour semer le doute sur l'ensemble du système.

*specifications of the tenders to its offering, thus gaining an undue competitive advantage over other tenderers. Burmeister & Wain further concealed the arrangements it had entered into with the third parties, in breach of the rules governing the tenders."*

Le Gouvernement ne peut feindre la surprise ou l'ignorance face aux révélations de la BAD. Le leader du MMM et un ex-député du MSM avaient lancé l'alerte sur ce contrat du CEB au Parlement dans le passé, mais leurs avertissements ne furent pas pris au sérieux. Aujourd'hui, la BAD leur donne raison.

Cette nouvelle affaire vient s'ajouter au palmarès des controverses sur les marchés publics qui jalonnent l'histoire récente du pays. Nous nous rappelons de l'affaire MedPoint (clinique achetée par l'Etat à un prix représentant le double de l'évaluation initiale) et de l'affaire Betamax (contrat à source unique attribué à une compagnie privée pour le transport des produits pétroliers) qui ont été débattues en Cour par les parties prenantes avec les résultats que l'on sait.

Malheureusement, il y a une impression que les règles de la mise en concurrence des soumissionnaires pour un projet spécifique ne sont pas rigoureusement respectées, comme l'enquête de la BAD sur l'affaire BWSC le prouve.

## Coûts excédentaires

Il y a eu d'autres projets dont les coûts ont augmenté en cours de route, allant très largement au-dessus de l'évaluation initiale. Et, pourtant, la performance de ces projets est sujette à caution, comme

les routes construites à prix élevé mais qui ne résistent pas à l'assaut de la moindre pluie diluvienne. Le complexe sportif de Côte d'Or, qui a coûté Rs 4,97 milliards contre l'estimation initiale de Rs 3 milliards, en est un exemple flagrant. Ne parlons pas du projet famélique de Safe City ou encore de l'échec du projet de Heritage City. Les coûts excédentaires des projets semblent devenus la norme alors que les méthodes pointues d'évaluation financière sont disponibles avec des logiciels très avancés.

A chaque fois qu'il y a un scandale, on a droit à la réaction prévisible des autorités concernées: l'ICAC sera appelée à faire une investigation et, en attendant les résultats, toutes les questions restent sans réponse. Même au Parlement les députés ne peuvent interpellier le Gouvernement sous le prétexte officiel que l'ICAC s'en occupe. A ce jour, bien des menus fretins ont été pris dans les filets mais les gros requins de la fraude, de la corruption et du blanchiment d'argent restent au large.

Le crime à col blanc n'est pas vraiment puni à Maurice. Si quelqu'un est poursuivi, il peut se payer les services d'avocats réputés pour utiliser toutes les procédures légales en sa faveur, et ce, en grimant les divers paliers du judiciaire jusqu'au Conseil Privé. Cela prend des années pour avoir une conclusion de l'affaire non sans mentionner le fait que la poursuite peut changer de fusil d'épaule en cours de route pour saboter ses propres charges.

Contre cette toile de fond sombre, devrait-on s'étonner si l'Union européenne décide de placer le pays sur la liste noire des juridictions dont le dispositif de lutte contre le blanchiment d'argent et le financement du terrorisme présente des

carences stratégiques ? Le placement de Maurice sur une liste noire causera un dommage significatif à la réputation du centre financier international, entamera la confiance des investisseurs, affaiblira les flux d'investissements transfrontaliers, et entraînera une fragilisation générale du système bancaire local.

## Image ternie du pays

Le Groupe d'Action Financière (GAFI) avait déjà placé Maurice sur la liste grise des juridictions qui ne répondent pas à tous les 58 critères de l'accueil, de la surveillance et du contrôle des investissements étrangers et des placements de capitaux dans le secteur offshore. Suivant l'acte du GAFI, la Banque centrale de l'Inde a nié à certaines sociétés incorporées dans le centre offshore local le droit d'investir sur son sol.

Cela, rappelons-le, intervient après la révision du traité de non-double imposition entre l'Inde et Maurice afin d'accorder aux autorités indiennes le droit d'imposer la taxe sur les gains en capital sur les investissements en Inde effectués par des sociétés domiciliées à Maurice.

**Il y a eu d'autres projets dont les coûts ont augmenté en cours de route, allant très largement au-dessus de l'évaluation initiale. Et, pourtant, la performance de ces projets est sujette à caution, comme les routes construites à prix élevé mais qui ne résistent pas à l'assaut de la moindre pluie diluvienne. Le complexe sportif de Côte d'Or, qui a coûté Rs 4,97 milliards contre l'estimation initiale de Rs 3 milliards, en est un exemple flagrant. Ne parlons pas du projet famélique de Safe City... Les coûts excédentaires des projets semblent devenus la norme...**

Allant plus loin que l'Inde, le Sénégal vient d'abroger son traité de non-double imposition avec Maurice en raison de la perte de revenus fiscaux due au fait que les sociétés investissant sur son sol paient l'impôt sur les bénéfices non pas dans la juridiction de source (Sénégal) mais dans la juridiction de résidence (Maurice). Il est à craindre que d'autres pays africains n'emboîtent le pas au Sénégal pour redessiner leurs rapports avec Maurice. Ce n'est pas un bon signe quand on veut investir Rs 10 milliards en Afrique à travers la Mauritius Investment Corporation (MIC).

A la lumière de tous ces manquements à la bonne gouvernance, comment ne pas poser des questions légitimes sur le fonctionnement de nos institutions de contrôle telles que le Central Procurement Board, la FSC et la Banque centrale?

- La FSC a accordé une licence d'investissement non-bancaire à l'investisseur anglais Sobrino qui fait l'objet de poursuites ailleurs.
- Des sociétés de la famille Dos Santos, accusées de détournement de fonds en Angola, sont domiciliées à Maurice.
- La Banque centrale permet un laxisme chez les grandes banques commerciales (SBM, MCB) qui accordent des prêts sans garantie à un milliardaire indien, qui a été placé en état d'insolvabilité aux Emirats arabes unis.
- Les entreprises d'Etat ne font pas mieux. Air Mauritius court vers la banqueroute. Le CEB a créé des compagnies privées (ex: Fibernet) pour investir dans l'installation de câbles optiques et autres facilités dans le pays sans que le Parlement n'ait un droit de regard sur ses comptes.

Pour couronner le tout, la MIC va maintenant investir de l'argent public (Rs 80 milliards) dans des entreprises sans être comptable de ses décisions au Parlement. Qui seront les bénéficiaires de ces investissements? Question pour un champion.



Saint Louis Power Station

A chaque fois qu'il y a un scandale, on a droit à la réaction prévisible des autorités concernées: l'ICAC sera appelée à faire une investigation et, en attendant les résultats, toutes les questions restent sans réponse. Même au Parlement les députés ne peuvent interpellier le Gouvernement sous le prétexte officiel que l'ICAC s'en occupe. A ce jour, bien des menus fretins ont été pris dans les filets mais les gros requins de la fraude, de la corruption et du blanchiment d'argent restent au large.

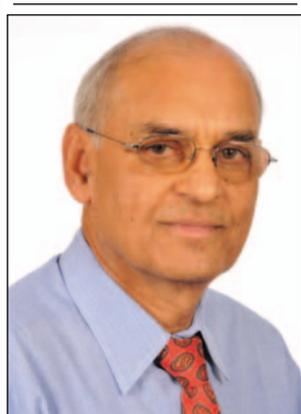
Le dernier scandale a été ébruité par la Banque africaine de développement (BAD), dont le bureau d'investigation (*Office of Integrity and Anti-Corruption*) a pointé l'administration mauricienne du doigt concernant l'attribution du contrat d'installation de moteurs à la station électrique de Saint Louis à une firme danoise, à savoir Burmeister & Wain Scandinavian Contractor (BWSC).

L'accusation de maladresse est venue non pas d'un parti politique cette fois-ci, mais de la BAD, une institution de financement de renom et non des moindres, et elle ne peut donc être balayée d'un revers de la main. Ce que dit la BAD est très grave pour l'image de marque de Maurice, qui est déjà empâtée dans d'autres affaires sordides dans le secteur offshore au moment où elle se démène pour attirer des investisseurs étrangers.

## Le CEB sur la sellette

En 2014-2015, BWSC avait fait une soumission pour le projet de redéveloppement de la station thermique de Saint Louis, financé par la BAD à hauteur de Rs 3,5 milliards. Le bureau d'investigation de la BAD a conclu que la compagnie danoise était fort probablement impliquée dans des "pratiques frauduleuses et corrompues" dans le contexte du projet, dont le coût fut majoré de Rs 700 millions pour faire passer le financement à Rs 4,3 milliards.

Le communiqué de la BAD du 8 juin 2020 déclare: "Evidence supports a finding that Burmeister & Wain, on a balance of probabilities, financially rewarded members of the Mauritian administration and others, through the intermediary of third parties, for providing access to confidential tender-related information which allowed them to tailor the technical

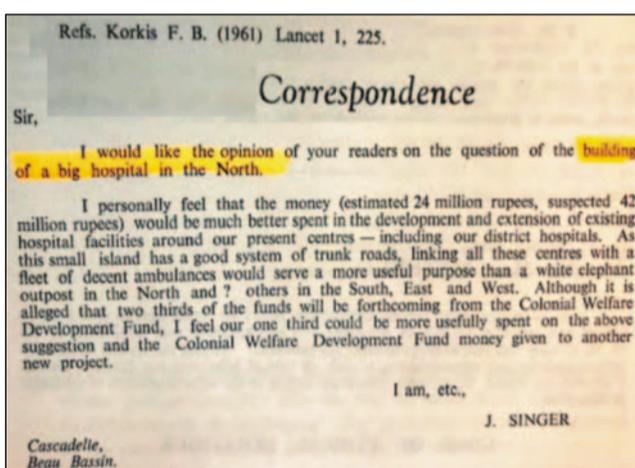


Dr R Neerunjun Gopee

# SSRN Hospital: A white elephant?

Is there anyone today, especially in the context of the acute global health crisis that the Covid-19 pandemic is, who would consider the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital (SSRNH) as a 'white elephant'? – which is defined as 'something that costs a lot of money but has no useful purpose'. And yet when it was being planned, pursuant to the need for a

hospital in the north of the island identified in a Report submitted to the Governor by Richard M. Titmuss and Brian Abel-Smith in 1960, 'Social Policies and Population Growth in Mauritius', this is the opinion that was expressed in a letter in the 'Correspondence' section of the *Mauritian Medical Journal* of October 1965, signed J. Singer, as shown in the accompanying picture.



It read as follows:

'Sir,

I would like the opinion of your readers on the question of the building of a big hospital in the North. I personally feel that the money (estimated 24 million rupees, suspected 42 million rupees) would be much better spent in the development and extension of existing hospital facilities around our present centres – including our district hospitals. As this small island has a good system of trunk roads, linking all these centres with a fleet of decent ambulances would serve a more useful purpose than a *white elephant outpost in the North and ? others in the South, East and West*. Although it is alleged that two-thirds of the funds would come from the Colonial Welfare Development Fund, I feel our one third could be more usefully spent on the above suggestion and the Colonial Welfare Development Fund money given to another new project'. (italics added)

So the North, South, East and West were considered as *outposts* not deserving of better medical services!

On the occasion of 50th anniversary of SSRN Hospital last year, a Souvenir Magazine was published. It was the laudable initiative of Dr D. Ramruttun, who had started his career there as Medical and Health Officer (MHO) before becoming Medical Superintendent at the hospital until his retirement recently. Besides the several articles covering the different departments of the hospital, there are a few others which give a historical account of the genesis and setting up of the hospital.

Today we take for granted the existence of our six Regional Hospitals (including the one in Rodrigues), the Specialized Hospitals, the Area and Community Health Centres, the Mediclinics, and the services that all these health delivery points provide. Neither in the public nor in the medical profession is there any great interest in know-

ing how all these developments took place, let alone understand or appreciate the fundamental concept that underpins the provision of the health and medical services in the island, namely Universal Health Coverage, right from the beginning. This is something that the country can be proud of, as many others that do not enjoy this privilege struggle to cope with the pandemic. It is because of this state-driven and centralized health system free at the point of service that we have been able to effectively bring the pandemic under control.

The rationale for constructing a new hospital was explained in the Titmuss Report in the chapter on 'The Fundamental Problems of Medical Care'. The authors identified the main problems as being shortage of nurses and doctors, and of hospital beds. They noted that 'The Government is fully aware that a growing population and other factors make necessary further extensions to the existing services. Among the projects which have been envisaged are a number of additions to the general hospital services...a new Central Hospital will be constructed to serve the North and to replace the services now provided by the inadequate small hospitals at Poudre d'Or and Montagne Longue; Rodrigues will be supplied with a new hospital.'

The government went ahead with the project. In 1962, the British firm of architects Messrs Fry, Drew and Partners were officially commissioned to design the 'Central Hospital North', and construction began in 1965. Finally, 'in October 1968 the keys of the complete building were officially handed over to the Honourable Minister of Health. January 1969, therefore, saw the Government of Mauritius in possession of a very modern and fine hospital building with all the heavy equipment like boilers, X-Ray apparatus, etc. already installed'.

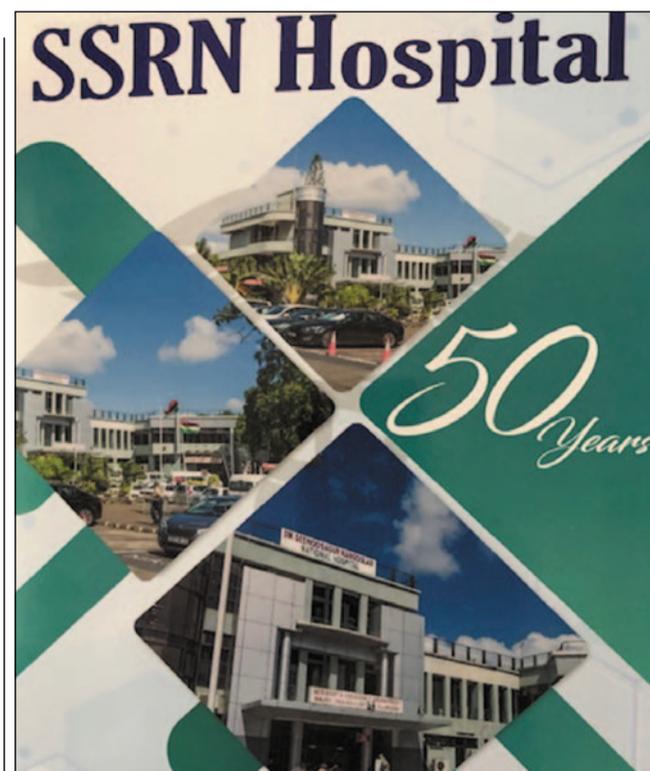
It needs to be highlighted that this was the first time in the history of Mauritius that there was proper planning for a hospital, which included its ancillary support services and collateral developments for its smooth running through provision of nursing training and quarters for medical staff. None of the existing hospitals had been purpose-built.

It was in August 1969 that the opening ceremony was held, and the hospital started running some specialist outpatient services, with specialists attending from the Civil and Victoria Hospitals. There was a delay in initiating inpatient services, that is, admitting and treating patients in the new wards. One of the reasons was that there were not enough nursing and medical staff. Nearly a hundred people sent to the UK were still undergoing nursing training. Besides, in the same vein as the correspondence in the *Mauritian Medical Journal* referred to above, there were others too who were critical - and that included government specialists who resided mainly in Plaines Wilhems and Port-Louis where they had their private practice too – and were therefore apprehensive about being posted to the North.

In November 1969 male and female medical wards were opened with a total of 52 beds, with patients transferred from Poudre d'Or Hospital, as well as 24-hour Accident & Emergency Services provided.

In December 1969, Dr J.C. Mohith was appointed the first Medical Superintendent of SSRH Hospital. He immediately began planning the expansion of services in phases, and in an integrated manner - that is, making provision for and accommodation of Public Health Offices and clinics for Health Education, malnutrition and anaemia, and scabies, which was in contrast to the uncoordinated and inefficient 'vertical programmes' approach that had till then prevailed.

Unfortunately, the nurses under training in the UK for nursing training in anticipation of the opening of the North Hospital decided to stay back, obtaining employment in the NHS which itself badly needed nurses and also offered better terms and conditions. Nevertheless, during the year 1970, commissioning progressed at a fairly rapid space as more and more staff became available, including several young specialists newly returned to the country, and the



“What characterized SSRN Hospital was that the newly-returned specialists were not only very dynamic, but acted as true mentors to the MHOs. Many of the senior Nursing Staff were equally 'protective' of junior doctors, especially the new recruits, and overall at least in the initial few years there was a very conducive and convivial atmosphere of 'camaraderie' that distinguished the hospital, and that led to several lifelong friendships among all levels of staff - and that persist to this day among those who are still around...”

hospital gradually became fully operational by the time I joined as MHO in 1972.

What was unique about the SSRN Hospital were the innovative features that were brought in besides the integrated approach to healthcare delivery already mentioned. These concerned both infrastructure and functioning of the departments concerned, and related essentially to the non-medical activities, as follows: Medical Records; Central Sterile Supply Department (CSSD); Engineering: A Planned Preventive Maintenance Scheme; Catering, with the appointment of a Catering Officer and ten cooks trained in modern cooking methods and equipment; Domestic Services headed by a Domestic Supervisor; Regular meetings with department heads and with President and Secretary of the District Council of Pamplemousses Riviere du Rempart and Chairman of Village Councils to inform the public of facilities available and how to use them. These pioneering features were subsequently introduced in all hospitals.

What further characterized SSRN Hospital was that the newly-returned specialists were not only very dynamic, but acted as true mentors to the MHOs. Many of the senior Nursing Staff were equally 'protective' of junior doctors, especially the new recruits, and overall at least in the initial few years there was a very conducive and convivial atmosphere of 'camaraderie' that distinguished the hospital, and that led to several lifelong friendships among all levels of staff – and that persist to this day among those who are still around.

Further, there used to be weekly clinical meetings in the Conference Room which were well attended. Such were the exhilarating days of the SSRN Hospital, now a hub of medical activity – certainly not a 'white elephant'!



Mrinal Roy

# Chronicle of a Budget Exercise Foretold

*Before proposing costly support measures in a context of strapped financial resources, the government must first ascertain whether the sector or activity being helped is viable or not*

**D**espite the current blitzkrieg on national TV to extol the policy choices underpinning the 2020-21 Budget proposals, it is patently evident that some of these choices are questionable. In the light of the systemic flaws and failings of our economic model, there was a widespread expectation among the multitude for the economy to be profoundly reformed and reengineered to establish a new socio-economic order which bridges inequality, provides equal opportunities to all, assures a fair sharing of the fruits of prosperity and a better quality of life for all. People basically want their seminal aspirations which have been repeatedly thwarted since independence to be finally met.

There is a basic industriousness among the people who want a level playing field in respect of opportunities, merit based recruitment and promotion to improve their prospects and quality of life though their hard work, qualifications and competence in pursuit of their dreams of happiness. This potent force of the nation must be harnessed for the common good and not undermined by nurturing a culture of dependence on state assistance and subsidy or political patronage.

## Lifeline

Without the one-off Rs 60 billion lifeline received from the Bank of Mauritius to boost up strapped government revenue caused by the Covid-19 crisis, the 2020-21 budget would not have had a leg to stand on. Yet, there is not a word about this substantial grant from the BOM representing some 37% of the total 2020-21 budget expenditure of Rs162.9 billion.

Apart from enabling the Minister of Finance to balance the budget, the Rs 60 million grant also provided him with tremendous leeway and flexibility to reform and reshape the economy to comprehensively meet the aspirations of the people. Instead, the policy choices made basically followed the same template and model used time and time again. Many of the budgetary measures proposed are simply variations and adjustments of the same elements which have formed part of the budget structure for years in the country.

As has been the case for years now, the Minister of Finance reaffirmed that the construction industry will be the engine of our recovery. Thus, more than Rs 40 billion have been allocated for various infrastructural projects including *inter alia* the construction of 12,000 social

housing units. As before, 34 lucrative private sector property development and smart city projects worth some Rs 62 billion have

been earmarked for fast track processing and approval procedures by government.

## Short-termism

The upshot is that the generous fiscal incentives amounting to billions of rupees of forfeited tax revenue granted since 2015 to promoters of smart city and real estate development projects have heavily skewed Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) away from productive economic activities into real estate activities which obtained Rs13,599 billion representing more than 89% of gross FDI flow in the country during the January to September 2019 period. Of this amount the lion share of FDI or Rs11.821 billion were invested in IRS/RES/IHS/PDS/SCS schemes (Integrated Resort Scheme/Real Estate Scheme/Invest Hotel Scheme/Property Development Scheme/Smart City Scheme). The allowed sales of a major share of these residential properties to foreigners have escalated real estate values in the country out of reach of large swathes of mainstream Mauritians. Selling property or passports or resident and occupation permits to foreigners is a desperate and shortsighted strategy to raise one-off funds.

These are short lived measures which benefit only the few who are richly endowed with land assets in prime locations, deepen inequality, have profound adverse fallouts on the fabric of society and have limited positive multiplier effect on the economy in terms of, for example, the employment of the qualified young or productive economic activities.

Among the questionable policy choices are the budget proposal to bend over backwards to facilitate the entry of foreigners into the country. Foreigners can thus obtain an Occupation Permit (OP) for an investment of a mere USD 50,000 (about Rs 2 million), bring their parents to live in Mauritius and invest in other ventures without any shareholding restriction. Non-citizens who have a residence permit would no longer require an Occupation or Work Permit to invest and work in Mauritius. OP and Residence Permit holders will be eligible to apply for a Permanent Residence Permit if they have held the permit for three consecutive years.

*On brade à tour de bras.* Do such questionable policies reflect the ethos and ideals on which independence was fought and obtained? Some years ago, a similar misguided policy led to the creation of foreign enclaves and the setting up of small 'businesses' like hairdresser's salons in Black River/Tamarin in the West.

No wonder subsidized social housing is now also being proposed to an increasing range of income groups including 1,500 housing units for the middle-income families

earning monthly income between Rs 45,000 and Rs 60,000 with government subsidizing 30% of the cost. No Mauritian, except the most vulnerable, wants to depend on state subsidy to meet his basic existential needs.

This is a major step back in the country. We should recall that despite lower income levels, the post-independence generation of cadres, teachers, civil servants and a broad spectrum of employees had the disposable income and the purchasing power required to invest in a house, a car to commute to work or go on holidays as well as bequeath assets including land to their children. In contrast, it is very difficult for a young professional of today to, for example, buy land and build a house from his savings owing principally to the significant rise in real estate values fueled by the explosion of high end real estate projects in the country. The present situation is unsustainable. There is therefore an urgent need to scuttle such decried short-termism and initiate the long overdue land reforms required.

## The chimney syndrome

Instead of much needed land reforms, government is instead proposing to put some 20,000 acres of abandoned land on a land bank platform for 'immediate use'. Let it be clearly stated. The property rights of the owners of these agricultural lands who individually own small plots of land acquired through their hard work and who have contributed for generations to the sugar industry or to assure food security in the country cannot be tampered with.

Is it not instead high time to corral the required acreage of cane lands from uneconomic sugar production to make the country with the help of the savvy entrepreneurship of planters and the farming community as self-sufficient in (preferably organic) agricultural produce and other essential food supplies as possible with the required support of greenhouse production and modern storage facilities, cold rooms and direct sale options? This is certainly a much more profitable economic activity for planters and farmers. The chimney syndrome dies hard.

Before proposing costly support measures in a context of strapped financial resources, the government must therefore first ascertain whether the sector or activity being helped is viable or not. While enunciating its policy of self reliance recently, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has spelled out clear principles: Whatever is produced to replace imports must be competitive and comply with the best quality standards prevailing in the market place. Government cannot support substandard and uncompetitive products or unviable sectors from scarce financial resources.

For example, the budget proposes to waive Port dues and terminal handling charges payable in US \$ on exports from July to December 2020 and reduce them by 50% for the period January to June 2021. This means a significant reduction in Port and cargo handling revenue and possibly deferred investments for profitable entities of the economy. Are the sectors benefitting from such support viable? Will the companies benefitting from these measures improve their competitiveness and increase their market share?



Photo: gulfindustryonline.com

“Government has again hiked the import tax on sugar from 80% to 100% purportedly in a bid to reduce diabetes in the country. Sales of locally produced sugar on the local market decreased from 18,000 tonnes to 16,000 tonnes in 2018-19 in a domestic market of some 36,000 despite the increase in import duty from 15% to 80% in June 2018. Does this simply mean that locally produced sugar is significantly less competitive than high duty paying sugar imports? Are we bent on flogging a moribund horse?”

Diabetes and smoking cannot be significantly reduced by higher taxes but by a robust campaign by health authorities to sensitize people on the serious risks to their health. Government has again hiked the import tax on sugar from 80% to 100% purportedly in a bid to reduce diabetes in the country. Sales of locally produced sugar on the local market decreased from 18,000 tonnes to 16,000 tonnes in 2018-19 in a domestic market of some 36,000 despite the increase in import duty from 15% to 80% in June 2018. Does this simply mean that locally produced sugar is significantly less competitive than high duty paying sugar imports? Are we bent on flogging a moribund horse?

## Rational choices

There is also a hullabaloo about some Rs 3.5 billion expected to be collected from the Solidarity Levy of 25% from those earning more than Rs 3 Million annually. People must remember that the brunt of the fiscal burden of the country is borne by mainstream Mauritians through the payment of VAT, excise and taxes on goods and services. In 2018-19, it represented about 61% or the lion's share of total tax revenue. In addition, mainstream consumers pay various contributions through the retail price of petrol and diesel or the air fare, etc. Is it not high time to usher the urgent fiscal reforms required to ensure a fairer sharing of the tax burden in line with the skewed distribution of wealth in the country?

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Against such a backdrop, it was imperative to make well thought out policy choices and judiciously allocate the scarce financial resources available on the basis on rational principles and sound analysis to sort the wheat from the chaff in order to chart viable pathways to boost the future prospects of the country in the exceptional circumstances imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

## An additional 49 M people may fall into extreme poverty due to coronavirus: UN chief



49 million people more to fall into extreme poverty.  
Photo - images.moneycontrol.com

Nearly 49 million more people are likely to fall into extreme poverty this year due to the Covid-19 crisis and every percentage point drop in the global GDP would mean hundreds of thousands of additional children will have stunted growth, UN chief Antonio Guterres has warned, calling on countries to act immediately to ensure global food security.

"There is more than enough food in the world to feed our population of 7.8 billion people. But, today, more than 820 million people are hungry. And some 144 million children under the age of 5 are stunted - more than 1 in 5 children worldwide. Our food systems are failing, and the Covid-19 pandemic is making things worse," Guterres said at the launch of the policy brief on food security on Tuesday.

"The number of people who are acutely food or nutrition insecure will rapidly expand," he said, adding that even in countries with abundant food, there are risks of disruptions in the food supply chain.

Launching the policy brief on the impact of the COVID-19 on food security and nutrition, Guterres said nations must mobilise to save lives and livelihoods, focusing attention where the risk is most acute.

"That means designating food and nutrition services as essential, while implementing appropriate protections for food workers."

Guterres stressed the need to preserve critical humanitarian food, livelihood and nutrition assistance to vulnerable groups and to position food in food-crisis countries to reinforce and

scale up social protection systems.

"Countries need to scale up support for food processing, transport and local food markets, and they must keep trade corridors open to ensure the continuous functioning of food systems," he said, adding that nations must ensure that relief and stimulus packages reach the most vulnerable, including meeting the liquidity needs of small-scale food producers and rural businesses.

Further, Guterres called on nations to strengthen social protection systems for nutrition, safeguard access to safe, nutritious foods, particularly for young children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, older people and to adapt and expand social protection schemes to benefit nutritionally at-risk groups, including supporting children who no longer have access to school meals.

Looking beyond the pandemic, the Secretary-General called for transforming food systems to achieve a more inclusive and sustainable world.

"We cannot forget that food systems contribute up to 29 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions, including 44 per cent of methane, and are having a negative impact on biodiversity."



Guyana's opposition candidate, Irfaan Ali. Photo - buzz-caribbean.com

## Guyana presidential election data shows opposition leader Ali wins recount

Preliminary data published by Guyana's elections commission shows that opposition candidate Irfaan Ali has won a recount of votes in March's presidential election following accusations the tally was manipulated.

President David Granger had claimed victory despite observer groups and diplomats from the United States and the European Union saying there were irregularities in the count, reports Reuters.

While Guyana's election commission has yet to officially declare results, initial data shows Ali's opposition PPP party secured enough votes to win 33 seats in the 65-seat legislature.

Granger's APNU+AFC party secured enough votes to take 31 seats.

The 40-year-old Ali is expected to be sworn in as president.

The opposition had said the results from the largest voting district had been inflated to put Granger ahead of Ali. Guyana's top court found the district's electoral head had not counted votes in accordance with electoral laws, eventually leading to a country-wide recount.

The disputed vote may fuel long-simmering tensions between two groups, Afro-Guyanese and those of Indian descent, each of which has grown suspicious that the other is seeking control over revenues from oil production.

Guyana, which has a population of less than 800,000, is expected to become a major oil producer in the coming years as a consortium of companies taps into 8 billion barrels of oil and gas off its coast.

## Pope Francis sends strong message to US Catholics after George Floyd's death

Pope Francis called George Floyd by name, twice, and offered support to an American bishop who knelt in prayer during a Black Lives Matter protest.

Cardinals black and white have spoken out about Floyd's death, and the Vatican's communications juggernaut has shifted into overdrive to draw attention to the cause he now represents, reports Associated Press.

Under normal circumstances, Floyd's killing at the hands of a white police officer and the global protests denouncing racism and police brutality might have drawn a muted diplomatic response from the Holy See. But in a US election year, the intensity and consistency of the Vatican's reaction suggests that, from the pope on down, it is seeking to encourage anti-racism protesters while making a clear statement about where American Catholics should stand ahead of President Donald Trump's bid for a



Francis spoke out June 3 after Trump posed in front of an Episcopal church near the White House, Bible in hand, after law enforcement aggressively forced protesters away from a nearby park.  
Photo - AP

second term in November.

Francis "wants to send a very clear message to these conservative Catholics here who are pro-Trumpers that, 'Listen, this is just as much of an issue as abortion is,'" said Anthea Butler, a presiden-

tial visiting fellow at Yale Divinity School.

The degree to which Francis and the Vatican have seized on Floyd's killing is unusual and suggests a coordinated messaging strategy aimed at a national church that Francis has long criticized for its political and ideological partisanship, said Alberto Melloni, a church historian and secretary of the John XXIII Foundation for Religious Studies in Bologna, Italy. Last week, Francis denounced the "sin of racism" and twice identified Floyd as the victim of a "tragic" killing. In a message read in Italian and English during his general audience, Francis expressed concerns about violence during the protests, saying it was self-destructive.

He also said, "We cannot close our eyes to any form of racism or exclusion, while pretending to defend the sacredness of every human life."

## Tokyo 2020: Olympics will be 'simplified' in 2021

The Games, scheduled to start in July, were postponed for a year in March because of fears over the Covid-19 pandemic.

Tokyo 2020 chief executive Toshiro Muto added that the Olympics will "not be done with grand splendour".

organisers had not ruled out reducing the number of fans, although the competition schedule remained unchanged for now.

Meanwhile, Yoshiro Mori, the president of Tokyo 2020, refused to discuss the possibility of cancelling the Games altogether.

"It's not right to discuss speculation based on a hypothetical scenario and therefore our direction is to not consider at all about cancellation," he added.

In April, Japan's Prime Minister



Tokyo 2020 to simplify the Olympics. Photo - news.cgtn.com

Organisers said that they are working on more than 200 ideas to simplify and reduce costs for the rescheduled Games.

Muto, speaking at a news conference, also revealed that the

Shinzo Abe said it may be "difficult" to stage the Games if the country does not successfully contain the virus.

Compiled by  
Doojesh Ramlallah



Ashvin Ramgoolam

# Financial services sector, budgetary measures that are really not...

**T**he Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, Hon Rengaden Padayachy, has presented his first-ever Budget on

4th June 2020. Despite being a socio-economic and accounting exercise, the national Budget 2020-2021 comprises a number of measures... that are really not. Focusing on the financial services sector, the five main 'measures' that were enumerated to enable Mauritius to be withdrawn from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the European Commission list of high-risk countries are actually action points recommended by the FATF that, Budget or not, the authorities ought to have already worked on.

## Compliance with the FATF Recommendations

The Government is, more than ever, committed to work on the action plan and to make Mauritius a fully compliant and effective jurisdiction. As such, the Government should prioritise on the following, against anything else:

### 1. Risk-based supervisions in accordance with the recommendations of the FATF

The Bank of Mauritius (BoM) and the Financial Services Commission (FSC) have already put in place an AML/CFT Risk-Based Supervision (RBS) framework by setting up a dedicated AML/CFT team within its Supervision Department. This framework was established when the aforementioned current Minister was the then first Governor of the BoM. As such, with regard to the RBS, Mauritius is practically compliant and the private sector is playing a crucial role by complying with the instructions from the regulators.

### 2. Targeted outreach programmes to promote clear understanding of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing risks

The Government must come forward with a detailed plan in view of disseminating knowledge on ML and TF risks to a larger audience. As such, the Financial Services Institute may develop and deliver a foundation course or introductory certification on the financial crimes to fresh graduates, as well as to civil servants, amongst others. The Mauritius Bankers Association, the Association of Trustees and Management Companies, Global Finance Mauritius, amongst other stakeholders may also work in collaboration with the Government for a dedicated annual one-week awareness campaign on ML and TF risks.

### 3. Increasing the reporting of suspicious transactions

A mismatch in the number of suspicious transaction reports filed to the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) between the banking and the non-banking institutions has been noted. Despite a regulatory requirement that training be provided to all the staff of a regulated body annually, the latter must ensure that the staff have developed the skill to identify suspicious transaction thanks to warning signs. The FIU may also organise trainings targeting the Money Laundering Reporting Officers (MLRO), Deputy MLRO, and Compliance Officers on a regular basis.

### 4. Targeted financial sanctions in cases of terrorist financing

Mauritius has come forward with the United Nations (Financial Prohibitions, Arms Embargo and Travel Ban) Sanctions Act 2019. This legislation provides a framework to implement targeted sanctions, including financial sanctions, arms embargo, and travel ban, and other measures imposed by the United Nations Security Council. Having



said that, Mauritius has addressed the issue of the targeted financial sanctions in cases of TF thanks to actions taken well before the Budget.

### 5. The timely access to beneficial ownership information

Mauritius must take a call as to whether the beneficial ownership information should be made available to the public, for instance by inserting a dedicated 'Beneficial Owner Information' section in reports which are generated by the Corporate and Business Registration Department online company search platform, while the aspect of confidentiality and data protection is taken into account.

### Introduce an AML/CFT (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill

The Government will come up with a new AML/CFT (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill to complement the existing legislations and shall ensure that Mauritius is a compliant jurisdiction at all levels. However, it is of paramount importance that the aforementioned Bill is introduced, voted, assented and gazetted prior to September 2020 so that the regulators and the regulated entities have ample time to incorporate the amendments in their Guidelines, Code or Manual, and Policies before the October 2020 FATF assessment.

### Financial Offences Court

Additionally, a dedicated and specialised Financial Offences Court shall be set up to hear cases related to financial crime within a reasonable timeframe. Hence, delays would be avoided in prosecuting criminals and where applicable, assets could be ordered to be frozen by the Asset Recovery Unit.

### Introduce New Financial Products

As a diversification strategy, the following products shall be made available to the market to further enhance competitiveness as an International Financial Centre:

#### 1. Central Bank Digital Currency

Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), a widely accessible digital form of fiat money that could be used as legal tender. CBDC takes crypto currency form as a new form of money, with the difference that the power of money issuance and monetary policies are still in the hands of the central bank.

#### 2. An Insurance Wrapper

The Insurance Wrapper is referred to as a life insurance policy 'wrapped' around the policy owner's (the investor) investment portfolio made up of investment funds, securities, shares, bonds, listed and non-listed investments.

#### 3. Variable Capital Companies

Variable Capital Companies (VCC) may serve as a structure for both open and closed-ended investment funds. It is a combination of a legal entity as well as a fund structure and may be used for all types of investment funds, including mutual funds, hedge funds, private equity, and real estate funds.

### 4. An inaugural Sukuk issuance by the Bank of Mauritius

Sukuk, also known as Islamic bond, is a Sharia-compliant, fixed-income capital markets instrument that represents a portion of ownership in a portfolio of eligible existing or future assets. Unlike traditional bonds, Sukuk does not represent a debt obligation. The investors are also entitled to part of the profits generated by the asset.

### 5. Green and Blue Bond framework works by the Bank of Mauritius

Green bonds or Climate Bonds are specifically linked to climate change-mitigation, adaptation, and resilience and they are financing climate change solutions, whereas Blue Bonds or Ocean Bonds are an innovative ocean financing instrument whereby funds raised are earmarked exclusively for ocean-friendly projects which are devised to enhance ocean and coastal resilience.

### Miscellaneous Measures

- The Central Know Your Customer (CKYC) project has once again surfaced after 2 years. The centralised database will comprise KYC documents (Passport, National Identity Card, Proof of Address, amongst other) of customers engaged in various financial market segments. This shall ensure that once a person completes his KYC process with a financial institution, he will need not be required to go through the KYC process again.
- The BoM shall also come up with new frameworks for digital banking, private banking, and wealth management by banks, and these frameworks are expected to be in the form of guidelines and shall also upgrade the Mauritius Credit Information Bureau (MCIB) to provide credit score of potential borrowers.
- As part of the fund-leveraging mechanism, a dedicated Venture Capital Market will be set up at the Stock Exchange of Mauritius for start-ups and Small and Medium Enterprises.

### Amendments to Existing Laws

A number of amendments in the existing laws governing the financial services sector was proposed and the laws which shall be impacted are Banking Act 2004, Financial Services Act 2007, Insurance Act 2005, Mauritius Deposit Insurance Scheme Act 2019, Private Pensions Scheme Act 2012, and Securities Act 2005.

*Ashvin Ramgoolam is a Compliance professional with extensive experience in the financial services sector. He is the co-author of the first-ever Financial Crime Threat Assessment for Mauritius and he is specialised in financial crime compliance, data protection (GDPR), governance, FATCA and CRS.*

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Interview: Dharam Gokhool - Former Education Minister

# “ We have to brace ourselves for some difficult days ahead ”

'The longer the pandemic stays around, the greater the risk of a delayed recovery'



**Mauritius Times: As a former Minister of Education, what is your take on Government's overall handling of the Education Sector in this Covid-19 pandemic situation?**

**Dharam Gokhool:** There is some parallel to be drawn between the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic by the central government and the Ministry of Education. When the first three cases of Covid-19 were detected, in March 2020, and in view of the invisible, unpredictable and potentially lethal nature of the virus, there was a strong patriotic momentum that the Republic should rise up to the situation, mobilise its collective intelligence and experience and deal with the virus as one people, one nation.

The MSM-led alliance government decided that there was no need for a concerted, united response and as we know, there were a number of instances where the situation could have got out of control, namely the mishandling of opening of supermarkets, on-line shopping, the chaotic distribution of potatoes and cooking gas, etc. Unnecessary tensions and inconveniences added to the fear and anxieties of the population. All this could have been better managed if Government had adopted a more open and less blinkered approach.

As regards the situation prevailing in the Education sector, as from 18th March when it was decided to close down the educational establishments, the way forward remained fuzzy, with people wondering 'What next?'. To calm down the concerns of parents and learners, the Ministry started the broadcast of video lessons for Primary Schools through MBC-TV and on-line teaching for Secondary and Higher education. Numerous problems were encountered with regard to the quality of the educational programmes and their

“The difficult part for the opposition was after the defeat at the 2019 polls. But times are changing and events are playing in their favour. Also, people are coming to realise that Government cannot continue to blame the previous government when it is facing difficulty in honouring its promises. Nor can it continue to use precedent past wrongdoings of the previous government to justify its own wrongdoings...”

delivery, especially for the Primary stream. Obviously there was a time constraint but if the Ministry had roped in dedicated professionals - many had already publicly announced their willingness for collaboration -- the situation could have been handled in a much better manner.

As in the case of the Government's handling of the virus, there was also absence of openness and a collaborative ethos on the part of the Ministry in dealing with the initial stages of the shutdown of educational establishments.

\* In the UK, former Tory education secretary said recently that the government still did not know how it was going

**D**haram Gokhool, former Minister of Education in a Labour-led government feels that the government has missed an opportunity to benefit by the collective intelligence and experience of educational stakeholders in the country who were willing to collaborate so as to deal with the problems linked to the pandemic as "one people, one nation". Nevertheless, he makes some suggestions after reviewing some of the gaps he identifies in the response to the emergency by the Minister of Education. He also comments briefly on the economic situation.

**to get pupils back into class safely. Over here, the Minister of Education has unveiled her plans to get learners back to class. What is your assessment of her plans?**

On 6th June the Minister unveiled her plans to get learners back to class. There is a new school calendar and a new scheme for assessments and examinations. There is also a very elaborate sanitary and social distancing protocol.

Now that the details are known to the stakeholders, we note that there is quasi-consensus among them that the plans have been elaborated without taking them on board and without paying due attention to the specificities of each of the subsectors. The Minister seems to have been oblivious to the fact that the Education sector is not a monolithic bloc and that it cannot be subjected to a one-size-fits-all formula.

UNESCO has recommended that careful and detailed planning is essential for reopening of schools, and Ministries must factor in three key elements: infrastructure, human resources and finance. I am not convinced that all these aspects have been taken on board in elaborating the plans. They are all very pertinent issues in the implementation phase.

The reopening plans must necessarily be formulated on the basis of extensive consultations in order to build a strong sense of ownership among the stakeholders and also to size up all organisational and practical aspects - within and outside educational establishments - to which learners will be exposed.

For example, what will be the fate of children of Grades 1, 2 and 3 who will come to school on two days for morning sessions as from 14th September until 18th December 2020, when most parents are at work? Who will take care of them during the two afternoons and the three full days when they will have to be at home?

During the Teaching Break between 15th June to 14th July and during the period when Educators will have to be in their respective educational establishments as from 15th July to resumption of classes, what will happen to the broadcast of lessons on MBC-TV for the Primary sector and on-line learning for the Secondary sector?

The plans make no mention of how the MITD centres under the Ministry will conduct

their activities.

Like me, many people will wonder whether, in elaborating her plans, the Minister has complied with the precept so well known to Ministers of Education: *Bien préparer pour bien gérer, bien gérer pour mieux éduquer.*

\* **Parents are worried about the coronavirus' toll on children's learning, and the risks kids might face once schools reopen given the difficulties of implementing social distancing in and outside the classroom in most of our schools (except for those with low school population) and even in school buses. To be fair, there is not much the authorities can do about that. What do you think?**

As a former Minister, as an Educator and as a parent, I am very disturbed that, in formulating her plans, the Minister who speaks very eloquently about "*l'épanouissement de chaque enfant*", has not taken into consideration the tremendous emotional and psychological pressures that almost all learners will have been through with the confinement/lockdown being extended to July 2020.

The arrangements under which the Minister is proposing to reopen schools are likely to cause more distress to learners as the conditions of social distancing to which they will be subjected and under which they will restart their learning, will sound like a prolongation of the confinement/lockdown.

The plans of the Minister should have incorporated a reasonable period of time, during which teams of psychologists and social workers together with educators and school administrators would have interacted with learners to prepare them emotionally and psychologically to renew with their normal learning activities. This would have helped to alleviate the pressures on learners.

Opportunities should also have been given to parents with specific issues concerning their children during the confinement/lockdown to share their experiences or seek counselling as appropriate.

These are but a few suggestions to alleviate the worries of parents and also to make the social-distancing less cumbersome. Constraints should not be an excuse to confine oneself in a comfort zone and be content with the strict minimum; it is an opportunity to show creativity and leadership

# The Opposition: 'Since times are changing, who knows, the tides may change'

\* Contd from page 8

\* We read from the *New York Times* that researchers are saying that students could lose between "half and all of the achievement growth one would expect in a normal academic year". Do you think students will definitely fall behind because of the closings, or is it possible for them to eventually catch up?

We have a system of education where face-to-face Educator-Learner interaction is the norm and technology-mediated learning is yet to become pervasive and an integral part of our educational ecosystem. During the months of confinement/lockdown, most learners were deprived of their privileged medium of learning.

Also transforming teaching materials into digital format at short notice and not having the required digital and ICT skills may adversely impact on the quality of teaching and learning. These are issues that cannot be addressed by *ad hoc* quick fix solutions like running a couple of days of workshops.

Another aspect which limits the learning process is the absence of peer learning, and most learners were deprived of this opportunity.

In many cases, many learners did not have access to technology or a supportive home environment.

Now, in the plans elaborated by the Minister, there is a marathon term of some 20 weeks (1st August to 18th December). Is such a long stretch of time conducive to effective learning?

It may be a useful exercise for the Ministry to assess the situation in our local context, but the researchers cited by the *New York Times*, to my mind may not be too off the mark in their affirmations.

\* Given the digital divide here as elsewhere, new arrangements put in place to ensure online schooling during the lockdown could widen equality gaps. Are you worried about the issue of educational equity?

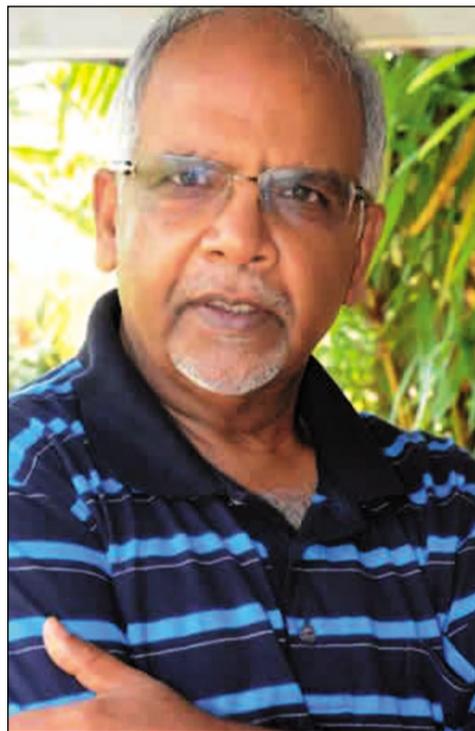
Ministers of Education, worldwide, are champions and promoters of three fundamental principles that should guide education policies, processes and practices. They are Access, Quality, Equity and Inclusion.

Equity and Inclusion in Education is a basic human right.

When I scrutinise how the Ministry is handling the issue of equity and inclusion, I cannot refrain myself from concluding that the reality is very far from the rhetoric that we often hear from the Minister on this issue.

Let me give you two concrete examples.

1. On 14th January this year, at Bois des Amourettes ZEP school, a Hot Meals project for children of that school was launched. Since the confinement/lockdown, over five months have elapsed. Were they provided with the meals or were they deprived?
2. The on-line teaching started in mid-March. When starting the programme, the Ministry should have assessed whether all learners would be in position to take advantage of the facility. On 8th May, Cabinet decided that 2572 tablets will be purchased for learners of Grade 10 to Grade 13, who were on the Social Register Mauritius, to enable them to



// The other factor which will impact on the recovery process is the Covid-19 pandemic itself. The longer it stays around and the longer it takes to produce an effective vaccine, the greater the risk of a delayed recovery. All in all, we have to brace ourselves for some difficult days ahead..."

follow on-line teaching. For more than two months after the start of on-line teaching, these learners presumably did not have the facilities to access on-line teaching. There is no precise indication as to when the tablets will be available to these learners. Is this is not a flagrant case of gross inequity?

This is but a sample of how the principle of equity in the education sector is being handled. Yes, I am terribly worried, and I am sure there are many who will share my concern.

\* The coronavirus pandemic has changed how millions around the globe are educated. New solutions for education could bring much needed innovation. Is it not time to reassess and review our educational policies, processes and practices to align them with global best practices?

We are living in a global village and the world is becoming virtual. Complexity is increasing. Knowledge is growing exponentially. Speed is of essence. All these changes are challenging the traditional, old, brick and mortar educational architecture. We cannot sit back and watch the world move forward. We have to be part of the process. We have to be involved.

We have to aim for excellence, for quality of a global standard. This was our ambi-

tion in 2005. As Minister of Education of the Labour government, we came up with the concept of a World Class Quality Education. We formulated the Education and HR Strategy for 2008-2013 to position Mauritius as a Regional Education Hub, with alliances with institutions of international repute.

Some twenty years down the road, the writings on the Education wall are not promising. Government's aim is to reach a target of a Gross Tertiary Enrolment Ratio (GTER) of 60% in the years to come. But when we see the achievement of our learners at the School Certificate level, with only some 20% of candidates attaining 5 Credits, the future of our Higher Education sector does not look bright.

The corona pandemic has come as an adversity; it has exposed our limitations. But it has also provided us with some useful insights about the huge potential of a society driven by knowledge. It has provided us with a wake-up call for a New Education Agenda. A **New Educational Strategy**. With innovation as the way forward

\* What else do you think might be envisaged in terms of innovation whether with regard to teaching and learning, syllabus, etc?

In 1996, Jacques Delors who chaired the International Commission on Education on Education (UNESCO) for the 21st Century, produced a report entitled "Learning: the treasure within." In that report, he argued that learning should not be limited to what happens within the four walls of a classroom. Learning should be a holistic, comprehensive and multidimensional process. He promoted a philosophy of life-long learning where a learner learns how to learn and provided a framework for organising learning into four pillars: *Learning to know; learning to live together; learning to do and learning to be.*

In the twenty-first century where every human being must be able to develop his or her full potential and live a life of fulfilment, we could add a fifth pillar: *Learning to lead.*

Delors' philosophy and framework are still valid for reshaping the educational landscape, with technology playing a catalytic role.

In the Scandinavian countries, they are experimenting with a new approach to the whole idea of curriculum design where instead of silos-type individual subject-based learning, the trend is to adopt the Learning Areas concept which has a holistic developmental orientation with a mix of both academic and non-academic aspects.

Another innovative approach to curriculum design is the adoption of the STREAM CURRICULUM, an innovative, engaging and interactions based curriculum, focusing on 6 stream skills (Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Art and Maths) and 5 core skills (Relate, Regulate, Think, Communicate and Move).

These are but a few thoughts that could help educational policy makers, planners and practitioners to reshape and revitalise the educational agenda.

\* As regards the coronavirus pandemic itself, even in the absence of a comparative standard, there is consensus that the Government has managed the health and sanitary issue rather well, and

that we'll hopefully be better prepared for a future pandemic. Do you agree?

As you put it, in the absence of a valid comparative standard, the Government may take credit for what it has done. However, a critical assessment of how the pandemic has been handled will reveal that there were a number of unnecessary hiccups that could have been avoided.

Earlier I gave a few examples.

On the other hand, let us also not discount the fact that in spite of the dreadful nature of the pandemic, within the Government, the MSM component was able to stage-manage a partisan Public Relations agenda, with some political mileage as a windfall.

Since the pandemic is still around and since we may face other pandemics in future, what is important is to draw from this experience and ensure that a proper system of surveillance is put in place and that we upgrade our state of preparedness and our build our capacity for risk and crisis management.

\* What are your thoughts about the measures proposed for economic recovery in the Budget 2020-21?

Taking into consideration the global economic outlook, and being given that our economy is an export oriented economy, prospects for economic recovery will depend a lot on:

- (a) how the traditional sectors respond to the measures announced in the 2020-2021 budget,
- (b) how fast the global economy picks up,
- (c) how effective Government is in the implementation process and last, but not the least,
- (d) how the Government handles its overall Good Governance credentials, especially in the international arena.

Lately there have been a number of embarrassing cases of unethical and alleged illegal financial transactions which may discourage foreign investors. I have in mind here, in particular, the recent ADB (African Development Bank) findings about alleged corrupt transactions between the Danish enterprise B&W (Burmeister & Wain) and certain individuals connected with the CEB St-Louis project.

The other factor which will impact on the recovery process is the Covid-19 pandemic itself. The longer it stays around and the longer it takes to produce an effective vaccine, the greater the risk of a delayed recovery. All in all, we have to brace ourselves for some difficult days ahead.

\* One last question: how are your friends in the opposition doing?

I think they are doing fine. The difficult part was after the defeat at the 2019 polls. But times are changing and events are playing in their favour. Also, people are coming to realise that Government cannot continue to blame the previous government when it is facing difficulty in honouring its promises. Nor can it continue to use as precedent past wrongdoings of the previous government to justify its own wrongdoings.

Politics is often like the ebb and flow of the ocean, and since times are changing, who knows, the tides may change as well... in the days to come.

# UK Nationals of Mauritian descent march for Justice

**Nandini Malini Daby**  
London, UK

"I have a dream that my children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character." Those famous words of Martin Luther King Jr rang true for the world to hear back in August 1963. Sadly, Mr King's dreams are not recognised in the great nation of United States of America, where racist police brutality has once again reared its cruel and ugly head.



'Black Lives Matter': Tia Daby with her friends Niyushka Ram and Yasmine Ashcroft joined thousands of people gathered last Saturday and Sunday (6 & 7 June 2020) outside Parliament Square in the protest march to the US embassy

The killing of George Floyd on 25 May 2020 in Minneapolis has sparked worldwide condemnation and protests. Mr Floyd, a young black man in his 40s, was heard saying "I can't breathe" 16 times over the course of 5 minutes while police officer, Derek Chauvin, defiantly continued to press his knee down on Mr Floyd's neck. The expression on Chauvin's face was easy to read. There was a recognisable smug and self-satisfied, superior and authoritarian expression whilst onlookers attempted to stop Floyd's death through both pleas and tolerance. The expression worn by Chauvin whilst he continued his inept action showed the four-hundred year old story of US as being one of the biggest perpetrators of crime against humanity.

Racism and being black is a loaded smoking gun in the US. And Derek Chauvin pulled the trigger, this time against the world.

It is exceptionally offensive to witness this type of racism in 2020. There is a tired recurrence pattern trend to this bullying type of behaviour, stemming from the traditional southern states of the US whose affluence was built on slave trade. US police and local judicial practices are one extreme example. Their current incompetent President is the other. Limited intelligence or lack of compassion can no longer be excusable or dismissive.

The recorded amount of violence, deaths and barbaric treatment against black men and women in the US can no longer be ignored. There are, I am sure, plenty of unrecorded incidents that have fallen by the wayside too. The mentality that black lives are worth less than white lives is therefore a protest worth fighting for.

'Black Lives Matter' rallied worldwide support, including London. Thousands of people gathered last Saturday and Sunday (6 & 7 June 2020) outside Parliament Square to march to the US embassy. Amongst them were young UK nationals of Mauritian descent, born in the UK and raised as British nationals. These courageous young people joined the ranks of the marchers and braved the day fighting for the cause.

Their home is the UK. Their parents are from Mauritius,

and their ties with Mauritius are limited to the occasional holiday visit to Mauritius or being familiar with family, cultural food and customs of Mauritius.

Other than that, these 'forgotten generation' young Mauritians are British. They have been raised in British schools, embrace British culture, values and society. Their accent is English. They speak Queen's English, have British and non-British friends and are totally absorbed in the British way of life.

So why was the 'Black Lives Matter' march and the murder of George Floyd particularly personal to them?

The UK nationals of Mauritian descent all have one thing in common. They are still looked upon as being 'foreign' or 'different'. Based on the colour of their skin, their names and ethnic background, they are coerced into the UK system's bias towards political correctness.

According to Tia Daby who marched three years ago for the 'Black Lives Matter' movement, police brutality is unacceptable and the world must change for the better to make it safer for non-whites to travel freely without being looked upon with suspicion.

Also, Tia pointed out in completing recent medical forms, she was forever asked to tick-box her ethnicity which she eventually resigned herself to "Asian Other" which was far from the truth as her grandparents are from Mauritius, both her parents are born in the UK and the generations of her descendants which left Asia for Mauritius did so 100 years or more ago.

However, ticking the box would enable the medical services to label and identify her roots which she felt held no relevance to her day-to-day life.

Tia spent four months studying in Miami and a further four months working in the US. She was therefore able to see the inequalities blacks faced, especially in the poorer states.

According to Niyushka Ram, racism has no place in society, US, UK or anywhere and it is time to take a stance and join the world to declare this openly. She states: "I marched in solidarity with my black friends, colleagues and the wider black community to take a stand against the systemic and micro-racism which cannot and will not be tolerated anymore. This is a fundamental human rights issue - all lives cannot matter until black lives matter.

And finally, Yasmine Ashcroft stated growing up as a person of colour meant she was available to reflect on ways we are all complicit to the black community. She stated: "It was a show of black solidarity within the black community and oppression for hundreds of years. Witnessing so many of us coming together was incredibly peaceful and powerful and what turned out to be one of the largest civil rights movements in history."

By the admission of all who took part, the march was peaceful, organised and full of life. There was a common shared goal which blacks, whites, old, young, men and women took part in and that was to live in a world where racism and discrimination cannot continue.

Demonstrating examples of racism and trying to improve the system is a long and arduous process. Changing the way the world thinks is near enough impossible. But it is reassuring to know we have so many brave people in our world who are not afraid to stand up to the ugly truths surrounding this issue.

We began this article with the words of Martin Luther King's dream which is yet to be realised, but we will end this article with those of Nelson Mandela: "A winner is a dreamer who never gave up."

## Haunted House

Hannah didn't remember much before the crash. Accompanied by her parents and brother, they were driving to a beach holiday in Spain - then the car began to jerk, they started screaming, then darkness.



Nobody was conscious. Hannah could stay in the car or go look for help. A mile away, she saw a sign just hanging on to a gas lamp, reading 'Welcome to Southfield'. Getting nearer, she noticed that the buildings were unkempt and an overgrown park, bombarded by weeds and ivy, lay in a dilapidated corner. She saw a creepy-looking house at the end of the road. Tentatively, she stepped inside and discovered it was grubby, dimly lit and decorated by cobwebs. A threadbare carpet covered the floor, surrounded by knights' armour and medieval weapons. A grim-looking portrait of what Hannah assumed was the house owner began to glow with a blue haze. Suddenly, a skeletal hand shot out of the frame, followed by the rest of its body. Standing in front of her was a creature with sunken eyes, hollow cheeks and straggly hair.

Hannah croakily asked 'W-who are you?'. 'I'm a nobody,' answered the ghost. When I was alive, nobody wanted to be friends with me, the 'harmless old bag'. When I died, I vowed to destroy the neighbourhood. The ghost fixed his bloodshot eyes on Hannah. 'I may be a nobody, but I still have enough strength left in me to kill anyone who sets foot in this town.'

After that day, Hannah was never seen again.

\* \* \*

## March 2020

It was March 2020  
Nature's own month  
After so many months of winter  
The sun shone  
Birds sang with bees buzzing around  
The sky was clear and blue  
Mornings arrived early  
There was a chill in the air  
Winter was gone but the memory still here  
The scent of flowers filled the air  
Everybody awaiting impatiently for Spring  
But oh! What did it bring?  
Not a soul in sight  
The streets were empty  
People have been put on lockdown  
To protect close and dear ones  
Young people had to study online  
As schools were closed down  
No more meetings or family gatherings  
As social distancing was the new norm  
Although gardens were filled with flowers aplenty  
The parks were empty  
Only a rare few ventured out during this plight  
Despite all the scenes of despair and chaos  
Critters chattered playfully  
While new shoots found their way through the ground  
Trees were filled with leaves  
Leaves were green and flowers blooming  
It was March 2020...

**Sonakshi Seetohul**

*Sonakshi Devi Seetohul, who is only 11 years old, has qualified for and become a Member of Mensa, The High IQ Society, in September 2019, after scoring brilliantly in the Mensa IQ Test. This has allowed her to join a community of more than 20,000 with a high IQ. She is the daughter of Gautam and Shoba Seetohul, who live in the UK.*

As you get older

# How aging affects your sleep



**A**s you get older, you're likely to notice changes in your sleeping patterns. You may find it harder to get to sleep -- and stay that way -- than you used to. You might feel tired during the day and want to take a nap. You're not alone: More than half of men and women over the age of 65 have problems with sleep. Many things can affect the quality of your rest, and sometimes there's more than one cause at play, writes WebMD.

## Pain

Arthritis, back problems, GERD, diabetes, and other age-related illnesses can cause pain that wakes you up. In some cases, physical therapy or surgery can help with back pain. Otherwise, your doctor may be able to treat it as well as other underlying illnesses. Over-the-counter pain relievers can lessen pain and inflammation.

## Neurological illness

These types of illnesses cause pro-

blems with electrical signals in the brain and nervous system. Parkinson's can cause movements that wake you or disturb your sleep in other ways. And Alzheimer's unsettles and agitates some people right around the time they normally go to sleep. Your doctor can help you treat symptoms of these conditions.

## Medication

Drugs for heart disease, high blood pressure, Parkinson's, and thyroid problems -- all more common as you age -- might interrupt your sleep. And age can make the effects of some medications more likely to keep you up, such as the stimulant pseudoephedrine in over-the-counter decongestants. Your doctor may be able to adjust or change your medication if it seems to affect your sleep.

## Waking up to pee

If it happens more than once a night, your doctor might call it nocturia. It tends to

happen more as you get older. This may be due to illness, like diabetes, heart failure, or to infection, inflammation, and other age-related bladder problems. It may help to avoid caffeine and alcohol later in the day. Your doctor may prescribe water pills (diuretics) to help you pee earlier in the day, or other drugs that lessen the need to go.

## Menopause

As you stop having your period in middle age, your body slowly stops making the hormones progesterone and estrogen. This often causes hot flashes in which a surge of adrenaline wakes you up. This can happen many times a night. They can make you get too hot and sweat -- sometimes a lot. Your doctor may be able to prescribe hormones to stop these flashes to help you sleep.

## Sleep rhythm changes

As you get older, you tend to get sleepier earlier in the evening and wake up earlier in the morning. It can help to listen to your body as this shifts so that your sleep hours are more in tune with your body's natural rhythms. You can ease yourself to bed with a soothing evening routine. Read a book or listen to calming music. A hot bath or shower and some light stretching exercises also can promote sleepiness.

## Sleep apnea

It's when you snore so intensely that you repeatedly cut off your breathing as you sleep -- sometimes hundreds of times a night. It can affect anyone, but it's more likely after age 40. You might notice that you're groggy the next day from a lack of sleep. Sometimes it's because you're carrying a few extra pounds, but not always. A doctor can test you to see if you have it and help you treat it.

## Restless legs syndrome

It causes your legs to move when you

don't want them to. It can keep you up with strange feelings in your legs: they may tingle, or you could feel your skin crawl or have a "pins and needles" sensation. When it includes your arms, it's called periodic limb movement disorder, or PLMD. About 20% of people 80 or older have RLS. More than that have some form of PLMD. Your doctor may be able to help you manage your symptoms.

## Mental health

New mental health issues, like depression, can come up as you age. People with depression, bipolar disorder, and other mood disorders are more likely to have sleep problems. It might be a sudden event or difficult period in your life. Or it could be that everyday events start to worry you more than they used to (anxiety). Talk to your doctor if worries or your mood seem to interfere with your sleep.

## Naps

As you get older, you may find yourself with more extra time to doze off during the day, either by accident or on purpose. But if you're not sleeping at night, naps may not be a great idea, especially in the late afternoon or evening. You may not feel tired at bedtime or sleep as well. That can lead to a cycle that disrupts your normal sleep routine and makes it harder to get up in the morning.

## Heart issues

Shortness of breath from heart failure, chest pain from angina, a racing pulse from atrial fibrillation: All of these heart problems can interfere with your sleep. And less sleep can worsen these heart issues, which leads to an unfortunate cycle. Talk to your doctor about any of these symptoms. If you have an underlying condition, find out how you can manage it with lifestyle changes, medications, surgery, or other treatments.

## Food for Thought

### Alter Ego

**O**ne hundred and fifty-five years have passed since Abraham Lincoln was shot dead in 1865, but he has been the most talked about President of the US excluding Donald Trump out of the 45 elected so far. Rated as one of the best, he had numerous failures in his career. He lost eight elections, twice declared bankrupt, engaged to be married but his sweetheart died and suffered a nervous breakdown, until he was elected as President in 1860. Turns and twists of his life make him the most venerated. Year after year celebrations are arranged in his honour all over America. And here is the story.

A man looked like Abraham Lincoln; just a few touches here and there and he was almost a photographic copy of Abraham Lincoln. Keen sponsors selected him for role playing.

He was trained to speak the way Abraham Lincoln used to speak, with his gestures, his emphasis, his accent, everything - even the way he walked - for 24 hours a day... and he performed the drama of life of Abraham Lincoln all over the country, moving from one place to another for years.

He was shot dead so many times, every night in every show, sometimes even twice a day. He died so many times that his part in the drama became almost his second

nature. So, when the celebrations were finished, people were surprised: he walked the same way Abraham Lincoln used to walk - he used to limp a little. He was limping.

His wife said, "Come to your senses!" - because he spoke in the same way, in an accent one hundred years old. His wife said, "Do not stretch the joke. Just become your real self and come home."

He said, "I am my real self, I am Abraham Lincoln."

For a long time, he had lived as Abraham Lincoln, he died a thousand of deaths as Abraham Lincoln; he had completely forgotten that he was ever anybody else. He was brought to a doctor. The doctor talked to him, but he was still in his dramatic role.

The doctor said, "Just forget that drama."

The man said, "What drama?" The doctor said, "This man won't listen unless he is shot dead!"

The family was down in the dumps. Nobody could treat him as he believed his mask to be his original self.

For a long time, every day, 24 hours a day, he was Abraham Lincoln. And after Abraham Lincoln, who would

like to suddenly become an ordinary human being? He had seen the glorious days, the golden days, and he was clinging tightly to them.

That man lived for a few years as Abraham Lincoln; he used to sign "Abraham Lincoln" exactly the same as Abraham Lincoln used to sign. And quit the world as Abraham Lincoln.

And this is the situation of almost everybody in the world - not so dramatic, not so outstanding - but everybody is playing a certain role that has been taught to him, for which he has been brought up.

A child is born - he is not Christian, he is not a Jew, etc - and then we start putting a mask on him. His innocent face disappears. And he will die believing that he is the mask.

Biological incidents decide our act... beautiful names, culture, manners - but this twist of nature makes us forget our originality and imbibe actors around us, no longer capable of tearing our masks and becoming at ease, spontaneous, able to accept ourselves without raising our own eyebrows.

So, don't laugh at that poor man who died believing that he was Abraham Lincoln, because everybody else is doing the same...

In A Light Vein

# For daru lovers



**I**t takes only one drink to get me drunk. The trouble is, I can't remember if it's the thirteenth or the fourteenth.

-- George Burns

A woman drove me to drink and I never even had the courtesy to thank her.

-- W.C. Fields

I envy people who drink - at least they know what to blame everything on.

-- Oscar Levant

I only take a drink on two occasions - when I'm thirsty and when I'm not.

-- Brendan Behan

Alcohol may be man's worst enemy, but the Bible says love your enemy!

-- Frank Sinatra

I have taken more out of alcohol than alcohol has taken out of me.

-- Winston Churchill

Beauty is in the eye of the beer holder.

-- Kinky Friedman

Dear Alcohol, we had a deal, you were going to make me funnier, sexier, more intelligent and a better dancer. I saw the video, we need to talk.

-- Anonymous

I used to think drinking was bad for me. So I gave up thinking.

-- Anonymous

I would date you, but my heart already belongs to Johnny Walker.

-- Anonymous

Sometimes I drink water to surprise my liver.

-- Anonymous

You look like I need another drink!

-- Anonymous

Alcohol does not solve problems, but then again, neither does milk.

-- Anonymous

**I say NO to alcohol, but it just doesn't listen!!**

## Ode to Coronavirus

**A**nyone remember the poetess Pam Ayres? Well, she's 73 and still going strong. Here's her latest ode to coronavirus...

I'm normally a social girl  
I love to meet my mates  
But lately with the virus here  
We can't go out the gates.

You see, we are the 'oldies' now  
We need to stay inside  
If they haven't seen us for a while  
They'll think we've upped and died.

They'll never know the things we did  
Before we got this old  
There wasn't any Facebook  
So not everything was told.

We may seem sweet old ladies  
Who would never be uncouth  
But we grew up in the 60s -  
If you only knew the truth!

There was sex and drugs and rock 'n roll  
The pill and miniskirts  
We smoked, we drank, we partied  
And were quite outrageous flirts.

Then we settled down, got married  
And turned into someone's mum,  
Somebody's wife, then nana,  
Who on earth did we become?

We didn't mind the change of pace  
Because our lives were full  
But to bury us before we're dead  
Is like a red rag to a bull!

So here you find me stuck inside  
For four weeks, maybe more  
I finally found myself again  
Then I had to close the door!  
It didn't really bother me  
I'd while away the hour  
I'd bake for all the family  
But I've got no flaming flour!

Now Netflix is just wonderful  
I like a gutsy thriller  
I'm swooning over Idris  
Or some random sexy killer.

At least I've got a stash of booze  
For when I'm being idle  
There's wine and whiskey, even gin  
If I'm feeling suicidal!

So let's all drink to lockdown  
To recovery and health  
And hope this awful virus  
Doesn't decimate our wealth.

We'll all get through the crisis  
And be back to join our mates  
Just hoping I'm not far too wide  
To fit through the flaming gates!

## Dedicated to all Wonderful Men

*Why men are important and special*

1. You can't spell (Madam) without the (Adam) in it.
2. Neither can you spell (Woman) without the (Man).
3. You also cannot spell (Female) without the (Male).
4. Nor spell (She) without the (He).
5. You definitely cannot spell (Mrs) without the (Mr).
6. Finally, in prayers, we continue to say (Amen) and not (A-women).

**Happy International Men's Day**

\*\*\*

Son: Dad, I have a doubt.

Dad: What's it, son?

Son: I learnt that Shri Ram attained Godly status by listening to his father in Satyayug.

Dad: That's true, son.

Son: But then Prahlad became great by not listening to his father in Tretayug.

Dad: That is also true.

Son: So, dad, kindly enlighten me - Should I listen to you or not?

Dad: My dear son, we are living in Kaliyug. It's good for both of us to listen to your mother to lead a harmonious life.

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### POUR QU CONTRE LES DEVOIRS À LA MAISON ?



# Parineeti Chopra: *The Girl On The Train* Made Me Realize Who I Am As An Actor

In this episode of the series by the popular magazine, let's take a look at Parineeti Chopra, spilling some beans on her future films including *The Girl On The Train*.

Parineeti Chopra on Filmfare Lockdown Conversations interview shares some exciting tidbits about her personal as well as professional life. The actress has made some revelations about her as an artist, and also her upcoming movie plans. In this episode of the series by the popular magazine, let's take a look at Parineeti Chopra, spilling some beans on her future films including *The Girl On The Train*.

When quizzed on her process as an actor, Parineeti revealed, "You probably won't believe me. But I finally learnt who I am as an actress eight months ago while shooting for *The Girl On The Train*. What I used to do earlier was sign films without thinking and realizing where I want it to go. There was no planning as such, which I believe is a failure on my part. I wish I was better equipped to enter the industry. But I realised who I was as an actress while doing the first shot of *The Girl On The Train*. The day before that I was a different person."

She also talks about her equation with the director of the film, Ribhu Dasgupta, where he had a very no-nonsense attitude and inadvertently became a teacher to her. Explaining the mood on set she said, "I am an academic person. I am used to the teacher-student relationship. You give me instructions and I will do anything nicely. Ribhu became my teacher and mentor. Suddenly, I was only focused on the film and wouldn't waste a single minute. For two months I forgot my family, friends and barely called anyone. This film changed my DNA."

Speaking of Parineeti Chopra's upcoming project, the



actress will be next seen in the Hindi remake of *The Girl On The Train*, also starring Aditi Rao Hydari and Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar. Dibakar Banerjee's film, *Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar* was originally slated for 2018 and later pushed to 2019. The makers announced on March 3 that the film was ready for release. Now, however, the film has been further pushed.

*The Girl On The Train* remake is yet to be titled shares the story about a woman who witnesses a murder and embarks on a mission to solve the mystery behind what exactly happened. The Hollywood film was a very successful thriller, and the Bollywood version seems as exciting.

## Amitabh Bachchan heaps praise on Shoojit Sircar's acting skills

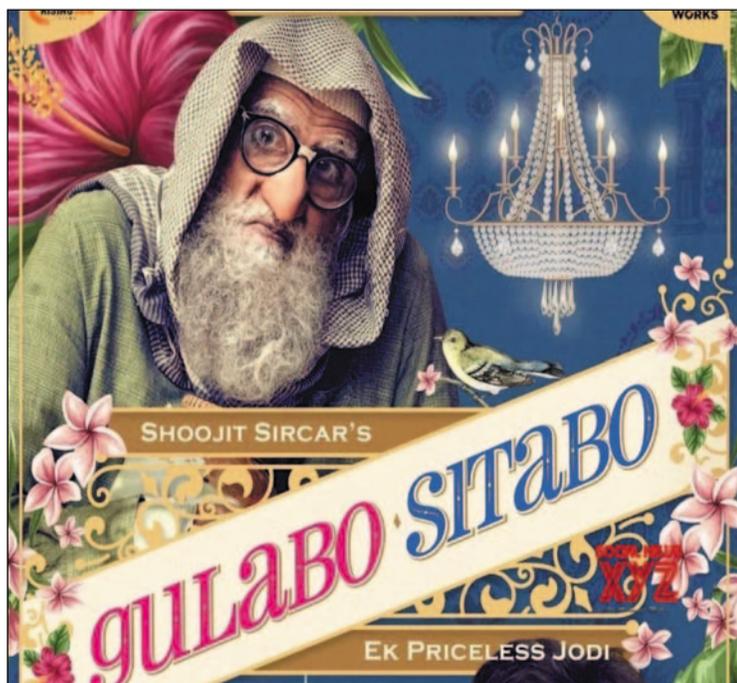
Amitabh Bachchan took to his blog to reflect on working with director Shoojit Sircar in *Gulabo Sitabo*. The film, also starring Ayushmann Khurrana, releases on Amazon Prime Video on June 12.

Amitabh Bachchan is all praise for his *Gulabo Sitabo* director Shoojit Sircar. The megastar took to his blog and wrote about reuniting with Sircar after *Piku* (2015).

"Shoojit Sarkar is no mean director... he is many creative beings in one form of his body... an alumni of the prestigious NSD – the National School of Drama, his acting qualities far outweigh his qualities as a Director..." Bachchan wrote.

Further sharing how his portrayal of Mirza in *Gulabo Sitabo* is a reflection of Shoojit Sircar's vision, Big B added, "His own personal briefings of the nature of his characters he brings up, are the results of the performances seen... for me at least all that I do or seem to do, are Shoojit in prosthetic make up... each little detail is brought out and suddenly there is an ease of the following that he wishes for... we do what he enacts for us... for me at least there is no individual output...it is all his doing... he tells, I follow..."

*Gulabo Sitabo* is a slice-of-life dramedy set in Lucknow. It has been written by Juhi Chaturvedi and produced by Ronnie Lahiri and Sheel Kumar. The film will begin streaming on Amazon Prime Video from June 12.



### YOUR STARS

#### Sagittarius: Nov 22 - Dec 21

Living as a couple, you won't be bored with your partner, who will reveal you his/her treasures of tenderness. Loneliness can come to an end for some singles.

#### Capricorn: Dec 22 - Jan 19

It's useless to revolt against the difficulties of life; learn resignation, patience, and optimism. Avoid taking financial commitments which, if they aren't renewed within a few months, will end up in as many losses.

#### Aquarius: Jan 20 - Feb 18

You'll be subject to excesses of fatigue, gloomy thoughts, or painful nightmares. In your couple life, try to have confidence in your spouse. New contacts as well as dependable friends will greatly help you in your work.

#### Pisces: Feb 19 - Mar 20

The difficulties in your work may increase your present tendency to edginess, even to the blues. See to it that your problems do not bear on your home life. Force yourself to change your ideas.

#### Aries: Mar 21 - Apr 19

You'll make interesting or useful friendship ties. A stroke of financial luck. If you still suffer from migraines or sleep troubles, don't despair; have recourse to homeopathy.

#### Taurus: Apr 20 - May 20

Love will largely smile to you: perfect understanding with your beloved one, or a very promising encounter. In work, you should bring an extremely ambitious project to a successful conclusion. Why not buy a lottery ticket?

#### Gemini: May 21 - June 20

A favourable week for romantic encounters, tenderness, and gentleness. You'll experience very happy moments heartwise. You can get very interesting results in your work. You'll have insolent luck with money.

#### Cancer: June 21 - July 22

In your relations as a couple, the tensions will ease off gradually. You'll go through moments of exaltation, followed by instants of great fatigue; think to regulate the functioning of your nervous system.

#### Leo: July 23 - Aug 22

A career promotion may befall you this time. In love, you'll also have much chance, but do not overdo things. Don't count too much on your friends to solve your money problems.

#### Virgo: Aug 23 - Sept 22

You'll be more reflective, more logical, with a more comprehensive and fuller view of things. A favourable week for sensible and peaceful affective relationships, which will be focused on daily life, security in love, and the family's well-being.

#### Libra: Sept 23 - Oct 22

You'll enjoy prosperity: money will come in from all parts on condition that you do not embark on hazardous speculations by following the advice of no specialists. Your most beautiful love dreams will have an occasion to come true.

#### Scorpion: 23 Oct - 21 Nov

During this week, luck and success are promised you but they're most likely to attract jealousies to you. Your bones, joints, and knees will be the weak points you should be careful about. You'll have excellent assets for carrying out your professional ambitions.

## Arjun Bijlani: 'The real place I belong to is the set'



The lockdown has affected the lives of some people in a brutal way, while some have lost their jobs, the less privileged were on the street looking for food. The migrant workers were just walking back to their hometowns, which was heart-breaking. However, the lockdown period has brought a few positive changes for a few people.

Actor Arjun Bijlani, too, wants to focus on the brighter side of the lockdown period: "This lockdown has been so great for me. In the past 15 years, I don't remember spending so much time with the family that I got to spend now. I have always been working and even after Ayaan (Arjun's 5-year-old son) was born I was continuously shooting, so I never got to spend much time with him. Of course what is happening outside is not good. The pandemic is not good at all, but if I look at the brighter side of it it's been good because I got to spend so much time with my family."

The actor recently celebrated his seventh wedding anniversary with wife Neha Swami, which was a different kind of celebration. He added, "We usually organise a party on our anniversary and we have friends over, but this time it was just the two of us and our son. It was amazing, because we have been home for two months, so that day we got dressed up, we

asked each other what to wear and how we are looking. A few friends had sent us some cakes over. We decorated the whole house with some candles, lights and old pictures. We celebrated it with our son, so it was nice."

Arjun has been missing sets and shootings during the lockdown. "I want to be back on the sets so much. Just the other day I was sitting with Neha in our balcony and it was raining, and I told her that the real place I belong to is the set. It's been over two months, everybody is at home, not working, but that is the place I have always pictured myself spending most of my time at. I am missing the camera, the team, the whole vibe that you get when you are shooting, I am missing everything and I just want to be there," he said.

Arjun was last seen in *State of Siege: 26/11*. The show was released a few days before the lockdown and though he admits that the timing was just perfect, he feels promotions could have helped it to reach a larger audience. Now that the lockdown has been eased out, he hopes to promote the show.

Arjun also revealed that he will be seen hosting the third season of dance reality show *Dance Deewane*. He hosted the previous two seasons.

## Ramayan's Dipika Chikhliya: Women in those days were far more progressive'

D's 'Ramayan' triggered off the feminism debate on Twitter recently as the Indian audience has got a chance during the lockdown to watch the epic on TV all over again. The discussion had taken a gender-based turn with some viewers calling Queen Kaikeyi a b\*\*ch and hurling abuses at Manthara, reports Times of India. Dipika Chikhliya, who is still addressed and known as Sita by many, spoke to Etimes TV exclusively about the recent debate and shared that if Kaikeyi's character is being hated, the character deserves it.

She said, "Lot of hate is shown towards Kaikeyi's character but she has turned the story's plot. The story is about relationships and her character brings twist to the plot. There is always one person in a family or an organization, who is selfish and only thinks about themselves. That is how society and the world are. Hence, if she is hated for it, then it is the right mindset to hate her. In reality, you do have such people around."

There has been a debate centred on the feminism quotient in the show, too. While some users felt *Ramayan* did not give fair treatment to its female characters, others felt the storyline



champions women's empowerment. About this Dipika shared, "In those days women were treated more equally and given more respect. They had a mind of their mind. When Ram Rajya happens, he made Sita sit on the throne. That's the kind of power Sita had. He stood by her. At every step you will realise she might not have great dialogues but she always did what she wanted to do. The women always had the right to do what they wanted and their spouses supported them."

Also, Dipika is overwhelmed to see the phenomenal response of audience as it garnered 170 mn viewers. The actress said, "In a way, I wasn't expecting this phenomenal response from the younger generation. I always knew it will be successful. 30 years back, the kids have grown up and they are all mature adults. I knew they would have wanted to see the same magic on-screen once again and influence their family to see the show as well."

"My daughter and her friends have always seen me as Sita. It wasn't anything unusual as they have seen me in the Sita's get-up always. But yes, they are appreciating the process of storytelling," added Dipika.

### TV SERIAL

## Kulfi Kumar Bajewala

**Friday 12 June:** Kulfi rebukes Sikander for his actions while he struggles to console her. Later, she takes a drastic step, which leaves everyone shocked.

**Monday 15 June:** Sikander is devastated after failing to trace Kulfi while a stranger motivates her. Later, Kulfi takes an unexpected decision when Vikram finds her.

**Tuesday 16 June:** Vikram promises Kulfi that he will make her famous. Later, Sikander pleads with Kulfi to return home, but she puts forth a shocking condition.

**Wednesday 17 June:** Vikram hires Murphy Singh as a new secretary for Kulfi. Elsewhere, Mahinder has an emotional conversation with Gunjan while Loveleen is troubled.

**Thursday 18 June:** Murphy Singh secretly brings food for Kulfi and helps her to compose a song. Later, Loveleen is suspicious of Sikander's activities.

## Yeh Un Dinon Ki Baat Hai

**Friday 12 June:** Sameer meets at the tea stall in fine morning and Aditya offers him chili items and he starts eating the same without his consent. Later Naina's father gets worried about Sameer as he went to acting classes alone.

**Monday 15 June:** After the act put up by Sameer, Rakesh is deeply hurt by it and slaps Sameer. Naina and Sameer apologize but he isn't ready to budge and decides to leave the house and go back.

**Tuesday 16 June:** Naina's father breaks his leg and their house's roof has leakage which is to be made right within a month and hence the society secretary decides to send Naina and her father back to Ahmedabad. Sameer suddenly picks up some plan to tackle the situation.

**Wednesday 17 June:** After getting shifted to Naina's friend's house, Sameer gets into trouble as he misbehaves the mother in law of Naina's friend while in sleep.

**Thursday 18 June:** Sameer in his acting classes requests his teacher that before he starts acting, he would like to eat something. Then, his teacher explains to all what is the true meaning of acting.

## Kahan Hum Kahan Tum

**Friday 12 June:** Nishi seeks revenge against Suman while the police barge into Sonakshi's house to arrest Suman. Elsewhere, in a fit of rage, Pari throws alcohol on Pooja.

**Monday 15 June:** Rohit struggles to get Suman released while Sonakshi makes a tough decision. Later, Rohit is taken aback when a nurse gives an odd response to his question.

**Tuesday 16 June:** Rohit seeks Nethra's help regarding Sonakshi while Nishi and YK rebuke each other. Elsewhere, a shattered Suman expresses her feelings to Sonakshi.

**Wednesday 17 June:** Sonakshi is distressed, recalling her late father while Netra plans her next shoot at Rohit's hospital. Later, Netra makes a shocking revelation to the latter.

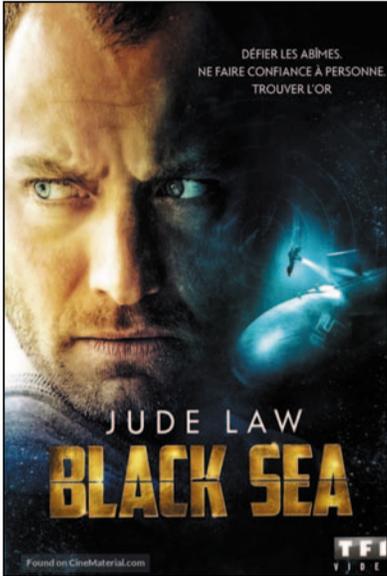
**Thursday 18 June:** Rohan plans to take Tanya out for a romantic dinner. Later at the hospital, Rohit humiliates Sumit in front of everybody.

**CINE 12**

Vendredi 12 juin - 21.15

**The Black Sea**

Avec: Martin Compston, Vicky McClure, Adrian Dunbar, Craig Parkinson



**CINE 12**

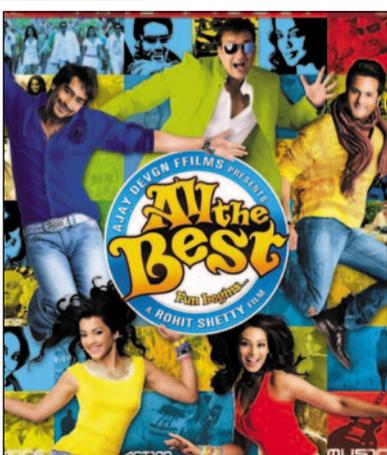
Samedi 13 juin - 21.15

**La Fille De L'autre**

Avec: Anne Parillaud, Carole Saïdah, Floriane Potiez, Françoise Lebrun, Gaëlle Fraysse, Michel Vuillemoz, Thomas Coumans, Virginie Lavalou



**B TV** Dimanche 13 juin - 12.30



	MBC 1	MBC 2	MBC 3	Cine 12	Bollywood TV
<b>vendredi 12 juin</b>	06.00 Local: Art Live 07.00 Dessin Anime 10.30 Mag: Origami 10.45 Mag: Zoboomafoo 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Doc: Autour Des Valeurs 12.35 Doc: Wildlife Heroes 13.30 Local: Saver Kiltirel 14.30 D.Anime: Bob Le Bricoleur 14.41 D.Anime: Le Quiz De Zack 14.44 D.Anime: Astrology 15.07 D.Anime: Kuu Kuu Harajuku 16.28 D.Anime: Johnny Test 17.00 Live Press Conference 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Serial: Siya Ke Ram 19.30 Journal & La Meteo 20.00 Local: Press Conference 20.35 Prod: Komiko 22.15 Serial: Chicago Police... 23.00 Le Journal	04.30 Aastha TV 07.00 DDI Live 10.00 Serial: Tumhaari Natasha 11.19 Serial: MOL 12.04 Film: 15.00 Live: Samachar 15.20 Honaar Soon Mee Hya... 15.43 Mooga Manasulu 16.03 Apoorva Raagangal 16.30 Serial: Ki Jaana Mein Kaun 16.53 Serial: Gangaa 18.00 Serial: Dr. Quin 18.30 Tele: Mariana Et Scarlett 19.00 Zournal Kreol 19.30 DDI Magazine 19.50 Local: Yaadein 20.20 Serial: Mah-E-Tamaam 21.25 Local: Anjuman 21.26 Local: Urdu Programme 22.37 DDI Live	06.00 Mag: Eco India 06.44 Mag: Shift 07.00 Mag: Border Crossing 07.29 Doc: A Question Of Science 07.31 Mag: Tomorrow Today 08.53 World Stamps 09.00 Live Educational Program... 16.03 Mag: Strictly Street 17.08 Doc: Street Food 18.04 Doc: Living In Dignity 18.40 Mag: Urban Gardens 19.00 Live: Zournal Kreol 19.27 Doc: A Question Of Science 19.58 Doc: L'Ame Des Chefs 20.52 Doc: World Stamps 21.03 Doc: 360 GEO 21.45 Doc: Bauhas World 22.28 Doc: Ma Vie De Femme... 23.53 Doc: Photo Number 6 00.36 Doc: The Floods Are Coming 01.18 Mag: Urban Gardens	01.38 Film: Sniper 7 03.05 Serial: S.W.A.T 03.47 Film: Effie Gray 05.31 Tele: Amanda 06.13 Serial: When Calls The Heart 09.00 Serial: Line Of Duty 09.59 Tele: Au Nom De L'Amour 10.23 Tele: Mariana Et Scarlett 10.47 Serial: S.W.A.T 11.27 Tele: Dulce Amor 12.00 Film: La Chance D'une Vie 13.30 Tele: Amanda 14.45 Film: Family Of Lies 16.23 Serial: Line Of Duty 17.39 Serial: When Calls The Heart 18.12 Tele: Au Nom De L'amour 18.36 Tele: Mariana Et Scarlett 19.10 Tele: Dulce Amor 20.05 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir 20.30 Serial: The Magicians 21.15 Film: The Black Sea	09.05 Film: Joroo Ka Ghulam 11.50 / 19.54 - Kahan Hum Kahan Tuam 12.12 / 20.11 - Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 12.33 / 20.32 Radha Krishna 12.55 / 21.09 - Bin Kuch Kahe 13.17 / 21.24 - Zindagi Ki Mehek 13.39 / 21.46 - Bade Acche Lagte Hai 14.00 / 21.59 - Chhanchhan 14.22 / 22.25 - Ishqbaaz 15.10 Film: Detective Naani Stars: Ava Mukherjee, Zain Khan, Shweta gulati, Amit verna 17.30 Yeh Hai Mohabbatein 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Kumkum Bhagya 18.51 Piya Albela 19.13 Mere Angne Mein
<b>samedi 13 juin</b>	06.00 Dessin Anime 10.50 Serial: Heidi, Bienvenida 11.25 Local: Rodrigues 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Local: People - No 54 12.35 Doc: Zenith 14.10 Local: Itinerer Moris 14.30 D.Anime: Bob Le Bricoleur 14.41 D.Anime: Le Quiz De Zack 14.45 D.Anime: Astrology 14.47 D.Anime: Croque Nuage 14.56 D.Anime: Zou 16.03 D.Anime: Chicken Town 16.30 D.Anime: Johnny Test 17.00 Live Press Conference 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Entertainment: Nach Baliye 19.30 Journal & La Meteo 20.00 Local: Press Conference 20.30 Local Prod: Sega Tipik 21.55 Film: Victim 23.20 Local: Le Journal	04.30 Aastha TV 07.00 Film: 11.40 Good Morning Shanghai 12.00 Nanda Saukhya Bhare 12.30 Serial: Mooga Manasulu 12.48 Serial: Brundavanam 13.10 Serial: Annakodiyum Ainthu 13.35 Serial: Anu Pallavi 14.05 Entertainment: Dil Hai Hindu 15.00 Live: Samachar 15.20 Film: Imtihaan 18.00 Mag: Check In 18.30 Mag: Eco@Africa 19.00 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 The Floods Are Coming 06.47 Mag: Arts And Culture 07.29 Doc: A Question Of Science 08.03 Doc: La Cuisine Des Papes 08.48 Doc: World Stamps 09.48 Doc: Bauhas World 10.31 Ma Vie De Femme D'ailleurs 11.55 Entertainment: Britney Spears 12.54 The Floods Are Coming 13.36 Mag: Urban Gardens 14.10 Doc: A Question Of Science 14.16 Mag: Euromaxx 15.30 Doc: World Stamps 17.53 Mag: Japan Video Topics 18.04 Doc: Siberia 19.00 Zournal Kreol 19.24 Mag: Mixeur, Les Gouts et... 20.02 Doc: Wildlife Heroes 20.59 Doc: World Stamps 20.55 Doc: 360 Geo 21.47 Doc: World Stamps 23.15 Doc: Light Pollution	01.01 Film: The Black Sea 02.50 Serial: The Bletchley Circle 03.36 Film: Love Blossoms 05.02 Tele: Destiny 05.47 Serial: The Magicians 06.29 Film: The Musketeer 08.24 Serial: Mike Hammer 09.04 Film: Murder, She Baked 10.34 Film: L'incroyable Equipe 12.25 Serial: The Bletchley Circle 13.11 Tele: L'esclave Blanche 13.52 Tele: La Premiere Dame 14.39 Mag: Close Up 15.05 Film: S.W.A.T 17.00 Serial: The Magicians 17.45 Film: La Passion En Heritage 19.34 Mag: Close Up 20.05 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir 20.30 Series: The Magicians 21.15 Film: La Fille De L'autre 23.58 Mag: Hollywood On Set	04.05 Kahan Hum Kahan Tum 04.26 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 04.43 Radha Krishna 05.05 Zindagi Ki Mehek 05.27 Bade Acche Lagte Hai 05.47 Chhanchhan 06.07 Ishqbazz 06.29 Kumkum Bhagya 06.50 Piya Albela 07.12 Mere Angne Mein 08.00 Zindagi Ki Mehek 10.11 Yeh Un Dinon Ki Baat Hai 12.30 Film: Dhamaal Stars: Ritesh Deshmukh, Arshad Warsi, Javed Jaffrey, Sanjay Dutt 16.00 Pavitra Rishta 18.30 Film: Agent Vinod 21.06 Serial: Siya Ke Ram 21.41 Serial: Naagin Season 2 22.26 Serial: Zindagi Ki Mehek
<b>dimanche 14 juin</b>	06.00 Dessin Anime 09.35 Serial: Grandpa In My Pocket 10.05 Au Pays Des Merveilles 11.00 Local: Un Rasinn 12.00 Le Journal 12.30 Prod: Komiko 14.30 D.Anime: Bob Le Bricoleur 14.46 D.Anime: Le Quiz De Zack 14.55 D.Anime: Zou 15.30 D.Anime: Astrology 15.40 Un Chien Des Flandres 16.33 D.Anime: Linkers 17.00 Live Press Conference 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Local: Grand Finale - Mauritius Dancing Star Competition 19.30 Le Journal 20.05 Local: Press Conference 20.35 Local: Faya Vibes 21.35 Film: Bad Stepmother	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: Tiba Tiba Nu Avance 19.00 Zournal Kreol 19.30 DDI Magazine 20.00 Serial: Maharakshak 20.42 Serial: Naagin 21.28 Serial: CID 22.15 Serial: Piya Rangrezz	06.00 Doc: Horizon 06.51 Doc: Olivia's Garden 07.44 Doc: Wildlife Heroes 09.31 Doc: World Stamps 10.59 Doc: Light Pollution 11.45 Doc: Olivia's Garden 12.11 Entertainment: Eminem 13.38 Doc: Wildlife Heores 15.25 Doc: Scanning The Great... 16.50 Doc: Light Pollution 17.36 Doc: Olivia's Garden 18.02 Doc: The Tattooed Lady 18.30 Live: News 19.05 Zournal Kreol 19.28 Mag: Mixeur, Les Gouts Et... 20.06 Doc: Cary Grant, De L'autre... 20.55 Doc: World Stamps 20.58 Doc: 360 Geo 21.50 Doc: Bauhas World 22.33 Doc: Digital Africa 23.05 Doc: The Tattooed Lady	00.24 Tele: The Magicians 01.31 Film: La Fille De L'autre 03.01 Serial: Hawaii 5-0 03.42 Film: La Passion En Heritage 05.09 Tele: Destiny 06.09 Serial: The Magicians 06.52 Film: Surprise Me! 08.19 Serial: Mike Hammer 09.10 Film: L'ile Aux Sorciers 10.50 Film: La Passion En Heritage 12.15 Serial: Hawaii 5-0 13.00 Tele: L'esclave Blanche 13.44 Tele: Premiere Dame 15.06 Film: La Passion En Heritage 17.09 Serial: The Magicians 18.30 Series: Mission: Impossible 19.16 Mag: Hollywood News Feed 20.05 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir 20.30 Serial: Counterpart 21.15 Film: Il Suffit D'une Nuit 23.06 Film: L'ile Aux Sorciers	00.35 Yeh Hai Mohabbatein 02.14 Bin Kuch Kahe 04.11 Pavitra Rishta 05.36 Film: Agent Vinod 08.16 Chhanchhan 09.58 Itna Karo Na Mujhe Pyaar 12.30 Film: All The Best Starring: Ajay Devgan, Sanjay Dutt, Fardeen Khan, Bipasha Basu, Mugdha Godse, Asrani 15.10 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 17.00 Punar Vivaah 18.00 Samachar 18.30 Film: Gold Starring: Akshay Kumar, Mouni Roy, Kunal Kapoor 20.54 Entertainment: Nach Baliye 21.31 Bade Acche Lagte Hai

Samedi 13 juin - 18.30 Stars: Aamir Khan, Anushka Sharma, Sushant Singh Rajput, Boman Irani, Saurabh Shuk

**B TV** Dimanche 14 juin - 18.30 Stars: Akshay Akshay Kumar, Mouni Roy, Kunal Kapoor



# Consommation et épargne - le juste équilibre

*Les travers de la consommation. Je consomme, donc je suis...*



Nita Chicooree-Mercier

**S**upermarché cherche clients. A la vue d'une publicité ambulante affichée par un centre commercial sur le flanc des autobus du Nord: **Vous nous manquez. Revenez, vous êtes les bienvenus.**

Le coup de sifflet donné pour signaler la fin du confinement a été un soulagement, mais a nullement provoqué une ruée vers les centres commerciaux dans les villages. Bon signe !

## Où va votre argent ?

Si par votre mode consommation, vous rajoutez quelques milliers de roupies chaque semaine dans les caisses des supermarchés multimillionnaires, il est temps de tout revoir.

Les supermarchés n'ont pas hésité à augmenter les prix de certains articles en toute impunité. A titre d'exemple, les bas salaires entre Rs 10 et Rs 15 mille, et même ceux de la petite classe moyenne qui consomment une marque de lait en poudre importée: ils ont été obligés de déboursés Rs 214 au lieu de Rs 185, une hausse de Rs 34 du jour au lendemain. Le lait importé en brique est passé de Rs 38 à Rs 44.

Même scénario pour les conserves, sardines, thon, saumon, tomates pelées, etc., et bien d'autres articles alimentaires. Montée en flèche des légumes. L'absence de prix de certains produits a gêné les clients mais pas la direction des supermarchés. Les deux mois et demi de confinement a été une manne en or pour eux.

L'Etat a, contre toute logique, payé la moitié des salaires de leurs employés ! Tout cela n'exprime qu'une chose: la logique du profit à tout prix, se faire "du pognon" en profitant d'une situation sociale difficile.

Une exploitation et un abus dans le plus grand mépris des consommateurs. Les poches se sont vidées, et les clients ont déserté les couloirs de certains supermarchés.

## Et maintenant ?

Une prise de conscience s'impose. Il serait raisonnable et juste d'acheter dans divers types de commerce afin de faire vivre d'autres personnes que les super riches. Les supermarchés ont l'avantage d'offrir une concentration de produits divers, proposés parfois à un prix inférieur.



**En dilapidant des milliards tirés des fonds publics en toute opacité dans les investissements hasardeux, en se contentant de la rentabilité des secteurs économiques limités, et en affichant grand train de vie de la haute sphère étatique, les équipes successives ont donné le mauvais exemple, et ont entraîné le public dans une spirale de consommation et de dettes...**

- En favorisant le commerce de proximité, laboutiks et moyennes épicerie, on économise l'essence et le temps du déplacement.
- Le nombre des vendeurs de légumes a augmenté devant les petits magasins et les domiciles des particuliers avec une offre plus intéressante que dans les grandes surfaces.
- Les 'demi-gros' et autres détaillants de la capitale valent la peine d'une visite plus régulière.
- Les marchés de viande sont suffisamment garnis. C'est au pied des débarcadères que les villageois et habitants des régions côtières ont l'avantage de s'approvisionner en poissons frais.
- Produits d'entretien, boissons, vaisselle, etc., il y a moyen aussi de diversifier les visites vers d'autres points de vente.

On accroît la concentration des richesses entre les mains d'une poignée d'individus et de sociétés commerciales en achetant tous les besoins en un seul lieu. Mais vu que le client-roi a été obligé de patienter dans les longues files d'attente comme un mendiant pour s'approvisionner et se faire plumer comme un pigeon, il est en droit de se poser des questions.

Hier, c'étaient les riches qui pouvaient se permettre d'acheter de la viande. La tendance actuelle dans les pays riches montre que les pauvres restent accros à l'alimentation à base de viande tandis que les riches se tournent davantage vers d'autres

sources de protéines, les produits bio, les légumes, les céréales, le quinoa, etc.

Quoi qu'il en soit, l'ère de la consommation de masse est terminée. L'heure est à consommer moins mais mieux. Du moins dans les pays avancés.

## Statut social fondé sur les acquis matériels ?

C'est une vanité qui confère un sens erroné de supériorité. On ne devient pas quelqu'un en poussant un caddie bien rempli pour impressionner les autres aux rayons de supermarché ou en se jetant sur n'importe quel nouveau gadget importé pour appâter le porte-monnaie. Mettre la main sur la voiture rutilante dernier cri ou s'attabler inutilement dans les cafés étalant glamour et luxe sous les feux des projecteurs dans les centres commerciaux: nouveauté qui donne l'illusion d'une prospérité comme ailleurs ou comme exhibée au cinéma et à la télé. Pour avaler ou se goinfrer d'aliments quand l'estomac ne crie pas urgence.

La publicité, corollaire de la consommation de masse, a eu pignon sur rue à la radio ces derniers temps. Pousser à acheter comme la voisine, un slogan maintes fois répété, sans aucune gêne.

Faute d'un public à épater pendant l'isolement car chacun est resté cloîtré à domicile, les tenants des illusions éphémères ont dû faire le ménage dans les méninges.

Sars Covid-19, une minuscule bactérie attaque princes, gouvernants, célébrités, simples salariés, riches et pauvres sans

discrimination, et impose l'égalité devant la mort.

Le virus conserve sa toute-puissance faute de vaccin, mais il faut se réjouir s'il a aidé les uns et les autres à être vaccinés contre le superficiel et l'image illusoire.

## La culture de l'épargne est restée vivante ?

Quand bien même un matraquage incessant sur les panneaux publicitaires et dans les médias vise à vider le porte-monnaie, la culture de l'épargne est restée bien vivante. Elle gagnerait à être renforcée par une réduction des dépenses inutiles et une anticipation plus consciente des temps difficiles.

Consommation de ménage est le mot d'ordre du libéralisme, et tout écart sèmera un vent de panique dans le milieu des affaires et les rangs des gouvernants. Or, les gens ne se définissent pas a priori comme des machines à consommer...

Les décideurs politiques ont du grain à moudre. Pendant des décennies, ils ont choisi la voie de la facilité pour les lobbys des affaires, et pour eux-mêmes d'une manière indirecte. La nécessité de diversifier et de produire localement ce qui est possible s'impose comme une évidence. La masse des travailleurs ne demande qu'à acquérir un savoir-faire, des nouvelles techniques et une compétence dans les nouvelles technologiques pour déployer leur potentiel. Vaste chantier.

En dilapidant des milliards tirés des fonds publics en toute opacité dans les investissements hasardeux, en se contentant de la rentabilité des secteurs économiques limités, et en affichant grand train de vie de la haute sphère étatique, les équipes successives ont donné le mauvais exemple, et ont entraîné le public dans une spirale de consommation et de dettes.

A l'insouciance de la cigale s'ensuivent les vertus de la fourmi. Il n'y a pas de choix car le plus dur est devant nous. Mais la situation suscite aussi de nouvelles vocations, stimule l'ambition et le désir de relever les défis, et aguerit l'esprit de combat qui caractérisera toujours les Sapiens.