

By Jan Arden 🖙 See Page 5

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## We are not out of Covid yet

ost people must have breathed a sigh of relief on Sunday evening at the announcement by the PM about the easing of restrictions as from May 1st, that is, Saturday next. The main ones perhaps relate to the WAP and alphabetical order at the supermarkets not being applicable any more, and also the opening of bazaars. Certain other activities have also been allowed but with limits on the number of participants, e.g. religious ceremonies, funerals and marriages.

Obviously, the situation will continue to be monitored daily and the data made public. Several times in this paper the capital importance of proper communication has been underlined, including by experts in Public Health. This remains a fundamental, and will have to be maintained. There will have to be complete transparency about the facts and figures regarding the ongoing situation (the number of cases and their distribution around the island, etc.), the vaccination status including supply, and other relevant information as it arises.

In communication the medium is the message, and between Covid-free and Covid-safe there is not only a nuance but a notable difference. It is true that towards the end of last year, especially as the festive season was approaching, people were looking forward to releasing the tension that the almost year-long pandemic had created, and that is quite natural. But it was for the authorities to keep a close eye on the situation in light of the global evolving context so as to pick up the warning signs that all was not well as yet. Not only was this not done, but there was also the constant touting of the island being Covid-safe, creating thereby a false sense of security.

There may also have been a similar relaxation in terms of continuation of the programme of testing and tracing in the community – despite our being 'Covid-safe'-, and here again it must be taken into account that the health personnel were also exhausted and stressed by the week-on-week going around the island and doing their field work.

Not to mention what is already only too well-known: the quasi-abandonment of the sanitary precautions by a majority of the population, making all of us, therefore, collectively responsible when Covid struck anew at the beginning of the year.

As we approach the coming easing out of restrictions, therefore, it is every citizen's responsibility to keep these facts in mind as lessons that must serve as a guide for future behaviour – which is going to be a long term affair.

Similarly, for the authorities: about careful wording of messages to save from embarassment and unnecessary criticism in future to start with. They must provide accurate and timely information about the changing situation. Further, there should not be a let-up in community tracing, but giving enough time for teams to recuperate because it is a tiresome exercise.

On the other hand, in anticipation of any future surge, a thorough review of **all the aspects** of the quarantine arrangements must be made, because there have been so many adverse accounts in this regard. And last but not least – in fact perhaps more important still, is to revisit disposal of the dead so that there is respect for the dignity of the person and the emotional needs of the family while complying with the sanitary regulations that are mandated.

There is much advance thinking and planning to be done so that we are better prepared for the next hit – but it is not as if we are starting from scratch. Let the professional experience as well as the experience of those who have been directly impacted socially and economically by the disease be our guide.

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Pearl House 4th Floor Room 406 - Sir Virgil Naz Street, Port Louis -- Tel: 5-29 29301 Tel/Fax: 212 1313

✓ mtimes@intnet mu

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#### The Conversation

### Intellectual property and Covid-19: how can we accelerate vaccination globally?

Licensing agreements between pharmaceutical companies and the Medicines Patent Pool, in cooperation with the WHO, could accelerate access to doses for the poorest countries



At the end of 2020, India applied to the WTO for a temporary suspension of intellectual property rights related to Covid-19. Pic - AFP

The gap between the number of vaccines administered in rich countries and in the developing world "is growing every single day, and becoming more grotesque every day", declared Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), on March 22. The latter statement referred to the fact that only 0.1% of the doses of vaccines distributed in the world had been received by the 29 poorest countries, which represent 9% of the global population.

#### An ambitious scaling-up plan

However, as early as April 2020, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the European Commission and France together with WHO supported the implementation of COVAX (Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access), an international solidarity mechanism. Led by GAVI (the Vaccine Alliance) and CEPI (Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations), in partnership with UNICEF and PAHO (Pan-American Health Organization), COVAX's mission is to purchase vaccines for equitable distribution in 98 participating high-income countries and 92 lowand middle-income countries.

At the end of February, the first 504,000 and 600,000 doses were delivered to Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana respectively. At the beginning of April, more than 38 million doses had already been received by 100 countries, 61 of which benefiting from a subsidy financed by a dedicated fund. In the coming months, the expected scale-up of COVAX is ambitious, with a stated objective of 337 million doses to 145 countries by the end of June, and at least 2 billion doses by the end of 2021, including 1.3 billion at no cost to low-income countries, where up to 27% of the population could be vaccinated.

Even if this objective is met, it will not be sufficient to bring the pandemic under control. To achieve this, a much higher percentage of the population must be immunised. Recent modelling has estimated that if a vaccine prevents transmission of the virus in 90% of cases, then nearly 67% of the population needs to be vaccinated to achieve - at least temporarily - herd immunity, and return to "normal" life. Such a threshold, applied to a world population of 7.7 billion people, leads to a production target of between 5.2 billion doses in the most favourable situation of a single-dose vaccine, and twice as much, or 10.4 billion doses, if two shots are needed

*Etienne Billette de Villemeur,* Université de Lille; *Bruno Versaevel, EM Lyon; Vianney Dequiedt,* Université Clermont Auvergne (UCA) Op-Ed

**Mauritius Times** 

# India Will Overcome



It is in the interest of all of us that the Covid pandemic be brought under control as soon as possible. As we have been reminded repeatedly, **no one is safe until everybody is safe** - in this globalised world of 24/7 travel and trade exchanges amongst all countries, this effectively means that every single country from the smallest to the largest must be safe.

Commonsense will tell us that the larger a country and its population, the bigger and more complex the problems it will face in achieving a desired level of safety because it would have had to cope with larger numbers of patients at the outset of Covid last year, as well as during subsequent surges and waves. This is the pattern that has been present in all countries, from the most to the least developed.

And as we saw in Bergamo, Italy where the European first wave started last year, and similarly in New York at that time with the daily briefings of Governor Andrew Cuomo, their health systems were overwhelmed. Bodies were kept in refrigerator containers outside hospitals, and there were mass graves (in Brazil too) for lack of space in the normal cemeteries. Doctors and other health staff died of Covid or of suicide, away from family, and did not have the dignity of a proper burial. Politicians were criticised for their initial skepticism and laggardly response. As the pandemic spread with waves and surges followed by rolling lockdowns, Covid fatigue set in. Along with politicians, it was the turn of the public to get the flak for failing to rigorously implement the sanitary measures recommended - and this has not changed.

This is the situation in which India finds itself today, and because of its population of nearly 1.4 billion or nearly one fifth of humanity, it is quite natural that the world's attention should be currently focused there. That is fine if it is done in the spirit that we are all in it together and that it will be in everybody's interest that India gets over this crisis as fast as it can.

We can either be cynical, which will happen if we are ignorant or overreact emotionally to the harrowing pictures that are We can either be cynical, which will happen if we are ignorant or overreact emotionally to the harrowing pictures that are doing the global rounds. Or we can be objective by analyzing the actual metrics



66 As of a few days ago, India had 134 deaths/million population, whereas almost all the Western countries including USA have reported more than 1,500/m, the lowest being Switzerland with 1212/m. In terms of deaths per million, India is 120th. The USA, with double the number of reported cases as compared with India (about 32 million), has 3 times more deaths. These figures tally with those of the John Hopkins Covid Resource Centre, considered to be the most reliable source of Covid stats..."

doing the global rounds. Or we can be objective by analyzing the actual metrics --facts and figures - comparatively, which is what responsible reporters and health professionals do.

In a forwarded post, Khalid Umar, a Pakistani who lives in London, gives his appreciation of 'Indian Media and reporting':

'Do you think that the despair and gloom would have been less in the other countries? Obviously no. But no one has seen such gory images from those countries: of dying patients, wailing attendants, aerial drone shots of crematoriums, shouting news anchors, corpses lined up for burial, honking ambulances, point scoring politicians, sensational news headlines, as if hell has broken lose.

'Nowhere in the world would press reporters be reporting directly live from the Covid wards! Nowhere else would the attendants be attending to their loved ones and being interviewed too. NOBODY in the world has seen the kind of Covid reporting being done in India. That is something which is the worst kind of yellow journalism and must be legally stopped.'

However, he does not stop there, but gives the figures to show that India is much better off than the rest of the world. As of a few days ago, India had 134 deaths/million population, whereas almost all the Western countries including USA have reported more than 1,500/m, the lowest being Switzerland with 1212/m.

In terms of deaths per million, India is 120th. The USA, with double the number of reported cases as compared with India (about 32 million), has 3 times more deaths. These figures tally with those of the John Hopkins Covid Resource Centre, considered to be the most reliable source of Covid stats.

And he reiterates that 'it is a pandemic and the odds are so heavy against poorer nations.' Thus, 'Germany & Japan have 13 beds/1,000 people, France 6, Switzerland 4.6, China 4.3, UK 2.5, Canada 2.5, whereas in India it is 0.5!' That is, for every 2000 people India has 1 bed!

The way to go about understanding and handling this situation in India is therefore to first, avoid sensationalist lay reports (for a more comprehensive overview vide article by Abhishek Banerjee in OpIndia.com about 'tragedy porn') and instead look at the proper metrics and second, listen to and implement the advice of the frontliner authoritative voices in the country. They include the Director of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Prof Randeep Guleria, Chairman of Medanta Dr Naresh Trehan, Professor and Head of Department of Medicine AIIMS Dr Navneet Wig and Director General Health Services Dr Sunil **Kumar** 

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In an interview last Sunday, they reiterated that Covid-19 is a mild disease and there is no need to panic, with 85 to 90 per cent of people witnessing normal symptoms like fever, cold, body ache, and cough, not needing Remdesivir or other large numbers of medicines. They will get well within 7-10 days, and don't need to keep Remdesivir or oxygen in their houses, creating panic and an artificial shortage. 10-15% of people may witness severe infection and may need extra medicines like Remdesivir, oxygen or plasma. Less than 5% than of patients need a ventilator.

On the issue of oxygen supply, in a post Hanuman Mal Bengani ex-CEO of Linde India, one of the largest oxygen producers in India points out: 'There is absolutely no shortage of oxygen product in India. You will be surprised to know that less than 1% of oxygen production capacity is used for medical purposes. Even in corona times it may go up to three times or even 5%.'

According to him, the crisis is due to 1) a shortage of distribution assets i.e. road tankers, storage tanks and cylinders, which are expensive, 2) logistics management because most of plants are located in select geographies, distribution assets have to travel 200-1000 kms to deliver to customers, which even with good roads takes around 7-10 days to make a round trip, and a cylinder also takes that much turnaround, and 3) desire of gas companies to focus on what maximises their profits.

'Last but not least,' he adds, 'this wave came so quick it took our government administration with pants down. Had they thought of this impending danger and prepared, a major crisis could have been avoided. But that's easier said than done knowing our democratic set up.' He follows up with some suggestions to Government.

Let the last words go to Khalid Umar again:

'It is also not about medical facilities only. It is about the general attitude towards protection and safety. It is also about the necessity to go out for work. Not everyone has the Work From Home facility.

'But in India, the worst is the political lot. Here **in the UK**, there are no partisan politicians who would do point scoring during a national emergency. Had the opposition and the press been so damn bad in the UK a year ago, Boris Johnson would have long been history. But no, **everyone rallied behind their PM for the national cause.** 

'With all these heavy odds, whatever India has done to combat the pandemic is commendable. There has been a wave of philanthropic nationalism. People have come forward to help one another. India has the capacity to combat this pandemic. All that India needs is patriotism, humanism and rallying around your national leadership.'

Definitely a much better prescription than the ambient cynicism and negativism. Perhaps, after all, India does really need a stronger and not a weaker centralized government.

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#### Tuesday, April 27, 2021

#### Breakfast with Bwana

**Mauritius Times** 

# **Post-Covid Geopolitics** and Power Plays



hich one factor do you think has been the single most important development or influence in the world over the past twenty years? This is a question that a friend asked me a few weeks ago when we met for dinner. He then asked me to list the five most significant developments or influences over the past twenty years. This was followed by two more auestions:

- 1. What do you think will be the single most important factor over the next twenty years? and
- 2. What will be the five most significant factors over the next twenty years?

I answered the first question quite readily. The Internet, of course. He agreed. But then he said: "Before you answer my question about the future which we will get to after you've listed the other four most significant factors in the past twenty years, think about whether you would have predicted those things twenty years ago.

We had a most interesting discussion which left me with the lingering distress at how easy it is to fumble prognostications. So, it is with some humility that I try to imagine how a post-Covid world will look in terms of geopolitics and power plays.

Picking up on my friend's approach, if we think of the five most significant factors in geopolitics over the past twenty years, we would probably agree on these:

- 1. the World Trade Centre attack of 2001 and the fol low-on focus on terrorism, and the involvement of the US in the Iraq and Afghan wars;
- 2. China's unquestionably established itself as a major economic and geopolitical force;
- the world's response to Climate Change; 3.
- cyberattacks and cybersecurity; and 4.
- globalization and e-commerce. 5.

We might include the erosion of democracy, the rise of autocracy, the swelling numbers of refugees worldwide and, of course, the Covid-19 pandemic.

But what of the next twenty years?

The most compelling change we are about to see is the ascendancy of China as a dominant force and the decline of the US in that role. There is nothing surprising about that prediction as it is more or less a continuation of a change that is already underway.

China's quest for world domination runs into another contender, India. On the surface, Chinese domination here seems a given, but this rivalry remains to be played out. Certainly, China seems in an ascendant position when it comes to taking control of Bhutan and perhaps Nepal, but China faces a delicate choice in how aggressive it can be, so as not to leave India feeling its very existence threatened and no choice but a nuclear option.



**66** China's quest for world domination runs into another contender, India. On the surface, Chinese domination here seems a given, but this rivalry remains to be played out. Certainly, China seems in an ascendant position when it comes to taking control of Bhutan and perhaps Nepal, but China faces a delicate choice in how aggressive it can be, so as not to leave India feeling its very existence threatened and no choice but a nuclear option..."

India has a chance to become the manufactory of the world. The urgency to replace China in that role will be pressing, and India will find support in America, Europe, Australia, Britain and Canada.

We will likely see the influence of Russia and Europe as a whole significantly diminished. Other than Germany as an exporter of automobiles, much of Europe will be reduced to the role of exporters of agricultural products. Machinery and equipment will probably be produced more cheaply and efficiently in Asia.

Russia will remain a proud reaper of income from energy sales to Europe, mostly to Germany for the next two decades or more but probably facing severe pricing pressure as renewable energy takes a bigger share of the market. Europe's future is more as a repository of refugees from Africa and the Middle East than as an economic power.

In the Middle East, it is touch and go to see if Iran will dominate or whether a rapprochement among Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia will produce a counterweight to Iran's ambitions. In terms of power plays, there is an ongoing danger that Iran's Ayatollahs will attempt strikes against Israel or Saudi Arabia. There is a serious danger of nuclear proliferation in the region with disastrous consequences.

Japan and Korea have much work to do. Both will remain major contributors in terms of worldwide automobile manufacturing which will trend to electric vehicles and autonomous offerings. Both seem unlikely to displace China as low cost manufacturers of lower margin electronic and machined goods.

The big wild card is whether the US will be able to repatriate manufacturing capacity whether by 3D printing or other more sophisticated automated processes. If not, China's influence will only increase.

China will likely emerge as the dominant naval power at least in the Pacific Ocean. It is on the way possibly to becoming the dominant power in the space race as well, but the US has yet to be heard from in that respect.

No African country seems to be in a position to change the dynamics of the geopolitical arena and the same may be said of South America.

The wild cards we cannot address are the ongoing pandemic and climate change. The Covid-19 pandemic will be over at some point. We will achieve herd immunity, but at what cost? The problem is that there is no way to predict how much more damage the world will have to endure and no way to predict what new pandemics lie ahead. What does seem clear is that the world remains woefully unprepared to deal with such grand-scale disasters even as we have the technology to develop vaccines rapidly.

In terms of climate change, it is not clear that merely reducing carbon consumption or carbon emissions will be sufficient to reverse the effects of climate change. In short, can we reduce carbon consumption and emissions sufficiently to make a difference? Can we reduce reliance on fossil fuels without causing a worldwide depression?

The battle here is one of technological development of solutions for efficient deployment of alternative energy. One has to think that the US has the advantage here and if America can harness the solutions needed for the world, it stands a chance of regaining its preeminent position in technology.

\* Cont. on page 11

Opinion

# **Covid - Victims of success?**

Success with this deadly virus is only transient and this is certainly not the time to relax controls in the rush to open economic and social life...

#### Jan Arden

Ven moderate success in the midst of the pandemic is often a welcome boon for governments facing countrywide fatigue after months of lockdown, curfews, leisure, sports or travel restrictions. The ensuing positive messaging while soothing for the government benches, reassures a country's struggling economic operators, keeps the morale of the self-employed afloat, and maintains the population psyche in the hope of a rapid return to some normalcy. But it is probably a platitude to observe that success often breeds an undesirable child, over-confidence, that itself generates complacency and smugness.

Undoubtedly Boris Johnson, the UK PM can take credit for handling the second wave of the pandemic far better than he did the first, pushing for a mass vaccination program while much of Europe was embroiled in vaccine controversies that hid underlying fierce commercial considerations. Today, with more than 35% of its population vaccinated to a first dose, the UK is a redemption story that has generated a sorely needed upbeat feel countrywide.

Yet many experts and independent professionals warn that these gains and the accompanying politicallyconvenient messaging should not breed complacency. Germany is warning of a third wave, Italy is heading for another lockdown and the pandemic is still rampant throughout much of Europe, Latin and South America. Success with this deadly virus is only transient and this is certainly not the time to relax controls in the rush to open economic and social life without adequate public health measures.

Closer to us by heart, India is the latest country where the unfolding tragedy is taking dramatic proportions, leaving an already stretched public health infrastructure on the verge of collapse, hundreds of thousands of lives swept away and the economic prospects somewhat in disarray. Many countries have now banned commercial flights from India.

In parallel, the Indian steel industry is diverting its liquid oxygen reserves to hospitals and traditional allies as far as Russia and France are promising medical supplies, vaccines or airlifts of liquid oxygen in such vital short supply. We need not say more as our TV channels are rife with dramatic images and expert analysis. Even if the topmost priorities of India are to get the wildfire under control, did complacency creep in from India's political messaging as the success story of pharmaceutical or vaccine producer for the world?

#### How a success story turned into a nightmare

Mauritius Inc, through the valiant efforts of health personnel and frontliners backed by the general cooperation of the wider population and a relatively clear lockdown strategy, had surfed the first wave of the deadly virus reasonably well during 2020, abstraction made here of the shocking stories of pandemic-business to cronies running into a billion rupees or more.



Germany is warning of a third wave, Italy is heading for another lockdown and the pandemic is still rampant throughout much of Europe, Latin and South America. Success with this deadly virus is only transient and this is certainly not the time to relax controls in the rush to open economic and social life without adequate public health measures. Closer to us by heart, India is the latest country where the unfolding tragedy is taking dramatic proportions..."

After months of negative coverage of the Wakashio wreckage and its oil-spill and from high-profile ongoing judicial inquiries, the months of "Covid-safe" leading to end 2020 was a success that authorities could not eschew. And the population cannot be blamed for espousing the unrelenting official smugness promoted in public gatherings and the National Assembly and largely covered by the national TV carrier.

But if that success led to some relaxing of restrictions, sanitary measures and strict protocols from quarantine to hospitals, then the milk has turned sour this year. As an island, a performing quarantine, *"operating under the strictest protocols on earth"* as toasted by the PM, should have kept out any second wave patient(s) that has seen the virus spread to a dozen hotspots or more. Did the successes of last year lull the health authorities into a false sense of security, an absence of preparedness and a lackadaisical approach to vaccine procurement strate-

6 6 Did the successes of last year lull the health authorities into a false sense of security, an absence of preparedness and a lackadaisical approach to vaccine procurement strategy, even though they were repeatedly warned by Opposition and independent voices to make diligence preordering and securing vaccines from any source? Behind the scenes, government should undertake a sober analysis of where it was right in 2020 and where matters went wrong since early 2021..." gy, even though they were repeatedly warned by Opposition and independent voices to make diligence pre-ordering and securing vaccines from any source?

Behind the scenes, government should undertake a sober analysis of where it was right in 2020 and where matters went wrong since early 2021, with health authorities struggling to cope with the second surge that must have emanated from its airport and quarantine protocols. One may wonder whether the official structures, the health authorities and the ad-hoc Committees learnt anything from last year or drew contingency plans during those periods of relative respite from the virus.

Vaccine orders, consent form paraphernalia and variations in vaccination roll-out policy are nothing less than shambolic, particularly for the vulnerable and the elders of society.

The tragic outcome of hospitals becoming hot-spots of infection and dialysis patients torn by the heart-rending feeling of going alone to their death-beds in hospitals or quarantine centres could have called for a much earlier inquest from top-levels, if only to help public health identify and urgently correct any breaches and re-assure an anguished population.

What was needed was a thorough review of dialysis treatment under pandemic conditions, spanning logistics through quarantine services to treatment facilities. No internal, departmental or medical negligence inquiry would have been broad ranging enough to be of use or relatively credible for the anguished families.

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\* Cont. on page 11

# Whatever Happened to Electoral Petitions?

"Unlike some countries, there is no provision in our electoral laws for the delay allowed in determining an election petition. But justice delayed is justice denied"

There are several petitions pending determination by the Court following the general election of November 2019. Till now there is no indication when they will be taken up in depth, let alone when a determination is likely. What does the law provide for under these circumstances, and what can the Court do to expedite matters? Comparisons with similar petitions in the UK can shed light and perhaps guide local practice.

#### LEX

\* Whatever happened to the electoral petitions lodged by Opposition candidates following the 2019 general elections? Could there be good reasons why it's taking so long for these cases to be heard and justice delivered?

It is almost 18 months since the last elections were held. Under the Representation of the People Act, an election petition must be presented within 21 days after the date of the return made by the Returning Officer to the Electoral Supervisory Commission of the member to whose election the petition relates. In the case of Rodrigues, it is 56 days. That time frame is extended to 28 days when there is an allegation of illegal practice and 70 days for Rodrigues.

As we can see, the delay for lodging petitions is relatively short. By the time the petitions are determined, they would have lost their relevance.

In fairness to the Supreme Court, the country got bogged down in a lockdown last year and this year too owing to the Covid-19 pandemic. That does not however justify all the delaying tactics taken by the lawyers for the elected candidates and which seems to have been condoned by the Court.

\* One would have expected that the electoral petitions lodged since 28 November 2019 would have been fasttracked despite delaying tactics, if any. Isn't that an instance of the checks and balances in our system not operating as they should?

Unlike some countries, there is no provision in our electoral laws for the delay allowed in determining an election petition. Procedural rules have to be followed. Each party must be given a fair chance to present its case. But, as it is often said, justice delayed is justice denied.

\* What do past judgements delivered by our judges tell us about the attitude and approach of our Supreme Court towards electoral petitions?

The Supreme Court will not easily and readily upset the results of an election. The election results are after all the will of

the people, and the Court will tread carefully and cautiously before upsetting the will of the electorate.

Having said that, the Supreme Court did invalidate the election of Ashock Jugnauth who was elected at the 2005 general elections following a case lodged by his rival Raj Ringadoo. He was accused of electoral bribery in the form of a promised new Muslim cemetery, and promising jobs to 101 healthcare assistants from his Constituency in exchange for votes in his favour. The Privy Council upheld the judgment.

In 1960, the election of Romriky Ramsamy who had defeated Gaetan Duval at the 1959 elections was invalidated on the ground that he did not inscribe his name properly on the Nomination Paper.

There had been also the case which took place after the 1963 elections. Michael Leal won the elections in Grand River North West but his election was challenged by Augustin Moignac, who came in second...

\* There are a number of possible outcomes of an electoral petition. The result may be either quashed and a writ issued for a new election, or it may be upheld or the petition itself withdrawn. It's also possible for such a petition to lapse should Parliament be dissolved before the petition process is completed. Without prejudging the decision of the Supreme Court, does it look like the last outcome is currently the most likely?

It must be noted that the Representation of the People Act provides that "no election shall be invalid by reason of a "non-compliance with this Act or any other enactment, where it appears that the election was conducted in accordance with the principles laid down in any other enactment and that such non-compliance did not affect the result of the election." So even if there has been a breach of the legal provisions, an election will not necessarily be invalidated unless the Court has no other choice.

\* Shouldn't the principle of "reasonableness" also apply in matters of electoral petitions in the same spirit as prescribed in Section 10 of our



6 An electoral petition is a civil proceeding. The Constitution states that a civil case just like a criminal one must be dealt with within a reasonable time. We have cases that have dragged on or still dragging on for years. There are no checks and balances. In a few cases, the Privy Council has drawn the attention of the Supreme Court on the long delay in the determination of cases...<sup>27</sup>

Constitution in relation to "Provisions to secure protection of law", which states inter alia: "... the case shall be afforded a fair hearing within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial court established..."?

Delay in the determination of election petitions raises concerns among the legal profession and the public. An electoral petition is a civil proceeding. The Constitution states that a civil case just like a criminal one must be dealt with within a reasonable time. We have cases that have dragged on or still dragging on for years.

There are no checks and balances. In a few cases, the Privy Council has drawn the attention of the Supreme Court on the long delay in the determination of cases.

\* Could it also be possible that our tolerance of suspected corrupt elections has become less over the years, and the people could not care less anymore about how long it takes for judgements to be delivered in such matters?

Remember what Cassius told Brutus in 'Julius Caesar': "Cassius: The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings."

We are underlings vis-à-vis the powers that be - be it the government, the authorities, the judiciary. We are a passive people in quest of what benefits we can derive from the government of the day. You think people give two hoots about the electoral petitions and how long it would take to determine.

\* In the UK, the May 1, 1997 election of Member of Parliament for Winchester, Mark Oaten (Liberal Democrat), contested by the Conservative Party candidate Gerry Malone, was declared void five months later, on 6 October 1997, by Lord Justice Brooke. Another legal challenge by the defeated Independent Rodney Connor (who lost by four votes and lodged a petition seeking a recount) against Sinn Féin MP Michelle Gildernew's win in the Fermanagh and South Tyrone constituency was rejected by Northern Ireland's Lord Chief Justice on 22 Oct 2010 - one month after the case began on 13 September 2010. What do such cases inform us about the British justice system's approach towards electoral petitions?

British judges set their foot down and will not condone all kinds of nonsensical delaying tactics. It's also true that the culture of British lawyers is different. The delays here are due to all kinds of objections that are raised by the opposing side. The more such procedural tactics are used, the longer it would take for the petitions to be heard. Should not the Court set its foot down?

\* One interesting point to note is that pending the determination of the legal challenge against MP Michelle Gildernew's general election win by Rodney Connor in the Fermanagh and South Tyrone constituency, Gildernew along with her Sinn Féin colleagues abstained from taking her seat at Westminster. Can we see that happening here?

Given the political culture that prevails in Mauritius, it's very unlikely that this will ever happen.

# China could rule world's technology, UK cyber spy chief says

The West must urgently act to ensure China does not dominate important emerging technologies and gain control of the "global operating system", Britain's top cyber spy said on Friday.

In an unusually blunt speech, Jeremy Fleming, director of the GCHQ spy agency, said the West faced a battle for control of technologies such as artificial intelligence, synthetic biology and genetics, reports Reuters

"Significant technology leadership is moving East," Fleming said at Imperial College London. "The concern is that China's size and technological weight means that it has the potential to control the global operating system."

World powers will compete to shape the future by developing the best technology, hiring the people with the best brains and dominating the global standards that will govern the technologies, Fleming said.

GCHQ, which gathers communica-

tions from around the world to identify and disrupt threats to Britain, has a close relationship with the US National Security Agency and with the eavesdropping agencies of Australia, Canada and New Zealand in a consortium called "Five Eyes".

Fleming said that if Britain wished to remain a global cyber power then it would have to develop "sovereign" quantum technologies, including cryptographic technologies, to protect sensitive information and capabilities.

Fleming said quantum computing, which uses the phenomena of quantum mechanics to deliver a leap forward in computation, was getting closer and posed huge opportunities but also risks.

Fleming said China was "bringing all elements of state power to control, influence design and dominate markets" while trying to dominate debates about global standards.

He said digital currencies held significant promise to revolutionise the finance



countries worried. Pic - Devdiscourse

sector but posed a potential threat to liberties if abused by illiberal states as they could enable "significant intrusions into the lives of citizens and companies".

Russia remains the biggest immediate

threat to the West but Communist China's long-term dominance of technology poses a much bigger problem, he said.

"Russia is affecting the weather, whilst China is shaping the climate," he said.

### US says will "work closely with India on essential supplies" amid covid surge



US will work closely with India to facilitate movement of essential supplies Jalina Porter said. Pic - assetsds.cdnedge.bluemix.net

Jalina Porter on Friday during a press briefing reaffirmed that US will work closely with India to facilitate movement of essential supplies during Covid-19 surge.

Informing about the update on India's request regarding US position on the embargo on lifting of raw materials for the vaccine, she said, "We have continued to work closely with India to facilitate the movement of essential supplies and also address the bottlenecks of their supply chains. But we'll also continue to collaborate with our partners in India to battle this at the highest level."

"We don't have any specific update to raw materials, but we'll just reiterate that we understand that the Covid situation in India remains a global concern," added Porter.

Earlier on Tuesday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar regarding the lethal second Covid-19 wave in India, reports ANI.

"We know Secretary Blinken spoke to his counterpart on Tuesday, and we remain deeply

engaged with India at all levels as we work to combat this crisis of the pandemic together, said Porter.

Earlier, India and South Africa had proposed to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to temporarily lift certain intellectual property barriers and allow countries to locally manufacture Covid-19 diagnostics and vaccines.

The Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver proposed by India and South Africa in October 2020 would temporarily lift certain intellectual property barriers and allow countries to locally manufacture Covid-19 diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines.



The SpaceX Crew Dragon spacecraft docking to the International Space Station in 2020, the same capsule is being used in this week's launch. Pic - www.aljazeera.com

### Recycled SpaceX crew dragon brings new crew to ISS

recycled SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule carrying four astronauts docked with the International Space Station early Saturday, the third time Elon Musk's company has safely delivered humans to the orbital outpost.

The spacecraft named Endeavour, piloting herself autonomously, locked on to a docking port at 5:08 am Eastern time (0908 GMT), some 260 miles above the south Indian Ocean.

Two hours after the process was completed, Endeavour's quartet posed for photos with the last crew of four sent by SpaceX, and three Russian cosmonauts -- making the ISS unusually crowded with 11 people in total.

It was the first SpaceX mission

involving a European, astronaut Thomas Pesquet of France, who hailed the spirit of international cooperation.

"It's been 20 years... since JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency), and ESA (European Space Agency), and NASA and Russian astronauts have been together in space, so it's actually pretty historic what's happening today," he said.

"We can't wait to start our work on the space station, we can't wait to see what's ahead on the adventure for us."

The Crew-2 mission blasted off from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida before

dawn on Friday on its 23-hour-voyage. Endeavour first flew to the ISS on the Demo-2 mission in May 2020, ending almost a decade of US reliance on Russia for rides to the ISS following the

It was the first time a capsule was reused and the first time a rocket was reused, key cost-saving goals of NASA's partnerships with private industry.

end of the Space Shuttle era.

Two Crew Dragons are now parked at right angles to each other at the ISS, underscoring hard-charging SpaceX's position as the US space agency's **Spotlights** 

#### **Mauritius Times**

#### Boris Johnson alleged to have solicited secret donations for refurbishment of his Downing Street flat

The British Labour Party has launched a legal bid for the Electoral Commission to investigate how Boris Johnson paid for the lavish refurbishment of his Downing Street flat - and whether he broke electoral law. The party's lawyers late on Sunday sent a formal letter to the watchdog stating that it was "now incontrovertibly in the public interest" to "commence a formal investigation" into the PM's activities. They want the commission to use its statutory powers to force Mr Johnson, Tory donors and the Conservative Party to reveal documents and invoices that could shed light on exactly what money changed hands, reports The Independent.

The letter referenced allegations by Dominic Cummings that Mr Johnson had suggested soliciting secret donations to fund the work - an approach the former chief of staff said was "unethical, foolish, possibly illegal and almost certainly broke the rules on proper disclosure of political donations". Electoral Commission rules state that all donations and loans must be properly recorded and, if they are over a minimum amount, reported.

# UK's biggest banks played a leading role in driving up greenhouse

#### gas emissions

Britain's banks are coming under increasing scrutiny for their role in driving the climate crisis. For decades, the UK's biggest banks have played a leading role in driving up greenhouse gas emissions by providing finance for fossil fuel projects across the world. While some banks have begun to set policies aimed at reducing the climate impact of their financial activities, recent figures show that the biggest high street lenders are still providing hundreds of billions in support for coal, oil and gas projects - many of which have devastating impact for local communities and ecosystems.

As well as providing financial support for fossil fuel

#### Joe Biden polls positive for first 100 days in office

Overall, the polls showed a range of 52-58 percent of US adults who say they approve of the job Biden is doing, compared with 39-42 percent who say they disapprove.

But the positive ratings

are divided along party lines: about 90 percent of Democrats say they approve of Biden's performance, while only nine to 13 percent of Republicans do.

was for his handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

Pic - ABC News

Biden's performance is far higher than predecessor Donald Trump achieved in his entire presidency.

Trump spent most of his presidency with ratings in the low 40s, and left office on January 20 with a Gallup poll approval of just 34 percent, a record low.

Biden's strongest performance across the board was for his handling of the coronavirus pandemic, with 64-69 percent approval.

However, the polls found that vaccine hesitancy has increased, with CBS showing that 19 percent of Republicans say they might get the vaccine, and 30 percent saying they won't get it at all.

Additionally, Biden received the weakest marks for how he has dealt with the migration situation at the US-Mexico border.



his official flat by his fiancée, it has been claimed. Pic - Daily Mail projects, banks are continuing to maintain close relation-

ships with some of the world's most polluting companies, campaigners have warned.

A recent investigation found that the majority of banking directors from the UK's five biggest banks maintain links with highly polluting companies. The Independent's Stop Fuelling the Climate Crisis campaign is shining a light on support for fossil fuels, including how banks are continuing to back projects overseas. Below, we explore some of the figures that illustrate the scale of banks' financial support for fossil fuels, and the extensive links between banking directors and the fossil fuel industry.

#### Johnson met with Manchester United official before launch of ill-fated European Super League

\* \* \*

Boris Johnson met with Ed Woodward, executive vicechairman of Manchester United, in Downing Street days before the launch of the ill-fated European Super League, The Independent has revealed. Mr Woodward - who

#### Angela Merkel defends 'tough' emergency measures amid 3rd wave in Germany

German Chancellor Angela Merkel in a video address on Saturday defended "tough" new coronavirus restrictions amid the third wave and urged German citizens to "do what is necessary again" to slow the Covid-19 pandemic.

"This is something new in our fight against the pandemic and I am convinced that it is urgently needed because we are in the middle of the third wave," Merkel said, reported euronews.

Defending the emergency brake measures, Merkel said that the government had weighed whether such tough efforts were necessary.

"As much as one would wish there were less burdensome ways to break and reverse the third wave - they don't exist," she concluded, explaining that infections were too high for testing and tracing to be a sufficient means to drive down case numbers, reported euronews.

Merkel said that if they are able to reduce infections now, it will be possible to relax the tough measures in the "foreseeable future".

She said that the vaccination campaign was "gaining momentum". So far, just over 20 per cent

announced his resignation after the planned breakaway competition collapsed amid fury from fans, politicians and football administrators held a formal meeting with the No 10 chief of staff, Dan Rosenfield, on Wednesday last week. Sources at Manchester United said that Mr Woodward's talks with Mr Rosenfield were "around Covid restrictions and the return of fans to stadiums".

Following the meeting, Mr Woodward was introduced to the PM, Manchester United sources confirmed. A Downing Street spokesperson refused to comment on the breakfast

meeting, but a senior source insisted there was "definitely no discussion of the Super League". The source said Mr Johnson was not in the meeting between Mr Rosenfield and Mr Woodward, but said they could not rule out that they may have met each other elsewhere in the building.

\* \* \*

An additional 55 cases of the so-called "double mutated" variant of the coronavirus first observed in India have been found in the UK, the latest findings from Public Health England have revealed. It brings the total number of B1617 variant infections in the UK to 132, the health body said - with the latest data running up to the week ending 21 April.

Scientists have previously called for caution and calm over the variant, with some theorising that it may not be as problematic as other mutated forms of the virus. It is not yet known if B1617 is more dangerous or better able to escape immunity triggered by vaccination or natural infection, but it contains a total of 13 mutations - two of which have been found in other concerning variants. On Thursday the government said a further 18 people had died within 28 days of testing positive for Covid-19, bringing the UK total to 127,345.

> "This is something new in our fight against the pandemic and I am convinced that it is urgently needed because we are in the middle of the third wave," Merkel said.

> > Pic - cdnuploads.aa.com.tr

of the population has received the first dose of a coronavirus vaccine.

Moreover, Merkel added that doctors and nurses have been calling for help due to high infection numbers and intensive care admissions.

"These people push their limits every day to save the lives of corona patients," Merkel said, adding that they "cannot do it alone".

Germany's parliament, the Bundestag, passed the new "emergency brake" measures earlier this week which now take effect in areas where the incidence rate is higher than 100 new infections per 100,000 people.

Those regions will be subject to tougher restrictions including a 10 pm curfew and restrictions on shops and households meeting, reported euronews.



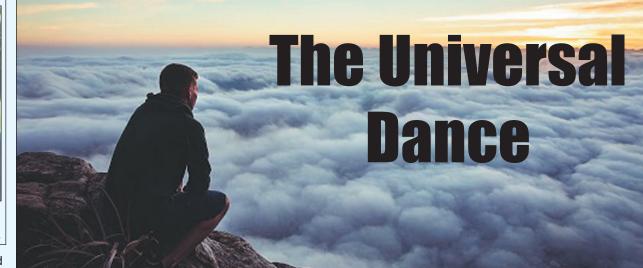
#### Musings

#### **Mauritius Times**



Soondron

Philosophers and religious people have been speculating about the mystery of life for a long time. But there's been a revival of the controversy when science came along, as its



Are we to sit crossed-legged in the cool breeze of a mountain recess, to meditate indefinitely while contemplating ourselves, our self-awareness, our fate, our brain's and mind's evolution into that incomprehensible, paradoxical and ever expanding universal dance?' - Pic - skilledatlife.com

method eliminates bias and subjective, emotional views. Scientists provided new angles to our thinking, thereby prompting us to approach the big mystery differently.

#### **Emergent phenomenon**

As to our consciousness, that hard problem of science, the present theory is that it is an *emergent phenomenon*; that is, it's an ultimate result of accumulation of information and energy in matter.

Taking the analogy of a glass of water whose molecules move about at a different rate to impact on the container's wall – thereby determining a temperature - we cannot appreciate the degree of hotness or coldness unless we touch the glass. By physical laws there is no way to describe our sensation. We can just talk about stimulation of our nerve endings by that degree of hotness or coldness, which is finally interpreted by our brain. And this subjective appreciation of different degrees of temperature is called an *emergent phenomenon*.

Is *time* also of the same nature? Most probably it is a more complex one; some scientists may say that it does not exist, while the Newtonians will disagree. Einstein conceived the idea of space/time curvature - where time is intimately intertwined with space -- leading to his theory of relativity. But in our classical world we humans are incapable of doing away with time; so could it be just such an emergent phenomenon – due to us being alive and intimately linked to intrinsic information and matter?

And gravity? Recently some researchers are wondering whether gravity, that complex fourth force, could be another such phenomenon. With no clouds, sun or plane's wing in view while travelling by plane, we get the strange sensation that the space outside is dull and flat. In fact some people view space as flat as a wellstretched cotton net. But the moment we throw in some massive objects - like a sun, a planet, a star or a galaxy -- it assumes a three-dimensional aspect; just as throwing in a heavy metallic ball on the cotton net forces it to sag, converting our two-dimensional sensation into a three-dimensional one. The presence of billions of galaxies in space/time bend it into a curvature. And the energy inherent in that inevitable curvature is the emergent phenomenon gravity, needing both space and matter to pop out into existence. And consciousness is said to be a similar phenomenon -- between our body, mind, space, experience, information and matter.

Evolutionary psychologists believe that we developed it to survive better; the more knowledge we have of our hostile environment the more chance we have to negotiate around all the traps to survive.

#### The balloon analogy

Meanwhile our universe is expanding. Where is it going? - no one knows. If we have a deflated balloon with hundreds of coloured spots on it, then on inflation those spots will distance themselves from each other -and if we are in the centre of that balloon we would see these spots running away from each other and from us in all directions at the same speed. Those spots, representing the galaxies, are partly moving by themselves, in fact they are being carried by the elastic balloon. Similarly, an expanding inter-galactic space drags the galaxies along with it.

However, our analogy stops here: the universe, unlike the balloon, has no space to expand into, nor is it a closed system as the balloon. Further, being inside the universe we cannot conceive what lies outside; the theory is that space and the universe are one and the same! We lay men are baffled. Expanding faster the peripheral void/space leaves all the galaxies behind – failing to assume a curvature – hence it has an opened a flat end. Some scientists have suggested that it is like a horse saddle – a double convex/concave curvature. But actually the void – teeming with enormous occult energy – will soon spurn out all sorts of particles, atoms, molecules and ultimately matter and new galaxies, ultimately inducing curvature and gravity afresh as it expands.

#### Complexity

To our scientists our universe - the initial void - is not only expanding but also gradually evolving towards *greater complexity*. This is epitomized by the human body: we started from simple life forms – like a virus- and during billions of years that simple organism gave birth to single cell organisms, then multicellular life forms that will ultimately lead to the birth of the individual, a real mass of complex cells well oiled to live together.

So modern science views our universe spurning more complexities as it ages. Consequently (a) universal energy inevitably becomes locked up into complex matter, (b) so less of it will be available to carry out other *useful activities.* This process is known as *increasing entropy*.

From a void with very high energy and simplicity, we progress towards a more complex state locking up most of that energy. Meaning the temperature of the universe will dwindle down towards absolute zero as new galactic matter uses up that original energy; in billions of years the universe might have no choice but to stop its expansion adventure and it will start the reverse journey of collapsing and contracting, going for a big crunch.

#### The ice cream: information

With the concept of information in modern physics the approach to analysis of matter and ener-

gy is taking a new meaning and importance. Which concept is difficult to grasp, for it takes place at a molecular level and only those professionals in the field can really appreciate it?

If we leave a solid ice cream in a glass container in one hour, it would have melted - specially in a tropical climate. So, let's ask an abstract nano being -- a cunning demon – if given the choice to describe those two states of the ice cream: which one of the two would it choose: the molecular frozen ice cream or the melted one? Being clever it would choose the former one because the molecules being in crystallized lattice would be in a more orderly arrangement; his formula to describe it would be extremely complicated but much less so than the one to describe the melted ice cream which is in a total disarray and more complex state. And physicists use this simplistic illustration to (1) measure and conceive the passage of time - the cooling of the system -- for the environment has lost heat to warm up the ice cream which melted; (2) by locking energy that ice cream has lost shape and become more complex -- which is faithful to the forward evolution of the universe, and (c) disorder has increased - as illustrated by the melted ice cream, another concept of entropy.

In simple terms - Time, complexity, entropy have all increased.

And we humans, as we encapsulate energy and complexity within us, are we bound to evolve a more sophisticated brain? Are we leaving simplicity for a more complex life? We have become more electronic dependent, getting addicted to our smart phone, our computer and soon to a quantum computer. Are we tending towards more disorder, going on rampage to destroy what looks like order so as to embrace the universal trend – of lesser energy and greater disorder? But, in fact, we notice that we are offering resistance and moving in an opposite direction due to our evolving intelligence and sensitivity – whence our more noble aspirations, beliefs and prayers that religious people ask us to cultivate. Is this the source of our inner conflicts and despair? Who knows?

Are we to sit crossed-legged in the cool breeze of a mountain recess, to meditate indefinitely while contemplating ourselves, our self-awareness, our fate, our brain's and mind's evolution into that incomprehensible, paradoxical and ever-expanding universal dance?

#### History

#### **Mauritius Times**

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 | 10

Friday 13 September 1957

4<sup>th</sup> Year No 162

From the Pages of History - MT 60 Years Ago MAURITIUS TIMES

• A good memory and a tongue tied in the middle is a combination which gives immortality to conversation. -- Mark Twain

**British Guiana Sets the Pace** 

By D. Napal

r Cheddi Jagan's overwhelming victory at the polls on the 12th of August 1957 should serve as an object lesson to our leaders. It has demonstrated that a cool-headed, sincere and bold leadership can defeat the ends of imperialists and reactionaries. The Tories branded him as a communist in 1953 because the sugar magnates in British Guiana were frightened by the reforms envisaged by his party when it came to power.

The Constitution was suspended and Dr Cheddi Jagan and his party went into the background for four years. But the devotion of the people to him has proved stronger than all the gold of the reactionaries used to dope the people and snatch them from the People's Progressive Party (PPP).

Here is a lesson for Mauritians, especially as there are so many points in common between Mauritius and British Guiana. Both are multi-racial, with a predominating majority of Indians, the descendants of those indentured labourers who came from India to save the sugar kings from ruin when the affranchised slaves showed a marked disgust for work in the cane fields. Dr Cheddi Jagan himself, for example, as some of the leaders of the PPP are the descendants of Indian immigrants. And the policy of the sugar magnates there as here has been throughout history to have on the labour market more labour power than can be absorbed by the sugar industry, with the result that immense wealth has been concentrated in the hands of a few capitalists to whom British Guiana is the "Magnificient Province" as Mauritius is the "Pearl of the Indian Ocean".

Whenever the Mauritian labourers have asked for an increase in their wages, have they not been told that sugar does not pay though they have made huge profits? Here is what Dr Jagan writes about the situation in British Guiana:

"The sugar planters are making huge profits. They forever tell us that sugar does not pay, but their balance sheets prove the opposite. Between 1948 and 1950 Booker's net profits after tax rose from £ 207,455 to £ 385,453. In 1951 the combined net profit was £ 660,677. With amounts deducted for tax, minority inter-



Dr Cheddi Jagan taking the oath of office on October 9, 1992. Pic - guyanachronicle.com

ests and reserves, the total in 1951 was  $\pounds$  2237904. And this figure is arrived at after deducting the high salaries paid to directors and high officials."

How were such profits realised? A large surplus of labour power was maintained around the sugar estates. Though the sugar magnates did not cultivate 50% of the land holdings they possessed, the surplus lands were not distributed to the farmers who were land hungry. And these lands were Crown lands for which the sugar magnates paid only a nominal rent to government. The same thing is happening here where 9036 acres of Crown lands are rented to big land owners at an average rate on Rs 17.60 per annum per acre.

When in 1951 Dr Jagan introduced in Parliament a motion to withdraw the leases, his motion was defeated. This reminds us of Mr Roy's motion on land legislation, in 1950, which passed by a majority still waits to become law. The sugar magnates in British Guiana as in Mauritius prefer lands to remain fallow rather than to distribute them among farmers for cultivation for fear that the workers might become economically self-sufficient and independent. The British Guiana sugar magnates in the period 1943-1947 snatched 3000 acres of land from the resident workers. In 1944 the King Report wrote in this connection:

"The reason why available work is not fully taken up is because resident workers find it more profitable to work on their own rice fields and farms and some non-residents have left working on the fields on the estates for more profitable occupation."

This state of things naturally makes of British Guiana a land of poverty and squalor, disease and illiteracy. Paul Blanchard forcefully describes this poverty as quoted by Dr Jagan in his 'Forbidden Freedom':

"The labouring population of almost the whole area lives at a level below human decency. The outward signs of Caribbean poverty, ragged clothing, bare feet, children with bloated bellies, shacks made of flattened cars, unemployed workers waiting at closed gates."

This quotation compares favourably with what Major Orde Browne writes about Mauritius:

"The picture is, therefore that of a poorly-paid undernourished, sickly population..."

What about the housing conditions? The dwellings of the labourers are dilapidated, barrack type ranges built during the days of slavery. The VENN Commission wrote about these:

"In numerous instances temporary sheets of awnings have been fixed over the beds to keep off the rain. They had mud floors and, consequently with the rain dripping from the roofs, these were made slippery and dangerous, in many cases we found bags laid over the floor to prevent slipping." It is natural that poverty and slum areas breed diseases faster than elsewhere, as is testified by the following figures: In 1947 there occurred in British Guiana 215 cases of TB. In 1949 the figure had risen to 532. It has kept on increasing since. And what are the provisions made in hospitals for those seeking admissions? The picture is lurid and

The education of the children of the workers is sadly neglected. The Report on Education for 1951-1952 showed that the schools were understaffed, had no proper equipment and were overcrowded. There were classes of 80 to 90 pupils. Even then more than 10,000 children could not find space in the schools. This picture of education in British Guiana appears to be a picture of the situation in our own island.

revolting.

We may stretch the comparison of the situation in British Guiana with that in Mauritius a little further. Everybody knows that a Boundary Commission is at work in the island. What the Commissioners will advocate, they alone know. The Boundary Commissioners in British Guiana made a demarcation to weaken Jagan's party. Fortunately for Jagan, the purpose of the Commissioners proved abortive before the will of the people of British Guiana. Money lavishly spent to bribe the people and manoeuvres conducted to wean away the masses from the PPP proved abortive.

The story of Jagan who is branded a communist has been often repeated. Here too, our progressive leaders have been more than once dubbed as communists, communalists, *khoonists* and what not. Has not money been lavishly thrown away by opponents of Labour to weaken our Labour movement? But the mass of people among us, as in British Guiana, have in the midst of their insecurity and poverty known where to look for comfort. They have been able to discern their true friends.

Dr Jagan in British Guiana, as Dr Nkrumah in Ghana, have had in their political and economic struggle to cope with many more difficulties than our own leaders. But courage, sincerity to their cause and singleness of purpose have never failed them. They have by their exertions taken out their own countries from the grip of imperialists and capitalists, and by their examples they may yet save other colonies which are still struggling.

Many our leaders study their tactics, the worth of which has been proved in the fire of experience. May they look up to them for inspiration which will surely serve in the battles which they themselves have to fight.



Whether the US can survive the deep divisions it sees domestically and the pressures from illegal immigration, is not known. If it loses control in that respect, it also risks losing control on the world stage. Pic - i.insider.com

#### \* Cont. from page 4

Tuesday, April 27, 2021

As of now, the world's financial system depends on the stability and acceptability of the US Dollar as the world's reserve currency. Given the massive runup in US debt and the printing of money at will, the US Dollar is in a precarious position. Nevertheless, the Chinese Yuan is not in a position to displace the US Dollar unless China can build a much greater degree of trust than it now enjoys in financial markets. Sadly, the US has been working hard to squander its built-in advantage here. My sense is that the US will retain a slight advantage and that remains its greatest hope of keeping China in check.

The Asian nations face immense pressure from China. Their only hope seems to lie in becoming viable alternatives to China as manufacturers of consumer goods, electronics and machinery. Success in these areas will require large investments. US private equity ventures can play a big role here.

The Internet and e-commerce also remain up for grabs. While it is true that China and India have almost 3 billion of the world's 7.7 billion potential consumers, unless there is a sea change in currency values or disposable income, the US will remain the dominant force in world trade.

In summary, we can expect a far more aggressive China on the world stage. Whether Iran will also be more aggressive remains to be seen. The US has far less ability to be militarily aggressive than in the past. But the US has the ability to exert meaningful influence due to technological superiority and a better ability to deploy technology than any other nation. However, this advantage is rapidly dissipating.

There is a significant unknown in the mix here. Whether China's authoritarian regime can maintain control of its population over the next two decades remains to be seen. Whether the US can survive the deep divisions it sees domestically and the pressures from illegal immigration, is also not known. If either nation loses control in that respect, it also risks losing control on the world stage.

> Cheerz... **Bwana**

## How a success story turned into a nightmare

#### \* Cont. from page 5

By holding on adamantly to those avenues and dismissively reeling out statistics and protocols against growing human tragedies, the inexperienced Minister of Health did those families, himself, the public health staff and the government a grave disservice.

The appointment last Friday of a Fact Finding Committee (FFC) to be chaired by a retired Supreme Court Justice Mrs D. Beesoondoyal, elevated GCSK in 2019, should go some way to shed urgent light both on the dialysis tragedies, the missteps, if any, and make recommendations for course correction even this late. Having staunchly resisted such calls days before the Cabinet decision, it was left to the Minister to bite the bitter bullet and make the announcement himself the same afternoon.

As regards the higher spheres of government, they might wish to go beyond the FFC, focused on dialysis, to fathom out more widely how a success story in 2020 turned into the nightmare of 2021.

Malin Génie stall

#### The Malin Génie stalking the corridors of power

Is there a "malin génie", not necessarily of the metaphysical Descartes variety, that seems to stalk the corridors of power in these difficult times? Fostering a sense of the greater good, a common destiny and a sense of patriotism has been so battered by institutional failings



66 We trust the Economic Development Board has been apprised of this extraordinary proposal (ICTA's Consultation Paper) and will rapidly adapt all its marketing materials and web brochures inviting foreign companies to invest in our IT economic pillar, with the added certainty that all their correspondences and exchanges would be fully government-supervised. Should that hairy proposal come to Cabinet for approval and a Bill tabled in the National Assembly, that is..."

that a clear impression of permanent confrontation seems deliberately cultivated in higher spheres.

Nowhere is it more evident than in the National Assembly where the Opposition, whose primary objective is to raise questions, concerns and issues relating to their constituents, the population at large or the state of the country, is continuously harassed and their leaders expelled at the drop of a hat.

More insidiously, some upper rungs of the Mauritius

Police Force and the PMO, saw fit to use the delivery of Work Access Permits, which control legitimate movements during the pandemic, for unexplainable denials of Opposition MPs while all government ministers, PPS, and their affiliated *babus* had theirs delivered weeks ago. With the threat of court sanction, the Commissioner and the PMO, were forced to relent and restore a belated normalcy.

But the more dangerous bite of the fantasized "Malin Génie" came from the ICTA, which, unsatisfied with the barrage of existing legal provisions to curb internet abuse, proposed nothing less than a solution that would have made North Korea proud. Much has already been written on the agency's consultation paper and there is no need to delve at any length on the philosophy and technicalities behind what is widely perceived as a renewed assault that now portends to confiscate and control public internet and social network access.

We trust the Economic Development Board has been apprised of this extraordinary proposal and will rapidly adapt all its marketing materials and web brochures inviting foreign companies to invest

in our IT economic pillar, with the added certainty that all their correspondences and exchanges would be fully government-supervised. Should that hairy proposal come to Cabinet for approval and a Bill tabled in the National Assembly, that is.

More seriously, there may still be hope that government's "towers of control" rein in their own darker impulses fed by fairy spirits...

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Jan Arden

#### The Conversation

#### **Mauritius Times**

#### Tuesday, April 27, 2021

# Intellectual property and Covid-19: how can we accelerate vaccination globally?

#### Cont. from page 2

#### No one is safe until everyone is safe

In addition to producing new vaccines at an unprecedented scale, it is necessary to vaccinate everywhere in the world, in the shortest possible time, before new variants compromise the initial results. This imperative is reiterated by GAVI and CEPI. the co-leads of COVAX, as well as by UNICEF and PAHO, in charge of procurement and logistics. In the words of Jeremy Farrar, director of the Wellcome Trust:

#### "If left to spread unchecked in large parts of the world, the virus risks mutating to an extent where our vaccines and treatments no longer work - leaving us all exposed."

The distribution of vaccines is complicated by early commercial agreements concluded by governments with the industry, when no product was yet approved, in some cases for more doses than needed. For example, by mid-November 2020, pre-orders from Australia, Canada and Japan together exceeded 1 billion doses. In total, highincome countries alone are estimated to have pre-ordered 4.2 billion doses for 2021.

The COVAX mechanism offers a partial solution, by encouraging high-income countries to donate surplus doses for reallocation to developing countries. But redistribution only makes it possible to share volumes which are limited by installed production capacities. The firms that signed a supply agreement with COVAX control capacities estimated at 8 billion doses for 2021, of which 2 billion relate to an mRNA vaccine that entails supply chain and storage challenges, particularly in the developing world. The manufacturing issues encountered recently by BioNTech-Pfizer, Gamaleya, Johnson & Johnson and Oxford-Astra-Zeneca have pointed to the difficulty of increasing production to capacity.

Future supply issues and resulting delays are likely to jeopardise the reallocation mechanism by incentivizing governments of developed countries to enforce priority clauses included in preorder contracts.

#### Temporary patent waiver versus bilateral manufacturing agreements

Efforts are already underway to increase production capacity. Suppliers of | compulsory licensing provide little incen-



approved vaccines invest in new manufacturing facilities. Other firms are developing candidate vaccines that could soon be added to the current supply.

A more controversial move was initiated in October 2020 by South Africa and India, which filed a request with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) for a temporary waiver of intellectual property rights relating to Covid-19, particularly patents. Supported by some 100 countries, the request aims to accelerate the production of vaccines, as well as treatments and diagnostics, for the developing world.

This initiative has met with opposition from the pharmaceutical industry, and many developed countries, for whom it would be sufficient to rely on bilateral agreements - between a vaccine producer and a firm holding production capacity - to increase supply, without questioning patents.

A patent waiver and the status quo are both vulnerable to policy-induced delays resulting from unilateral actions by governments. If patents are suspended, the flow of ingredients needed for vaccine production is likely to be hindered by export control mechanisms recently reinforced in a number of countries. If, on the other hand, patents are maintained, the use of compulsory licences - which allow a third party to manufacture the patented product without the consent of the patent holder - could become more widespread among developing countries, as occurred in the 2000s for the production of HIV antiretroviral drugs.

In both cases, a patent waiver and

tive for companies to engage in the transfer of know-how which is essential for vaccine production, and is not described by intellectual property rights.

#### The Medicines Patent Pool of the WHO C-TAP mechanism as a third way

A third approach, that we support, would be for vaccine producers to engage in licence agreements with the MPP (Medicines Patent Pool), a United Nations-backed public health organization integrated in the Covid-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP) initiative of WHO.

The mission of the MPP, whose mandate has been extended to Covid-19 as of March 2020, is to improve access to essential medicines in low- and middleincome countries. It solicits voluntary

licenses - and thus does not question the patent system - from the pharmaceutical industry before acting as a one-stop shop for disseminating (combinations of) these licenses to producers of generics or biosimilars.

The resulting lower transaction costs, and the elimination of multiple margins by the pooling approach, entail lower prices in the final market than if the licences were transacted separately in multiple bilateral agreements. At the same time, incentives to invest in research and to transfer technical know-how to technology users can be preserved when patent holders, without taking in their production capacity, receive royalties from the MPP. Licences can cover only a few critical ingredients, or relate to narrowly defined operations, in order to eliminate bottlenecks and increase production

capacity without transferring unduly the proprietary knowledge of patent holders.

Industry contributions to the MPP solution, within the WHO-initiated C-TAP mechanism, minimises risks of vaccine nationalism and of compulsory licensing initiatives, without suspending intellectual property rights. It has the advantage of using a well-established platform in order to immediately accelerate access to vaccines worldwide.

Etienne Billette de Villemeur. Université de Lille; Bruno Versaevel, EM Lyon; Vianney Dequiedt, Université Clermont Auvergne (UCA)



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#### Unwind **Mauritius Times**





### Why only the **Indians** are reborn!

ngel Gabriel came to the Lord and said: "I have to talk to you. We have some Indians here in Heaven and they are causing problems.

"They are swinging on the Pearly Gates, my horn is missing, they are wearing Dolce & Gabbana saris instead of their white robes, they are driving Mercedes and BMWs instead of chariots, and they're selling off their halos at discounted prices.

"They refuse to keep the stairway to Heaven clear or clean, since they crouch on the stairs midway, eating samosas and drinking chai (tea).

"They do not believe in discipline, and push their way through the line!"

The Lord said, "Oh, Indians are Indians! Heaven is home to all my children. If you want to know about real problems, give Saitan a call."

Gabriel calls Saitan on the phone.

Saitan picks up the phone, "Hullo! Saitan here."

Gabriel: "Are you having any problems with the Indians in Hell?'

Saitan says: "I'm sorry, Gabriel, I can't talk right now. "I am having a terrible time!

"These Indians are installing air conditioning and are trying to make Hell a comfortable place to live in by putting out the fire, which is there to keep them sizzling hot!

"Since they are so tech savvy, they are making a telephone and Internet connection between Heaven and Hell, between ME & GOD !!

"They have started a network Social Service for the Troubled, and are excellent in convincing others.

"Some have opened a Chai Dukan with Bhajia, Khandvi, Dhokla, Chakli, Pau-Bhaji, Idli-Dosa, Samosa, Barfi, Kulfi, which I tried to stop.

"They are corrupting everyone, and bribing my staff.

"I have difficulty in controlling the graft and corruption in Hell.

"They never complain, as this place seems to be better than from where they came!

"I therefore request, "Oh GOD, PLEASE, as soon as Indians arrive, send them back to earth - for re-birth."

So now you know - "Why Indians are the only ones that are re-born ... "

A German girl married a Spanish man and went to Spain

She couldn't speak Spanish. Each time she wanted to buy

chicken legs, she would lift her skirt and show her thighs to enable the shopkeeper understand her. This went on for sometime.

Then one day she wanted to buy bananas. So she took her husband to the shop... (stop laughing and read on, dirty minds) because her husband speaks Spanish very well...

A man walks into a bar and sits down. He asks the bartender, "Can I have a cigarette?'

The bartender replies, "Sure, the cigarette machine is over there."

So he walks over to the machine and as he is about to order a cigarette, the machine suddenly says, "Oi, you bloody idiot."

The man says with surprise in his voice, "That's not very nice.'

He returns to his bar stool without a cigarette and asks the bartender for some peanuts.

The bartender passes the man a bowl of peanuts and the man hears one of the peanuts speak, "Ooh, I like your hair."

The man says to the bartender, "Hey, what's going on here? Your cigarette machine is insulting me and this peanut is coming on to me. Why's this?" The bartender replies, "Oh, that's because the machine is out of order and the peanuts are complementary."

drank 8 Cokes?

A: He burped 7Up.

Three elderly men are taking a walk outside their nursing home.

\* \* \*

The first one says, "Windy, isn't it?"

The second one says, "No, it's Thursday!"

The third one says, "So am I. Let's go get a beer."

Q: What do you call a dinosaur with an extensive vocabulary?

A: A thesaurus. \* \* \*

Chuck Norris pulled the pin in a

grenade, threw it, killed 50 men, and then the grenade exploded.

> Travelling through the country, an old couple drives into a gas station.

> > The attendant asks the old man, "Where you folks from? I

know everybody in this town."

The old man says, "We're from Nebraska."

Hard of hearing, the old lady nudges her husband, "What did he say, papa?"

The old man answers her, "He asked us where we are from."

"Oh," replies the old woman.

The old man tells the attendant to fill up the tank and check the tires. When that's all done, the attendant tells the old man, "You know, the worst piece of ass I ever had was from Nebraska."

The old lady nudges her husband once more and asks, "What did he say, papa?"

The husband replies, "He thinks he knows you, mama."

+ + +

Two Irishmen friends are drinking together at one of their homes. One friend takes out a bottle of Irish whiskey and asks the other, "Will you pour this bottle out on my grave if I die

His friend replies, "Do you mind if I pass it through my kidneys first?"

first?"

### Wisdom A Great Thought

What's important while eating: taste or the stone in the bite?

In a restaurant, one well-known chef cooked very tasty pulav using high quality rice. As soon as the pulav was ready, its aroma spread all over. Everyone's mouth started watering. Now they were all eager to taste the pulav. About a hundred people were served the pulav.

Just when everyone was about to take the first bite, the chef came and said that there was a small stone in the pulay. As it was of the same colour and size of the rice grain, he couldn't find it. He said that as it may come in anybody's plate he would want them to be careful while eating.

The flavour of the pulav was good, the taste was also great but now the fun of eating had gone. Everyone was like forcefully swallowing one bite after other without paying attention to the taste while eating. The more they became aware, the more they became silent. Before the

start of the meal it was fun to be together. Now even though they were together, one by one, they fell into a trance.

After completing the meal everyone sighed with relief for not getting the stone. They washed their hands. Just then, someone noticed that no one had come across the stone.

Then they called the chef who said: 'I had removed most of the stones, but if there was one left by mistake, I wanted to alert you to that risk.'

Due to the pandemic, our personal situation has become just like the stone in the pulav with the stone.

Ease of living is gone. We suspect everybody to carry the virus. We are apprehensive about the health conditions of our usual milkman, vegetable vendor, grocer, etc., when we go to buy the basic necessities.

Earlier when one sneezed, we said 'God Bless'. But now we move away.

A humble request: do not your life become like the delicious pulav. Stop reading negative news and posts. Read motivating posts and books. Cultivate hobbies and buy happiness in kilos & tons!



In the Bodi tribe, in Ethiopia, the most desired men are those with the largest bellies. The more belly you have, the more attractive you are. I show this to you so you can see that you're not fat, you're just in the wrong tribe.

Q: Did you hear about the guy who

Coping with stress

Wellness

## Ways women can combat stress and adversity

Women have, over centuries, possessed strong emotional strength and intelligence, which has been attributed to their ability for excelling in interpersonal communication, multi-tasking, and people management skills. The multi-tasking, the added burden of unpaid work and the overall evolution of the society into a more isolated, competitive and tech driven space, have impacted all aspects of life, making stress a constant companion. And dealing with it can be a rather tricky matter, especially for women.

Here are 5 tips for the women of today, as reported by Shikha Desai of Times of India, that can help them cope better with stress and adversity, and gain control of their lives.

**Prioritising and delegation of tasks:** Like any expert taskmaster, prioritizing ones tasks helps effective time management and completion of tasks at hand. Delegation is another important, and often underrated aspect of effectively coping with higher workloads. Often lack of effective delegation can cause unmanageable pile up of workload, leading to overbearing work pressures, stress, and anxiety. Be in personal or professional arena, effectively drawing up boundaries, and taking up tasks based on practical and well thought thorough planning, can go a



long way in helping create a relaxed and pleasant worklife balance.

**Effective me time:** One of the most important aspect of maintain a healthy mind and body, is to indulge in some 'me time' activities. From physical pampering to relaxed solitude, pursuing a hobby, or just basically having a time assigned to do exactly what one wants to do, instead of having to or needing to do, can be as healing and therapeutic, as it is vital to help create mental peace. This also allows excellent opportunity for introspection and con-

necting with self - aspects that play significant roles when one is trying to cope with difficult situations or just trying to handle daily stress.

**Exercise for the mind and body:** Exercise has been one of the most under rated antidepressants and most often, is not on the list of most people with hectic schedules. However, even 30 mins of basic physical exercises daily, such as going for a walk, , joining dance groups or working out with friends can all help drastically improve the quality of life. In addition, doing yoga and mindfulness meditations can help build a healthier mind and body. These exercises can elevate spirit and help manage stress and anxiety.

**Healthy social support system:** This continues to remain a significant aspect of effective stress management. Indulging in a hobby or a social group activity, on a regular basis, can help improve stress, build self-confidence and greater ability to handle adversity/ crisis. A healthy social life, with an effective support system, like a group of friends or extended family, that can step in to help, talk, relax, share opinions or guide, etc., can be a boon when one is facing a high stress situation or an adversity.

**Music:** Music has a universal language and, since ancient times, and has been used to heal. Listening to music daily is highly therapeutic as it is quite relaxing and makes you calmer which then helps reduce anxiety and stress, help you sleep better, and fight diseases.

While all, of the above are important aspects in ensuring mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical wellbeing, it is important to not shy away from seeking professional help, if, and when needed. Mental health issues, especially postpartum depression, are serious issues that women need to be more aware about and take action.

## **Expert-approved tips to deal with procrastination**

There are times when you know that it's just going to take a few minutes to do some pressing tasks, but for some reason, you keep on putting them off. Only when you are close to the deadline, you curse yourself and often ask, why on earth you didn't do it before? If this sounds familiar, you're certainly not alone. Studies indicate that over 20 per cent of the adult population put off or avoid doing tasks by allowing themselves to be overtaken by distractions, which is known as procrastination.

#### What is procrastination?

Procrastination is defined as the act of delaying or putting off tasks until the last minute or past deadline. The main reason procrastinators do not want to finish their task is that they feel overwhelmed easily and their concentration level is low. According to Mumbai based psychiatrist, Janpreet Anand, "procrastination is not laziness." She describes it as a mental block, which needs to be dealt with profound techniques, reports Times of India.

Recent studies suggest that people remorse more about things they haven't done than the things they have done. Anand said that procrastination can be easily managed by taking the right step at the right time. She shared some easy tips to overcome this everyday challenge and be more productive.

#### Temptation bundling

The first method is the temptation

bundling. The psychiatrist recommends clubbing up the activity you love to do with the activity that you procrastinate about. For example, if you love listening to music and then club up this activity with your grocery shopping, which you dislike and often procrastinate about. Clubbing means doing these activities together. Listen to music only when you go grocery shopping. Bundling things up can give you the motivation to fight procrastination.

#### Immediate consequences

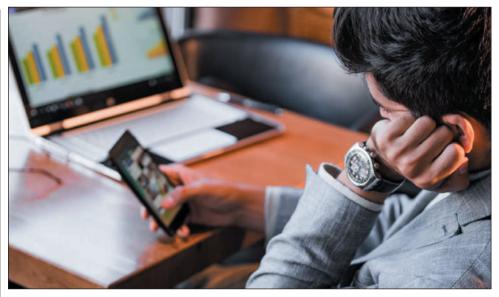
Club your activity with something that has immediate consequences. Like if you dislike working out then find a workout partner. By doing this whenever you miss your workout, you will feel that your partner is also suffering or you will feel motivated to do better because of the other person. Anand said doing this would motivate you to finish your task on time.

#### Design your future actions

You cannot change yourself in a day. Taking drastic methods often backfires. To succeed in your objective, it is important to take small steps. Plan your future actions and take small steps towards your target and make changes accordingly.

#### Make your target more achievable

This is one of the most important steps to avoid procrastination. Most people avoid doing any work because they feel overwhelmed or do not find the motivation



to do so. An easy way to overcome this issue is by dividing your task and making it more achievable, which Anand calls chunking. Making small goals and achieving your targets will make you feel accomplished and help you stay motivated.

#### **Commitment and consistency**

The last one is commitment and consistency. Without these two, it is not possible to achieve your goal and give up on procrastination. "Stay committed and consistent to reach your goal. This is the only way to beat procrastination," the psychiatrist said.



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#### Entertainment

#### **Mauritius Times**

**F**ilmmaker Karan Johar, the man behind popular love story *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*', says the romance genre, which dominated the 1990s, has completely vanished from Bollywood today as the audience is not invested in watching such stories on the big screen.

Johar was among the key filmmakers in the 90s-along with Yash Chopra and Aditya Chopra-who shaped the contemporary, larger than life romance that is associated with Bollywood.

Right from his 1998 debut 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai', multistarrer 'Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham' (2001) to 'Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna' and even production 'Kal Ho Na Ho' (2003), the films were not only blockbusters but also had a significant pop culture impact.

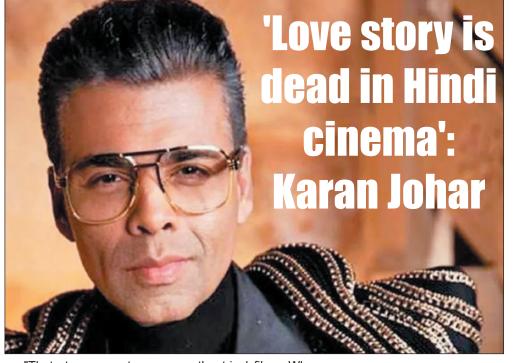
In the current phase of the industry, the 48-year-old director said romance has been long forgotten, reports PTI.

"Today if you notice in Hindi cinema, the love story is dead. We don't make love stories anymore, they're few. The 90s thrived on romances, starting from *'Hum Aapke Hai Koun!'* going right up to *'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai.'* It was dictated by love stories," Johar said.

The director was speaking at a special event of Netflix, 'See What's Next India', where the streamer announced its 2021 slate for movies and series.

Johar's Dharma Productions backed film, 'Meenakshi Sundareshwar', will head to Netflix for its premiere. The film stars Sanya Malhotra and Abhimanyu Dassani.

The director said he is now told to make love stories for Netflix, which is why a '*Meenakshi Sundareshwar*' will release on the streamer.



"That story came to me as a theatrical film. When Srishti (Behl Arya, Director- International Original Film, Netflix India) heard it and said let's do this for the platform, I did some data and an academic thought on it and realised this can be done. There's a data that supports certain genres which aren't working on cinema halls anymore but have a wide audience on platforms."

A Salman Khan actioner like 'Dabangg', the blockbuster 'Dhoom' franchise or even a Shah Rukh Khan led romantic film comes loaded with nostalgia for the big screen, Johar said.

"So the cinegoer in you would feel that film is meant for cinema halls. While I believe that these divides and lines are blurring. A lot of films that you would imagine would be in cinema halls are now being produced by platforms of power and are doing a spectacular job."

The director said eventually, co-existence of both, the big screen entertainers and streaming platforms, is going to be the future.

"So would I make a

'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai'? As a filmmaker, a scream inside says no. But a practical voice also says 'wait and watch'," he added.

Johar's upcoming productions on Netflix include drama 'Ajeeb Daastaans', Madhuri Dixit starrer series 'Finding Anamika', the documentary 'Searching For Sheela' on Ma Anand Sheela and season two of 'Fabulous Lives of Bollywood Wives'.

### Abhishek Bachchan recalls first meeting with Aishwarya Rai , admits he had a crush on her

A bhishek Bachchan admitted that it was difficult to not 'crush on' Aishwarya Rai, before they were married and had worked together on several films. The couple tied the knot in 2007, and have one daughter, Aaradhya.

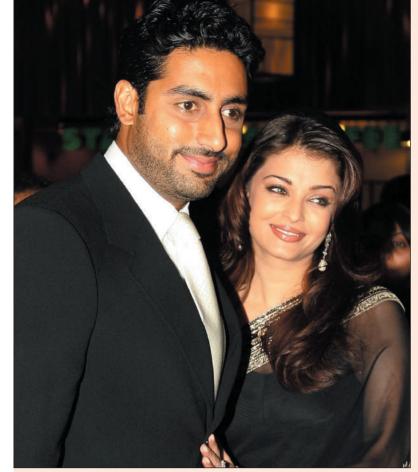
In an interview, Abhishek recalled his 'love story' with Aishwarya, which he said dated back to when they first met in Switzerland. Abhishek had been sent on a recce, and had met Aishwarya there while she was filming a movie with Bobby Deol, reports Hindustan Times.

He said on YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia's podcast, "I first met her when I was a production boy. There was a film my father was making called *Mrityudata*, and I had gone for the location recce to Switzerland, because the company felt that because I had grown up in Switzerland in boarding school that I would be able to take them to nice locations."

He continued, "I had been there for a couple of days, all alone. And that's when a childhood friend of mine, Bobby Deol, was shooting for his first film -- Aur Pyar Ho Gaya. And he got to know I was there, and said 'Hey, why don't you come over for dinner?' And that's the first time, when they were shooting, when I met Aishwarya."

Abhishek said that the second movie he shot for, called *Dhai Akshar Prem Ke*, starred Aishwarya, and that they worked together several times and had developed a good friendship before deciding to get married. Asked if he 'crushed on' her during this time, Abhishek said, "Who doesn't crush on her? I mean, come on, come on."

The couple has worked together on films such as *Guru, Raavan, Sarkar Raaj, Umrao Jaan, Dhoom 2*, and many others.



### Abhishek forced to drop out of college

Abhishek Bachchan also said that he had 'front row seats' when his family went through a financial crunch in the 1990s. He said that he was forced to drop out of college and return home because his father, Amitabh Bachchan, 'was going through a really rough time'. In an appearance on YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia's podcast, Abhishek recalled the time, and said that even though he wasn't 'qualified' to help him in any way, he felt that as a son, he should be around his father.

He said, "Well, truth be told, I left university -- I was studying in Boston University. I had declared my major as liberal arts, and then I majored in performing arts. And I left my education because my father was going through this really rough time, financially. He had started this business called ABCL."

He continued, "I don't think I was qualified to help him in any which way, but I just felt that as a son, I needed to be around my father, and help in whatever way. So I left my college and came back. I started helping him in his company." Abhishek said that he 'started as a production boy', which he described as a 'glorified tea maker'.

He recalled one particular incident, when his father summoned him to his study late at night, to tell him that his 'movies aren't working out, the business isn't working out, nothing is working out'. It was then that Amitabh decided to 'go back to basics' and revive his acting career. So the next morning, he 'walked across to

Yash Chopra's house', Abhishek said, and told him, "Look, I don't have a job, nobody is giving me work anymore, my movies aren't working, and I've come to ask you to please give me a film to work in."

Amitabh was offered *Mohabbatein*, which was around the same time he made his foray into television with *Kaun Banega Crorepati.* Both projects turned his fortunes around.

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### Gurmeet Choudhary: 'People often call me and cry... it's devastating'

s India struggles against the deadly Acoronavirus, Gurmeet Choudhary is making efforts to help people in dire need. The Khamoshiyan actor recently assembled a team and circulated a number on social media asking people to reach out to him for help, reports Times of India. "A few of my friends and relatives, who are financially stable, were struggling to get a bed in hospitals. They would call me for help, and that's when I realised the situation needs immediate intervention. So I decided to start a campaign on social media. I shared a number in a post and asked people in need to reach out to me. I was also inspired by Sonu Sood. I know him closely, we have worked on *Paltan* together and I'm proud of what he is doing for the country. As actors, we have the power to reach out to millions, and I feel this is the right way to use it," he says.

Gurmeet and his wife Debina Bonnerjee had tested Covid positive last year. He feels the situation is worse now. Sharing his first-hand experience of the current crisis, the actor tells us, "When Debina and I tested positive, things were bad, but now the situation is worse."



Gurmeet Choudhary and wife Debina donate plasma

Gurmeet adds, "The second wave is dangerous, the virus is spreading like wildfire. People often call me and cry, *log bolte hain meri maa ko bacha lo*, save my child, my sister is suffering... it's devastating. I haven't slept for the past five-six days. There's a shortage of medicines, injections, beds, oxygen cylinders, a lot of people are calling us for plasma, but awareness *hi nahi hai*, people don't know about it. Debina and I donated plasma after our recovery, we shared it on social media as well and asked people to do the same. But nobody took it seriously. Now, I have again started requesting people to donate plasma."

While in Dehradun, the actor has been

visiting hospitals and meeting doctors. "People told me that it's not safe to go to hospitals right now, but I had to go to see the situation. While I'm taking care of my safety I feel it's also important to make sure that others are safe. My team and I are tying up with multiple hospitals across the country and trying to provide beds to them. I have requested a few of my businessmen friends to help me financially in this. I want to save as many lives as I can," he says.

Gurmeet's relentless efforts have got him love and praise from all quarters. Talking about it, he says, "I don't think anything can make me happier than this. I got a call from Varanasi on Wednesday at 2am, the person needed help to shift his sister to a Delhi hospital. I told him that aapki behen, meri behen hai, aur uski help karna mera farz hai. I called up a few people and helped them shift her. I want to bring a ripple effect of change. I want people to help each other. Adopt a patient if you can and if you can't, share the patient's details with me. Let's all come together and help each other in these trying times."

### Surbhi Chandna on *Sanjivani*'s end: It was a fulfilling experience



The reboot of medical drama *Sanjivani*, starring Surbhi Chandna and Namit Khanna in the lead roles, is going off the air. On that occasion, Surbhi Chandna took to her Instagram account and posted a long message, reports Indian Express. Sharing a few pictures from the sets, Chandna started her note by thanking her producers, "And today we air the last episode of what I call a Fulfilling experience of my life #sanjivani .. @siddharthpmalhotra @sapnamalhotra01 I cannot thankyou both enough for having the faith in me and throwing this sweet challenge ..."

The actor also wrote about the theme of Sanjivani and the challenges of playing Dr Ishani, "A risky subject in today's TV TIMES ..letting me play her my way and immense respect to @starplus my home channel like i love calling it . Dr. Ishani has to be the most complicated the most difficult girl/character to decode and it has been a task cracking her and to still make her loveable - vulnerable - inspiring yet extremely strong was only possible because of my writers directors & the creatives."

Apart from Surbhi Chandna and Namit Khanna, Mohnish Bahl, Gurdeep Kohli, Rohit Roy, Sayantani Ghosh and Gaurav Chopraa also played pivotal roles in the Sanjivani reboot.

Earlier speaking to indianexpress.com, Chandna had stated that her series will have a completely new take on the subject. "So, neither Namit nor I have seen the previous *Sanjivani*. So our take is completely different. Also, I feel that's a good thing, as we are bringing everything fresh on the table. Even the way the reboot version has been written, you will not find any similarities. Yes, Mohnish Bahl and Gurdeep Kohli are part of our show too, but their equation has also changed for the better now," she stated.

# Shivaji Satam on *CID* memes and the team's bond with Lata Mangeshkar

Shivaji Satam has appeared in a variety of movies and shows throughout his long career. However, it was the longrunning cop drama *CID* that took the actor's popularity to new heights. Shivaji played ACP Pradyuman in the show, created by BP Singh. Dishya Sharma of Hindustan Times took a walk down memory lane with him on his birthday last Wednesday.

The actor revealed that the famous catchphrase, "Kuch toh gadbad hai, Daya (Something's fishy, Daya)" was not originally planned but came about when he was discussing a scene with the show's creator.

"One day I was talking to him, discussing something about the scene and he kept on (staring). I asked, 'What happened?' (He said) 'Jis tarah se tu explain kar raha tha. Abhi jo tu aise haath kar ke bata raha tha. Yehi mujhe chahiye, karega tu ye? Isko tu ACP ke character mein laa sakta hai kya? (The way you were explaining, using your hands, will you be able to replicate this as ACP?)' he asked me," Shivaji recalled. After some backand-forth, Shivaji replicated the gesture for the show, and the rest is history.

The line remains popular among viewers even years after the show ended. It has become fodder for memes, as well. Shivaji thinks of this as a compliment. He also revealed that one of his favourite memes is ACP Pradyuman morphed onto the Statue of Liberty.



"That was the most creative, amazing thing I had come across (laughs). Imagine, Statue of Liberty with ACP's moustache and eyes. How can one even think of such a thing, it is so amazing! What more wonderful compliment can be there than this," he gushed.

One of the show's most popular fans is legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar. Shivaji revealed that the singer hosted the cast at her house. "For her, *CID* is like her family. We've had dinner with her and her family. She's gifted us some wonderful gifts. One such is a wristwatch. I use it and with pride, I say, 'Lata didi gave this to me.' They love us all," he said. He also added that she calls and checks up on him from time to time.

Although it has been over two years since the show ended, Shivaji said that a reunion might be in the pipeline. He revealed that the negotiations were almost done, but the pandemic played spoilsport.

#### Watch's On

#### **Mauritius Times**

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#### Other Voices

#### **Mauritius Times**

Tree of Knowledge

Madisyn Taylor

# Football in Europe is being transformed by US private equity firms - here's how

Football is changing, again. Many fans who have spent years watching their teams, either live in a stadium or on the television, have long had to face the fact that their teams are (more often than not) no longer owned and run locally.

Russian oligarchs, Gulf nations and Chinese billionaires have regularly bought into European football clubs over the last 20 years. But more recently the money has been flowing across the Atlantic as US private equity firms have seen a lucrative opportunity, caused partly by the pandemic.

This is football like we have never seen it before. Transnational investors - driven by financial returns in a sport fast converging with the entertainment and digital sectors are transforming the game into a big bucks global industry. Television helped make top football clubs rich, but streaming could bring them untold riches.

COVID-19 didn't cause football's private equity boom, but it helped by accelerating and amplifying existing or emerging trends. As football clubs have struggled financially, investors have moved in to pick up some bargains. And as people have stayed at home, so the consumption of streaming services like Netflix and Amazon Prime have become entertainment and lifestyle staples, enhancing the relevance of such platforms for sport.

#### Who are the investors?

So who are these major American private equity investors taking over European football? Fenway Sports Group (FSG), the owner of English Premier League champions Liverpool, is reportedly on the verge of selling over 10% of the club to US investor RedBird Capital Partners for around £540 million. RedBird appears intent on building a global network of football investments. This would be on the back of the £4.7 million recently invested into the club by basketball superstar Lebron James.

In December, ALK Capital - another American sports investment business acquired the English club Burnley via a leveraged buyout (similar to how the Glazer family bought Manchester United in 2005). Leveraging essentially means using a club as collateral to secure a loan in order to buy it.

The situation is similar elsewhere. RedBird already holds a stake in French club Toulouse, while Bordeaux (General American Capital Partners and King Street Capital Management) and AS Nancy (New City Capital) are also US-owned. Meanwhile, Troyes FC was bought last year by City Football Group, in which Californian private equity investor Silver Lake owns shares.

The story is the same in Italy, where the Elliott Management Corporation owns AC Milan and where a private equity consortium consisting of CVC Capital Partners,



Anfield in 2016. Reuters / Phil Noble Livepic

Advent Capital Management and FSI Capital are pursuing the acquisition of a  $\pounds$ 1.5 billion stake in the new media business of premier league Serie A.

CVC and Advent are reportedly keen on striking a similar deal with German Football's Bundesliga International, which handles overseas media rights sales.

#### **Network analysis**

To give a sense of the size and scale of what private equity investors are engaged in and seeking to achieve, we undertook a social network analysis of a small sample of them. Our aim was to highlight the links when we observed two companies sharing an economic relationship. This resulted in the chart below (click to make it bigger).

It is apparent that this private equity investment is not just restricted to Europe or to football. For example, Silver Lake has connections to City Football Group franchises in India, China, Tokyo and Australia. And RedBird's activities also extend to baseball, through the Boston Red Sox and the New York Yankees.

Such investments are part of broader equity portfolios linked to sports like basketball, American football and wrestling. Silver Lake also appears keen to use football as the means of joining the dots between businesses operating in other sectors such as sports retail (like Fanatics, an online licensed clothing store) and entertainment (such as Endeavour, a talent representation agency).

#### Blank cheques and streaming

The resurgence of special purpose acquisition companies, or SPACS, has also given rise to a focus on sport. SPACS (like RedBird) are formed specifically to raise capital via initial public offerings (where shares are sold to institutional and retail investors) for the purposes of acquiring or investing in an existing business. They are sometimes referred to as "blank cheque companies" and are focused on making as much money as possible for the investors

#### involved in them.

SPACS and other private equity groups find football very appealing because it is a ready-made product with which people across the world are already engaged. Spectators and fans are willing to pay to watch sport and routinely buy merchandise. So there's money to be made and investors know it.

But perhaps one of the main reasons these clubs are such a tempting proposition are the opportunities that streaming provides. Consumption habits have changed over the last five years, leading to the consequent erosion of existing broadcasting formats. Over the last two decades, football clubs have benefited from lucrative broadcasting contracts. But the likes of Netflix, Amazon Prime and DAZN promise even greater financial returns, especially for the top clubs playing in the biggest leagues.

These firms can also put clubs in danger. For instance, ALK's acquisition of Burnley effectively involved mortgaging the club in order to complete its purchase. The club is now £90 million worse off than it was before.

At Manchester United, there has been a long-running fan campaign to remove the Glazers. Even at Liverpool, not everyone is happy with FSG.

That's because blank cheques off the field don't necessarily bring blank cheques on the field. Most fans know that investors are interested in one thing: making money. The problem is, maximising profits often means eroding the connections between clubs and the communities in which they are located.

**Paul Widdop** Senior Lecturer in Sport Business, Manchester Metropolitan University

Simon Chadwick Global Professor of Eurasian Sport | Director of Eurasian Sport, EM Lyon

# You are not crazy

ost of us feel a little crazy Most of us reer of the second second like high stress can make us feel like we're losing it, as can being surrounded by people whose values are very different from our own. Losing a significant relationship and moving into a new life situation are other events that can cause us to feel off-kilter. Circumstances like these recur in our lives, and they naturally affect our mental stability. The symptoms of our state of mind can range from having no recollection of putting our car keys where we eventually find them, to wondering if we're seeing things clearly when everyone around us seems to be in denial of what's going on right in front of their eyes. For most of us, the key to survival at times like these is to step back, take a deep breath, and regain our composure. Then we can decide what course of action to take.

Sometimes a time-out does the trick. We take a day off from whatever is making us feel crazy and, like magic, we feel in our right mind again. Talking to an objective friend can also help. We begin to see what it is about the situation that destabilizes us, and we can make changes from there. At other times, if the situation is particularly sticky, we may need to seek professional help. Meeting with someone who understands the way the human mind reacts to stress, loss, and difficulty can make us feel less alone and more supported. A therapist or a spiritual counselor can give us techniques that help bring us back to a sane state of mind so that we can affect useful changes. They can also mirror our basic goodness, helping us to see that we are actually okay.

The main purpose of the wakeup call that feeling crazy provides is to let us know that something in our lives is out of balance. Confirm for yourself that you are capable of creating a sane and peaceful reality for yourself. Try to remember that most people have felt, at one time or another, that they are losing it. You deserve a life that helps you thrive. Try and take some steps today to help you achieve more balance and a little less crazy.