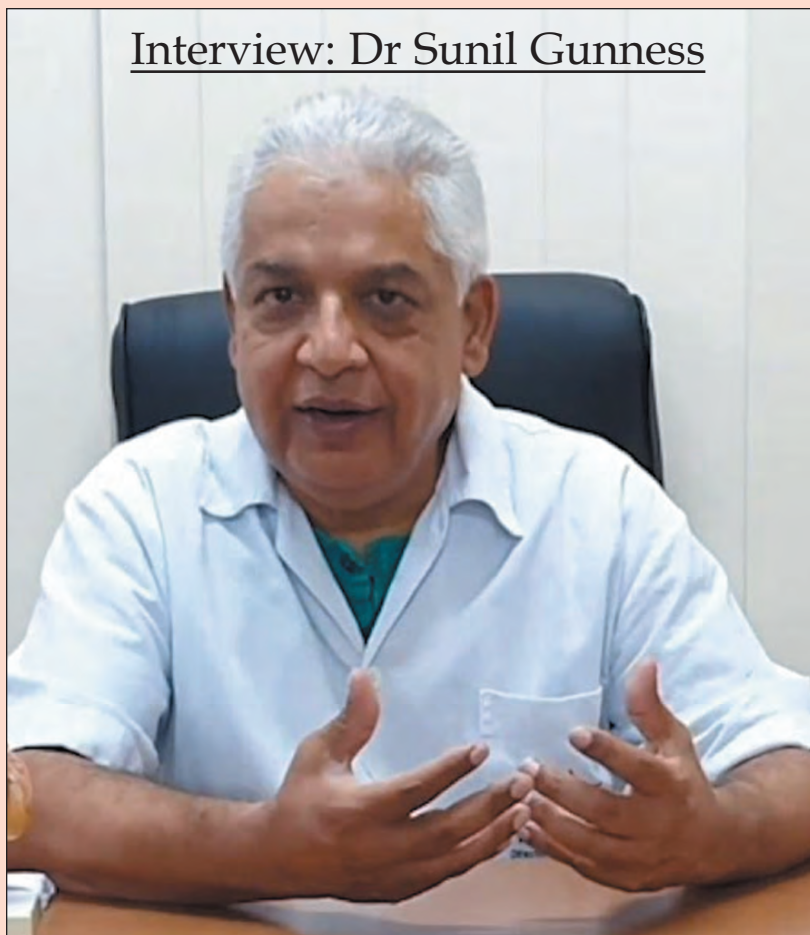


MAURITIUS TIMES

• "You could not bribe honest people, but bad people would accept bribery". -- Anne Holm

Interview: Dr Sunil Gunness



Covid-19 : 'On n'a pas suffisamment de recul pour se prononcer sur son taux de mutation.

Jusqu'à présent, les mutations rapportées sont mineures'

* Voir Pages 7-8



By Tom Buchanan + See Page 2

How to reduce the spread of fake news - by doing nothing

Covid is here to stay



NEW VARIANT OF CORONAVIRUS

FOUND IN UK

By Dr R Neerunjun Gopee * See Page 3

We cannot stop Covid from what comes naturally to it (mutation), and we will have to make adjustments if we too want to survive as a species

2020 - Vision of The Things Lost



"In America England, Europe, India, and beyond, hospitals overwhelmed, and cities under siege by an unseen enemy, an enemy that attacked as far as the eye could see and indeed beyond where the eye could see. There were the Trump supporters who went into denial. This was no pandemic, they declared, merely the flu, the Wu Flu or Kung Flu as the President said. They eschewed masks and flocked to rallies from which spread and surge were bound to follow. But they hoarded toilet paper..."

By Anil Madan * See Page 18

Uphold The Constitution

The primary responsibility of any government, whatever be its political model, is to ensure the security of its citizens. Security has many dimensions – economic, financial, ‘societal’: which is about maintaining the peaceful and conducive environment in the country within which its development will take place. This means that people can go about their daily routine and other affairs with a confidence that barring exceptional circumstances there will be no disturbance in their civilian life, because the rule of law will prevail at all times, and apply equally to all.

For the country to run smoothly on these lines, the most fundamental condition is that the law is followed, is enforced equitably and this is seen to take place, so that there is order in society – which means that people have to respect certain boundaries as regards what they can or cannot do. Thus arises the foremost of government’s responsibilities, which is to guarantee a situation of law and order in the country. All other activities related to the conduct of their affairs by citizens and the development of the country can only take place if there is law and order, and that is why all societies place a premium on this crucial aspect of their governance.

Events and incidents that have been taking place and unfolding over the past several weeks in the country have had the effect of creating a trust deficit between the government and the people. This is a time of the year when the end-of-year festive season is approaching, and everyone wants to feel relaxed and prepare to bid goodbye to this particularly distressing outgoing year and welcome the new year with hope in their hearts. Despite the Covid pandemic and the disruptions it has caused and continues to do so, people had started to feel a little more comfortable in themselves.

Unfortunately, suddenly this buoyancy in anticipation of the festive season has been marred by a series of deaths in suspicious circumstances. The dust had hardly started to settle down after the deaths of the Woman Police Constable of ADSU and of little Ayaan assaulted by his stepfather, that one body after another has been discovered, and the initial but rather hurried conclusion of suicide by the Police put into question by evidence that is arising from accounts, testimonies and findings that are being unravelled during the judicial enquiry under way. In all these cases the lawyers handling them are by the by establishing elements that would point to foul play, what with inexplicable and implausible

absence of images supposed to be captured by the ultra-sophisticated Safe City cameras coming to the fore in relation to the first case, that of Mr Kistnen. His and the subsequent deaths all seem to have some connection with the supply chain of requirements during the pandemic.

The lawyers who have taken up the case of Mr Kistnen have openly queried the existence of a ‘mafia’, and have expressed concern for their own security. Can we imagine the level to which we have sunk? If this is what lawyers are feeling, what about the common man?

In this connection, on 18 Dec an article has been published by the Swiss paper *Le Temps* bearing the title ‘*Le coronavirus représente une grande opportunité pour la mafia*’. The few lines of introductory write-up are worrying enough:

‘Le procureur italien Nicola Gratteri appelle la Suisse à se doter d’une législation plus efficace contre les capitaux mafieux...

Tout comme les autres pandémies, crises et catastrophes naturelles par le passé, la Covid a profité à l’expansion des groupes mafieux, qui se substitue à l’Etat avec la distribution d’argent généré de façon illicite.

Procureur à Catanzaro, en Calabre, Nicola Gratteri est depuis des décennies en première ligne dans la lutte anti-mafia. Avec le journaliste Antonio Nicaso, il vient de publier *Oxygène illégal*, un ouvrage sur la façon dont le crime organisé tire profit de la pandémie.’

There is clearly more than meets the eye that is going on, and this information raises the question of whether the local incidents have international ramifications. Is it surprising that there is an atmosphere of apprehension prevailing in the country, and that it will require more than just an appeal to lawyers by the Commissioner of Police to avoid creating a psychosis to allay the fears of the population? These are precisely the kinds of times when no less that the whole of government must come forward to give the absolute guarantee of their security to the citizens, and we repeat, especially at this period when they expect to de-stress themselves with family and friends after the hardest of years that we have known since long because of the pandemic.

But then, why for this period only? It has to be all the time, 24/7, whatever be the state of the surveillance system. One would expect that all those directly or indirectly assigned with the responsibility of maintaining law and order will uphold the Constitution of the country.

The Conversation

How to reduce the spread of fake news – by doing nothing

Calling out false information on social media may do more harm than good

When we come across false information on social media, it is only natural to feel the need to call it out or argue with it. But my research suggests this might do more harm than good. It might seem counterintuitive, but the best way to react to fake news – and reduce its impact – may be to do nothing at all.



In 2017, Facebook began putting up posters to raise awareness about fake news. Credit...Kyodo News Stills, via Getty Images

False information on social media is a big problem. A UK parliament committee said online misinformation was a threat to “the very fabric of our democracy”. It can exploit and exacerbate divisions in society. There are many examples of it leading to social unrest and inciting violence, for example in Myanmar and the United States.

It has often been used to try to influence political processes. One recent report found evidence of organised social media manipulation campaigns in 48 different countries. The UK is one of those countries, as demonstrated by news reports about a local branch of the Conservatives which urged activists to campaign by “weaponising fake news”.

Social media users also regularly encounter harmful misinformation about vaccines and virus outbreaks. This is particularly important with the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines because the spread of false information online may discourage people from getting vaccinated – making it a life or death matter.

With all these very serious consequences in mind, it can be very tempting to comment on false information when it’s posted online – pointing out that it is untrue, or that we disagree with it. Why would that be a bad thing?

Increasing visibility

The simple fact is that engaging with false information increases the likelihood that other people will see it. If people comment on it, or quote tweet – even to disagree – it means that the material will be shared to our own networks of social media friends and followers.

Any kind of interaction at all – whether clicking on the link or reacting with an angry face emoji – will make it more likely that the social media platform will show the material to other people. In this way, false information can spread far and fast. So even by arguing with a message, you are spreading it further. This matters, because if more people see it, or see it more often, it will have an even greater effect.

I recently completed a series of experiments with a total of 2,634 participants looking at why people share false material online. In these, people were shown examples of false information under different conditions and asked if they would be likely to share it.

Tom Buchanan

Professor of Psychology, University of Westminster

* Cont. on page 9

Mauritius Times

Founder/Editor: Beekrumsing Ramlallah - Aug 1954-Sept 2000

Editor-in-chief: M. Ramlallah / Senior Editor: Dr RN Gopee

This paper has been produced with the assistance of

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Covid is here to stay



Dr R Neerunjun Gopee

Among the decisions taken by Cabinet during its meeting on Friday 18th are those about the ongoing Covid problem. It was to be expected that in light of the advent of vaccines that have been announced in the UK and the US, there would be some local development in this regard. In fact, we learn that 'Cabinet has agreed to the setting up of a Special Fund to finance the National Covid-19 Vaccination Programme in the Republic of Mauritius. The Special Fund would be set up, under the Finance and Audit Act to mobilise and manage the funds required for implementing the Programme'.

Further, the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOH) has come up with a Vaccination Preparation Plan, which is in 'line with WHO Guidance on developing a national deployment and vaccination plan for Covid-19 vaccines'. MOH has set up Working Groups to look into various issues and implications, which comprise several aspects such as Regulatory Preparedness; Planning and Coordination; Costing and Funding; Target Population; Delivery Strategies; Supply Chain and Healthcare Waste Management; Human Resource Management and Training; Vaccines Acceptance and Uptake; Safety Monitoring; Immunisation and Monitoring Systems; COVID-19 surveillance; and Evaluation of Covid-19 Vaccine introduction. There will also be a two-day workshop with a view to elaborating an action plan with relevant stakeholders.

I have had occasion in a previous article to remark about the robustness of our Public Health System, developed over several decades and reinforced over the years to cope with both existing (e.g. malaria) and new (e.g. HIV AIDS, AH1N1) infections. The example of malaria has been the most catching selling point for Mauritius as a tourist destination, since we eliminated – as recognized by WHO – as far back as 1973. We have since remained free of any local infection, having only

We cannot stop Covid from what comes naturally to it (mutation), and we will have to make adjustments if we too want to survive as a species



Covid-19 upsurge in London. Photo - standard.co.uk

imported cases because of a rigorous surveillance protocol which amazed a visiting team from the University of Maryland which was here to discuss collaboration in medical education several years ago.

The Vaccination Preparation Plan is clearly a step in the right direction and a pro-active measure which is welcome in light of the prevailing situation in the world. With their experience of achieving a universal immunization coverage that reaches nearly 100% for the past several decades, I have no doubt that our Public Health professionals will be able to confidently pull through the Covid-19 vaccination programme whenever it is rolled out, depending of course on vaccine supplies.

On the other hand, the latest development on the Covid front, as the public would already have heard, is the finding of a new variant of the coronavirus in the UK. Apparently it is about 70% more infectious than the current strain, though so far there is no evidence that it causes more severe disease. Releasing this information has

“As the public would already have heard, is the finding of a new variant of the coronavirus in the UK.

Apparently it is about 70% more infectious than the current strain, though so far there is no evidence that it causes more severe disease.

Releasing this information has coincided with an ongoing spurt of cases in several advanced countries, amongst others the UK itself, Italy, France, Germany, the US. As a result, the authorities have perforce had to impose fresh restrictions which are even more stringent...”

coincided with an ongoing spurt of cases in several advanced countries, amongst others the UK itself, Italy, France, Germany, the US.

As a result, the authorities have perforce had to impose fresh restrictions which are even more stringent so as to prevent further increases in the number of infected cases, and deaths, in health systems that are already overwhelmed (especially in terms of ICU beds available). This is of course coming in the way of Christmas celebrations, plans made months ahead

to be with family or friends having to be altered – with much sadness if not anger.

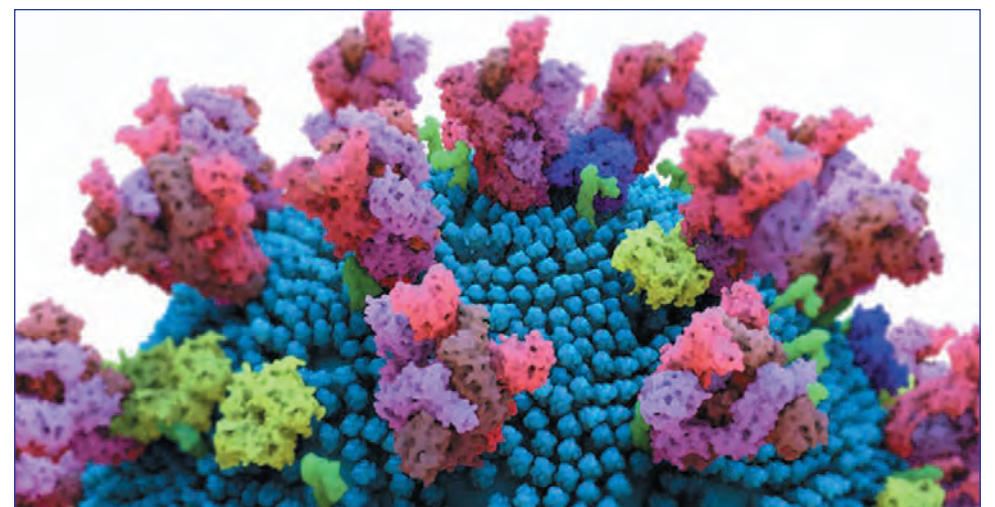
Several European countries have already announced the cancellation of

sanitary precautions'. The number of deaths still stands at 10; this contrasts with our neighbouring island of Reunion, of comparable size, where the death toll is 44, and the total number of cases over 8700.

Which goes to say that, despite several hiccups in the management of the pandemic, we have nevertheless been able to contain the epidemic quite well. It is worth noting that even several countries with the most developed health systems in the world were unable to deal properly with Covid-19 in the initial stages, and there were so many contentious issues on the medical and health, economic, social and political fronts. All countries have faced criticisms from their citizens, which is as it should be if it is taken in a spirit of doing so to improve on the arrangements made and in dealing with the ongoing problems – especially those of a human nature, such as stranded citizens – more justly and efficiently.

But we cannot afford to let our arms down, and have to remain as vigilant as ever, because there is a creeping laxity in the compliance with sanitary measures, especially the wearing of masks. There is certainly a need to show a greater sense of responsibility – why, towards ourselves to start with: *self-protect will mean everybody is protected* – it's as simple as that.

As regards the mutant in the UK, well,



The Covid-19 virus and its mutations - almost like a bouquet of flowers you would like to place in a vase to adorn your sitting room! Design - Cells/Shutterstock

flights to and from the UK, and India also is doing so as from midnight today until 31st December.

Locally, among other Cabinet decisions taken are extension of the quarantine period in Mauritius would from Jan 15 to Feb 15, 2021, and also the prohibition of entry of aircrafts and ships in Mauritius until 15 February 2021, except for those aircrafts and ships as may be approved by the Prime Minister. So we are having to fall in line with these harsher moves to preserve our status as a Covid-safe country as it has remained so far. In effect, it was also noted in Cabinet that - 'Currently, there were 24 active cases of Covid-19 in Mauritius. As at 18 December 2020, 524 cases of Covid-19 had been registered in Mauritius. The public should observe strict

no one can stop any organism – and more so the tiniest ones like viruses -- from changing to adapt which, after all, is also a form of self-protection in order to survive and perpetuate. We therefore cannot stop Covid from what comes naturally to it, and we will have to make adjustments if we too want to survive as a species.

The irony is that the Covid-19 virus and its mutations – which occur in what is called the Spike protein – look so beautiful when seen under the microscope, as can be seen in the accompanying picture which accompanies an article on the subject in *The Conversation*. Almost like a bouquet of flowers you would like to place in a vase to adorn your sitting room!

To be admired from afar... social distancing applies!

Coronavirus vaccines: how will we know when life can go back to normal?

Here's what we still need to find out before we can know when we'll be able to return to our pre-coronavirus ways



Jasmina Panovska-Griffiths
University College London

The first people have begun to receive vaccines in the UK and US as part of mass vaccination campaigns to immunise people against COVID-19. Excitement is building - finally, the end of the coronavirus crisis is in sight.

Since early December, elderly patients and health workers in 50 hospitals across the UK have been given the vaccine developed by Pfizer and BioNTech. This vaccine has also been granted emergency use authorisation by the Food and Drug Administration in the US and is currently being administered to the first priority groups.

The popular assumption is that the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and the others in development will reduce severity of the disease, reduce transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, provide population immunity and get us back to the normality of the pre-Covid era.

While scientists, including myself, are very excited at the prospect of an effective vaccine and the prospect of returning to normality, it is important to temper this enthusiasm with caution. Several questions still remain about how much protection an effective vaccine offers, to whom and for how long.

A bumper crop of vaccines

Starting a mass vaccination programme is an important first step towards ending this pandemic. And it has come relatively quickly. Producing an effective vaccine against an infectious disease is a long process that in the past has usually taken many years.

The development of the COVID-19 vaccine this year, on the other hand, has been extraordinarily fast. It has shown how quickly scientific development can be achieved via collaborative hard work, and how much the will can produce the means. During 2020, 61 vaccines have been developed, with a number of these in clinical trials, and some reporting a more than 90% efficacy rate against COVID-19. There is no doubt that it has been a year of



Sandra Lindsay, a nurse at Long Island Jewish Medical Center, is given the COVID-19 vaccine - she is one of the first in the US to receive it. EPA/Mark Lennihan

remarkable progress.

But even when widely used, the efficacy of vaccines has not historically been guaranteed. Only one disease, smallpox, has ever been truly eradicated - and achieving that took more than 200 years. Meanwhile, we continue to live with diseases such as polio, tetanus, measles and tuberculosis, with the wide use of vaccines helping protect vulnerable cohorts. So we don't yet know if immunisation will get rid of COVID-19 for good.

Learning from the roll-out

There are other questions for which we also need answers.

The efficacy of the vaccine during a clinical trial is measured by how many cases occurred in the vaccinated group. To ascertain the efficacy across the population, further details are needed on whether these cases are mostly mild or whether they include significant numbers of moderate and severe cases.

We also need clarity on transmission - will the vaccine prevent asymptomatic people or those with very mild symptoms of COVID-19 from spreading the virus? The recent resurgence of the virus suggests that transmission of COVID-19 is not slowing down, and that we need a transmission-blocking vaccine to truly bring about the end of the pandemic. A severity-reducing vaccine will prevent deaths and the overwhelming of hospitals, but not stop the spread.

Whether the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine or the other vaccines in late-stage trials can achieve this is difficult to assess, because this would require routinely testing all trial participants as well as their contacts - this is difficult to do in such large numbers. Instead, as the vaccines roll out in the UK and the US, the after-effects will be closely watched and we will get a better feel of the overall impact.

Another aspect that we need to understand is how well the vaccine may work across different age, population and risk cohorts. Finally, there is the question of how long immunity will last. People need to be watched and tracked three, six and 12 months after receiving the vaccine to assess the different levels of protective antibodies in their blood.

Modelling

We can't wait a year to find out the answer to all these questions. This is where mathematical modelling of possible epidemic trajectories with different vaccination scenarios can be helpful.

Mathematical modelling has been at the forefront of policy decision-making worldwide throughout the pandemic, as it allows us a way to assess the potential effects of both non-pharmaceutical interventions - such as lockdown or different test, trace and isolate strategies - and pharmaceutical interventions such as a vaccine or antiviral treatment.

Modelling can help us explore what the

effect of different levels of vaccine efficacy and coverage (percentage of people vaccinated) will be on the reproduction number R (which indicates the rate of transmission in the population) or on the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths. We can also explore the potential differences between a vaccine that reduces severity, one that blocks transmission and one that does both. We can model how these outcomes change if we combine different levels of coronavirus restrictions with different vaccines.

Together with colleagues, I am working on answering such questions and exploring whether vaccination against COVID-19 will stave off third and subsequent waves.

For now, we are still very early in the vaccination campaigns and we do not yet even have published results from our models. So unfortunately, it's still too difficult to say whether life will go back to normal next year.

The good news is that by combining the results from the recently started mass vaccination campaigns in the UK and the US with mathematical modelling, we will soon have some of the answers we need.

We should all be excited at the prospect of an effective vaccine, but we should also be wary of the fact that we are not there yet. And until we get there, we need to follow the COVID-19 safety measures to protect ourselves and others.

Sri Venkateswara Devasthanam Trust

Om Namo Sri Venkatesaya

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&

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Friday 01 January 2021 - 7 am to 11 am

at the Sri Prasanna Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple, La Laura, Saint Pierre.

Officiating Priests: Acharya Satish Kumar & Acharya Sai Ramanjaneya

Boris Johnson announces 'tier 4' Covid curbs and curtails Christmas mixing in England



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson speaks during a news conference on the ongoing situation with the Covid-19, at Downing Street

Boris Johnson has issued a new "stay at home" order covering London and much of the south and east of England, and dramatically curtailed plans for Christmas mixing nationwide, in response to a new fast-spreading

strain of coronavirus.

Just days after reaffirming the festive "bubble" plan and claiming it would be "inhuman" to cancel Christmas, the Prime Minister announced the creation of a new, stricter "tier 4".

Only households living outside this area will now be allowed to mix for Christmas in England – and then only for a single day, 25 December, with long-distance travel discouraged, reports Heather Stewart of MSN.

"It is with a very heavy heart that I must tell you we cannot continue with Christmas as planned," the Prime Minister said, insisting there was no alternative.

The new tier 4 rules will come into effect at midnight, and will be

similar to those in place during the four-week lockdown in November.

Non-essential retail, leisure venues and close-contact services such as hairdressers will not be allowed to reopen after they close on Saturday.

Members of the public will be ordered to stay at home, aside from a few exemptions such as taking exercise. The only mixing with other households allowed in tier 4 will be meeting up with a single other person outdoors.

The area affected includes all of London and much of the south and east of England, including Kent, most of Essex, most of Surrey, as well Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Hertfordshire, parts of Bedfordshire, Gosport, Portsmouth and Peterborough.

The Prime Minister said travel was not recommended anywhere

in England. "We're asking everyone, in all tiers, to stay local," he said.

Johnson announced the draconian new restrictions after being presented with evidence on Friday night that the new strain of coronavirus recently identified in the capital and in Kent is spreading more rapidly than the previous strain.

Johnson said the government's New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (Nervtag) had estimated that the new variant may be up to 70% more transmissible.

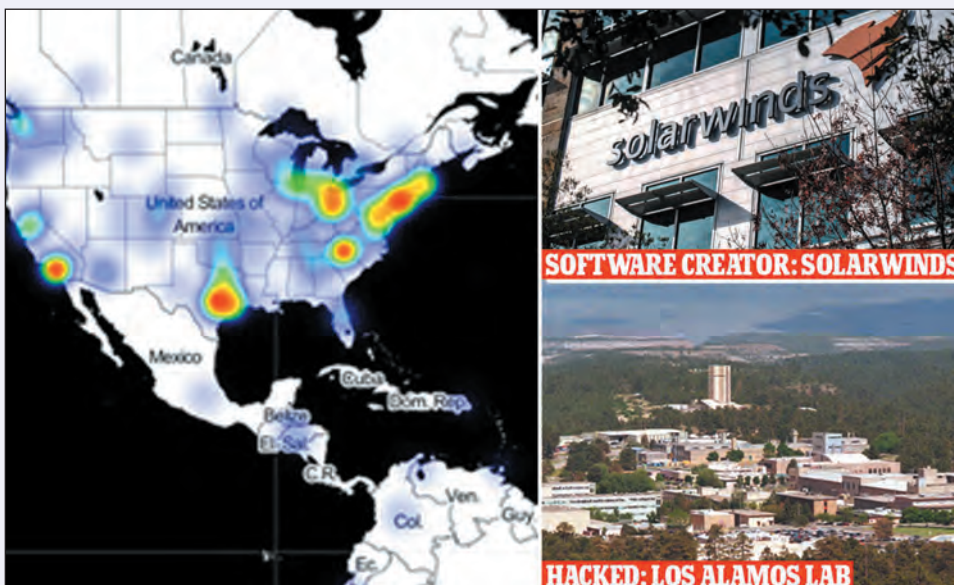
US Covid relief package: 'More help is on the way'

In the US, Democratic and Republican congressional leaders have finally reached agree-

ment on another sweeping Covid relief package after nearly nine months of mostly stalled negotiations and bickering.

The deal, worth an initial estimate of around \$900bn, is the eleventh-hour culmination of talks that abruptly intensified last week between Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer on one side and Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell, House minority leader Kevin McCarthy and Donald Trump's treasury secretary, Steven Mnuchin, on the other. "For the information of all senators and more importantly for the American people, we can finally report what our nation has needed to hear for a very long time: More help is on the way," Mr McConnell announced on the Senate floor on Sunday.

US government hack: espionage or act of war?



The hack hijacked software made by Texas-based SolarWinds Corp. Photo - dailymail.co.uk

The suspected Russian hack of US government agencies has led to heated rhetoric from lawmakers, with US Senator Dick Durbin calling it "virtually a declaration of war" and US Senator Marco Rubio saying that "America must retaliate, and not just with sanctions."

But cybersecurity and legal experts said the hack would not be considered an act of war under international law and will likely go down in history as an act of espionage, reports Jan Wolfe and Brendan Pierson of Reuters.

Here's why.

What do we know about the hack?

The hack, first reported by Reuters, hijacked software made by Texas-based SolarWinds Corp. By inserting malicious code into updates pushed to SolarWinds customers, the hackers were for months able to explore the computer networks of private companies, think tanks, and government agencies.

Sources familiar with the US investigation said the hack was likely carried out by Russia's foreign intelligence service. Moscow has denied involvement.

The magnitude of the hack is still unclear, but hackers are known to have monitored email or other data within several US government agencies.

The breached federal agencies include the Commerce Department, Treasury Department, and Department of Energy. Is there any precedent for the hack?

A hack in 2014 that targeted the US government's personnel agency, the Office of Personnel Management, exposed sensitive personal information of millions of current and former federal employees and contractors.

Former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper said in 2015 that he suspected China of conducting the hack, and he said during congress-

sional testimony two years later that in his view it was an act of espionage.

A devastating 2017 hack attributed to Russia, known as "NotPetya," crippled ports by paralyzing the shipping giant A.P. Moller-Maersk and other global corporations.

Olga Oliker, a Washington-based expert on US-Russia relations, said in 2017 testimony before the US Senate that, if Russia was to blame for NotPetya, "it is an example of precisely the type of cyber operation that could be seen as warfare, in that it approximates effects similar to those that might be attained through the use of armed force."

See more on page 6





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China says tailed U.S. warship in Taiwan Strait



The U.S. Navy said the guided missile destroyer USS Mustin had conducted "a routine Taiwan Strait transit in accordance with international law". Photo - freemalaysiatoday.com

China's military tailed a U.S. warship as it passed through the sensitive Taiwan Strait on Saturday, the Chinese military said, denouncing such missions as sending "flirtatious glances" to supporters of Taiwan independence.

China, which claims democratically-run Taiwan as its own territory, has been angered by stepped-up U.S. support for the island, including arms sales and sailing warships through the Taiwan Strait, further souring Beijing-Washington relations, reports Reuters.

The U.S. Navy said the guided missile destroyer USS Mustin had conducted "a routine Taiwan Strait transit (on) Dec. 19 in accordance with international law".

"The ship's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific," it added.

This is the 12th sailing through the strait by the U.S. Navy this year.

China's military, in a statement released by its Eastern Theatre Command, said its air and naval forces "tailed and monitored" the vessel throughout.

Such missions "deliberately raise the temperature of the Taiwan issue, as they fear calm in the Taiwan Strait, and send flirtatious glances to Taiwan independence forces, seriously jeopardising peace and stability in the strait", it said.

In Taipei, Taiwan's Defence Ministry said the U.S. ship had proceeded in a southerly direction, that it has also monitored its movements, and that "the situation was as normal".

Beijing believes Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen is bent on a formal declaration of independence for the island, a red line for Beijing. She says Taiwan is already an independent country called the Republic of China, its formal name.

Tsai has made bolstering Taiwan's armed forces a priority in the face of repeated Chinese military activity near the island, including on occasion this year sending fighter jets across the Taiwan Strait's median line, an unofficial buffer.

Iran, despite sanctions, has routes to vaccines

Although Iran faces crushing U.S. sanctions, there are still ways for Tehran to obtain coronavirus vaccines as the country suffers the Mideast's worst outbreak of the pandemic.

After earlier downplaying the virus, Iran has since acknowledged the scope of the disaster it faces after 1.1 million reported cases and over 52,000 deaths. Getting vaccines into the arms of its people would be a major step in stemming the crisis.

But while Iran is able to obtain vaccines, challenges remain ranging from sanctions imposed under President Donald Trump to the logistics of making mass vaccinations happen, reports Jon Gambrell of Associated Press.

How could Iran get the vaccine?

Iran has signed up for COVAX, an international program designed to distribute coronavirus vaccines to participating countries around the world. That program is run in part by Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance. Gavi says the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Asset Control has already issued a license for Iran to take part.



Though Iran faces crushing U.S. sanctions, there still remain ways for Tehran to obtain coronavirus vaccines as it suffers the Mideast's worst outbreak of the pandemic. Photo - AP

For its part, Iran has alleged U.S. sanctions have affected its ability to purchase medicine and vaccines. President Hassan Rouhani has said Iranians "should curse Trump a hundred times" over the difficulties. U.S. sanctions do have specific carve-outs for medicine and humanitarian aid to Iran. However, international banks and financial institutions hesitate in dealing with Iran transactions for fear of being fined or locked out of the American market.

Those sanctions, however, would not stop Iran from flying a load of cash to Geneva to pay for its participation in COVAX. Gavi declined to offer any information about Iranian payments or orders, though Iran under its rules at a maximum could order vaccines for 50% of its 82 million people.

Alireza Miryousefi, a spokesman

at Iran's mission to the United Nations, criticized the U.S. for its sanctions and banking restrictions, which he said "cruelly put many obstacles in the way of Iran receiving the Covid-19 vaccine."

Does Iran have the infrastructure for a mass inoculation?

When it comes to childhood vaccinations, Iran has nearly 100% success in inoculations, according to World Health Organization data. People from surrounding countries often come to Iran for medical care as well. Iran's hospitals, doctors and nurses are known as some of the best in the wider Middle East, with a network of clinics from villages to big cities. State-run facilities offer subsidized care, while private hospitals can be incredibly expensive.

However, there are questions about the logistics of a mass vaccination drive. Iran's aging fleet of aircraft likely would need to fly to pick up vaccines made abroad. Many airlines don't fly into Iran due to sanctions. Keeping vaccines ultra cold, like in the case of Pfizer-BioNTech's required minus 70 degrees Celsius (minus 94 degrees Fahrenheit), also likely would be a challenge.

'Mysterious North Korea site may be building nuclear components'

A mysterious North Korean facility may be producing components for building nuclear bombs, a new report suggests, offering clues to understanding the site near the capital that has perplexed experts and policymakers.

The nondescript cluster of buildings called Kangson on the southwest outskirts of Pyongyang was first publicly identified in 2018 by a team of open-source analysts as the possible location of a facility for secretly enriching uranium, a fuel for nuclear bombs, reports Reuters.

But the report by North Korea watchers at the 38 North project, reviewed by Reuters before its release on Friday, says satellite imagery points to the facility making components for centrifuges, the high-tech spinners used to enrich uranium, rather than enriching the fuel itself.

"The characteristics of the site are more consistent with a plant that could manufacture components for centrifuges," writes former International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) official Olli Heinonen in the report.



Pyongyang has denied having secret nuclear sites, an issue that contributed to the failure of a 2019 Hanoi summit between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un. Photo - i.brecorder.com

The imagery suggests the site lacks the infrastructure needed for enrichment, writes Heinonen, a distinguished fellow with the Stimson Center, the Washington think-tank that runs the project.

Pyongyang has denied having secret nuclear sites, an issue that contributed to the failure of a 2019 Hanoi summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Denuclearisation talks have remained stalled in part over U.S. assertions that the North is not fully declaring the extent of its programme.

"If the issue of undeclared facilities is going to be a factor in U.S.-North Korea negotiations, as it was in Hanoi, the more we can learn about these suspected facilities, the better we can assess their role and value to North Korea's overall nuclear weapons development," said Jenny Town, deputy director of 38 North.

Friday's report could advance the debate on whether the Kangson site is building machines or using them to create bomb material.

Clandestine enrichment sites would complicate efforts to estimate the number of nuclear weapons produced by the North, which has pushed ahead with enlarging its nuclear deterrent in the absence of a denuclearisation agreement.

Covid-19 : 'On n'a pas suffisamment de recul pour se prononcer sur son taux de mutation.

Jusqu'à présent, les mutations rapportées sont mineures'

La Grande Bretagne a démarré sa campagne de vaccination. Puis, l'OMS et l'Alliance pour les vaccins ont planifié les premières livraisons de vaccins dans plusieurs pays. Puisque les autorités n'ont détecté aucun cas local, ni à l'île Maurice, ni à l'île Rodrigues, ni dans les autres îles de la République, alors arrêtons-nous un instant pour poser quelques questions à propos de la Covid-19 et de la complexité de cette pandémie au Dr Gunness, cardiologue bien connu du service public mauricien. Que pouvons-nous attendre d'un vaccin ? Qui doit être vacciné ? Est-il prudent d'ouvrir les frontières de nos îles si les touristes sont tous vaccinés ?

Mauritius Times : La Covid-19 s'est propagée dans 188 pays et a infecté près de 75,5 millions de personnes durant ces dix derniers mois. Maurice toutefois s'en est bien sortie et n'a connu que 10 décès sur les 524 cas enregistrés jusqu'ici. Avec recul, à quoi attribuez-vous cette performance ?

Dr Sunil Gunness : Le succès est de toute évidence attribuable à un ensemble de mesures. La fermeture rapide de nos frontières reste la stratégie phare comme cela a été démontré par les autres îles qui ont adopté la même approche.

Deuxièmement, on doit saluer la discipline des Mauriciens qui, tant bien que mal, ont suivi à la lettre les conseils donnés par le ministère de la Santé, les ONGs et les médias. Ces derniers ont participé de façon active afin de transmettre les conseils dans un langage simple et accessible à tous. Nos 'frontliners' ont également fait du tout bon travail afin de tout mettre en œuvre pour suivre les recommandations de l'Organisation mondiale de la santé. On doit également saluer l'expérience et le professionnalisme de toutes les personnes impliquées dans le 'contact tracing' qui a été un succès.

*** Notre éloignement géographique des principaux hubs aériens a dû peser grandement sur la capacité du pays à se protéger contre la propagation de la Covid-19 au sein de notre population. Assurer la sécurité et l'ouverture de nos frontières constitue donc un véritable défi pour les autorités. En tant que spécialiste du domaine de la santé, quelles sont vos réflexions sur cette question ?**

C'est une question difficile à répondre. Le tout est de trouver le juste équilibre entre l'économie et la santé. Beaucoup de questions restent sans réponse...

- Combien de temps faudra-t-il pour remettre notre économie sur les rails ?

“La mutation des virus n'est pas chose nouvelle. Les différents virus ont des taux de mutation différents. Le virus de la grippe, par exemple, mute rapidement tandis que celui du SIDA ne mute quasiment pas. En ce qui concerne la Covid-19, on n'a pas suffisamment de recul pour se prononcer sur son taux de mutation. Jusqu'à présent, les mutations rapportées sont mineures...”

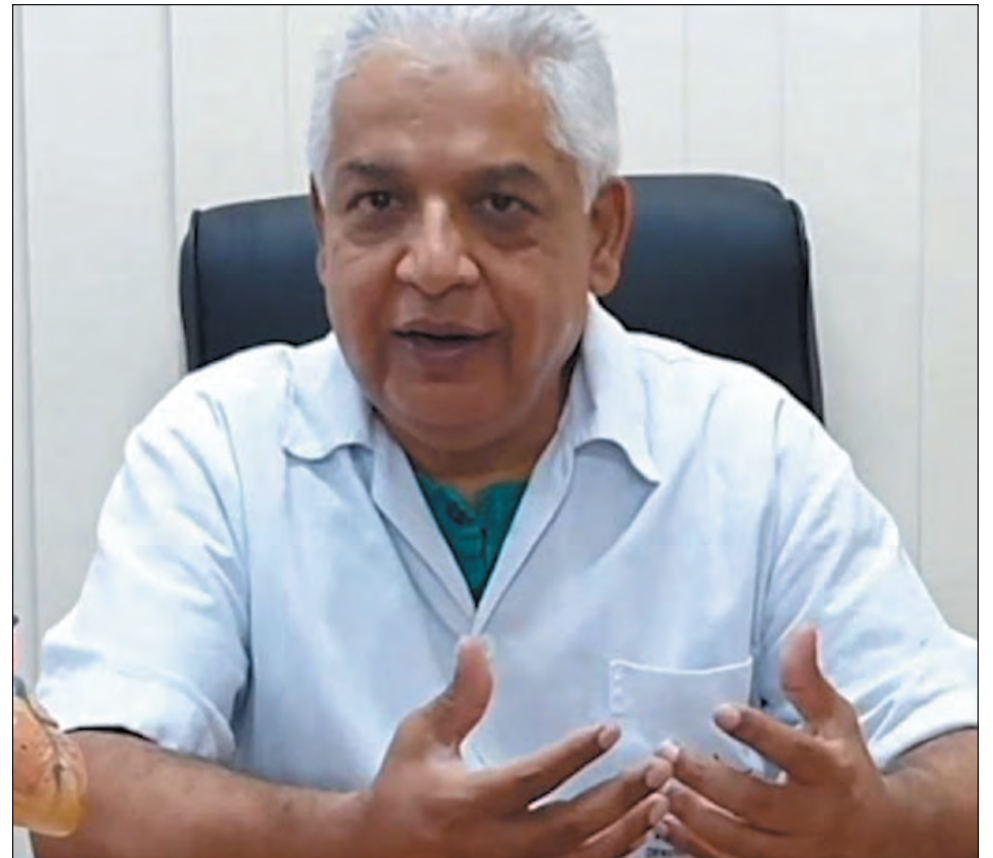
“Le vaccin sera un outil indispensable pour mener cette bataille et que le degré d'efficacité sera variable en fonction des mutations. De toute façon, la philosophie sous-jacente est de donner à notre système immunitaire un aperçu même grossier de ce virus, afin que notre organisme puisse se défendre rapidement lors d'un contact avec une variante de ce dernier...”

- La fermeture prolongée des frontières n'engendrera-t-elle pas plus de chômage et de pauvreté au-delà d'un point de non-retour ?

Par rapport à la santé elle-même, plusieurs questions font surface.

- Quelle sera l'efficacité des vaccins ?
- Dans quel délai les vaccins potentiels seront-ils disponibles à Maurice ?

Les réponses à ces différentes questions peuvent nous aiguiller pour prendre une décision, ce qui aura le moins d'impact



négatif sur notre économie sans pour autant affecter la santé de la population.

On peut également réfléchir sur l'ouverture "soft" de nos frontières pour les voyageurs déjà vaccinés. On peut imaginer un système où ces voyageurs sont en possession d'une carte de vaccination (comme pour la fièvre jaune, la polio).

Le vrai challenge serait, à ce moment, d'avoir des kits de tests fiables, faciles et reproductibles. Le test optimal serait celui qui permet de distinguer le patient infecté et le patient qui a déjà acquis une immunité contre la Covid-19.

*** Différents types de vaccins contre la Covid-19 seront disponibles dans les jours à venir. Mais, au regard de la mutation et la transformation d'une souche de ce virus à une autre, comme cela a été décelé ces derniers jours en Angleterre, pensez-vous que la vaccination s'avèrera quand même un outil efficace pour prévenir cette grave maladie ?**

La mutation des virus n'est pas chose nouvelle. Les différents virus ont des taux de mutation différents. Le virus de la grippe, par exemple, mute rapidement tandis que celui du SIDA ne mute quasiment pas. En ce qui concerne la Covid-19, on n'a pas suffisamment de recul pour se prononcer sur son taux de mutation. Jusqu'à présent, les mutations rapportées sont mineures.

Je suis personnellement confiant que le vaccin sera un outil indispensable pour mener cette bataille et que le degré d'efficacité sera variable en fonction des mutations. De toute façon, la philosophie sous-jacente est de donner à notre système immunitaire un aperçu même grossier de ce virus, afin que notre organisme puisse se défendre rapidement lors d'un contact avec une variante de ce dernier.

*** Selon une étude de modélisation publiée dans 'The Lancet Global Health' en septembre dernier, il paraît qu'une personne sur cinq à travers le monde présente un risque accru de Covid-19 grave en cas d'infection, principalement en raison des maladies non transmissibles sous-jacentes, comme les maladies cardio-vasculaires, le diabète, l'hypertension, le cancer, etc. A-t-on noté cette incidence à Maurice ?**

Oui, on a observé la même tendance chez nous. Les études ont démontré que ce sont essentiellement les pays avec une population où il y a plus de personnes âgées qui ont été plus affectés.

Il est vrai que la prévalence des pathologies non transmissibles à Maurice nous rend vulnérables mais je dois ajouter que notre population est relativement plus jeune, ce qui nous donne un léger avantage.

*** Suite en page 8**

'Il faut uniquement une proportion de 60% de la population qui soit vaccinée pour qu'on puisse parler d'immunité collective'

* Suite de la page 7

* Par ailleurs, on affirme que 'a healthy nation is a wealthy nation,' quoique que l'inverse n'est pas toujours vrai. Quelles sont vos réflexions sur nos services de santé publique en 2020 que ce soit par rapport à son financement, les logistiques, etc. ?

Je dois dire que nos services de santé se portent plutôt bien surtout dans le domaine de la cardiologie et la chirurgie cardiaque. A ce jour, nous avons différentes unités de cardiologie dans les quatre coins de l'île qui sont bien équipées avec des Unités de Soins Intensifs. Nous avons également quatre ou cinq spécialistes attachés aux unités de soins avec tous les médicaments nécessaires pour le bon fonctionnement du service.

Nous pratiquons un nombre croissant d'angiographies, d'angioplasties et de chirurgies cardiaques quotidiennement avec des cas qui sont de plus en plus complexes. Le succès est attribuable à la bonne communication entre les divers intervenants, ce qui nous permet de prendre des décisions collégiales pour le bien du patient.

Cet engouement se voit également dans le privé où certaines institutions sont maintenant dotées des avancées technologiques qui leur permettent de faire des angiographies, angioplasties de même que la chirurgie cardiaque quotidiennement.

Le ministère de la Santé avec la caravane de la santé, et les ONGs s'investissent énormément dans le dépistage des maladies non-transmissibles, ce qui porte ses fruits. L'association "Heart Foundation" et "La Route du Cœur" font un travail remarquable afin de se rapprocher des Mauriciens et de répondre à leurs questions en utilisant des termes simples.

Malgré tous ces efforts, on est déçu de constater qu'une proportion de la population ne suit pas les recommandations et nous observons une incidence toujours élevée du diabète, d'hypertension artérielle, d'obésité et de la malbouffe ainsi que du tabagisme.

* On aura noté que davantage de Mauriciens se tournent vers les services de santé fournis par les entreprises privées et dont les coûts sont assumés ou remboursés par l'assurance-maladie, ce qui n'est pas à la portée d'un grand nombre de nos citoyens. Or, les études ont démontré que les grandes différences de revenu



“Le tout est de trouver le juste équilibre entre l'économie et la santé. Beaucoup de questions restent sans réponse... Combien de temps faudra-t-il pour remettre notre économie sur les rails? La fermeture prolongée des frontières n'engendrera-t-elle pas plus de chômage et de pauvreté au-delà d'un point de non-retour? Par rapport à la santé elle-même, plusieurs questions font surface. Quelle sera l'efficacité des vaccins? Dans quel délai les vaccins potentiels seront-ils disponibles à Maurice? ”

ont des conséquences néfastes sur la santé publique dans la plupart des pays, ce qui ne fait que creuser les inégalités en matière de santé. Est-ce une question qui interpelle les professionnels de la santé ?

La coexistence de l'activité médicale dans les secteurs public et privé est une pratique courante dans différents pays. Je pense que la parfaite symbiose de ces deux secteurs ne peut qu'être bénéfique à la population.

Avec l'avènement des assurances médicales à Maurice, l'activité du secteur privé augmentera, ce qui aidera à désencombrer les hôpitaux publics. La diminution d'afflux de patients dans les hôpitaux va permettre à nos médecins de

prodiguer de meilleurs soins à leurs patients.

Ainsi, on observera une amélioration de la qualité de soins de santé accessible à tous indépendamment de leur niveau de revenu.

* Pour revenir à la Covid-19, certaines voix se sont élevées pour demander si nous allons servir de cobayes du fait que les vaccins ont été conçus trop vite. Qu'en pensez-vous ?

C'est vrai que beaucoup de gens ne font pas confiance aux différents types de vaccins disponibles sur le marché. Cependant, c'est une réalité qui ne m'étonne pas. De tout temps, il y a eu des pous et des contres des programmes de

“On peut réfléchir sur l'ouverture "soft" de nos frontières pour les voyageurs déjà vaccinés. On peut imaginer un système où ces voyageurs sont en possession d'une carte de vaccination (comme pour la fièvre jaune, la polio). Le vrai challenge serait, à ce moment, d'avoir des kits de tests fiables, faciles et reproductibles. Le test optimal serait celui qui permet de distinguer le patient infecté et le patient qui a déjà acquis une immunité contre la Covid-19... ”

vaccination, et c'est également le cas pour le vaccin de la grippe même en 2020.

En ce qui concerne la Covid-19, c'est bon de savoir qu'il faut uniquement une proportion de 60% de la population qui soit vaccinée pour qu'on puisse parler d'immunité collective.

* Finalement, est-ce que la pandémie va s'arrêter et la vie reprendra enfin son cours normal si on parvient à faire vacciner un nombre important de personnes à travers le monde?

Les stratégies pour mettre fin à cette pandémie seront multifactorielles.

Premièrement, on aura besoin d'une bonne campagne de vaccination. Ensuite, on misera fort sur l'utilisation de médicaments à titre prophylactique comme l'Ivermectine (un antiparasitaire dont l'activité antivirale semble prometteuse) comme ont suggéré les équipes australiennes depuis le mois de mars.

On espère que les différentes équipes dans les différents pays vont venir de l'avant avec des thérapies plus encourageantes les unes que les autres. L'importance des gestes barrières de même que l'hygiène des mains ne sera jamais assez soulignée.

Je pense que ce sera cet ensemble de différentes stratégies qui permettra de mettre fin à cette pandémie. Ceci prélude bien évidemment à un changement comportemental qui fera partie de notre nouvelle " norme ".

Lifetime Achievement Award to Nazirah Ganjee in Kolkata

RNG

It was with great pleasure and pride that I learnt that an educator of Mauritian origin had been awarded a prestigious award in India. Courtesy WhatsApp, she shared this good news with me.

Nazirah is the daughter of late Jaynool Hamid Bucktowar, jeweller, Route Royale, Rose Hill. Describing herself as a 'Loreto girl to the core', after completing her secondary studies at Loreto Curepipe she joined the Loreto College Kolkata in 1967, her admission having been arranged by Mother Provincial. In 1971 she obtained BA Hons (Geography) and B.Ed. She returned to Mauritius to work as Geography teacher at Loreto College Vacoas for a year, after which she flew back to Kolkata as Mrs Nazirah Ganjee.



During her student days in Kolkata, the Ganjee family were her guardians, and became her in-laws when Bashir – the eldest son – and her decided to tie the knot, in Mauritius in 1972.

In 1977 she joined La Martinere for Girls (LMG) to teach geography to Classes XI & XII for ten years, after which she became Head of Primary Dept until her retirement in 2006. She was not the type to stay idle, and went on to take a course in Mental Health, and founded a new school for the children of a Muslim Orphanage.

No surprise, therefore that, after she had received the Long Service Recognition from LMG, her engagement in education was crowned on December 12th by the granting of the 'Memorial Lifetime Award for a Teacher' offered by

the Telegraph School Awards for Excellence 2020. For this, she is 'thankful to the three Lady Principals I worked under, for granting me the freedom to run the department, to the parents for trusting their children's education to us, and the students who brought out the innate. I had a great rapport with my staff that cooperated and helped me to run the department'

Her family consisted of son Rahil, an international professional golfer who takes part in the annual Open Golf Championship in Mauritius and a daughter, who settled in the US.

This sharing by Nazirah rekindled many memories of our times spent together in Kolkata, especially with her in-laws and the family who were ever so welcoming to the small group of us Mauritian students studying in Kolkata. Most unforgettable will remain Bashir, a *bon-vivant* with his unending jokes. The last time we met was during their visit in 2013, and I was saddened to learn of his passing a few months after their return to Kolkata.

For the past couple of years, WhatsApp has allowed us to touch base afresh and remain in contact. Unfortunately, only a few of us who had been her contemporaries in Kolkata remain to share the joy of Nazirah, to whom must go the last words: 'Since my husband passed away La Martinere for Girls is my family, thousands of students I taught for 30 years and colleagues are my lifeline. I'm grateful to God for the affection and respect showered on me. This Award is a recognition of my devotion to teaching.'

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How to reduce the spread of fake news – by doing nothing

* Cont. from page 2

They were also asked about whether they had shared false information online in the past.

Some of the findings weren't particularly surprising. For example, people were more likely to share things they thought were true or were consistent with their beliefs.



But two things stood out. The first was that some people had deliberately shared political information online that they knew at the time was untrue. There may be different reasons for doing this (trying to debunk it, for instance). The second thing that stood out was that people rated themselves as more likely to share material if they thought they had seen it before. The implication is that if you have seen things before, you are more likely to share when you see them again.

Dangerous repetition

It has been well established by numerous studies that the more often people see pieces of information, the more likely they are to think they are true. A common maxim of propaganda is that if you repeat a lie often enough, it becomes the truth.

This extends to false information online. A 2018 study found that when people repeatedly saw false headlines on social media, they rated them as being more accurate. This was even the case when the headlines were flagged as being disputed by fact checkers. Other research has shown that repeatedly encountering false information

makes people think it is less unethical to spread it (even if they know it is not true, and don't believe it).

So to reduce the effects of false information, people should try to reduce its visibility. Everyone should try to avoid spreading false messages. That means that social media companies should consider removing false information completely, rather than just attaching a warning label. And it means that the best thing individual social media users can do is not to engage with false information at all.

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From the Pages of History - MT 60 Years Ago

4th Year No 154

MAURITIUS TIMES

Friday 19 July 1957

Liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth. -- George Washington

D. Napal

Fall of Bastille - What it Teaches Us?

By The anniversary of the fall of the Bastille has again been celebrated in France, here and elsewhere, with the usual glamour claimed by the 'Fête nationale française'. The local papers have given their reports of the celebrations. Unfortunately, we are left under the impression that the fête on the 14th of July has sunk into mere formalism. We often hear: *la prise de la Bastille*, but we fail to realise the significance embodied in these few words. Time seems to have obliterated the symbol of oppression which the Bastille represented – at least this is true of our own island. The basic facts about the Bastille and its fall seem to have been clean forgotten. But it is not so easy to forget the lessons of History.

The fall of the Bastille was the fall of tyranny of the most grinding sort; it was the victory of the hungry masses upon their oppressors who fathered themselves upon their sweat and blood.

The 14th of July is a date which naturally brings to the mind thoughts on the French Revolution, which ushered in a new era in world

history. And to understand the French Revolution we should have an idea of the forces which launched it. It was as the bursting of a volcano which had for years in its bowels the elements of eruption. Oppression and injustice were rife in the France of the old regime.

The philosophers had long been at work. Jean Jacques Rousseau had expounded his theories in the 'Social Contract', of which the opening lines alone set one thinking: "Man is born free but is everywhere in chains." But the philosophers Voltaire, Diderot and others based their theories on actual facts – on the oppression, injustice, starvation, and squalor which were the eye-sores of pre-revolutionary France.

A century before 1789, when the whole of Europe was astounded by the glaze and glitter of the reign of Louis XIV, the sun-King, in vivid words Jean de La Bruyère gave a picture of the peasantry when he wrote:

"Certain savage-looking beings, male and female, are seen in the country, black, livid, and sunburnt, and belonging to the soil, which



they dig and grub with invincible stubbornness. They seem capable of articulation, and, when they stand erect, they display human lineaments. They are, in fact, men. They retire at night into their dens, where they live on black bread, water, and roots. They spare other human beings the trouble of sowing, ploughing, and harvesting, and thus should not be in want of the bread they have planted."

These were the men who made the revolution, men who made life a heaven on earth for those in clover, while they themselves led a life of semi-starvation and died as dumb driven cattle. In the words of the Bishop of Chartres, "men ate grass

like sheep, and died like so many flies."

Louis XV, in whose lifetime the populace had begun to show restlessness, had dismissed the situation with his usual indifference: "*Après moi, le déluge.*" And the deluge came. Louis XVI was by temperament unfitted to weather the storm. Indecision marked all his actions. He was weak and easily influenced, at one time by the young and lovely but the unexperienced and haughty Marie Antoinette, his wife whom the Parisians contemptuously alluded to as the "Autrichienne. He always meant well but ever lacked the firmness to tide over difficult situations.

The Bastille was the symbol of centuries of oppression. The populace had always looked upon it with awe and hatred. The King and his entourage laughed at the idea of its even falling under an attack by the *canaille* where the great Conde had failed.

In the month of July 1789, Louis XVI's minister was Necker. He was popular with the Parisians but unfortunately hateful to the Queen

and her courtiers. The King finally ceded to his wife's remonstrations and dismissed Necker. The news roused the fury of the populace, especially as Necker's dismissal was followed by that of other ministers who were all replaced by those who were notorious for their opposition to the popular cause. This was the immediate cause of the insurrection of the 14th July 1789. But the real cause was deeper. They were the oppression of centuries which had rendered the people desperate.

The Bastille fell without much opposition. The Governor Delaunay was decapitated. Other executions followed, especially that of Foulon who was reported to have told to the hungry populace to eat grass.

The fall of the Bastille, almost two centuries ago, is still vivid in the minds of people. A picture of the grim horrors perpetrated during the French Revolution shows one thing plainly – injustice and oppression cannot continue indefinitely. Sooner or later the day of reckoning comes.

May the fall of the Bastille serve as an object lesson to our Mauritian exploiters who take undue advantage of the weakness and helplessness of their less fortunate fellow-brothers.

"Maintain friendly relations," says Swami Dhruvanand

In the quiet, rustic surrounding of the Gayasingh Orphanage we went to meet Swami Dhruvanand. He is staying there since his arrival in January, with the orphans and destitutes.

Tall, well built, his mind is alert as any young man's in spite of his 73 years. A scholar in Sanskrit and Hindi he is a very eloquent speaker. His sermons are illustrated with various examples drawn from the vast store of experience he has acquired. Swamiji hates publicity. Only after some hesitation he accepted to reply to our questions.

He was born in Brindaban, the birthplace of Lord Krishna, and was named Dhruvendra. In 1919 he passed the Shastri examination at the Punjab University. Nyaya (logic) being his favourite subject he took the *Nyaya Bhushan* of the Vidya Parishad which he passed in 1921. It's then that started his career of strain and strife devoted to the cause of his downtrodden people.

In 1923 Dhruvendra Shastri was appointed Secretary of the *All India Hindu Suddhi Sabha*. From 1926 to 1930 he became Principal of the *Gurukul Vaidya Nath Dham* which is managed by the Bengal and Bihar Arya Pratinidhi Sabha. In 1930 while serving in the Indian National

Congress he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment by the Patna City Court. In 1939 he took the leading part in the agitation against the suppression of civil liberties by the Hyderabad State. He was arrested and sentenced to 23 months in jail.

Youths have always attracted Swamiji. He did not miss an opportunity to help them. In 1941 he was made president of the *All India Arya Kumar Parishad*. Being himself a physical culturist, he sponsored the establishment of several gymnasiums in Bihar and in UP. Some even bear his name. From 1945 to 1949 he became president of the *International Aryan League*. On the 7th November 1954 when he was ordained Sanyasin he relinquished all his official functions.

Besides taking part in these social and religious functions, Swamiji held some very privileged positions. He was the Raj Guru (Royal preceptor) to five Indian princes, namely to the Raja of Kala Kankar, Maharaja of Shahpura, Maharaja of Devas junior, Maharaja of Sharguja, Raja of Nagargunj. Swamiji has done quite a lot of



Swami Dhruvanand

travelling. He preached the Vedic religion for six months in Burma. On the invitation of the East African Arya Pratinidhi Sabha he went to Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. Swamiji is leaving us for Nairobi by air on 21st July. As his mission is not yet complete, he intends coming back after three months' stay in Nairobi.

To our question whether he had any knowledge of this colony prior to his coming, Swamiji told us:

"I had a very hazy knowledge of Mauritius. All that I knew was that sugar cane is the main crop and that Biharis are in majority. It was indeed a pleasure for me to find out that though the Indo-Mauritians are cut off from India for more than a century they still cherish their mother tongue, their religion and culture."

Now that you have stayed with us for some time, we asked him, tell us the impression you have got of the Hindus.

"On the whole the Hindus of this colony seem to me to have faith in their religion, devotion to their family, they are hard working. But I would add that the womenfolk

have conserved more of Hinduism than the men. A remarkable feature which cannot escape the visitors from India is that the adepts of all sects of Hinduism live in complete harmony. The spirit of provincialism is almost inexistent. And true to their religious concept, Hindus maintain good neighbourly relations with the other communities."

- Have you found anything wrong with us?

"One aspect of Mauritian life which has shocked me is that people spend a tremendous sum of money on alcohol and tobacco. I seize this opportunity to make a fervent appeal to my brethren to cease indulging in these obnoxious habits. It is not only a drain on their purse, but it is doing them a lot of harm – physical, mental as well as moral."

- What is your message to the Hindus, Swamiji?

"First I have remarked that you are doing little concrete work. You haven't got any lending library of your own, you haven't got any Hindi daily paper, there is no gymnasium worth the name, there is no school where Sanskrit and Hindu culture are taught. You should fill these gaps. Second, you should give more thought to moral and physical upliftment. Third, Mauritius being your country of adoption, work for its prosperity and maintain the friendly relations with the other communities."



Sukhada Tatke

Why Indian wedding traditions could trump the pandemic

Covid-19 has made many rethink social gatherings. But for Indian weddings, the lure of the lavish tradition might be stronger than the pandemic

Two months after Uthara Murugamanikkam and Dhamodaran Subramanian met in November last year, their families started planning their wedding. The couple, from Chennai in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, would get engaged in early March and married in June. The wedding would take place in Coimbatore, 500km (311mi) from Chennai, with 250 close friends and family in attendance. Then, it would be followed by a reception for 500 people, and a larger soiree back in Chennai for 750 guests.

The engagement ceremony went smoothly. However, less than a week later, the World Health Organization declared the Covid-19 outbreak a pandemic, and India found itself living under lockdown. "As time went by, we thought of two things: postpone the wedding or have it anyway," says Murugamanikkam, 30, who runs a business selling handmade hair and skincare products. "Quickly we realised we weren't sure when things would get better."

The couple decided to go ahead with a wedding in Chennai, with only close family present. Just 15 people were there on 7 June as the bride and groom married at a small temple. "My only dream was to have friends and family at my wedding to share in my happiness, tease me, help me get ready. But now we have a story to tell our children and grandchildren. I don't regret this intimate wedding at all," she says.

Now that the pandemic has brought over-the-top Indian weddings to a halt, couples have had to make small events



In Mumbai, Rasika Kshirsagar and Ajinkya Meher scaled their wedding from 700 people to 25 (Credit: Rasika Kshirsagar)

memorable amid restrictions. On the other side of the pandemic, could the smaller wedding endure, or is the lure of the big Indian wedding too strong?

In India, planning weddings generally involves striking a delicate balance between the desires of couples, dreams of families and expectations of guests. Weddings are often seen as occasions to flex social-standing muscles. Big weddings are very much the norm, and families are judged on their hospitality. Guest lists often include distant relatives and acquaintances. Budgets range from \$6,000 and \$13,000 for modest weddings; \$41,000 and \$80,000 for lavish celebrations; and \$100,000 to \$1m for extravagant revelries, according to industry experts.

In general, parents save for decades (and often go into debt) for what they see as their biggest responsibility toward their child, especially girls. An episode of *Made in Heaven*, a recent Amazon series set against the backdrop of glamorous weddings, shows a man taking a loan from the bank for his daughter's wedding without telling her, just to fulfil her dream of a perfect wedding.

The idea of a big wedding as a marker of social status is both deeply entrenched and continuously reinforced by marketing from the wedding fashion, jewellery and styling sectors. Sociologist Patricia Uberoi once called Indian weddings "the most visi-

ble site of conspicuous consumption and conspicuous waste", while according to a KPMG analysis, an average Indian family spends about one-fifth of its accumulated wealth on a child's wedding.

With about 10 million weddings taking place in India each year, the industry is widely reported to be worth around \$40bn to \$50bn annually, second only to the US. Despite periodic attempts to curb them, weddings have grown more opulent over the years. Lavish celebrations involving wealthy business and Bollywood families have emerged as national spectator sports.

"Till earlier this year, one wondered just how big the Indian wedding was going to get. It was like a race. Grand was becoming grander, especially in high-income families," says Parthip Thyagrajan, CEO of WeddingSutra, a popular wedding portal.

When this powerful industry went from booming to shuttered overnight, the restrictions came as a boon to some. Rasika Kshirsagar and Ajinkya Meher, both yoga teachers in Mumbai, didn't want to splash out on a big wedding. But, like many couples, they gave up on the idea to placate their parents. They picked a March date at a venue that would accommodate about 700 people, but Covid-19 forced them to cancel. When things opened up a little after three months, they had a small ceremony with 25 people instead. "We eventually got what we wanted," says 29-year-old Kshirsagar. And they only spent 20% of their original budget. They hope the savings will help them as they start their married life. "We've always wanted to travel around the country, and the world, for a few months to teach yoga. We hope to use the saved money on that."

There are also signs that people are trying to show wedding hospitality in innovative ways, rather than embracing austerity entirely. "For instance, people are opting for sit-down lunches as opposed to buffets," says Sejal Deshpande, founder of Shaadi Ityaadi, a wedding planning

company focused on sustainable weddings. She planned a wedding in October in which the couple sent food parcels to relatives and friends who would have otherwise been present at the ceremony.

Although many more people will end up opting for smaller weddings out of necessity over the next few months, it's not clear the new approach will turn into a new tradition. According to Parul Bhandari, an associate professor of sociology at Jindal Global University, part of the reason is that Indian marriages are strongly embedded in family and kinship structures. "Families keep in constant touch with their extended family and kin groups, not just at times of weddings, but also [for] religious rituals and festivals. In this way, the extended family and kin form an important part of the Indian society's fabric and, therefore, it is only considered reasonable to include them in an important rite de passage as marriage."

Wedding Sutra's Thyagrajan believes that the concept of a big wedding is firmly entrenched in the Indian culture. "Big weddings are very much part of our DNA. They are a special celebration. They are part of the happiness industry. They will make a comeback," he says, though he believes it may take a year or two.

Indeed, nine months into the pandemic, there are signs that interest is picking



Although some couples are scaling back their large Indian weddings, others are keeping ceremonies just as lavish – but in a different way (Credit: Aju Photography)



"I don't regret this intimate wedding," says Uthara Murugamanikkam, whose ceremony happened in June in front of only 15 people (Credit: Aju Photography)

up again. Banquet halls at five-star hotels have seen a surge in bookings for November and December. However, hosts are having to get a little creative; for an upcoming ceremony, wedding planner Ekta Saigal Lulla says the clients have requested that all the guests be tested for Covid-19 two days prior to the wedding. Lulla has partnered with a diagnostics lab. She says, "Social gathering and social distancing don't go hand in hand, no matter how hard you try. Which is why we are taking precautions beforehand."

7 science-based strategies to boost your willpower and succeed with your New Year's resolutions

Forget being super self-critical and whipping yourself into shape. There are ways to set yourself up for success that are far kinder and work better



Jelena Kecmanovic
Adjunct Professor of Psychology,
Georgetown University

It's that time of year when people make their New Year's resolutions - indeed, 93% of people set them, according to the American Psychological Association. The most common resolutions are related to losing weight, eating healthier, exercising regularly and saving money.

However, research shows that 45% of people fail to keep their resolutions by February, and only 19% keep them for two years. Lack of willpower or self-control is the top cited reason for not following through.

How can you increase your willpower and fulfill your New Year's promise to yourself? These seven strategies are based on behavioral science and my clinical work with hundreds of people trying to achieve their long-term goals.

1. Clarify and honour your values

Ask yourself why this goal matters to you. Do you want to lose weight because you value getting in shape to return to a favorite pastime of hiking, or because of societal expectations and pressures? People who are guided by their authentic values are better at achieving their goals. They also don't run out of willpower, because they perceive it as a limitless resource. Figure out what makes you tick, and choose goals consistent with those values.

2. Frame goals and your life in positive terms

Focus on what you want to accomplish, not what you don't. Instead of planning not to drink alcohol on workdays during the new year, commit to drinking your favorite sparkling water with Sunday to Thursday evening meals. Struggling to suppress thoughts takes a lot of energy, and they have a way of returning to your mind with a vengeance.

It also helps to reflect on the aspects of

yourself and your life that you are already happy with. Although you might fear that this will spur complacency and inaction, studies show that gratitude and other positive emotions lead to better self-control in the long run.

3. Change your environment to make it easier

Research suggests that people with high willpower are exceptionally good at arranging their environment to avoid temptations. So, banish all credit cards from your wallet if your goal is to save money. And don't keep a bowl of M&M's at your work desk if you intend to eat healthy.

If your coworkers regularly bring sweets to work, ask them to help you with your goals (they might get inspired to join in!) and bring cookies only for special occasions. Supportive friends and family can dramatically increase your chances of achieving your resolutions. Joining a group whose members practice behaviors you'd like to adopt is another great way to bolster your willpower, because having role models improves self-control.

4. Be prepared with 'if-then' strategies



New Year Resolutions? Me? Cartoon - mcgilltribune

Even the best resolution falls apart when your busy schedule and exhaustion take over. Formulate a series of plans for what to do when obstacles present themselves. These "if-then" plans are shown to improve self-control and goal attainment.

Each time you wake up in the middle of the night craving candies or chips, you can plan instead to read a guilty-pleasure magazine, or log into your online community of healthy eaters for inspiration, or eat



Most common resolutions are related to losing weight, eating healthier, exercising regularly and saving money. Photo - cdn-prod.medicalnewstoday.com

an apple slowly and mindfully, savoring each bit. When you're tired and about to skip that gym class you signed up for, call your supportive sister who is on standby. Anticipate as many situations as possible and make specific plans, vividly imagining the situations and what you will do in the moment.

5. Use a gradual approach

When you embark on a new goal, start small and build on early successes. Use one less spoonful of sugar in your coffee. Eventually, you might be able to forgo any sweeteners at all. If resisting that muffin initially proves to be too hard, try waiting 10 minutes. By the end of it, your urge will likely subside.

You might be surprised to realize that change in one domain of life - like abstaining from sweet processed foods - tends to spread to other areas. You might find you are able to bike longer distances, or moderate your caffeine intake more easily.

6. Imagine rewards and then enjoy them

Picture the feeling of endorphins circulating through your body after a run, or the sun on your skin as you approach a mountain summit. Pay attention to all your

senses: smell, sight, hearing, touch and taste. Visualizing rewards improves your chances of engaging in the activity that results in them.

If it's hard to imagine or experience these rewards in the beginning, decide on small, meaningful gifts you can give yourself until the positive effects of the new behaviors kick in. For example, imagine yourself taking a half-day off work each month after you pay down your credit card debt: visualize exactly what you would do and how you would feel. And then do it.

7. Be kind to yourself, even during setbacks

Most people believe the way to increase willpower is to "whip oneself into shape," because being kind to oneself is indulgent and lacks self discipline. But the exact opposite is true - people who harshly blame themselves for even small willpower failures tend to do worse in accomplishing their goals in the long run.

Try self-compassion instead. Cut yourself some slack and remember that being human means being imperfect. When you fall for that doughnut, don't despair, and don't throw in the towel. Treat yourself with care and understanding and then recommit to your goal the following day.

Remember, you aren't likely to achieve your New Year's resolutions by being self-critical and hard on yourself. Instead, boost your willpower through a series of small and strategic steps that will help you succeed.



Teacher: "Kids, what does the chicken give you?"

Student: "Meat!"

Teacher: "Very good! Now what does the pig give you?"

Student: "Bacon!"

Teacher: "Great! And what does the fat cow give you?"

Student: "Homework!"

Why did I get divorced?

Well, last week was my birthday. My wife didn't wish me a happy birthday. My parents forgot and so did my kids. I went to work and even my colleagues didn't wish me a happy birthday.

As I entered my office, my secretary said, "Happy birthday, boss!" I felt so special. She asked me out for lunch. After lunch, she invited me to her apartment. We went there and she said, "Do you mind if I go into the bedroom for a minute?"

"Okay," I said. She came out

five minutes later with a birthday cake, my wife, my parents, my kids, my friends, & my colleagues all yelling, "SURPRISE!!!" while I was waiting on the sofa... naked.

Kid 1: "Hey, I bet you're still a virgin."

Kid 2: "Yeah, I was a virgin until last night."

Kid 1: "As if."

Kid 2: "Yeah, just ask your sister."

Kid 1: "I don't have a sister."

Kid 2: "You will in about nine months."

Teacher: "If I gave you 2 cats and another 2 cats and another 2, how many would you have?"

Johnny: "Seven."

Teacher: "No, listen carefully... If I gave you two cats, and another two cats and another two, how many would you have?"

Johnny: "Seven."

Teacher: "Let me put it to you differently. If I gave you two apples, and another two apples and another two, how many would you have?"

Johnny: "Six."

Teacher: "Good. Now if I gave you two cats, and another two cats and another two, how many would you have?"

Johnny: "Seven!"

Teacher: "Johnny, where in the heck do you get seven from?!"

Johnny: "Because I've already got a freaking cat!"

Q: Why do Chinese people have Chinese babies?

A: Because two Wongs don't make a white.

Q: Why couldn't the leopard play hide and seek?

A: Because he was always spotted.

Priest's Retirement Speech

A Priest was being honoured at his retirement dinner after 25 years in the parish.

The leading local politician was chosen to make the presentation and to give a little speech at the dinner.

However, he was late, so the Priest decided to say his own few words while they waited:

He commenced with: "Thank Goodness we Catholics have a wonderful sense of humour! I got my first impression of this parish from the very first confession I ever heard here. I thought I had been assigned to a terrible place. The very first person who entered my confessional, and whom I shall not name, told me he had stolen a television set and, when questioned by the police, was able to lie his way out of it. He had stolen money from his parents; embezzled from his employer; had an affair with his boss's wife; taken illegal drugs; had several homosexual affairs; was arrested several times for public nudity. I was appalled that one person could do so many awful things. But as the days went on, I learned that my people were not all like that and I had, indeed, come to a fine parish full of good and loving people."

Just as the Priest finished his talk, the politician arrived full of apologies at being late. He immediately began to make the presentation and gave his talk:

"I'll never forget the first day our parish Priest arrived," said the politician. "In fact, I had the honour of being the first person to go to him for confession."

Moral: Never, never, never be late.

Titbits

- Couples who spend at least 10 minutes a day laughing together are more likely to have a stronger relationship.
- Any friendship that exceeds the 7 years' mark is more likely to last an entire lifetime.
- You can judge a lot about a person's character by what they laugh at.
- A lot of problems in the world would disappear if we talked to each other instead of talking about each other.
- Kids who play video games tend to have better hand-eye coordination, a better memory, and better problem solving skills.
- A person is more likely to use "K" in a text message when they have no interest in talking to you.
- No matter what you're going through, music is always there for you.
- 75% of women ask questions in which they already know the answer to. This is why it's best to simply tell her the truth.
- Everyone has a song in their playlist which they always skip, but never delete.
- People who talk to themselves are more likely to have a high I.Q.



- If you chew gum when you study a subject and then chew the same flavor when you take the test it can help you remember.
- Your body is actually designed to get 4 hours of sleep twice per day instead of 8 hours once!
- Coca-Cola says only two people alive know the Coca-Cola 'recipe', and they aren't allowed to travel on the same plane lest it crashes.
- Overthinking can cause physical and mental fatigue, it may also lead to chronic depression.
- Ironically, sometimes the people who don't talk to you are the ones who really want to.
- Psychology says the best things in life are usually found when you are not looking for them.
- According to old myths, the inability to fall asleep at night means you're awake in someone's dream
- Smiles have been proven to be more attractive on a woman's face than makeup.
- Lack of sleep makes it difficult to control emotions which is why people are more likely to cry or laugh uncontrollably at night.
- Bob Marley's last words to his son, Ziggy were: "Money can't buy life."



Over 50? These problems can sneak up on you

More than nine in 10 older adults have some type of chronic disease, and almost eight in 10 have more than one. So, chances are, you'll have one sooner or later. But there are things you can do to live a healthier life.

Obesity

If you weigh a lot more than is healthy for your height, you could be considered obese -- it's not having just a few extra pounds. It's linked to at least 20 chronic diseases, including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure, and arthritis. Nearly 45% of Americans ages 40 to 59 are obese.

Osteoarthritis

At one time, doctors chalked up this disease of the joints to the wear and tear of age, and that is a factor. But genetics and lifestyle probably have something to do with it as well. And previous joint injuries, a lack of physical activity, diabetes, and being overweight can all play a part, too.

Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis causes your bones to become weak and could lead to fractures. A couple of things that can help: a healthy diet rich in calcium and vitamin D (you need both for strong bones) and regular weight-bearing exercise, like dancing, jogging, or climbing stairs.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

This causes inflammation and blocks air from your lungs. It's a slow-moving disease that you could have for years without knowing it -- symptoms usually show up in your 40s or 50s. It can make you have trouble breathing, and you may cough, wheeze, and spit up mucus. Exercise, a healthy diet, and avoiding smoke and pollution can help.

Hearing loss

Maybe nothing says "You're getting older" more than having to ask, "What did you say?" Loud noise, disease, and your genes all play a part. Some medications can cause hearing problems, too. See your doctor if you're not able to hear as well as you used to.

Vision problems

That annoying blurriness when you try to read the small type on labels or menus isn't the only threat to your vision as you age. Cataracts (which cloud the lens of your eye) and glaucoma (a group of eye conditions that damage your optic nerve) can harm your eyesight. See your eye doctor for regular exams.

Bladder problems

Whether you can't go when you need to or you have to go too often, problems with bladder control tend to happen

as we get older. They can be caused by nerve problems, muscle weakness, thickening tissue, or an enlarged prostate. Exercises and lifestyle changes -- drinking less caffeine or not lifting heavy things, for example -- often help.

Cancer

Age is the biggest risk factor for cancer. The disease affects young people, too, but your odds of having it more than double between ages 45 and 54. You can't control your age or your genes, but you do have a say in things like smoking or spending too much time in the sun.

Back pain

The older you get, the more common this is. Lots of things can make you more likely to have it: being overweight, smoking, not getting enough exercise, or diseases like arthritis and cancer. Watch your weight, exercise, and get plenty of vitamin D and calcium to keep your bones strong. And strengthen those back muscles -- you'll need them.

Dementia

Alzheimer's, a form of dementia, usually doesn't pop up until 65 or so. Some risk factors (like age and heredity) are things you can't control. But evidence suggests that a heart-healthy diet and watching your blood pressure and blood sugar might help.



High blood pressure

As you age, your blood vessels get less flexible, and that puts pressure on the system that carries blood through your body. That might explain why about two out of three adults over 60 have high blood pressure. But there are other causes you can control. To do so, watch your weight, exercise, stop smoking, find ways to deal with stress, and eat healthy.

Diabetes

Your chances of getting the disease go up as you get older. Diabetes can lead to heart disease, kidney disease, blindness, and other problems. Talk with your doctor about having your blood sugar checked.

Heart disease

Plaque buildup in your arteries is a major cause of heart disease. It starts in childhood and gets worse as you age. In the 40-to-59 age group in the U.S., 6.3% of men and 5.6% of women have heart disease. Between ages 60 and 79, heart disease cases go up to nearly 20% of men and 9.7% of women.

Ramakrishna Mission

Ramakrishna Mission Road, Vacoas

Devotees are cordially invited to participate in the following programmes:

The Birth Anniversary of Sri Sarada Devi & New Year Prayer

Friday 1st January 2021

From 10.00 am to 12.45 pm with Puja, Havan & Prasad

The Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda

Sunday 7th February 2021

From 10.00 am to 12.45 pm with Puja, Havan & Prasad

Sri Saraswati Puja

Tuesday 16th February 2021

From 7.00 pm to 9.00 pm with Puja, Bhajans, Talk & Arati

Yours in the Lord

Swami Krishnarupananda

Anil Kapoor

'Mr India' actor Anil Kapoor is 63 years old, but you wouldn't know it if you saw him exercising, sprinting on the beach or on the race tracks. He's still a lean, mean, fighting machine.

Rajkumar Rao

Rajkumar Rao is building up his physique. In an Insta-post, the 'Trapped' star can be seen at the gym, getting ripped. His caption alluded to a new role and his old characters. He wrote, "#WorkInProgress #NEWTAN (new body) To get a new look for a new character, need to get a new body and a new mindset. #BadhaiDo #Bemehnati (be hard-working)."

Kareena Kapoor

This mum-to-be is keeping it stylish. Kareena Kapoor is a yoga buff and is using it to stay calm and carry on during her second pregnancy. She certainly has a lovely glow.

Malaika Arora

Kareena's BFF Malaika Arora is also into yoga, especially aerial yoga and even runs a studio in Mumbai. It's obviously working for her.

Kangana Ranaut

She may constantly be in the eye of the storm with her rapier-sharp retorts, but that doesn't mean Kangana Ranaut will give her exercise hour a miss. Her team often posts pictures of her doing yoga and kickboxing on social media.

Jacqueline Fernandez

From Ranveer Singh to Kareena Kapoor, here's how Bollywood actors stay fit



Jacqueline Fernandez uses pole fitness to keep those abs in the best shape possible.

Alia Bhatt

Don't think that just because she's petite Alia Bhatt can't keep up. She's a powerhouse who does lunges and squats and works out on the treadmill every day. The 'Highway' actress also runs, does circuit training, kickboxing, swimming and weights.

Varun Dhawan

Varun Dhawan works out for about one and a half hours, and four to six times a week. There's cardio and Pilates and weight training on the agenda.

Deepika Padukone

Deepika Padukone's battled depression for a long time and one of the things that can help is exercise. Add to that the fact that she's naturally athletic and it's no wonder that she takes her fitness goals

seriously. She goes to the gym, plays badminton, and does yoga, Pilates and functional training.

Ranveer Singh

Padukone's husband, Ranveer Singh, is a livewire even at the gym. Singh's known for high-intensity training followed by playing a sport such as swimming or cycling.

Vaani Kapoor

Even when she's on movie sets, Vaani Kapoor keeps it real with workout regimes being a must.

Anushka Sharma

Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma, who's quite pregnant, recently posted a shot of herself doing a headstand. Now that's commitment.

Hrithik Roshan

Bollywood hunk Hrithik Roshan has dollops of muscle thanks to a strenuous workout regime that's a blend of cardio and circuit training.

Tiger Shroff

How could a fitness list be complete without mentioning Tiger Shroff, the action man of the hour? A self-confessed fitness buff, Shroff practices martial arts and works out nearly every day of the week.

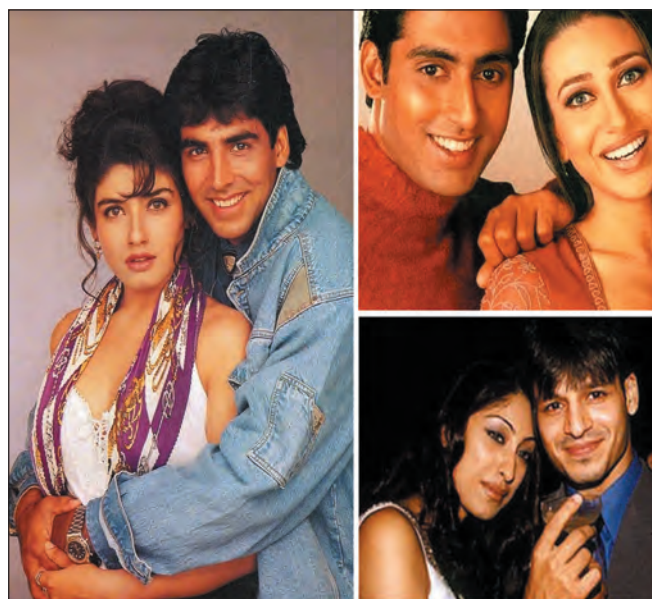
6 Bollywood celebrities who got engaged but couldn't make it to marriage

From Akshay Kumar to Vivek Oberoi, numerous celebrities in Bollywood got engaged but did not make it to marriage. Times Now News takes a look at some of them

Marriages are made in heaven, they say. When two people fail to make it to marriage, it is said that they were simply not meant to be together. Blame it on mishandling of a relationship or hapless fate, it is never easy to deal with an engagement breakup. It hurts especially because two people are just a step away from taking their relationship to the ultimate level. Numerous celebrities in Bollywood got engaged but did not make it to marriage. We take a look at some of them...

Akshay Kumar: For a long time, Akshay Kumar kept mum about his breakup rumours with Raveena Tandon. However, years later, the actor revealed that his engagement with the actress was called off. He had also clarified that he was not married to Raveena and that only engagement had broken.

Abhishek Bachchan: Bachchan Jnr and Karisma Kapoor dated each other for quite some time before they got engaged in 2002. The occasion was all the more



special as the two exchanged rings on Abhishek's father Amitabh Bachchan's 60th birthday. However, the engagement was called off in February 2003. Many reports claimed that it was Karisma's

mother Babita who was behind the breakup.

Sajid Khan: Sajid Khan got reportedly engaged to Gauahar Khan in the year 2003. Since neither of them were popular names then, their breakup didn't make headlines.

Vivek Oberoi: Much before he began his journey in showbiz, Vivek Oberoi got engaged to model Gurpreet Gill. However, Vivek's hectic schedule created differences between the two and the engagement was called off. In an interview with Times of India, Gurpreet had opened up about the breakup and said, "I never thought things would go this way. We broke up because I wasn't willing to compromise on basic moral values. The

truth is that I asked Vivek to change, or go."

Karan Singh Grover: Whenever there is talk about Karan Singh Grover's exes, the names that come to one's mind are Shraddha Nigam, Nicole Alvares and Jennifer Winget. But much before he got involved with these women, he was in a relationship with TV actress Barkha Bisht. It is said that the two got engaged in 2004 but parted ways two years later.

Cinema Sirsa - Castel

Tuesday 22 to Wednesday 23 December
10:15 -- 13:15 -- 16:15 -- 20:15

Manit Joura on juggling two shows amid the pandemic

'These are unprecedented times, but not working isn't a solution'

At a time when many are sceptical to take up too much work given the coronavirus scare, actor Manit Joura is working on two TV shows. And in both the shows he plays pivotal parts. One wonders how is the actor managing so much, that too in such times.

"These are unprecedented times but not working isn't a solution. I've been extra careful. My mask is on till I face the camera and I'm putting it back every time the take gets over. I'm sanitising, maintaining distance, eating and drinking right. And every time I'm feeling unwell, I've got myself tested before going back to set. I've actually tested five times since July, thankfully every time the result came negative. We all have to be responsible so that we don't spread the virus," says Joura, confessing how it does get hectic at times, and he ends up losing out on sleep.

Mention about actors who've left shows and others who didn't take up much work this year, Joura adds that different people have "different ideologies and mechanisms" to deal with certain things.

"Also, since I stay alone in Mumbai, I'm able to take the risk. I'm not meeting people outside the set. In fact, I'm going to miss the wedding of three of my best friends this month. I can't take chance with anyone's safety," adds the

actor, who made his acting debut in 2009 with 12/24 Karol Bagh.

Having worked for over a decade in TV and given his popularity, the actor, however, hasn't fronted a show.

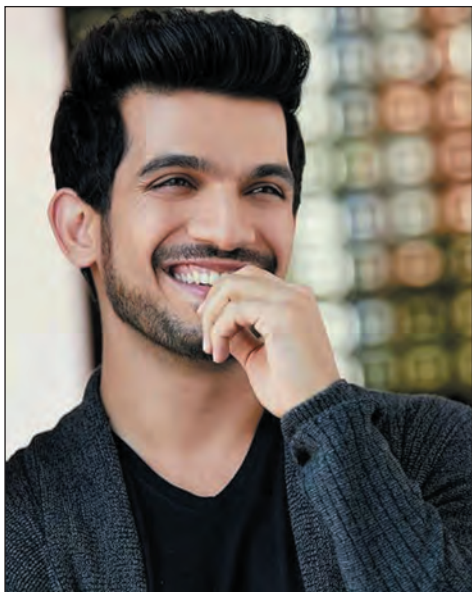
Ask if good opportunities didn't come his way and Joura answers, "The amount of hard work I've put in, the sacrifices I've made I'm sure all these would take me somewhere. Acting is my passion. I might not be a leading face on TV, but I've done good shows and films and web too. My focus has always been on good stories and not on the length of my role."

Joura says everything happens at its time and that his failures in his career have made him patient, taught him a lot.

"I've put in more hours into my acting than in the gym or in front of the mirror or on pr machinery. I'm thankful to Ekta ma'am (Kapoor; filmmaker) for the opportunities and the audience for all the love. I never get carried away. *Har cheesa ek samai hota hai*. I know I can shoulder a show, film or web series, but may be earlier I wasn't ready. I always look at the positives," adds the actor, who's in talks for a web series.



'You need to show that you are open to challenges and not stuck up to one particular idea': Arjun Bijlani



With the emergence of the OTT platforms in which content is delivered via an internet connection rather than through a traditional cable/broadcast provider, the audience can now swap easily between TV and the web. But with a plethora of content available now, it is difficult to like one particular genre. '*Miley Jab Hum Tum*' actor Arjun Bijlani agrees to it and also says that the choice of content also depends on the mood.

Though he revealed that he loves to watch '*Khatron Ke Khiladi*' and '*The Kapil Sharma Show*', he said, "Life has enough dramas already, so I love to watch light-hearted shows. And honestly, it's now that I have got time to watch some content, otherwise, I was always shooting for 14-15

hours a day and after that, you don't feel like watching anything. There are so many platforms these days and I love watching science fiction shows, I love action shows, I love comedy too. I think people watch content depending on their mood too."

When asked if he thinks TV viewership is slowly declining, the '*Naagin 1: Mohabbat Aur Inteqaam Ki Dastaan*' actor said, "Maybe in metropolitan cities, people are shifting, but still there are a lot of people who watch television, or they can watch both TV and internet also." Arjun was last seen in the web series '*State of Siege: 26/11*'. The show did extremely well, and the actor is now waiting for some good work to come his way. "Good things take time and I am just waiting to do good work. I did get quite a few offers, but I have not chosen them, I am still looking for that one show. It can be anything, but the script has to be good," he said.

So these days the '*Ishq Mein Marjawan*' actor is working on his craft because he believes that one needs to keep working on themselves. "I feel you can always work on your craft by doing workshops and understand a different perspective to what you do in terms of a particular emotion. So I am just exploring those different emotions. You need to provide variety to the audience, and you need to show that you are open to challenges and that you are not stuck up to one particular idea. I want to be a director's actor, where you can completely surrender to him and pull off a character," Arjun signed off.

Mahabharat's Arjun aka Firoz Khan and Ramayan's Sunil Lahri's sons are spitting image of their fathers



One look at these TV celebs' kids, you will be amazed to see how much they look like their parents. Some even look like twins. Here's a look at all the celeb kids who are exactly a spitting image of their parents.

Sunil Lahri's son Krish

Sunil Lahri, who is known for playing Lakshman in *Ramayan*, came into lime-light this year when their show became a national topic of discussion. Their personal lives were also discussed, when the actor's son became a hot topic. Netizens declared Sunil's son Krish as "national crush". They also said that he is a doppel-ganger of his father.

Arjun aka Firoz Khan's son Jibraan

Mahabharat's Arjuna aka Firoz Khan's son Jibraan looks a lot like his father. Incidentally, Jibraan started acting from childhood. He is fondly remembered as the kid who played the role of Rahul (Shah Rukh Khan) and Anjali's (Kajol) son Krish from the film *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*. Jibraan Khan gets a lot of attention on social media.

Ronit Roy's daughter Aadur

Ronit Roy is blessed with a son and a daughter. The actor is one of the most handsome and charming men of the Indian television. His daughter Aadur is an exact replica of her father and is very cute. His son is a mix of both the parents and is cute.

Keerti Kelkar's daughter Keshha

Keshha, who is the daughter of Keerti Kelkar and Sharad Kelkar, is the joy of their lives. Keshha looks exactly like her mother. She is blessed with cute features just like her mother Keerti and the charm of her father.

Kavita Ghai's daughter Ahana and Orvana

The actress is a mother to two young ladies. Her daughters look exactly like her mother and is a literal spitting image of Kavita. Infact, they look like sisters.

Karanvir Bohra's daughter Bella

TV couple Karanvir Bohra and Teejay are proud parents to twin little girls - Bella and Vienna. The actor's elder daughter Bella is a Xerox copy of her dad. The younger one looks more like her mother Teejay Sidhu. The daughters are the apple of their parents' eyes. Pic: Instagram

Hiten Tejwani's twins - Nevaan and Katya

The actor is blessed with twin children. The kids are extremely attached to their father. Both the kids look exactly like Hiten and are adorable.

CINE 12

Mardi 22 Dec - 21.05

Christmas Jars

Avec: LeAnn Rimes, Tyler Hynes,
Gwynyth Walsh

CINE 12

Mercredi 23 Dec - 21.15

Bienvenue A Noel



CINE 12

Jeudi 24 Dec - 21.15

Avec: LeAnn Rimes, Tyler Hynes,
Gwynyth Walsh

MBC 1	MBC 2	MBC 3	Cine 12	Bollywood TV
mardi 22 decembre 07.00 D.Anime: Teenie Weenie 07.39 D.Anime: The Garfield Show 09.01 D.Anime: Astrology 09.50 Magazine: Origami 10.00 Serial: Heidi, Bienvenida 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir 12.55 Doc: Foodland - Christmas... 14.00 Mag: Word On The Street 14.30 D.Anime: Teenie Weenie 14.54 D.Anime: Astrology 15.06 D.Anime: Jojo - Special Noel 16.00 Film: Elifland 17.15 Serial: Backstage 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Serial: Jamai Raja 19.30 Journal & La Meteo 20.10 Local: Priorite Sante 20.40 Local: MBC Prod 21.05 Film: Riding Tornado 23.00 Le Journal	mardi 22 decembre 07.00 DDI Live 10.00 Serial: CID 10.43 Serial: Ye Vaada Raha 12.04 Film: Joroo Ka Ghulam Starring: Rajesh Khanna, Nanda, Om Prakash 15.00 Mag: Comedy Classes 15.21 Serial: Honaar Soon Mee... 15.43 Serial: Mooga Manasulu 16.06 Serial: Apoorva Raagangal 16.32 Serial: Tu Ishq Hai 16.50 Serial: Achra Ke Moti 17.11 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 18.00 Serial: Bloody Romance 18.30 DDI Magazine 20.00 Tamil Programme 20.30 Film: Aya Sawan Jhoom Ke Starring: Dharmendra, Asha Parekh, Balraj Sahni 23.10 DDI Live	mardi 22 decembre 06.00 Mag: Eco@Africa 06.26 Mag: Foodland 07.00 Mag: Voa Connected 08.00 Doc: Amazing Gardens 08.53 Doc: 360 GEO 10.02 Global 3000 11.29 Mag: Eco@Africa 11.59 Doc: Foodland 12.25 Mag: World Stories 13.05 Mag: Urban Gardens 13.12 Mag: In Good Shape 13.38 Doc: Amazing Gardens 14.36 Doc: 360 GEO 15.28 Mag: Global 3000 16.20 Doc: Profit Or Life? 17.06 Mag: Eco@Africa 18.26 Doc: "Dearest Juliet" 18.55 Mag: Check In 19.21 Mag: Made In Germany 19.47 Doc: Foodland 20.05 Doc: Builders Of The Future	mardi 22 decembre 01.32 Film: A Perfect Christmas 02.54 Serial: Counterpart 03.33 Film: 12 Dogs Of Christmas 05.27 Tele: Totalement Diva 06.45 Serial: L.A.'S Finest 09.00 Serial: Mission: Impossible 09.48 Tele: Soleil Levant 10.24 Tele: Tanto Amor 11.00 Serial: Counterpart 12.00 Film: 12 Dogs Of Christmas 13.48 Tele: Totalement Diva 14.48 Film: A Perfect Christmas 16.45 Serial: Mission: Impossible 17.20 Serial: L.A.'s Finest 18.05 Tele: Soleil Levant 19.10 Tele: Tanto Amor 20.05 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir 20.30 Serial: L.A.'s Finest 21.15 Film: Christmas Jars 22.45 Tele: Totalement Diva	mardi 22 decembre 08.00 Film: Kochadaiyaan 11.55 / 19.54 - Kahan Hum Kahan Tuam 12.23 / 20.11 - Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 12.44 / 20.32 Radha Krishna 13.09 / 21.09 - Sanjivani 13.29 / 21.24 - Zindagi Ki Mehek 13.52 / 21.46 - Bade Acche Lagte Hai 14.12 / 21.59 - Jai Kanhaiya Lal Ki 14.32 / 22.25 - Ikyawann 15.20 Film: Fanny Khan Starring: Anil Kapoor, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Rajkumar Rao 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Kundali Bhagya 18.51 Ek Rishta Saajhedari Ka
mercredi 23 decembre 06.30 Local: Fam Model 07.00 D. Anime: Teenie Weenie 09.50 D. Anime: Astrology 12.00 Le Journal 12.50 Doc: Foodland - Christmas... 13.00 Local: Les Grandes Lignes 14.05 Mag: Word On The Street 14.30 D.Anime: Twirlywoos 14.42 D.Anime: Robot Trains 15.10 D.Anime: The Hive 15.49 D.Anime: Rev & Roll, Amis... 16.05 Film: Penguin Land 17.10 D.Anime: Astrology 17.15 Serial: Backstage 17.45 Doc: Foodland - Christmas... 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Serial: Jamai Raja 19.30 Journal & La Meteo 20.20 Prod: Lottotech 20.25 Local: Sur Un Air De Noel 20.30 Local: Retrospective 2020 22.25 Film: Misconduct	mercredi 23 decembre 10.00 Serial: Pyar Ka Dard Meetha 11.16 Serial: Suhani Si Ek Ladki 12.00 Film: Main Tulsi Tere Aangan Stars: Nutan, Vinod Khanna, Asha Parekh 14.29 Mag: DDI Magazine 15.00 Serial: Comedy Classes 15.21 Honaar Soon Mee Hya... 15.44 Mooga Manasulu 16.10 Apoorva Raagangal 16.30 Serial: Tu Ishq Hai 16.48 Achra Ke Moti 17.12 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 17.33 Serial: Kulvadhu 18.00 Serial: Bloody Romance 18.30 Serial: DDI Magazine 19.00 Live: Zournal Kreol 19.30 DDI Magazine 20.00 Programme In Marathi 21.00 Film: Take Care Good Night Starring: Sanskruti Balgude, Shubhangi Damle, Umesh Damle	mercredi 23 decembre 06.00 Mag: Rev: The Global Auto... 06.26 Mag: Foodland 07.00 Doc: Desert Patrol 08.00 Mag: Made In Germany 08.53 Doc: Northern Lights 10.02 Local: Klip Seleksion 11.29 Mag: Rev: The Global Auto... 11.55 Doc: Foodland 12.34 Doc: Desert Patrol 13.05 Mag: Check In 13.29 Mag: Made In Germany 13.55 Doc: Builders Of The Future 14.20 Doc: Northern Lights 15.03 Prod: The MIC Africa 16.24 Doc: On Route 7 Into The... 17.06 Mag: Rev: The Global Auto... 17.32 Doc: "Dearest Juliet" 18.00 Mag: Motorweek 18.57 Mag: Arts.21 19.23 Mag: Carnet De Sante 19.36 Doc: Foodland	mercredi 23 decembre 01.10 Film: Christmas Jars 03.06 Serial: Counterpart 03.53 Film: Christmas Jars 05.43 Tele: Totalement Diva 06.34 Serial: L.A.'S Finest 07.16 Film: Signed, Sealed,... 09.00 Serial: Mission: Impossible 09.49 Tele: Soleil Levant 10.35 Tele: Tanto Amor 11.00 Serial: Counterpart 12.00 Film: Christmas Jars 13.43 Tele: Totalement Diva 14.40 Film: Signed, Sealed,... 16.36 Serial: Mission: Impossible 17.24 Serial: L.A.'S Finest 18.05 Tele: Soleil Levant 19.00 Tele: Tanto Amor 20.05 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir 20.30 Serial: Beauty And The Beast 21.15 Film: Bienvenue A Noel 22.45 Tele: Totalement Diva	mercredi 23 decembre 08.00 Film: Fanny Khan 12.04 / 20.06 - Kahan Hum Kahan Tuam 12.23 / 20.26 - Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 12.47 / 20.46 Radha Krishna 13.09 / 21.09 - Sanjivani 13.31 / 21.31 - Zindagi Ki Mehek 13.54 / 21.46 - Bade Acche Lagte Hai 14.20 / 21.59 - Jai Kanhaiya Lal.. 14.36 / 22.25 - Ikyawann 15.30 Film: Dhoom Dhadaka Starring: Anupam Kher, Shaad Randhawa, Sameer Dattani, Chunky Pandey 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Kumkum Bhagya 18.51 Ek Rishta Saajhedari Ka 19.13 Mere Angne Mein 19.33 Serial: Yeh Pyaar Nahi Toh Kya Hai
jeudi 24 decembre 06.00 Local: Klip Seleksion 06.45 Entrepreneuriat Au Feminin 09.50 D. Anime: Astrology 10.00 Serial: Heidi, Bienvenida A... 11.10 Tele: Au Nom De L'amour 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir 12.50 Doc: Foodland - Christmas... 13.30 Local: Zanfan Nou Zil 14.30 D.Anime: Twirlywoos 15.10 D.Anime: The Hive 15.20 D.Anime: Les Triples 15.27 D.Anime: Teenie Weenie... 16.05 Film: Santa Saves The Univ... 17.15 Serial: Backstage 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Jamai Raja 18.55 Local: Chaar Dham Tirth... 19.30 Le Journal 20.20 Film: Maine Dil Tujhko Diya 23.00 Local: Le Journal	jeudi 24 decembre 10.00 Karm Phal Data Shani 12.05 Film: Krodhi Starring: Dharmendra, Shashi Kapoor, Zeenat Aman, Hema Malini 15.00 Serial: Comedy Classes 15.21 Honaar Soon Mee Hya Gharchi 15.43 Mooga Manasulu 16.06 Apoorva Raagangal 16.29 Serial: Tu Ishq Hai 16.51 Serial: Achra Ke Moti 17.13 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 17.31 Local: Amrit Vaani 18.00 Serial: Bloody Romance 18.30 Serial: Ghar Pahucha Da Devi Maiya 20.00 Local: Retrovizer 21.15 Film: Saving Flora Starring: Jenna Ortega, Martin Martinez, David Arquette	jeudi 24 decembre 06.00 Mag: Motorweek 06.25 Doc: Foodland 06.39 Doc: From Ghetto To... 07.21 Mag: Arts.21 08.47 Mag: Vue D'en Haut 11.18 Doc: The Memory Illusion 12.00 Doc: Foodland 12.16 Doc: Motorweek 13.24 Mag: Arts.21 13.52 Mag: Urban Gardens 16.37 Mag: Business Africa 18.00 Songs For The Season 20.00 En Direct De La Paroisse Notre Dame Du Rosaire, Q. Bornes 21.45 Local: Christmas Carols 23.45 Doc: Foodland 00.50 Mag: Eco India 01.16 Mag: Shift 01.29 Mag: Border Crossing 01.55 Mag: Urban Gardens	jeudi 24 decembre 01.24 Film: Bienvenue A Noel 02.54 Serial: Counterpart 03.47 Film: 12 Dogs Of Christmas 2 05.36 Tele: Totalement Diva 06.28 Serial: Beauty And The Beast 07.06 Film: Bienvenue A Noel 09.00 Serial: Mission: Impossible 09.48 Tele: Soleil Levant 10.35 Tele: Tant Amor 11.00 Serial: Counterpart 12.00 Film: 12 Dogs Of Christmas 2 13.45 Tele: Totalement Diva 14.43 Film: Bienvenue A Noel 16.40 Serial: Mission: Impossible 17.23 Serial: Beauty And The Beast 18.05 Tele: Soleil Levant 19.00 Tele: Tanto Amor 20.08 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir 20.30 Serial: Beauty And The Beast 21.15 Film: It's Christmas Eve 22.45 Tel: Totalement Diva	jeudi 24 decembre 08.00 Film: Dhoom Dhadaka 12.03 / 19.54 - Kahan Hum Kahan Tuam 12.26 / 20.11 - Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 12.47 / 20.32 Radha Krishna 13.09 / 21.09 - Sanjivani 13.31 / 21.24 - Zindagi Ki Mehek 13.56 / 21.46 - Bade Acche Lagte Hai 14.20 / 21.59 - Jai Kanhaiya Lal Ki 14.36 / 22.25 - Ikyawann 15.20 Film: Chaar Din Ki Chandhi Starring: Tusshar Kapoor, Rana Jung Bahadur, Mukul Dev, Harish, Farida Jalal 18.30 Kundali Bhagya 18.52 Ek Rishta Saajhedari Ka



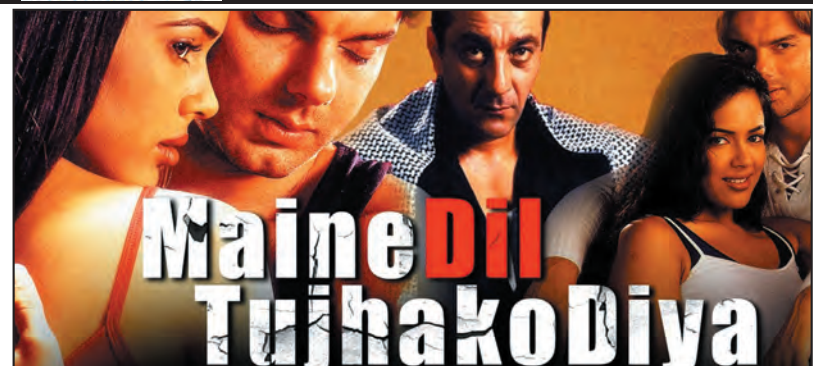
Jeudi 24 Dec

- 15.20

Stars: Tusshar Kapoor, Rana Jung Bahadur,
Mukul Dev, Harish, Farida Jalal

Jeudi 24 Dec

- 20.20

Stars: Sohail Khan, Sameera Reddy,
Sanjay Dutt

Breakfast With Bwana

2020 - Vision of The Things Lost



Anil Madan

As 2019 rolled into 2020, much of East Africa and South Asia feared the world's most deadly pest. No, it wasn't the coronavirus. It was the desert locusts swarming and wreaking havoc. Crops were lost, food supplies were lost. Hope was lost.

Hong Kongers feared a virus of a different kind, a virus of oppression. And the Chinese Communist Party delivered. Democracy was lost. Freedom was lost.

Could 2020 get any worse? March in the northeastern U.S. brings the promise of spring as St. Patrick's Day arrives with its celebratory parades and drinking with friends, to be followed by College basketball's March Madness tournament, and then we have Easter and the Master's tournament, a holy conjunction.

This time, the Chinese Communist Party ensured that things would get worse as it trumped *Schistocerca gregaria* (the desert locust), and even outdid its localized repression in Hong Kong, by unleashing Covid-19 on the world. WHO knew? Or did W.H.O. know?

With reassurances that self-isolation and social distancing would buy us time and control the spread, those in charge -- I hesitate to use the word "leaders" -- shut us down, and to varying degrees, shut down restaurants, bars, movies, gyms, airports, subways, trains, indeed pretty much all travel, sports, casinos. It seemed life was lost.

So St Paddy's Day was lost, colleges decided that having March Madness would be insane. Basketball was lost in this madness. The Easter Bunny was lost down a rabbit hole, the Masters was lost down a golf hole, spring itself was lost in a black hole. Hope was lost, logic lost, even despair a losing proposition. Camaraderie lost, companionship lost, meetings separated by Zoom calls, families brought closer by telephone calls but contact lost.

A world turned topsy-turvy. An economy in a slide, unemployment, hunger, homes lost. But then a marvel overtook events. New leadership sprung in the economy as, *mirabile dictu*, the Internet, e-commerce, streaming videos, and working remotely take hold. A two-tier stock market with some stocks crushed and some soaring.

Meanwhile, leaders have lost their way



Why 2020 is the Worst Year?

Viralatclick.com

"In America England, Europe, India, and beyond, hospitals overwhelmed, and cities under siege by an unseen enemy, an enemy that attacked as far as the eye could see and indeed beyond where the eye could see. There were the Trump supporters who went into denial. This was no pandemic, they declared, merely the flu, the Wu Flu or Kung Flu as the President said. They eschewed masks and flocked to rallies from which spread and surge were bound to follow. But they hoarded toilet paper..."

and leadership is lost as if all the oxygen has been sucked out of those in charge. Then oxygen was then literally sucked out of George Floyd. A Black man dies with a policeman's knee symbolically on his neck. Ruth Bader Ginsburg (former Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States) was lost. She is associated with these words: "I ask no favour for my sex. All I ask of our brethren is that they take their feet off our necks." The grim reality of the oppression of women did not provoke those words from RBG; they were said by the aptly named Sarah Moore Grimké. But Floyd's death unleashed something. Perhaps it was the pent up sense of injustice that Trump had sparked. Perhaps it was just the boredom and lack of anything to do during the lockdowns that spurred the protestors on. We shall find out in due course.

2020 saw Elon Musk's ascent and the ascent of his rocket-powered space vehicle that ferried astronauts to the ISS. China landed an aircraft on the far side of the moon. We learned that there is no exclusivity of space control. If ever there was, it has been lost. We learned that technology has been lost. Science is not exclusive. Knowledge is not the province of any one nation. That which is not protected is lost.

For Trump and McConnell, there was a Supreme Court vacancy, a nomination, and a confirmation won. For McConnell, a Senatorial election won. Six more years of his devious visage hanging over the Senate bodes ill for America. But the issue is not decided as yet. The runoff elections in

Georgia may swing the Senate to the Democrats. One is left wondering if the Democrats win, will the country have lost yet again?

For Trump, an election was lost in all but his mind. Ah, his mind. It still does not comprehend that he lost. It seems he has lost his mind.

For America, a possible new course but with an old hand at the helm perhaps ready to return to familiar shallows. Alas, the shallows have not been lost. For children's education, time lost.

Meanwhile, oppression reigns around the world. Regions of conflict remain regions of conflict. There is hope for peace in the Middle East, or at least of politics making strange Bedouin fellows of the Israelis and Arabs.

In America England, Europe, India, and beyond, hospitals overwhelmed, and cities under siege by an unseen enemy, an enemy that attacked as far as the eye could see and indeed beyond where the eye could see. There were the Trump supporters who went into denial. This was no pandemic, they declared, merely the flu, the Wu Flu or Kung Flu as the President said. They eschewed masks and flocked to rallies from which spread and surge were bound to follow. But they hoarded toilet paper. Wiping away their own excrement is never the solution to wiping away their stupidity.

Then the Summer was lost, the Fall fell by the wayside -- lost, Halloween a ghostly non-event was lost, Thanksgiving was lost. Life itself was lost here and there and here and there some 317,000 times so far in the U.S. and almost 1.7 million around the world.

Behold! A vaccine is at hand. Nay two vaccines. May we get one on the left hand and one on the right hand.

As the Winter Solstice dawns, and the days ahead promise to get longer, the light trumping the shadows, perhaps in this winter of our discontent, all is not lost.

Cheerz...
Bwana

Tree of Knowledge

Madisyn Taylor



Dumbing Ourselves Down

When we dumb ourselves down, we sell ourselves short and lose an opportunity to shed light where it is needed.

The ability to go into any social situation and sense the level of consciousness in that situation is a gift. It enables us to move considerably in a world that holds people of all levels of awareness. However, there is a difference between shifting our energy to accommodate people and dumbing ourselves down to a regrettable degree. Sometimes, when we get into a particular social situation, we may feel pressure to play it small in order to fit in. Perhaps everyone is drinking or smoking excessively, engaging in gossipy small talk, or complaining bitterly about politics. It is one thing to notice this and modify our expectations and another thing entirely to join in.

When we notice where people are coming from and acknowledge to ourselves that their energy is not in alignment with ours, we have several choices as to how to proceed. One viable option is to quietly endure the situation, keeping to ourselves until it is time to leave. In this way, we take care of our own consciousness and protect our growth process. Another option is to interact in a way that honors and pays respect to the people in the group, while gently attempting to shift the level of consciousness with our input. In order to do this, we must maintain our own vibration, which means that joining in by dumbing down is not an option.

When we choose to dumb ourselves down to fit in, we not only sell ourselves short but we also lose a possible opportunity to influence the situation for the good of all concerned. Our desire to join in may come from our natural yearning to feel connected to the people around us. There is no shame in this, but being able to stand on our own, separate from the crowd, is a powerful milestone on any spiritual path. It can be difficult in the moment, but when we arrive on the other side, our integrity intact, we may find ourselves feeling positively smart.