

MAURITIUS TIMES

• "We are, or will be, going through the most radical transformation the world has ever seen; people are justly terrified, excited, depressed, heartbroken and hopeful, all at once." -- Heather Marsh

Encounter

Dr Sabrina Dyall, Associate Prof in Biosciences, UOM



"Humans are explorers. We want to know what's out there - are we alone in this immense Universe?"

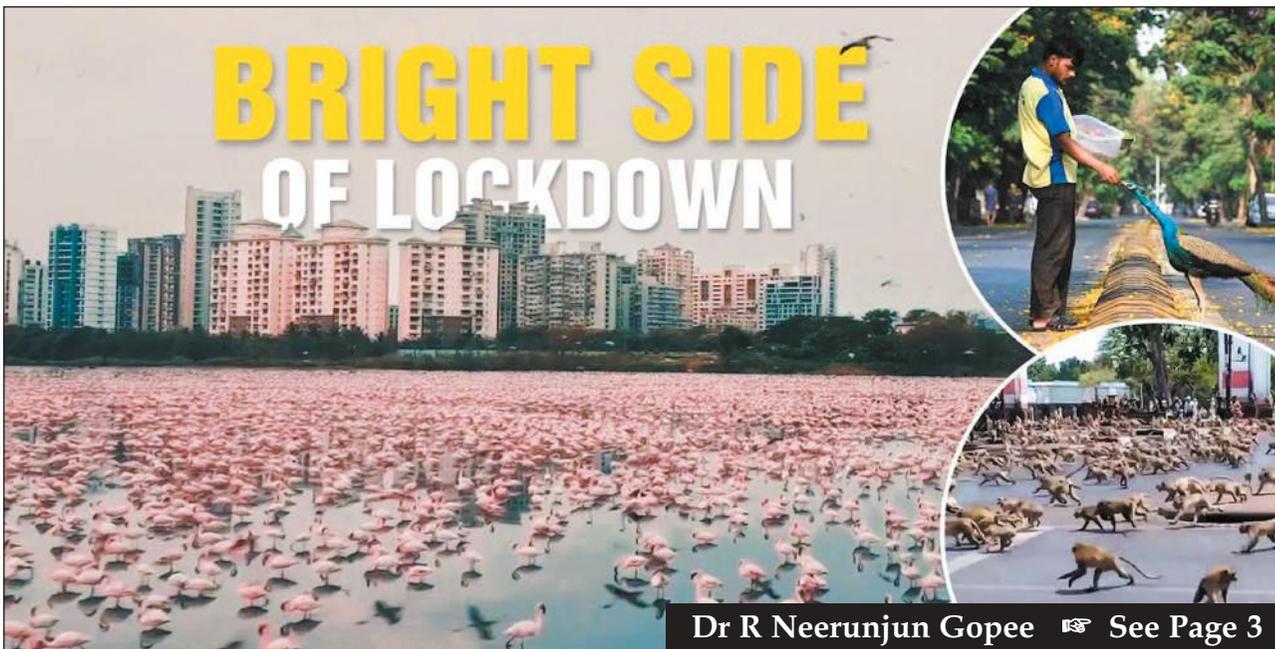
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The price of global pandemic responses has been to make many other diseases worse

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Pour mieux comprendre

L'histoire de Maurice



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The Public Needs Answers

The public needs answers and its interests defended on broad national issues. In a parliamentary democracy like ours, it is through their elected representatives that these objectives of the public can be met. If the latter are unable to exercise their constitutional right of representation whether in the field or in Parliament, then they are failing in their obligations to the electorate. Another way of looking at it would be that they are being paid to do nothing, which would be tantamount to a waste of taxpayer money.

Whatever be the technicalities involved, the more recent happenings in Parliament which is supposed to be the temple of democracy are a matter of serious concern, worry even, to the country at large.

The lay public's perception of partiality on the part of the Speaker can itself affect the ruling regime adversely down the line. Because as has often been said, in politics the reality is the perception. A persistently negative perception as a result of the actions of any of its members will definitely impact a party as a whole.

Three things happened that do not augur well for the future conduct of the country's affairs at the level where it matters most:

1. The disallowing of the question put by Hon Patrick Assirvaden about the ambassadorship of Mr Soodhun in Saudi Arabia;
2. The removal of this question from the Speaker's list so that it will not figure in the official records of Parliament, the Hansard;
3. The suspension of three members of the Opposition from Parliament from its current session.

Since any ambassador is paid from the public exchequer, surely the public has a right to know what is the current status of Mr Soodhun given the incomplete information that is available, not to speak of rumours? In fact, it is precisely because of the 'good relations' that we entertain with any country that the people should know what their representative in that country is up to. It is all the more important to clear the air when there are echoes about that person having been declared *persona non grata*, per the information that is being circulated. One cannot understand, therefore, why was the question disallowed, more so since there was no convincing explanation forthcoming from the Speaker on such an important matter. He may be acting by the Standing Orders, but the public doesn't know them, and they deserve and expect clarification – for that matter, also in the interest of the proper functioning of Parliament.

On the other hand, even if the Speaker was right in disallowing the question, why remove it from the Hansard? Why stifle the evidence that there was an attempt by an MP to find answers to an issue of material interest to the people? Isn't the historical record important for future researchers and historians, in fact for the future generations of Mauritians to form their own opinion about how their Parliament was functioning – or malfunctioning?

As regards the suspension of the three members, again whatever the technicalities, the clear perception is that it is inordinately out of proportion to the 'fault' allegedly committed.

All in all it is the image of the country as a truly functioning parliamentary democracy that will suffer, and that has serious implications. Isn't it enough that we are on some black lists and that our international image is thus already at a low? Who wants it to slide further down?

The Conversation

The price of global pandemic responses has been to make many other diseases worse

We should assess the pandemic's effect in the round, beyond just Covid deaths



Photo - theconversation.com

We are living through an age of untold suffering. Over 500,000 people have died from coronavirus in the US alone, over 120,000 in the UK, and over two million worldwide. With Covid-19 dominating the news cycle, you would be forgiven for forgetting that other diseases still exist. And yet we know full well that diseases don't stop just because one is hogging all the limelight.

There have been plenty of reports on the troubling cost of the pandemic and associated lockdowns or shelter-in-place orders on people's mental health. For example, it has had a profound effect on those living with obsessive-compulsive disorder. Studies from Europe show that between a third and half of those suffering from OCD had their symptoms worsen during the pandemic.

Young adults seem to have been particularly affected by the emotional burdens of isolation and insecurity. In a recent survey, conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the US, 63% of 18-to-24-year-olds reported symptoms of anxiety or depression, with 25% reporting increased substance use to deal with stress, and 25% saying they'd seriously considered suicide.

Crucially, these issues won't abate as soon as the pandemic is over. Even when the crisis recedes, Dr Shekar Saxena of the Harvard School of Public Health suggests that 10% of these young people will have to live with the long-lasting effects of

the mental illnesses they are currently enduring.

The damage done by the pandemic to mental health has already attracted well-deserved attention. It has highlighted the importance of looking beyond coronavirus deaths to assess the success of global pandemic responses. Cancer tells a similar, and equally distressing, story.

Cancer care in the pandemic

Throughout 2020, hospitals across the UK, US and Europe cancelled or postponed urgent cancer operations because they could not cope with the rising number of desperately ill coronavirus patients. Determining cancer prognosis is complex, but early evidence suggests that even a four-week delay in treatment can raise the risk of death by up to 10%.

The danger is not just physical, but psychological too. Despite these distressing figures of cancellations and waiting times, we don't yet know much about the emotional toll these delays will have on people living with cancer today. Stories are, however, starting to emerge. One man, diagnosed with stage-4 bowel cancer in June 2020, had his December surgery postponed, and then "cancelled indefinitely".

Agnes Arnold-Forster

Research Fellow, History of Medicine and Healthcare, University of Bristol

Mauritius Times

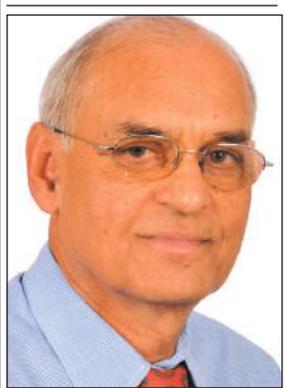
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Lockdowns and Dharti Ma



Dr R Neerunjun Gopee

Sometime after the first Covid-imposed lockdowns around the world last year, there was a profusion of articles from all over describing how Nature was reviving. India witnessed the rare sight of dolphins cavorting in the clear waters of the Ganga river, but they were also sighted clearly enjoying themselves off the coasts of Mumbai and Chennai. From Delhi came posts of the blue sky there as well as in the adjoining towns of Noida and Gurgaon, and also of the clear blue waters of the Yamuna river and of the Ganga at Hardwar. They revived many warm memories and nostalgia of these places familiar to me, and a yearning to visit as soon as possible. This horizon is alas receding even further with the second and imminent third Covid waves that are surfing on the planet.

In Venice too, the waters became crystal clear once again.

In Mauritius several citizens waxed lyrical about seeing birds that had virtually disappeared from the landscape that began to be seen again, including in my own yard. But I apprehended that when the lockdown was lifted the noise of the traffic that will start to ply again will disturb these denizens, making them show up less frequently. Unfortunately, this did happen, as the madness that we call 'normal' returned in full swing.

This time round, I have hardly come across any articles about the glories of the Earth recovering its freshness and glory. Perhaps we have been too preoccupied with trying to control the spread of the coronavirus and coping with its medical consequences and the rising numbers of deaths.

It's just as well therefore that, on April 22, the UN will refresh our collective memory about our debt and responsibility to 'Mother Earth' by celebrating International Mother Earth Day. I don't know when there was a transition to the idea of the Earth being Mother changed from the prevailing industrial one of man exerting dominion over nature to exploit it at its will, but perhaps it's better late than never.

Explanations had to be given about how Mother Nature was *sometimes* known as Mother Earth or the Earth

Just like mother's milk that initially nourishes us, so does Mother Earth nourish us until we die - and return to Her



Mother, as a personification of nature that focuses on the life-giving and nurturing aspects of nature by embodying it, in the form of the mother. Also that we call our Earth as Mother Earth because earth is the only planet where life can exist as life, meaning the home place where you born, where you grow, where you eat and play, that Earth is the only one Mother of all living organism who gives you everything you need.

But to the Hindus, the Earth has long been known intuitively as Dharti Ma. *Dhar* comes from the Sanskrit root *dhri* which means to support/to sustain, and from which the term dharma is also derived, and refers to 'that which sustains or upholds.'

Dharti Ma is therefore the Earth Mother who supports our collective physical weight: multiply 7.5 billion by, say, an average of 40 kg and that will give an approximation of the weight pressing down on Dharti Ma, which weight is continuously increasing as the population grows; add to that the weight of all the other animals and plants and the total is mind-boggling. But Dharti Ma not only supports our weight, and our burdens, She also sustains us - all of us living things, because She produces all the food that we consume. Our food is either of plant or animal origin, so we are fed directly (the plants that we eat) and

indirectly: the animal flesh, which is itself built up from either plants or other animals consumed by the predator animals. When we eat animal flesh we are also predators, however gastronomically smart the dishes may be that we prepare.

Just like mother's milk that initially nourishes us, so does Mother Earth nourish us until we die - and return to Her. And here again, one moment's thought will make us realise how magnanimous a Mother She is indeed: for after some hours when the flesh starts to rot, we can no longer be endured by our near and dear ones, and no other human being can 'take us in' either, so we go back to: Dharti Ma, to Her ample womb and bosom. And are 'accepted' without any reluctance or repugnance whatsoever.

Why? Because we are made of the same material as Her, in fact of the same stuff that all that exists in the universe is made of. These are the five elements - NB: not as defined in chemistry, which is a too limited a perspective from the cosmic point of view - and they are fire, air, space, earth and water. In Hinduism these five fundamental constituent elements are known as agni, vayu, akash, prithvi and jal. By earth in this terminology is meant all the minerals. And for that matter anywhere in the universe it is these same elements that go into the composition of whatever objects exist.

It is thus a bit of a paradox that we have to proclaim an International Mother Earth Day, to create awareness about how precious the Earth is to us and to sensitize us about the now critical need to protect it from our depredations. Ecological salvage and environmental protection and preservation have now become an imperative if we are to survive. This has to be drummed into us by the UN from a global platform because we have let go of our simple commonsense, which would have made us realise for ourselves how important it is to protect the Mother that sustains us from birth - why, even before birth as we lie in our mother's womb! - to death. And also how intimately we are connected, through the five elements, to the universe as a whole.

This organic connection with the earth is what makes us cherish a little corner that we can call our own, where we can sit in peace and silence, and contemplate the beauty and the vastness that nature has graced us with, and look inwards to express the gratitude that we owe. Those who fail to understand this deep connection tend to use disparaging terms such as polytheism, paganism, animism when referring to people who feel so embedded in Nature that they consider it endowed with the same life-giving power that animates them.

Many years ago, when visiting the Grand Canyon, I bought a little book there titled 'Earth Prayers From Around the World', a collection of '365 prayers, poems, and invocations for honoring the earth.' On the dedication page we read: 'May the Earth always speak to your spirit.'

In their introduction 'A call to Earth prayer' the authors write: 'We wanted to link our personal spiritual life with that of the entire biosphere. Perhaps everything prays - not only humans.' They go on to say that the voices represented in the book unfold a 'collective story' of women and men throughout history and prehistory who share a 'common spiritual heritage we choose to call Earth Prayer. And it is based on one single recognition: we are, body and spirit, one with the Earth and with all of creation.'

But of course we are: since we are made of the same five elements, as the sages thousands of years ago understood, experienced, and proclaimed as a Universal Truth, Unique and Eternal. Just listen to these healing words that the authors offer for our delight:

***The beauty of the trees
the softness of the air
the fragrance of the grass
speaks to me
The summit of the mountain
the thunder of the sky
the rhythm of the sea
speaks to me
And my heart soars.***

Blessed be our Dharti Ma, for ever and ever...



Dr Vinaye Ancharaz
International Economic
Consultant

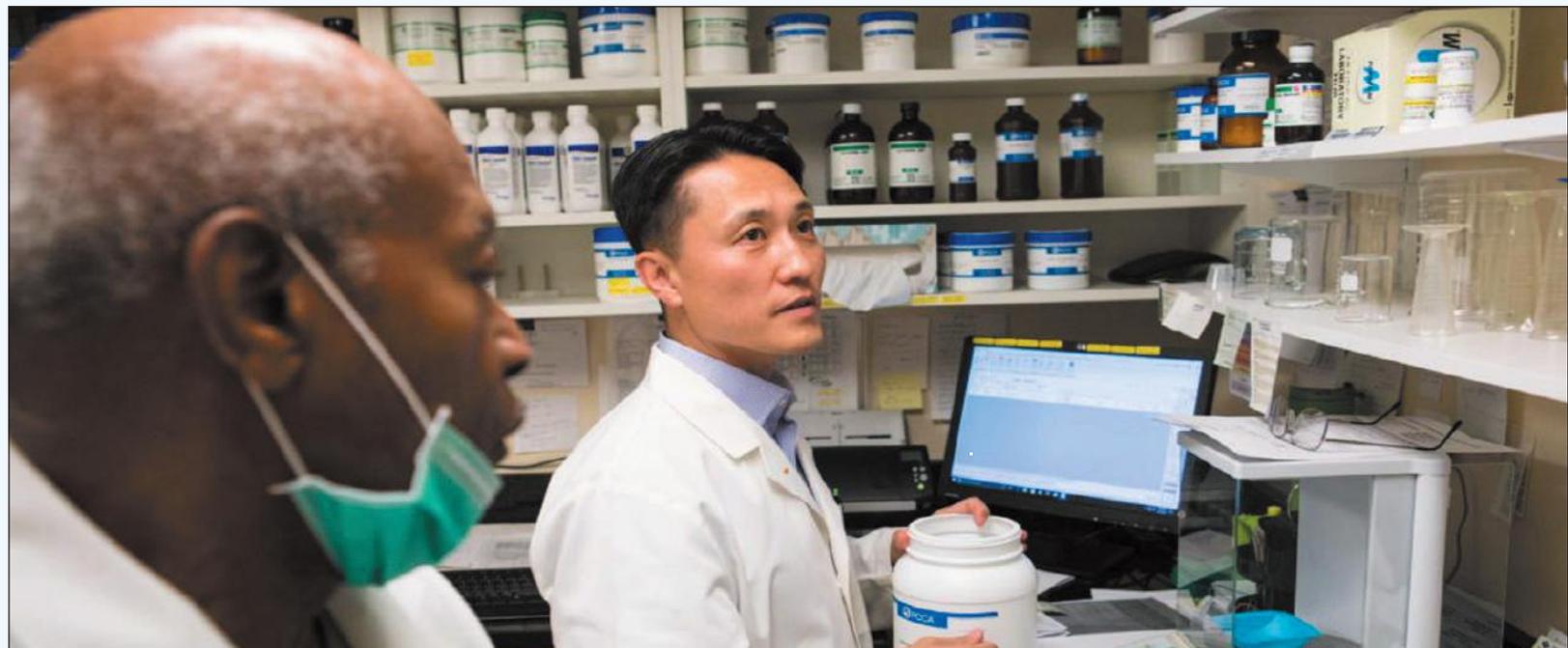
The Audit Report: 'Same old, same old' or a harbinger for change?

History suggests that the most difficult reforms have occurred at the peak of protracted crises. So, the time for change is now

Sunday's festive mood was somewhat spoiled by the country waking up to the news that the price of gasoline (l'essence) has gone up by Rs4.40 per litre, with the price of diesel maintained at Rs35 per litre. The Petroleum Pricing Committee pinned this increase to a sharp rise in the world price of oil and the continued strengthening of the US dollar. However, as usual, the devil is in the detail. The new price of Rs48.40/litre includes taxes and compulsory contributions amounting to Rs26.10, that is 56% of the whole-sale price of gasoline! And the fact that the price of gasoline was increased while that of diesel remains put corresponds to an implicit subsidy paid by users of motor vehicles to users of public transportation, as if the former are rich, and the latter poor!

The outcome could have been different. Last year when oil prices collapsed on the back of the outbreak of Covid-19, local prices were maintained, resulting in significant gains in the reserves of the Price Stabilization Account, part of which was used to support government efforts to combat the pandemic. At a time when large segments of the population are reeling from the devastating economic effects of the pandemic while facing sharp hikes in food prices, the higher price of fuel only makes things incrementally worse. It represents a desperate measure to replenish the government coffers that have been systematically plundered through a lot of wheeling and dealing, bordering on corruption and an outright theft of public money. This is what the people have suspected for some time. It is now confirmed by the latest report of the National Audit Office (NAO).

The 2019-2020 Audit Report continues in the steps of its predecessors, making important revelations about wastages of public resources due to a lack of adherence to legislations and basic principles of procurement, governance, and asset management. Where the Report departs from the tradition is in the very scale of the dilapidation of taxpayers' money that it brings to light. To be fair, much of the period (July 2019 to June 2020) that the Report covers is exceptional, and it would therefore be meaningless to compare it against past years. Yet, the audit period spans less than three months of the Covid-



"The available information, albeit partial and incomplete, provides a particularly damning account of the conditions under which Rs14 billion worth of medical products were procured. It transpires that some Rs1 billion was disbursed by the STC for the purchase of medical products and subsequently claimed from the Ministry of Health even if it was the Ministry of Commerce which commissioned the transaction – in many cases, independently, and without knowledge, of the Ministry of Health..."

19 crisis, which started with the first lockdown in March 2020. This is why the Report's findings are so significant. If in such a short period, so much of public finances was misappropriated, wasted or lost, one can only speculate about the horror story that next year's Report will tell, more so since it will cover another lockdown period and a gush of Covid-19-related government spending.

The 500-page Report devotes an entire thematic chapter to Covid-19-related expenditure and, not surprisingly, this is where the most critical findings lie. However, the Report also reveals irregularities and wastages in several other sectors that have nothing to do with the pandemic. For example, it notes that the Safe City Project was awarded to a private company without any assessment as to whether that company offered the best deal. This is a major misstep since the sheer size of the project (Rs16 billion) meant that a shade less could have resulted in substantial savings. Similarly, delays in awarding contracts led to significant loss of money.

A case in point is the contract for security services for 292 schools, which had been approved in February 2017 but not yet awarded, leading to the renewal of contract with the existing service providers on a month-to-month basis, at much higher cost. One would be tempted to ask if this situation is not deliberate so as to favour the current contractor!

The Report also draws attention to deficiencies in managing and enforcing contracts, which have resulted in recurring project delays and loss of money in several ministries/departments. At the Ministry of Education, for example, delays up to 575 days have been registered in respect of projects for the maintenance of buildings.

In several other projects, value for money was not obtained, and the contracted services were not delivered despite substantial additional cost incurred. The most glaring example, perhaps, is a project to design and implement a Human Resource Management Information System at the Ministry of Public Service. Seven years after the contract was awarded, not a single module of the project has been operationalized, and the government has now decided to scrap the project after spending Rs422 million on it!

Another damning case is the project to provide high-speed connectivity in 164 secondary schools, awarded to a local company in December 2015. The company went into receivership in January 2019, by which time no school had been connected to the Internet. Payments to the tune of Rs83.6 million (or about 70% of the project value) made to the contractor as at 30 June 2020 have been lost. These cases prompt one to wonder if some contractors benefit from a culture of impunity due to their affinity with people close to or in the circle of power.

Last, but not least, the Report also uncovers numerous shortcomings in asset management, resulting in loss of assets, or waste of public funds. The Ministry of Ocean Economy, for example, acquired 20 patrol boats at the cost of Rs59 million over the four years to June 2020. However, due to lack of repair and maintenance, only eight of these boats are currently operational, hampering the good conduct of control and surveillance activities. It is worth pointing out here that the government realised a measly return of 1.5% on its investments in 2019-20!

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'Category 5 hurricane status': Highest daily cases predicted next 2 weeks

Amid a worrying surge in coronavirus disease cases in several countries, an infectious disease expert has predicted that the world would witness the highest number of daily caseloads reported globally in the next two weeks. During NBC's Meet the Press show, Michael Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, said that the world is at "category 5 hurricane status", indicating that the ongoing surge would lead to the highest daily cases since the start of the pandemic.

"Let me say that, at this time, we really are in a category 5 hurricane status with regard to the rest of the world," Osterholm said. "At this point, we will see in the next two weeks, the highest number of cases reported globally since the beginning of the pandemic," he added.

The highest number of daily Covid-19 cases globally was reported in December 2020, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) data, but the numbers gradually declined amid the vaccination drive. However, another surge in Covid-19 cases in countries like India, the US, Brazil, Italy, and Germany has raised fresh concerns about the ongoing health crisis.

"In terms of the United States, we're just at the beginning of this surge, we haven't even really begun to see it yet," the American epidemiologist said.

On Friday, India added the most number of Covid-19 cases than any other country, surpassing the US in the number of new infections reported on average. The daily Covid-19 cases have shot up 10 times in a span of 50



Healthcare workers treat patients inside a Covid-19 ICU at a field hospital in the Heliopolis favela of Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Photo - Bloomberg

days, according to the Union health ministry data. Last week, Brazil recorded its highest ever daily deaths related to Covid-19 as states across the Latin American nation are seeing ICU bed shortages.

Dr Anthony Fauci, the top infectious disease expert of the US, on Saturday warned that the United States may be on the cusp of another Covid-19 surge if Americans aren't careful.

According to the Coronavirus Resource Center of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, more than 130 million cases of coronavirus and over 2.84 million related deaths have been reported so far. The United States remains the worst-hit country in terms of total Covid-19 cases and related deaths, followed by Brazil.



French restaurants have been closed since October to slow the spread of the coronavirus virus. Photo - Reuters

Amid Covid-19 restrictions, French ministers accused of dining at secret restaurants

French authorities are investigating accusations that government ministers and others dined in secret restaurants in violation of pandemic restrictions.

The Paris prosecutor's office said an investigation was opened Sunday into possible charges of endangerment and undeclared labour, and to identify the organizers and participants of the alleged gatherings, reports PTI.

A documentary that aired on French network M6 over the weekend included an unidentified man saying that he had eaten in two or three clandestine restaurants "with a certain number of ministers."

Government members quickly denied knowledge of such wrongdoing. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin asked police to look into the claims.

The prosecutor's office said Monday that the investigation is continuing despite reports that the man featured in the documentary had retracted his claim.

French restaurants have been closed since October to slow the spread of the coronavirus virus. France just entered a new partial lockdown in response to intensive care units again filling with Covid-19 patients.

Covid mutants multiply as scientists race to decode variations

When Bette Korber, a biologist at Los Alamos National Laboratory, spotted the first significant mutation in the Covid-19 virus last spring, some scientists were skeptical. They didn't believe it would make the virus more contagious and said its rapid rise might just be coincidence, reports Bloomberg.

Now, 11 months later, the D614G mutation she helped discover is ubiquitous worldwide, featured in the genomes of fast-spreading variants from the U.K., South Africa and Brazil. Meanwhile, new mutations are popping up in increasingly complicated patterns, spurring a drive by top biologists to devise new ways to track a fire hose of incoming genomic data.

The goal: Quickly detect variants that can lessen the effectiveness of vaccines for a pathogen that's unlikely to be eradicated any time soon. The SARS-CoV-2 virus could settle down and become a mere nuisance like the common cold. Or much like influenza, it could retain its ability to cause severe disease in some segments of the population, a scenario that could require regular booster shots.



"Mars Helicopter touchdown confirmed!" NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory tweeted Saturday.

Photo - akm-img-a-in.tosshub.com

NASA's ingenuity helicopter dropped on Mars' surface ahead of flight

NASA's Ingenuity mini-helicopter has been dropped on the surface of Mars in preparation for its first flight, the US space agency said. The ultra-light aircraft had been fixed to the belly of the Perseverance rover, which touched down on the Red Planet on February 18.

"MarsHelicopter touchdown confirmed!" NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory tweeted Saturday.

A photograph accompanying the tweet showed Perseverance had driven clear of the helicopter and its "airfield" after dropping to the surface.

Ingenuity is expected to make its first flight attempt no earlier than April 11, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory tweeted.

Ingenuity will be attempting to fly in an atmosphere that is one percent the density of Earth's, which makes achieving lift harder -- but will be assisted by gravity that is one-third of our planet's.

The first flight will involve climbing at a rate of about three feet (one meter) per second to a height of 10 feet (three meters), hovering there for 30 seconds, then descending back to the surface.

Up to five flights of gradual difficulty are planned over the month.

The four-pound (1.8-kilogram) rotorcraft cost NASA around \$85 million to develop and is considered a proof of concept that could revolutionize space exploration.

* Contd on page 6

Appartement à louer - long terme



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Iran rejects 'step-by-step' lifting of U.S. sanctions

Iran wants the United States to lift all sanctions and rejects any "step-by-step" easing of restrictions, the foreign ministry said on Saturday ahead of planned talks in Vienna next week on reviving the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and global powers.

The comments came as France urged Iran to show a constructive stance in the indirect talks with Washington in the Austrian capital, which will be part of broader negotiations.

Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said that Tehran opposed any gradual easing of sanctions.

"No step-by-step plan is being considered," Khatibzadeh told state broadcaster Press TV. "The definitive policy of the Islamic Republic of



Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi (center) attends a virtual meeting with the Joint Commission on Iran's nuclear program in Tehran on April 2. Photo - gdb.rferl.org

Iran is the lifting of all U.S. sanctions."

Former president Donald Trump pulled the United States out of the nuclear pact in 2018 and reimposed sanctions on Iran, prompting Tehran to breach some of the accord's nuclear restrictions.

Trump's successor Joe Biden wants to revive the agreement but Washington and Tehran have been at odds over who should take the first step.

The U.S. State Department has said the focus of the Vienna talks will be on "the nuclear steps that Iran would need to take in order to return to compliance" with the nuclear accord.

Iran, China, Russia, France, Germany and Britain - all parties to the 2015 deal - held virtual talks on Friday to discuss the possible return of the United States to the accord.

UK to announce new international travel rules



Travellers walk through Terminal 2 at Heathrow Airport. The UK has set a tentative date of May 17 to relaunch international travel. Photo - Reuters

Britain will set out plans to restart international travel, using a "traffic-light" system as the country cautiously emerges from lockdown.

The announcement comes as the UK has set a tentative date of May 17 to relaunch international travel, reports AFP.

Travel destinations will be ranked green, amber or red according to virus risk, Downing Street said in a statement late Saturday, with the government to provide more details on Monday.

International travel is currently banned except for a handful of permitted reasons. This has created massive pent-up demand for summer holidays abroad.

"We are doing everything we can to enable the reopening of our country... as safely as possible," Prime Minister Boris Johnson said.

The government said the new system "will help ensure the UK's vaccine progress isn't jeopardised and provide clear guidance for travellers".

People heading to low-risk "green" countries will simply take a virus test before and after they travel, the government said.

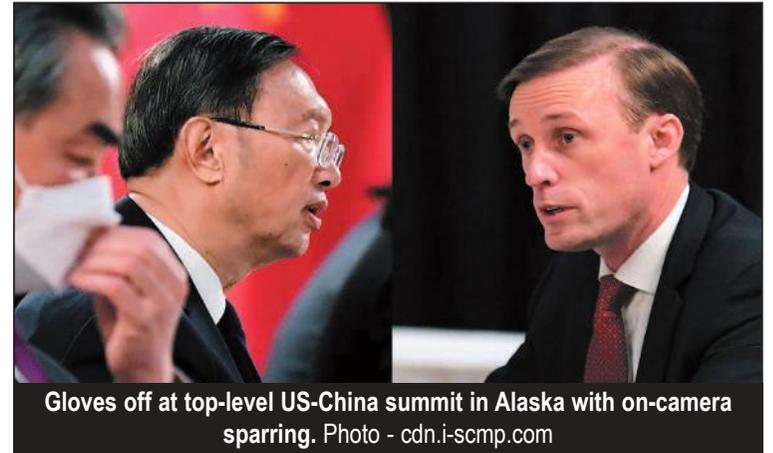
China warns US not to take 'superior' position on global affairs

Amid rising tensions between the US and China over a slew of issues, Beijing has warned Washington not to take a superior position and presume it has a final say on global affairs, reports ANI.

Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi said China would not accept a list from Washington of unilateral demands for negotiations with Beijing. "The door for dialogue with China is open. But the dialogue should be done on an equal basis and with mutual respect," he said.

"China will not accept that there is any nation in the world that [can] put itself superior to the others, and that any nation will have a final say on world affairs. If the US continues to confront, China will take it calmly without fear."

Wang said, while China-US cooperation was possible, both sides should respect each other's core concerns, and China would not accept unilateral demands and conditions from Washington, South China Morning Post reported.



Gloves off at top-level US-China summit in Alaska with on-camera sparring. Photo - cdn.i-scmp.com

Young Pakistanis rush to purchase Russian vaccine as private sales open

Thousands of Pakistanis rushed to get inoculated in the first round of commercial sales of Covid-19 vaccines that began over the weekend, with vaccination sites in the southern city of Karachi saying on Sunday they had already sold out.

Pakistan is currently offering free vaccines to frontline healthcare workers and people over the age of 50, but the drive has thus far been slow, and last month the country allowed commercial imports by the private sector for the general public, reports Reuters.

The first round saw the commercial sale of the two-shot Russian Sputnik V to the general public for about 12,000 Pakistani rupees (\$80) for a pack of two doses.

Despite the cost, a number of centres offering the shot reported long queues, with some in Karachi waiting in line for close to three hours. Most in the queue were young Pakistanis still not eligible for government's free vaccination.



People wait for their turn to receive a dose of Sputnik V vaccine at a vaccination centre in Karachi on Monday. Photo - AFP

"I am very happy to get it, since now it is required for travelling," Saad Ahmed, 34, told Reuters on Sunday after he got his shot at an upscale private sector hospital in Karachi.

Compiled by Doojesh Ramlallah

Dr Sabrina Dyall, Associate
Prof in Biosciences, UoM



*** Perhaps a good way to start is to ask: How would you define Life? What are the different hypotheses about its origin?**

I set the shortest exam question in the Biology undergraduate course at UoM a few years back: "Define Life". My ex-students, now long graduated, still joke about it but did an excellent job at answering it.

Two words that can trigger a life-long debate. One answer can be obtained by using a biology textbook checklist when observing something suspected of being alive. Another answer could be: Life is made up of cells. Another one would define it as the ability to transfer information from generation to generation.

JBS Haldane wrote a whole book on the topic and concluded with "I know it when I see it"! NASA's answer is "If it's Darwinian, it's alive". Personally, I prefer the link that Schrodinger made between the Second Law of Thermodynamics and Life: Life is a process that stops your molecules from simply decaying into more stable forms.

Life may have originated on Earth around 3.7 to 3.9 billion years ago when the planet was 500-600 million years old and geologically unstable. Such instability would have given rise to high surface temperatures on land and in the oceans and to an atmosphere without oxygen but consisting of gases such as ammonia, hydrogen, carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulphide, etc. Thus, hypotheses on the origin of Life centre around reactions and molecules that would have been stable under such conditions.

Some hypotheses propose that the first cells formed in the deep ocean, others propose volcanic pumice as the cradle. How did the first cells transmit genetic information to their descendants? Most theories tend to favour RNA as the primordial genetic material. Such theories are fuelled by our advancing knowledge of biochemistry derived from studies of extant organisms. Sometimes I wish I could travel back in a Tardis (a fictional time machine and spacecraft) to that point in time...

*** You have worked in Astrobiology. Could you please shed some light on this discipline, and where/how does your work fit into the search for extra-terrestrial Life? Can this kind of study be pursued in Mauritius?**

Basically, astrobiology investigates the origin, evolution, distribution and future of Life in the Universe. It is a multi-

"Humans are explorers. We want to know what's out there – are we alone in this immense Universe?"

From ancient times humans have looked up at the skies and asked themselves whether they were alone in the universe, and also pondered: What is Life? The answers have ranged from the mythological to the philosophical and the religious, but now it is science that is unravelling the mystery of Life in its multifarious dimensions. One of the frontier fields in this respect is Astrobiology. To tell us about it and how the scientific quest for Life in the universe has potential benefits for mankind, we approached Dr Sabrina Dyall, a Mauritian scientist who has worked for NASA, where she did research in Astrobiology Following in the footsteps of her parents and her elder sister Veena, Dr Sabrina Dyall became a laureate in 1988. At the Imperial College London, she graduated in Chemistry and Biochemistry and followed up with a PhD. Sabrina undertook postdoctoral studies at the Universities of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), Manchester and Melbourne. Her research focused on unicellular organisms and the evolution of cellular compartments, which led to several seminal publications, including two in the prestigious journals *Science* and *Nature*. Dr Dyall returned to Mauritius in 2010, where she is currently Associate Professor in Biosciences at the University of Mauritius. She retains much interest in Astrobiology, although she has now shifted her focus to topics directly relevant to Mauritius. What follows is nothing short of an exhilarating mini-tour of our galaxy...

disciplinary field that assembles biology, chemistry, physics, geology, astronomy, planetary sciences as its main disciplines.

The major objectives are (1) to search for habitable environments in or outside the Solar System, (2) to search for evidence of prebiotic chemistry and Life on Mars and other bodies in the Solar System, (3) to investigate the origins and early evolution of Life on Earth, and (4) to investigate the potential for Life to adapt to challenges on Earth and space.

I was involved in NASA's Astrobiology program when I was an Assistant Researcher at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in the early 2000s. There, I was part of an Institute that included biologists, chemists and geologists. My project aimed at investigating the origin and evo-

lution of cellular compartments, in line with objectives 3 and 4. Other biologists were studying extremophiles: microorganisms that live at extremes of pH, salinity and/or temperature. Collectively, we were exploring what were the limits for cellular Life on Earth.

These data are now used to redefine "habitable environments" in planetary missions such as those of Curiosity. In parallel, we compared protein and DNA sequences between diverse organisms to model what the common ancestor to all extant living organisms might have looked like.

Life on Earth is made up of three main branches: Bacteria, Archaea and Eukarya. If we superficially observe a dog, a coconut tree, a bacterium, a worm and a carrot, we immediately think that they are very different. However, when we observe their basic metabolic properties and their information pathways, they are quite similar. The similarities strongly suggest that all extant organisms have a single common ancestor, or to put it in another way: all living organisms descend from the same cell.

Thus, DNA sequence analyses allow biologists to formulate hypotheses on the origins and evolution of Life, and to subsequently challenge the hypotheses. Such studies can indeed be pursued in Mauritius. So far, only a minor fraction of microorganisms on Earth has been thoroughly studied. There are several interesting habitats in Mauritius that can be explored for novel microorganisms.

*** NASA's Perseverance Rover has landed on planet Mars about a month ago. Its mission is to search for evidence of ancient life and collect rocks to be brought back to earth. Have there been other similar missions, including by other countries and on other planets that have been sent?**

Perseverance is the most sophisticated of rovers sent to Mars, to join Curiosity and InSight. Curiosity has been studying habitable environments on Mars since 2012, and the race to find Life on Mars has erupted from the data generated. InSight is investigating geophysical processes and mapping the rocky planet. It has been getting quite busy around and on Mars with rovers and orbiters sent by China, India and the United Arab Emirates.

“Although Mars is now a frozen desert, NASA's Curiosity has found evidence that it was once warmer and had flowing water bodies. Once the presence of water is established, one can then search for the presence of organic molecules that are cellular building blocks. Indeed, organic molecules have been detected in several locations on Mars. However, it is unclear whether these molecules were generated by biological as opposed to geochemical processes...”



'We started off "combing" beaches to migrate from Africa to the rest of the world and now we are watching the aptly named Curiosity and Perseverance roving around on a planet millions of kilometres away!'

● Cont. from page 7

Currently, Perseverance is in the 45-km wide Jezero Crater, an ancient, 3.5 billion-year old river delta that was flagged as a potential habitable environment. Perseverance will now collect rocks and sediment from the area and screen for signs of ancient Life. Russia and the European Space Agency (ESA) will launch missions in 2024 to join the search.

Although most of the search for extraterrestrial Life has focused on Mars, missions have been planned to map Mercury and Venus. Europe and Japan launched Bepi-Colombo to reach Mercury in 2025 and India plans to launch Shukrayaan-1 in 2023 to Venus.

*** What are the kinds of evidence of life looked for? Have there been any promising hints to date?**

Preliminary evidence that such missions look for is water. Life as we know it is dependent on water. The presence of liquid water on a planet or a moon also signifies that the temperature range is permissible for Life. Although Mars is now a frozen desert, NASA's Curiosity has found evidence that it was once warmer and had flowing water bodies. Once the presence of water is established, one can then search for the presence of organic molecules that are cellular building blocks. Indeed, organic molecules have been detected in several locations on Mars. However, it is unclear whether these molecules were generated by biological as opposed to geochemical processes.

In the 1950s, Miller and Urey mimicked early Earth conditions on a mixture of simple inorganic molecules such as carbon dioxide, nitrogen, ammonia and hydrogen to generate organic compounds such as amino acids in a purely chemical process, without the intervention of living cells. Though promising, the discovery of organic molecules on Mars is not "damning" evidence on its own, but does contribute to the body of evidence.

Other evidence includes discovery of microfossils – these are impregnations of microorganisms in sedimentary rock. Why look for microorganisms? Because microorganisms can thrive under a wide range of temperatures, pH and salinities and are thus more likely to be found in harsh environments such as the Martian one. Carbon-based Life can also be detected through determining the ratio of isotopes ^{12}C to ^{13}C in molecular fossils. From what we know about Life on Earth, cells tend to favour one isotope over another.

*** Why this interest in looking for Life elsewhere? How long does it date back to?**



“After what we humans have done to the earth, let us not go out and spoil another planet. The grass certainly does not seem greener on Mars, but I am against considering it a back-up planet to save humanity. Moreover, there is the problem of extremely high radiation exposure to resolve before this idea can even be entertained...”

Humans are explorers. We started off "combing" beaches to migrate from Africa to the rest of the world and now we are watching the aptly named Curiosity and Perseverance roving around on a planet millions of kilometres away! We want to know what's out there – are we alone in this immense Universe? This question has been with us for thousands of years. There are depictions of extraterrestrial beings in spaceships on ancient monuments in Mexico and Central America.

The debate over the existence of "other beings" has been around since Ancient Greece and took off after the acceptance that other planets in the Solar System revolved around the Sun, raising the possibility that these planets may harbour Life. In the 19th century, several renowned scientists such as Gauss, Galton and Tesla amongst others devised transmission systems to contact extraterrestrial beings.

*** These missions are very expensive. Is there any likely 'benefit' for earthlings if ever life is discovered elsewhere in the solar system? What could be the possible impact of such a discovery – on science, on society at large?**

From the point of view of science, it would be tremendous. We may encounter a new domain of Life with novel metabolic properties. This would contribute towards a deeper understanding of the origin of Life in

the Universe. The novel metabolic and/or cellular properties could be engineered into developing biotechnologies and innovative solutions.

At the level of society at large, such a discovery would first and foremost satisfy our curiosity and settle this longstanding question of whether extraterrestrial Life exists or not. A second impact would be that humans would finally know that we are not alone and would move away from anthropocentric attitudes.

*** The dry, forbidding landscape of Mars revealed by the Mars Rover doesn't suggest that we are likely to see 'little green men' a la ET there soon isn't it?**

It is more likely that we find microorganisms because of the harsh conditions. I am sure all these orbiters and rovers would have long detected "little green men" if there were any roaming around!

*** What do you make of the setting up of human colonies on Mars, an idea being floated?**

I am not supportive of this idea unless it is strictly for scientific research. After what we humans have done to the earth, let us not go out and spoil another planet. The grass certainly does not seem greener on Mars, but I am against considering it a back-up planet to save humanity. Moreover, there is the problem of extremely high radiation exposure to resolve before this idea can even be entertained.

*** A parallel endeavour is SETI – the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence. Who was the brain behind this project, what are the tools used and where has this project reached?**

SETI was set up in 1984 by a small group of scientists that later expanded to include Carl Sagan and some Nobel Prize winners. The Institute initially engaged in research and surveillance through telescopes and spectroscopy in real-time. I remember connecting my Mac G5 to provide computing power to SETI remotely in the 2000s, wishfully waiting for that signal to pop up... SETI has pretty much similar objectives to NASA's Astrobiology program but also widely engages in education and in

“Humans are explorers. We started off "combing" beaches to migrate from Africa to the rest of the world and now we are watching the aptly named Curiosity and Perseverance roving around on a planet millions of kilometres away! We want to know what's out there – are we alone in this immense Universe? This question has been with us for thousands of years. There are depictions of extraterrestrial beings in spaceships on ancient monuments in Mexico...”

promoting STEM subjects.

*** Given the astronomical distances that have to be scanned, don't they represent an obstacle? Doesn't that tend to discourage the scientists?**

Not really, telescopes and spectroscopy can retrieve data from the far corners of the Universe. Spectra can be analyzed for signatures indicating organic molecules or prebiotic molecules relevant to Life. Distant planets resembling Earth both in size and orbit have thus been detected. Of course, these are several light years away and we do not yet have the technology to travel such distances although scientists could launch robotic devices to further explore the outer reaches of the Solar System.

*** Again, the same question comes up: what next, especially given the costs?**

We wait with baited breath for the outcome of Perseverance's mission. In the next two weeks, we shall witness the helicopter Ingenuity undertaking reconnaissance flights in the Jezero Crater. Soon Perseverance will analyze the chemical signatures in rocks and sediments. These rocks will then be returned to Earth for more thorough analyses in the early 2030s. Meanwhile, NASA is working on a new rocket propelling system in its aim to send humans to Mars, a perilous 7-month journey. We shall need to be patient on an astronomical scale.

*** Finally, how do you see the future unfolding in this search for distant Life and intelligence - what kind of intelligence could it be: of the AI type?**

Given the astronomical distances, we could very well encounter AI before we encounter the natural intelligence that created it. Most of my answers have focused on identifying Life loosely resembling that on Earth. We should also keep our minds open to encounters with completely different manifestations of Life à la "I know it when I see it".



Photo - cdn.arstechnica.net



Jack Bizlall

Pour mieux comprendre L'histoire de Maurice

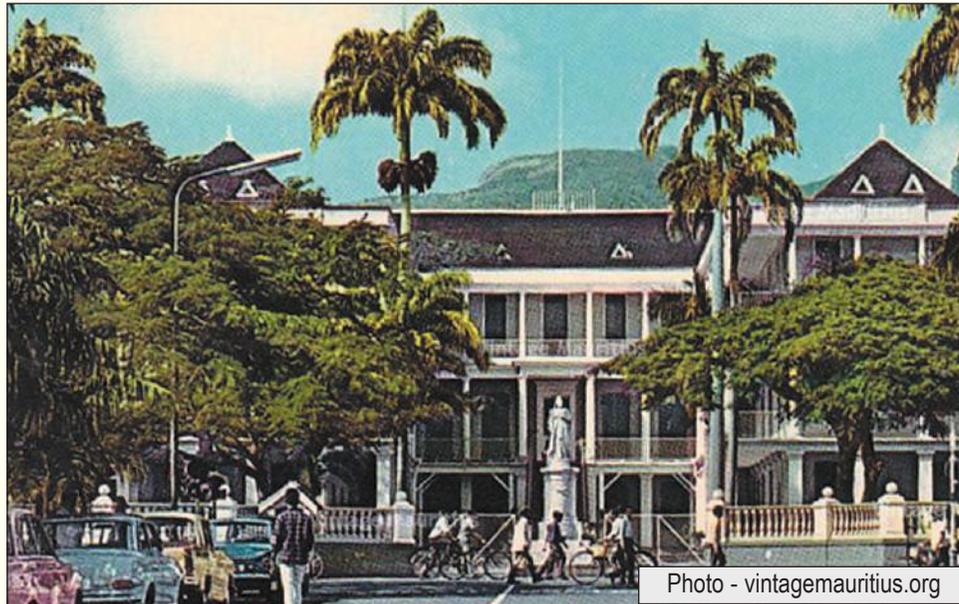


Photo - vintagemauritius.org

Pour comprendre l'histoire d'une société, il faut la méthodologie de la recherche des faits, la compréhension dialectique des rapports entre les classes sociales protagonistes, l'analyse de classe dans la combinaison des deux pour ensuite faire des propositions qui soient politiquement crédibles, acceptables et praticables.

J'ai expliqué dans mon texte 'Le Militantisme' publié le 23 mars 2021 de la nécessité de comprendre l'histoire, de l'interpréter et de la projeter dans le futur, en «*travail-lant*» sur la causalité historique - les liens «*de cause à effet*» - entre deux sociétés différentes, mais connectées entre elles où celle qui subit (la colonisée) traverse le temps de l'autre (la colonisatrice) qui a approprié son espace géographique. C'est l'essence de la discipline analytique de l'histoire, surtout du colonialisme.

De ce fait, on ne pourra comprendre l'Histoire de Maurice sans s'intéresser à l'Histoire de l'Angleterre et aujourd'hui celle de l'Europe. Demain de la Chine et de l'Inde. Historiquement, nous avons été des colonisés subissant la colonisation. Aujourd'hui, nous sommes des colonisés volontairement soumis aux pays du Nord (le Nord politique et économique), et demain, aux pays du BRICS.

Dans ce contexte historique, nos dirigeants politiques, représentants quasi organiques du secteur privé, agissent dans un cadre économique et social qui échappe à leur contrôle et ils ne sont, par conséquent, que des marionnettes (donc inconscients) ou, pire, ils sont des manipulateurs (conscients et ainsi opportunistes).

En conséquence de quoi, il faut démystifier ces dirigeants qui passent pour des héros de notre Histoire alors qu'ils n'ont été que les exécutants des décisions prises à l'étranger et au sein de la classe dominante à Maurice. Cela se fait sans discernement de leur part.

Je proposerais donc une tentative de démystifier Gaëtan Duval en mettant de l'avant son opportunisme politique. Dans le même contexte, j'aborderai aussi le cas d'Adrien d'Épinay comme symbole du racisme qui perdure encore de nos jours. Ce ne sont que deux exemples. Il y en a d'autres.

Quant à la question de la sémantique de l'Histoire (comme il y a la sémantique de la médecine ou de la

«**Nos dirigeants politiques, représentants quasi organiques du secteur privé, agissent dans un cadre économique et social qui échappe à leur contrôle et ils ne sont, par conséquent, que des marionnettes (donc inconscients) ou, pire, ils sont des manipulateurs (conscients et ainsi opportunistes). En conséquence de quoi, il faut démystifier ces dirigeants qui passent pour des héros de notre Histoire alors qu'ils n'ont été que les exécutants des décisions prises à l'étranger et au sein de la classe dominante à Maurice...**»

peinture), il est évident que les mots et les termes évoluent linguistiquement sous les effets des langues vivantes, de la philosophie, de l'Histoire et surtout de la politique. J'utilise la pratique rédactionnelle de la définition incorporée dans mes textes, pour les mots essentiels.

L'espace-temps et l'Histoire de Maurice

J'ai toujours aimé l'Histoire. C'est compréhensible pour un jeune des années 60 de s'intéresser aux événements de la période 1918-1939. La période dite «*entre les deux guerres*». Cette période m'a aidé à comprendre une chose : que des événements dans un espace géographique précis peuvent avoir des effets directs sur d'autres espaces géographiques connectés par des liens politico-socio-économiques.

D'autre part, il est aussi possible de lire l'histoire en rapport avec des phases de temps qui se succèdent, sans dissociation politique. En physique, on représente mathématiquement l'espace et le temps en tant que deux concepts inséparables qui

- 1) s'influencent réciproquement et qui
- 3) proposent deux versions d'une même réalité, d'une même entité.

J'ai en quelque sorte appliqué à l'Histoire le concept de l'espace-temps utilisé en cosmologie. Les événements dans un endroit précis ont des déroulements dans des temps qui varient. De ce fait, dans l'interprétation de l'Histoire d'un pays, ce sont les événements qui créent socialement le temps et qui font avancer ou reculer ce pays.

Partons du principe que si tous les mouvements se figeaient, le temps s'arrêterait. Le temps peut s'accélérer si les actions s'intensifient. Le temps peut ralentir si les

événements sont lents ou n'ont aucun intérêt ou effet.

Quand le *Mauritius Times* m'a invité à écrire sur l'Histoire, j'ai pris l'initiative de faire quelque chose d'innovant, en l'occurrence, d'interpréter notre Histoire comme un processus qui est déterminé ailleurs pour parler des effets marquants qui ont eu des retombées sur la société mauricienne. Il existe, par ricochet, des effets nuancés sur la société rodriguaise (moins graves), chagossienne (plus graves) et maintenant agaléenne (potentiellement dangereux).

Tout politicien qui se respecte doit évaluer non seulement *Le Pourquoi* philosophique de son action mais aussi *Le Comment* de son exécution scientifique et technique pour déterminer *Le Quoi Après* politique, en agissant à l'intérieur des trois dimensions géographiques de l'espace économique et la dimension du temps. Personne n'échappe à ces quatre dimensions. Il faut évidemment les identifier surtout dans la lecture de l'Histoire mondiale. Un exemple : La compréhension de la planification (si elle existe) est nécessaire puisqu'elle détermine à la fois l'espace et le temps de toute application politique de programmes sociaux et économiques. Ainsi, on peut aisément dire si nous sommes en avance ou en retard par rapport à une autre société. Par rapport au Temps. De première importance.

En appliquant ce concept, j'ai présenté mon premier texte sur un sujet qui me tient à cœur, le Travaillisme (*Mauritius Times* du 16 mars 2021). Mon deuxième texte fut le Militantisme (*Mauritius Times* du 23 mars 2021). Dans les deux cas ce sont des actions commencées ailleurs : le Travaillisme, à partir de la fin du dix-neuvième siècle en Angleterre, et le Militantisme dans les années 60 dans plusieurs endroits du monde.

Le Travaillisme et le Militantisme sont donc nés ailleurs. Historiquement parlant, notre société -dirigée par des opportunistes de droite comme de «gauche» - génère systématiquement plusieurs perversions en termes d'accaparements, de déviations, de corruptions, d'altérations... et des actes antisociaux. D'importance autant majeure, pour la raison de causalité.

Je prends trois exemples :

- (1) Nous avons hérité de l'Angleterre une Constitution de nature de Monarchie constitutionnelle. En 1992, nous passons à la République sans nous donner une constitution républicaine et le Gouverneur Général parti, on a fait du Premier ministre un monarque imposant sa dynastie.

Donc il faut passer à la Deuxième République et éliminer toutes les dynasties qui se comportent comme les Windsor. Cette dynastie est allemande (Saxe-Cobourg Gotha) catapultée à la tête de l'Angleterre, «*Naturalisée*» Windsor le 17 juillet 1917 à cause de la guerre contre les Allemands et aujourd'hui connue comme la famille Mountbatten-Windsor. C'est à croire que la famille Jugnauth «*émule*» la dynastie allemande Saxe-Cobourg Gotha, avec l'approbation des électeurs. Ce qui s'est passé en Angleterre et ce qui s'est passé à Maurice avant et après 1992 est catastrophique pour une république.

From the Pages of History - MT 60 Years Ago

4th Year No 161

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● *He who is destitute of principles, is governed, theoretically and practically, by whims. -- Jacobi*

Peter Ibbotson

Private ownership of property is the characteristic of the capitalist state. Private ownership appertains in Mauritius where the best and most productive agricultural land is in the ownership of the big capitalists; the peasant proprietors (if they own their land instead of renting it) have to put up with the least productive land. If anyone denies this assertion, he is referred to the *Yearbook of Statistics* where he can find figures showing the production of sugar per arpent in the big estates and on the peasants' land.

Collective ownership of land is regarded as the characteristic of the communist state, e.g. the Soviet Union and China, where agriculture is carried on in large collective farms. The land and farm equipment belong to the Collective; the workers share the income of the collective according to the amount of work each has done. The only private ownership of land on the collective occurs in respect of the land round each worker's house – each worker-family being allotted a small area on which to grow the family's vegetable needs, and perhaps to keep a few hens or a cow.

But a form of collective ownership is also practised in non-communist states. Collective ownership is characteristic of the tribal economies of many African territories; and collective ownership and work is found to a marked extent in present-day Israel. Such collective ownership and work make a possible alternative to nationalization of the land; and it may be of interest to many readers to learn how private ownership is abandoned without the introduction of communism.

Agricultural settlements, or as they are better known in Israel, labour villages, are one of the features of the country which strike the visitor most forcibly. They are run on co-operative lines and fall into three types: *moshav*, *moshav shitufi*, and *kibbutz*. The types depend on social structure. All have these things in common: nationally-owned land; self-labour; organised co-operative marketing and supply; all are mixed farms; and all are, in the first instance, financed from the central budget.

The *moshav* is based on the family farm. In the *moshav shitufi*, the village lands are worked collective-

ly but each household is separate and the general income of the village is divided among the various families according to the size of the family. In the *kibbutz*, all property is owned in common, the land is farmed collectively, and the guiding principle of life is "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs". In the *kibbutz*, household services such as kitchen and laundry are communal.

Of the 493 labour villages in Israel, 256 are *moshav* (family farms), 17 are *moshavim shitufim*, and the rest (220) are *kibbutzim*. They house one-tenth of the people of Israel, cultivate over two-thirds of Israel's farmland, and produce four-fifths of Israel's agricultural produce. Half of Israel's exported fruit is grown on the labour village lands.

Israel acknowledges that certain factors have given the labour villages an advantage over privately-owned farms. These include: the help of the central government in providing finance in the first instance and in providing land; the advantages of self-labour as against hired help, since the self-labourer is more interested in making a success of his job and has an interest in maximum efficiency and output; co-operative organisation of marketing, supply and finance (Israel has co-operative agricultural marketing, wholesale and banking organisations); and the disinclination of private capital to develop and bring under cultivation the desolate, remote, neglected areas of land, often under disturbed security conditions and in rigorous climatic conditions.

It is noteworthy that the labour villages have been developed not because of any political or social ideology favoured by the Israeli government. They have, indeed, developed out of geographical chances and economic necessity. They are also essential to the security of the country. Private capital was unwilling to invest in areas likely to be invaded; and in areas on the borders of the country where climatic and other conditions were antagonistic to what capitalism considered

profitable agriculture. So, the state stepped in and repopulated the border areas; and the labour villages have made no small contribution to the national economy. In poor surroundings, the labour villages have earned for their inhabitants a high standard of living; and not entirely by agriculture. On several *kibbutzim*, light industries have been started: processing farm produce, making plywood, making drainpipes, and so on – all industries using the raw materials of crops or natural resources found on the collectively owned property.

The development of labour villages has been given fresh impetus in recent years, with the immigration of many Jews to Israel from all parts of the world (but especially European countries). Many of these immigrants have been settled on new land which has thus been brought under productive use instead of lying idle and unproductive; but the labour villages had their origins at the beginning of the present century when Jewish settlers resolved to abandon commerce for a return to the soil. They found no place to work until the Zionist Organisation provided a budget so that a group of workers could run a settlement independently. Thus, was started the first collective village, Degania.

That was half a century ago. The principle of co-operation in buying supplies and selling produce was quickly established; not for ideological reasons but out of economic necessity – co-operative buying was more economical, co-operative selling was more lucrative.

And nowadays there are 493 such labour villages, all wedded to the co-operative principle. But no one is denied personal freedom and personal rights by living and working on a collective farm; on the contrary, it is the existence of the labour village which has enabled many Jews to realise to the full their personalities.

The moral for Mauritius is plain.

Collective Farming



Life in UK lockdown for a sandwich generation

Mauritian mum: one year on

In the backdrop of an underlying sense of fear and anxiety, Rhenal Bunwaree shares how she managed to keep her family safe, well and out of the hospital, keep the fridge constantly full, whilst also keeping her mental health firmly intact for months on end!



Rhenal Bunwaree

When England went into its first lockdown in March 2020, it also meant that many people from abroad who were working or studying in the country were unable to go home to see their families. Realising I was going to be staying away from home for a while, I decided to keep a diary and start writing about my feelings, as a way of organising my thoughts and clearing my head. Little did I know that the pandemic would continue for a year and that I was unwittingly writing about a historic moment in time.



Commuters walk through the concourse at London Waterloo station in London on Aug. 3. Photo -Bloomberg

way of working in an office. The inhumane strangeness of social distancing and the uneasy collision between my professional and personal life meant I had to settle into working from my couch or dining table. One no longer had that routine of leaving the office or commuting. I had to make the effort to go out for a walk straight after

street was not already experiencing extreme duress last year with Brexit, the most uncertain aspect of the Covid-19 crisis is that no one knows how long it will last. However, not all is lost -- opportunity lies in times of crisis. The pandemic caused a significant reduction in greenhouse gasses. But it also highlighted the moderate role we play on this planet and accept that things cannot always go as we want them to go.

A new way of shopping

There were socially distant queues outside Zara, Primark, and TK Maxx this morning (December 2, 2020), when the Government announced shops in England can reopen under eased lockdown measures. Lots of young people are here, mothers with strollers and some older shoppers too. Some people are wearing masks, but not many. The shoppers are mostly sticking to the new rules and staying socially distant - when they remember. Floor markings indicate a one-way system, every second toilet cubicle is closed, and touch-screen maps have been

powered down and seating areas are roped off. But apart from those changes - and a growing queue outside Primark - everything feels rather normal.

Away from home

I found it really difficult not being able to visit my parents and sister as my planned trip home in August 2020 never happened, due to the UK international travel restrictions. Going home was never an option.

I feel like later this year can't come fast enough as I hope I will be able to see my family and hug them. Though I'm all grown up, even grown-ups want to hug their mum. My parents are vaccinated now which makes me feel better, so I am less worried about them.

I am a "pretty tough cookie", but the three lockdowns have been stressful.

A year of exercising in the living room, of teaching my 12-year old son Rhushil maths and other subjects. I finally believe that exercise is good for you and makes you feel better; I actually like it now.

A year of wearing a mask like it's an ordinary thing to do. So too using phrases such as "herd immunity" and "flattening the curve"; "social distancing" and "R numbers".

Nobody can be sure what our long-term future looks like yet, but there is one thing we can all be sure of; that Covid-19 has had a profound impact on every one of us - one which will have undoubtedly changed us all forever.

I hope it will act as a reminder of what we have all been through, so that future generations will appreciate how precious life can be and how we must never take our medics, our scientists, our health, planet, or freedom for granted, ever again.

I'm looking forward to seeing my family.



Life in UK lockdown. Photo -cityam.com

A year in lockdown has precipitated scenes never previously imaginable; a disaster in which we all have played a reluctant role. It's been really difficult. It wasn't what I expected at all. Twelve months in which I witnessed abandoned city centres, empty motorways, sealed off playgrounds, field hospitals, and makeshift morgues. My only connection with distant loved ones has come from behind a computer screen.

I get a shiver down my spine, reading back my own words, reliving things from those early days of panic buying and so much uncertainty, as the story in London and around the world began to unfold.

Getting ready for the pandemic

The first glimpse of a new world came in the form of toilet rolls piled high in supermarket trolleys. The beginning of lockdown marked the point of rupture with our former

work so I didn't feel like I was constantly at home. Nonetheless for all the challenges that working from home and home-schooling my 12-year old son Rhushil provided, we did spend more time together. Covid-19 placed our focus squarely on family and loved ones. Where possible, we have taken more time to be with family. Whether that is playing a game online, watching Netflix together, or simply using Facetime to chat.

Empty streets as businesses put staff on furlough

Over the next couple of months, I witnessed large-scale furloughs putting thousands out of work, property giants cracking down on late rental payments, and retailers cancelling orders from suppliers to reduce costs and protect their businesses from this worldwide pandemic. Some retail businesses were forced to shut their doors permanently. As if the high





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Pour mieux comprendre

L'histoire de Maurice

☛ Suite de la page 9

Exemple - En Angleterre, la Reine Elizabeth 11 sera remplacée par son fils, sous le nom de Georges V11. Ici c'est le PM qui nomme son remplaçant, membre de sa propre dynastie. J'y reviendrai dans le cadre de la rédaction de la Nouvelle Constitution.

(2) Notre société était avant 1789, une partie intégrante de la Monarchie Française et après (1804) du 1er Empire français, La Révolution de 1789 n'a pas eu un effet important sur notre société à cause des Articles 7,8 et 9 de l'Acte de Capitulation du 3 décembre 1810.

Donc, nous sommes sortis d'une Monarchie pour entrer dans une autre. Il faut repenser la définition à donner à la propriété, à la distribution des terres, au pouvoir économique toujours entre les mains de l'Oligarchie des plantations. Comment voulons-nous changer les choses sans une remise en question de la propriété sociale privée ?

(3) Les antagonismes des puissances mondiales entre les deux guerres et surtout à partir de la guerre froide ont fait de Diego Garcia une base militaire. On ne peut récupérer les Chagos que si la base militaire est démantelée. D'autre part, nous risquons d'entrer dans des conflits entre l'Inde, le Pakistan et la Chine si nous perdons le contrôle sur Agaléga.

La démystification

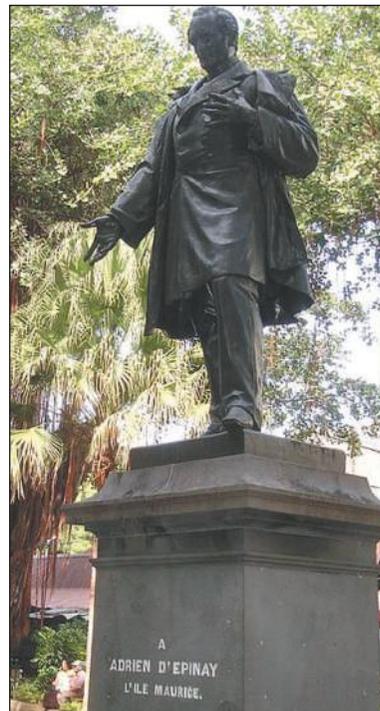
Que pensons-nous d'Adrien d'Epinaï ? Celui qui a conditionné l'abolition de l'esclavagisme à une contrepartie financière, pour mettre fin à ce mode de production. Il est né en

1794. Avocat et planteur. Il avait 16 ans en 1810 et il était un farouche opposant à l'abolition de l'esclavage sans compensation. Organisateur d'un lockout (le premier) pour faire partir John Jeremie. Il est mort en 1839 à l'âge de 45 ans.

Je mentionne ces faits pour bien faire comprendre que la mentalité des colons n'avait pas changé avec l'apport des idées du Siècle des Lumières (1715-1789) promouvant la transcendance de l'obscurantisme. La Révolution Française de 1789 et l'abolition de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises et des lois antiesclavagistes de l'Angleterre, n'eurent aucun effet idéologique sur eux, planteurs, mais aussi sur les gens d'église. Le combat doit continuer contre le racisme économique, surtout avec les 'Smart Cities'.

Que pensons-nous de Gaëtan Duval? Il est retourné à Maurice dans les années 60 pour

(1) soutenir, à contrecourant de l'Histoire, l'oligarchie sucrière alors que le Militantisme explose dans le monde. Il aurait été financé par le secteur privé pour



cela ;

2) opposer sauvagement et d'une façon obscurantiste, l'indépendance du pays au point que s'il n'y avait pas eu la bagarre de janvier 1968, il y aurait eu un coup d'état dans le pays le 12 mars 1968. Il n'y a jamais eu de possibilité d'association avec la Grande Bretagne. JAMAIS. Les Etats-Unis avaient imposé l'indépendance du pays. Pire, ce pays serait à l'origine de l'exode de cerveaux vers l'étranger, et ce, par milliers.

Plus grave encore il quitte l'opposition parlementaire pour s'intégrer au pouvoir et imposer des lois liberticides et anti-travailleurs, et le renvoi des élections. Que n'a-t-on pas vu à Rodrigues par ses promesses bidons (y compris la plus insipide qui est l'intégration à la France)?

Il est responsable d'avoir transformé le Parti Mauricien (anciennement le Ralliement Mauricien) en un PMSD d'extrême-droite impliquée dans plusieurs agressions. Il a créé des syndicats pro-patrons (FSP) pour empêcher la transformation de la Zone Franche en secteur économique non-exploitrice. A l'époque, on se référait à la Zone Franche en termes de Zone souffrance...

Suis-je le seul à le critiquer? Certainement PAS. Plusieurs personnes ont pris position contre lui au sein même du PMSD, y compris Xavier Duval. On a ensuite assisté à la danse macabre des PMSD, PMGD et PMXD.

Pourquoi alors le réveiller dans l'Histoire ? Parce qu'il y a dans le pays, plusieurs de ses émules qui forment une politique citoyenne populiste et de droite. En ce moment, il y a trop d'opportunistes dans ce pays qui obstruent la bataille politique contre la dynastie Jugnauth et les tenants du pouvoir économique.

Jack Bizlall

Quotable Quotes

Don't waste your energy trying to educate or change opinions; go over, under, through, and opinions will change organically when you're the boss. Or they won't. Who cares? Do your thing, and don't care if they like it.

-- Tina Fey

You don't need a title to be a leader.

-- Mark Sanborn

If your actions create a legacy that inspires others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, then, you are an excellent leader.

-- Dolly Parton

I am not a product of my circumstances. I am a product of my decisions.

-- Stephen R. Covey

Do what is right, not what is easy.

-- Unknown



COMMUNIQUE | COVID-19

WORK ACCESS PERMIT (WAP) FOR SELF-EMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) informs the public that **Work Access Permits (WAPs)** for self-employed individuals are **NOT** delivered by the MRA. The Mauritius Police Force is the Institution responsible for the issue of WAPs.

For self-employed individuals, who have made an application for financial assistance under the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme (SEAS), MRA has made necessary arrangements with the Police Department for the issue of a WAP.

Where a self-employed individual, whether he/she has applied for SEAS or not, is practicing an authorised activity and has not received a WAP by Friday 2 April 2021, he/she is required to follow the procedures specified in the Police communiqué dated 31 March 2021. As stipulated in that communiqué, assistance may be sought from the Citizen Support Unit (CSU) for the filing of the online application for WAP.

Self-employed individuals are informed that they will not be issued a WAP where the activities in which they are engaged are not authorized during the confinement period.

MAURITIUS REVENUE AUTHORITY

02 April 2021

Ehram Court, Cnr Mgr. Gonin & Sir Virgil Naz Streets, Port Louis, Mauritius
T: +230 207 6000 | F: +230 207 6048 | M: headoffice@mra.mu | W: www.mra.mu





U gotta love the Sindhis!

A fleeing Taliban, desperate for water, was plodding through the Afghan desert when he saw something far off in the distance.

Hoping to find water, he hurried toward the spot only to find a Sindhi tailor selling regimental ties of the British army.

The Taliban asked, "Do you have water?"

The Sindhi tailor replied, "There is no water here, the well is dry. Would you like to buy a tie instead? They are only USD10."

The Taliban shouted, "You idiot! I do not need an over-priced tie. I need water! I should kill you, but I must find water first!"

"OK," said the Sindhi, "It does not matter that you do not want to buy a tie and that you hate me. I will show you that I am bigger than that, and that I am a much better human being than you. If you continue over that hill to the east for about two miles, you will find a British army

officers' mess. It has all the ice cold water you need."

Cursing him, the Taliban staggered away over the hill.

Several hours later he staggered back, collapsed with dehydration & rasped: "They won't let me in without a tie!"

Friends Rock... Heaven or Hell?

Two 90 year old men, Mike and Joe, have been friends all of their lives.

When it's clear that Joe is dying, Mike visits him every day. One day Mike says, "Joe, we both loved cricket all our lives, and we played cricket on Saturdays together for so many years. Please do me one favour, when you get to Heaven, somehow you must let me know if there's bat and ball there."

Joe looks up at Mike from his death bed, "Mike, you've been my best friend for many years. If it's at all possible, I'll do this favour for you."

Shortly after that, Joe passes away.

At midnight a couple of nights later, Mike is awakened from a sound sleep by a blinding flash of white light and a voice calling out to him, "Mike... Mike."

"Who is it?" asks Mike sitting up suddenly. "Who is it?"

"Mike, it's me, Joe."

"You're not Joe. Joe just died."

"I'm telling you, it's me, Joe," insists the voice.

"Joe! Where are you?"

"In heaven," replies Joe. "I have some really good news and a little bad news."

"Tell me the good news first," says

Mike.

"The good news," Joe says, "is that there's bat and ball in heaven. Better yet, all of our old friends who died before us are here, too. Better than that, we're all young again. Better still, it's always spring time and it never rains or snows. And best of all, we can play cricket all we want, and we never get tired."

"That's fantastic," says Mike. "It's beyond my wildest dreams! So what's the bad news?"

"You're in the team for this Saturday's match!"

When your life is in darkness, pray to God and ask Him to free you from darkness. And if you are still in darkness, please pay your electricity bill.

When a man opens the door of his car for his wife, you can be sure of one thing: either the car is new or the wife.

What's the difference between stress, tension and panic?

Stress is when wife is pregnant.

Tension is when girlfriend is pregnant.

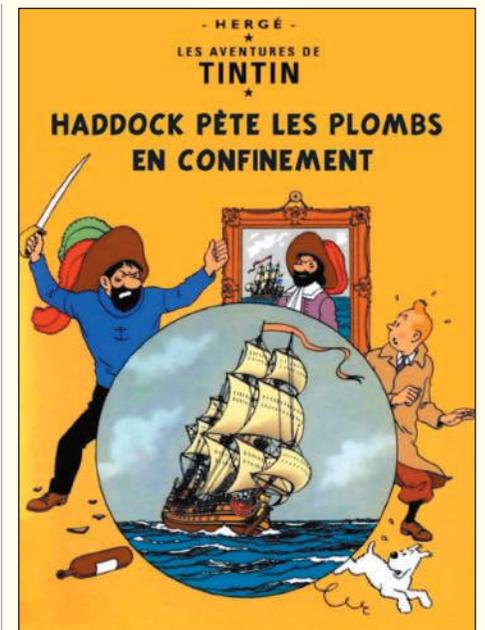
Panic is when both are pregnant.

Grammar teacher: Do you know the importance of a period?

Kid: Yeah, once my sister said she has missed one. My mom fainted, dad got a heart attack

And our driver ran away...

A young boy asks his dad: "What is the



difference between confident and confidential?

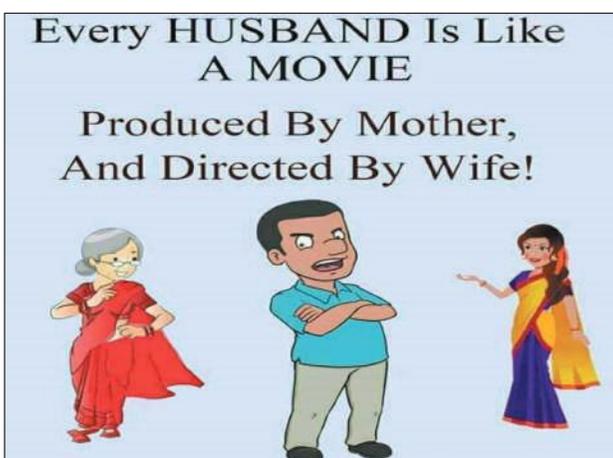
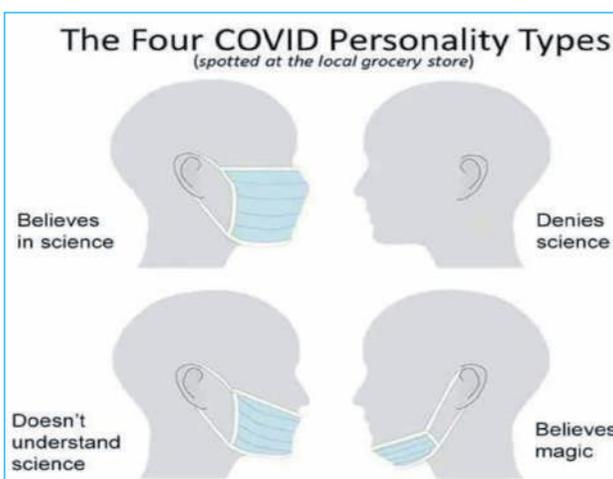
Dad says: "You are my son, I'm confident about that. Your friend over there is also my son, that is confidential."

Someone asked an old man: "Even after 70 years, you still call your wife 'Darling', 'Honey', 'Love'. What's the secret?"

Old man: I forgot her name, and I'm scared to ask her!

A bookseller conducting a market survey asked a woman: "Which book has helped you most in your life?"

The woman replied, "My husband's cheque book!"



Life's LESSONS

Beautiful 10 Lines

Someone has written these 10 beautiful lines. Read and try to understand the deeper meaning of them.

1. Prayer is not a "spare wheel" that you pull out when in trouble, but it is a "steering wheel" that direct the right path throughout life.

2. Why is a car's windshield so large & the rear view mirror so small? Because our past is not as important as our future. So, look ahead and move on.

3. Friendship is like a book. It takes a few seconds to burn, but it takes years to write.

4. All things in life are temporary. If they are going well, enjoy

them, they will not last forever. If they are going wrong, don't worry, they can't last long either.

5. Old friends are gold! New friends are diamonds! If you get a diamond, don't forget the gold! To hold a diamond, you always need a base of gold!

6. Often when we lose hope and think this is the end, God smiles from above and says, "Relax, sweetheart; it's just a bend, not the end!"

7. When God solves your problems, you have faith in his abilities; when God doesn't solve your problems, he has faith in your abilities.

8. A blind person asked God: "Can there be anything worse than losing eye sight?" He replied: "Yes, losing your vision!"

9. When you pray for others, God listens to you and blesses them, and sometimes, when you are safe and happy, remember that someone has prayed for you.

10. Worrying does not take away tomorrow's troubles; it takes away today's peace.

Company matters!

Sit for 10 mins before a housewife - you will feel life is too difficult.

Sit for 10 mins before a drunkard - you will feel life is very easy.

Sit for 10 mins before priests - you will feel like gifting away everything in charity.

Sit for 10 mins before a politician - you will feel all your studies are useless.

Sit for 10 mins before a life insurance agent - you will feel that it is better to die.

Sit for 10 mins before traders - you will feel your earnings are too meagre.

Sit for 10 mins before scientists - you will feel the enormity of your own ignorance.

Sit for 10 mins before good teachers - you will feel like wanting to become a student again.

Sit for 10 mins before a farmer or a worker - you will feel you are not working hard enough.

Sit for 10 mins before a soldier - you will feel your own services & sacrifices are insignificant.

Sit for 10 mins before a good friend - you will feel your life is heaven!

How much space is normal in a relationship?

"I need some space," can be the most dreadful thing that hits you in a relationship. It may seem that your partner is skeptical about the intimacy or proximity between you both, thus leading to the ever-scary conclusion of needing space in a relationship. Well, the fact is that it is healthy indeed, reports the Times of India. Space in a relationship is necessary to bring out the individualistic traits of each of the partners.

Every relationship needs a breather when things get rough, as every person has his own way of handling fights and arguments. It's not much of a bad thing since it helps us realise where our priorities lie. But no matter how much we convince ourselves, we are forced to question this: 'How much space in a relationship is normal?'

There is a perfect balance that's almost unattainable when it comes to having space in a relationship. It has its own set of ups and downs. If your partner is dependable on you for most of the time, then you definitely need some space i.e. set some clear boundaries. On the other hand, a little distance might do you and your partner good to help you both realise other important things in your life. Ultimately, you both will be grateful for the space and distance as it is bound to bring you two closer.

But as we navigate through the possibilities of bringing space into the relation-



He & She

ship, it is vital to know why you or your partner needed space in the first place. Remember that is very normal to talk to your partner about what you want. Calmly tell your partner why you need space in the relationship. Tell them why and how you haven't really been feeling like yourself for some time now and that you need some time to reconnect with your true self; mostly about what you need.

If your partner is comfortable in sharing the same with you, make sure you don't get defensive about your possible faults in the relationship that might have led to some emotional distance. When you both finally understand the problem that has been drifting you both apart, you can work towards resolving it.

Next, how much space do you both really want?

Once you and your partner have concluded the reason why you need space, you two then need to take the next step i.e. ideating how much space do you both really want or need. There is really no specific measure because every relationship is different. The parameters between couples vary. You may need more time to pursue hobbies and interests or simply need some 'alone time,' away from the complexities and responsibilities of a relationship.

If it isn't something life-changing or can drastically alter your relationship, it is probably alright to ask for some space. However, if your partner proposes to take

up a job in a different country, just to make some space in the relationship, then there is a problem. In cases like these, communicating with your partner about what exactly they want and feel is pivotal.

Too much space in a relationship isn't healthy. It denotes the fact that your partner isn't comfortable having you around; they will feel happier if they spend time alone. This further means that your partner isn't ready for relationship responsibilities and vice versa. Forcing each other to retain a dying relationship by inculcating the system of 'space' won't work unless any one of you is ready to work through the relationship.

Do you need to check on them?

To keep things safe and clear, you can ask your partner how comfortable they will be with you checking in on them, during the 'space' phase. You can suggest texting once in a while, or meeting for brunch on a Sunday until you both are ready to come back together happy and fresh! If your partner isn't comfortable, let it be. Let them get through this time on their own.

You, on the other hand, can focus on your work, goals, self-care and hobbies. Striking the perfect balance of space in a relationship can be attained. But only with the right amount of love, understanding and respect. If it doesn't work, the relationship isn't right for you.

Living
Better

Simple ways to beat digital fatigue while working from home

simple ways to beat digital fatigue, as reported by Deepika Sahu of TOI.

Learn to switch off: After you finish your work learn to take a digital break from all devices. Instead, focus on something you enjoy, it could be reading a book, listening to music, or spending some quality time with your loved ones. Learning to switch off also means sticking to a schedule that gives you a sense of contour to your daily life.

Focus on one task at a time: Multitasking seems to be the buzzword among professionals these days. However, recent studies across the globe show that multitasking is not really the best way to ace productivity. It might seem that you are a pro at doing many things at the same time but in reality, it has been actually reducing your productivity. Subrat Das, a tech professional says, "Thanks to long working hours and constantly navigating between devices and tasks, I am now really finding it difficult to concentrate. Now, even I am having problems remembering my tasks to be finished for the day."

Be mindful of the physical world: The digital world definitely looks and feels very new-age and we can get many things done at the click of a button. But the physical world gives us connections that give us pleasure, a sense of belonging, and interconnectedness. So, even in the midst of a hectic work schedule, make sure to do some physical exercise. Even a simple walk for 20 minutes will make your mind feel relaxed. Also, with safety precautions, you can meet your friends and spend some time building real-time communications.



Beat digital fatigue. Photo - pcdn.co

The Covid pandemic brought many fundamental changes in the way we live, work and entertain. For many professionals across the globe, working from home has become a norm of life. This also means working long hours, staying glued to their smartphones and laptops and

generally living a life where the lines between personal life and professional life are blurred. In the long run, health experts maintain that this can lead to a number of wellbeing issues. So, it is necessary to find out ways to beat this work from home induced digital fatigue. Here are some

Akshay Kumar's 'Laxmii' breaks records of 5 years, gets highest rated TV premiere

Akshay Kumar and Kiara Advani starrer *Laxmii* has broken the TV records of the last five years with its recent premiere on the small screen. Becoming the highest-rated premiere on television, the Raghava Lawrence-directorial garnered a whopping 63 million viewers across India after premiering on Star Gold on March 21 at 8 pm. Interestingly, while *Laxmii* is on the top of all other Hindi movies which have premiered on TV, nine out of 10 on the list are those that were premiered on Star Gold, reports India.com.

The overwhelming response by movie audience across India is a testament to their love for entertaining content. The team behind *Laxmii* conveyed thanks to the audience for their support and appreciation they received and the new benchmark set on television.

Talking about the astounding television success, Akshay Kumar said, "It's heartening to know that *Laxmii* is the highest rated movie in the last 5 years, over 63 million viewers across India tuned in for the World TV Premiere on Star Gold on 21st March. I'm glad that during this pandemic when people need to stay home, we could provide them with some wholesome entertainment which they could enjoy together with their families. Seeing so much love and appreciation for *Laxmii* only encourages me to come back with more such unique stories and interesting characters."



Laxmii featured Akshay in the role of a man who gets possessed by the ghost of a transgender person. The film dealt with gender issues and talked about the need of educating yourself as gender-sensitive people.

* * *

Sundry shades

Sharad Kelkar made his television debut with the show, *Aakrosh* (2004), on Doordarshan. Since then, he has come a long way, having acted in many big-ticket movies like Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela* (2013) and Ashutosh Gowariker's *Mohenjo Daro* (2016). He made his digital debut with the Amazon

Prime series, *The Family Man* (2019). The Gwalior boy has a number of upcoming projects, including *Ayalaan*, *Bhuj: The Pride of India* and *Jersey*. In a conversation with Pooja Biraia Jaiswal of The Week, talks about the experience of working as a transgender in *Laxmii*.

*** How was the experience of working as a transgender person in Akshay Kumar's *Laxmii*?**

Since childhood, we have been conditioned to think that transgender people are loud and kidnap kids, and so it is better to stay away from them. This film was an eye-opener. I was so closely attuned to their lives that I went through the roller-coaster of emotions that they undergo. The film changed my perspective. I think they are as much a part of society as the rest of us.

*** How do you select your scripts?**

I have been lucky to get some really good scripts. Choosing a script is a very personal experience for me. It is not my [screen time] that is important for me. I simply ask myself whether I am an important part of the film and whether I will have an impact on the story and the viewer. Whether the role is big or small is immaterial, as long as I can bring out a different shade of myself for the audience.

*** Tell us about the upcoming 'Bhuj: The Pride of India'.**

I have worked with Ajay (Devgn) sir for the last 11 years and he treats me like a younger brother. So, when the casting for *Bhuj* was taking place, I think he chose me and that was a sweet gesture. It is a great film.

*** How was it portraying Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in *Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior*?**

It was a superb opportunity. Om (Raut, director) had researched this subject for almost 10 years. He had done an in-depth study of Maharaj and that helped a lot. I knew I could not go wrong even in the slightest expression. So yes, it was challenging.



Preity Zinta, Celina Jaitley and more: Bollywood celebs who have moved out of India

Preity Zinta resides in Los Angeles, USA with her husband Amy Jackson is currently living in London. Jugal Hansraj moved to the USA after tying the knot in 2014.

One would think after working hard and making a name for themselves in Bollywood, stars would never want to leave their home country and the love and support of their fans. But some celebs decided to not just say goodbye to the showbiz world, but also packed their bags and settle in a new country. Some did it for love, some for

their profession, others have had their reasons to move out of their homeland, reports Times Now.

Preity Zinta

Bollywood's 'Dimpled beauty', Preity Zinta resides in Los Angeles, USA. The actress got married to her long-time American partner Gene Goodenough in a private ceremony in LA on February 29, 2016. Preity and Zinta frequently fly back to India to visit the latter's family and also for work.

Amy Jackson

Hosanna girl Amy Jackson suddenly vanished from the entertainment world after making her Bollywood debut and doing a couple of South Indian films. The mother of one, Amy has been dating London-based hotelier George Panayioto since 2015. They have a son together named Andreas. The family of three is currently living in London.

Jugal Hansraj

Masoom actor Jugal Hansraj moved to the USA after tying the knot in 2014. The 44-year-old model, producer, writer, and author is married to Jasmine Dhillon, an NRI investment banker from New York. The couple has a son together.

Celina Jaitley

Former beauty queen Celina Jaitley is settled in Dubai along with her husband Peter Haag and three kids.

Priyanka Chopra Jonas

The Desi Girl of Bollywood, Priyanka Chopra Jonas juggles between India and the USA post tying the knot with Nick Jonas. The actress was in LA during the coronavirus-induced lockdown

Almost a year into their marriage, the couple ticked off the first milestone on Chopra's list and bought themselves a gorgeous mansion in Los Angeles, which is estimated at \$20 million. Interestingly, Nick's brother Joe Jonas and his wife Sophie Turner are their neighbours and live just a few minutes away.

Sonam Kapoor Ahuja

Sonam Kapoor Ahuja is currently in her second home that's in London. The *Neerja* actress who has been away from the big screen for quite some time now, flew back to London right after the lockdown restrictions were eased. She resides in London's Notting Hill and often shares pictures and videos from her luxurious abode.

Madhuri Dixit Nene

Dhak Dhak girl Madhuri Dixit had moved to the US after her marriage to Dr Shriram Nene. Madhuri's decision came as a shocker to many of her fans when she, despite being at the top of her career, left everything to marry Nene. The actress has moved back to India now.





Arjun Bijlani reveals the worst relationship advice he has received

Television actor Arjun Bijlani opened up about the worst relationship advice he has ever received -- to break up if things are not working out. He said that one problem is 'very small', compared to the time spent with the other person, and that everything is solvable.

Arjun married Neha Swami in 2013 after an eight-year relationship. They have a six-year-old son, Ayaan, together.

Speaking to Pinkvilla, Arjun revealed, "Usually, people tell you to break up. They say, '*Jam nahi raha hai toh break up kar lo* (if things are not working out, you should break up).' That is the worst thing to say to somebody. Because one problem for that person is very small in terms of its magnitude but the life that you have lived for such a long time is far better than that one problem that you are making such a big issue about."

"I think everything is solvable, you just need to talk it out. That is the best thing you can do. And, of course, you need to love somebody for you to even want it to be solved in the first place. If there is no love, you can't solve it anyway, because you are going to behave differently," he added.

Arjun is known for shows such as *Left Right Left*, *Miley Jab Hum Tum*, *Naagin* and *Pardes Mein Hai Mera Dil*. He will soon be a part of the upcoming season of the adventure reality show, *Khatron Ke Khiladi*.

Last year, Arjun made his digital debut with the series, *State of Siege: 26/11*. In a recent interview with *Hindustan Times*, he said that he wants to explore more projects in the webspace. "I have been meeting people. When you try to shift a medium, it's not easy, you have got to do it the right way," he said.

"There is so much content for every age group. I want to do something which is more acting oriented. I don't want to be a part of any web series, which has no script but just bold scenes and bad language," he added.

TV actor Manit Joura back to work after testing Covid negative

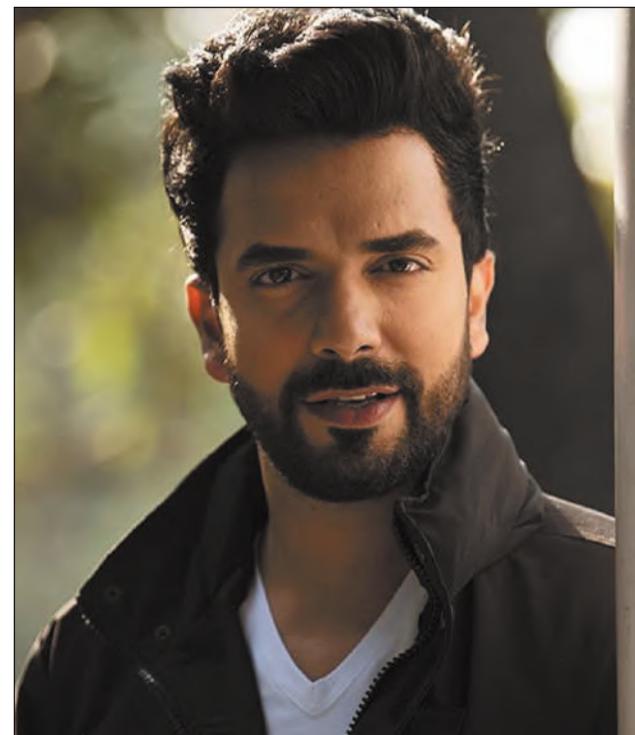
Actor Manit Joura, who currently leads the show "*Prem Bandhan*", is back on set after recovering from Covid-19.

"I am very excited to be back on set, all well and rejuvenated. I make sure to take my vitamins from time to time, take steams and eat healthy to keep my immunity level constantly high. Quarantining helped me do things I otherwise wouldn't get time to do. It gave me time to brush my acting skills, get some yoga done, a lot of reading and I spent some good quality time with myself," he told IANS.

The actor, who has been part of shows such as "*Kumkum Bhagya*", "*Ram Milaayi Jodi*", looked at Covid isolation as a time to relax.

"As my symptoms were not too severe, I could do a lot of things and I saw this as a mini-vacation and took some time out to take care and work on myself," he said.

Giving a message to his fans, Manit added: "To my fans, I would really urge everyone to stay home until it is very necessary. Please mask up, sanitise, maintain social



distance and take all the other precautionary measures because the numbers are going really high. Please take care of yourself and others."

Kundali Bhagya's Sanjay Gagnani on playing a girl: 'Takes me 2 hours to get the look'

Kundali Bhagya actor Actor Sanjay Gagnani takes versatility to the next level by portraying a girl's character in his show



Seeing a handsome male character turning into a female character adds a different fun and thrill element on-screen. And something similar is being done by television actor Sanjay Gagnani, who originally plays Prithvi in his TV show *Kundali Bhagya*. However, in the upcoming track, Sanjay will once again be also playing another character for which he has to transform himself into a girl, reports Neeki Singh of Spotboye.

On this character transition, Sanjay says, "It took me almost 2 hours to get ready and achieve the look of a girl. Since I've been into this look before too, I know and realise how tough it is for female actors to get ready and achieve the kind of look they aim for. As a male actor, I've always wondered why do female actors take so much time to get ready only until I'm required to get into a female look, I realised why and so I have high respect for all the female actresses around the globe for being so

hardworking, dedicated and strong."

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On this character transition, Sanjay says, "It took me almost two hours to get ready and achieve the look of a girl. Since I've been into this look before too, I know and realise how tough it is for female actors to get ready and achieve the kind of look they aim for. As a male actor, I've always wondered why do female actors take so much time to get ready only until I'm required to get into a female look, I realised why and so I have high respect for all the female actresses around the globe for being so hardworking, dedicated and strong."

As we can see in the pictures, Sanjay effortlessly plays the character by getting the movements and expression right. On what went behind the character sanjay shares, "As an actor, I've always craved for pursuing excellence in my craft. I love it when people get entertained with my performance and compliment me for my hard work, versatility and consistency. As an actor I feel responsible for the dose of entertainment for my audience and so, I give in my heart and soul in my work and my craft."

Kundali Bhagya is one show which has turned the tables for Sanjay. Sanjay says, "*Kundali Bhagya* has changed my *bhagya*. It has earned my fans worldwide, made me a household name, earned me a lot of awards, the tag Villainero (villain hero) by the viewers, listed me in the top ten iconic villains of Indian television as well as it has given me a scope to incorporate different looks and characters whenever the role has required me to adapt a disguise look in order to perform vicious activities in the show.

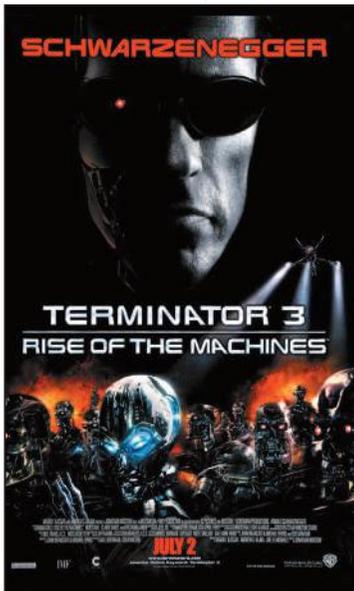
"I can safely say that Prithvi Malhotra is presently the most evil, cunning, stylish, unpredictable and entertaining Villain-Hero in the business."



Mardi 6 Avril - 21.15

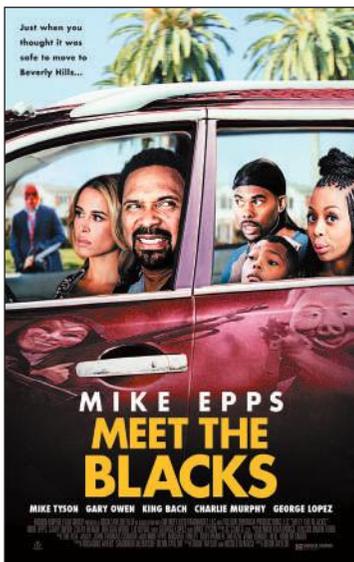
Terminator 3

Avec: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Kristanna Loken, Nick Stahl



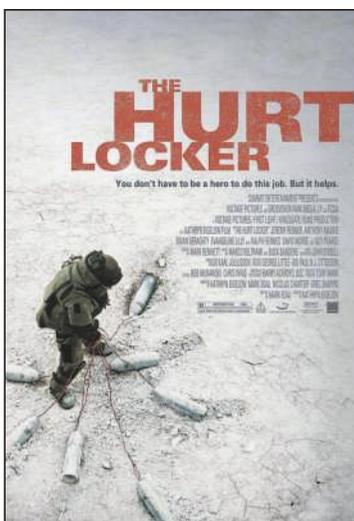
Mercredi 7 Avril - 21.05

Meet The Blacks



Jeudi 8 Avril - 21.15

Avec: Jeremy Renner, Anthony Mackie, Brian Geraghty



MBC 1	MBC 2	MBC 3	Cine 12	Bollywood TV
07.00 Dessin Anime 10.35 Serial: Heidi, Bienvenida A... 11.00 Mag: Le Saviez Vous? 11.10 Tele: Soleil Levant 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir 12.50 Mag: Urban Gardens 14.20 D.Animes: The Hive 14.30 D.Anime: Sindbad And The 7.. 15.05 D.Anime: Kung Fu Panda 15.30 Film: Les Aventures De... 17.05 Serial: Mustangs Fc/ Mighty... 17.30 Live - Covid 19 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Serial: Jamai Raja 18.55 Local: Vanarasi? 19.30 Journal & La Meteo 20.35 Local Prod: An Eta Dalert 21.10 Film: Misconduct 23.00 Le Journal	10.00 Serial: CID 10.48 Serial: Ye Vaada Raha 12.04 Film: Mard Starring: Mithun Chakraborty, Ravali, Kader Khan 15.00 Serial: Ek Deewana Tha 15.23 Serial: Aamhi Doghi 15.45 Serial: Mooga Manasulu 16.08 Serial: Apoorva Raagangal 16.32 Serial: Suno Chanda 16.53 Serial: Achra Ke Moti 17.12 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 17.32 Telugu - Premabhishekam 18.00 Serial: Colourful Bone 18.30 DDI Magazine 18.59 Mag: Sur Mesure 19.30 DDI Magazine 20.00 Local: Tamil Programme 20.30 Film: Vishwasghaat Starring: Sanjeev Kumar, Kabir Bedi, Shabana Azmi	06.00 Mag: Eco@Africa 06.52 Mag: Voa Connect 07.25 Mag: In Good Shape 07.51 Doc: Amazing Gardens 08.16 Mag: Future Mag 09.42 Mag: Global 3000 10.38 Doc: Asteroids 11.23 Mag: Eco@Africa 11.49 Mag: Arts And Culture 12.15 Mag: Voa Connect 12.50 Mag: In Good Shape 13.42 Mag: Future Mag 14.14 Doc: 360 GEO 15.06 Mag: Global 3000 15.32 Mag: Washington Forum 16.47 Mag: Eco@Africa 17.12 Mag: Arts And Culture 18.02 Mag: Rev: The Global Auto... 19.00 Student Support Prog... 19.26 Mag: Le Saviez Vous? 20.04 Doc: Ville En Fête	01.26 Film: Kill Kane 03.06 Serial: The Good Doctor 03.47 Film: UFO/OVNI: Sur La Piste 05.10 Tele: Muneca Brava 06.55 Film: Signed, Sealed, Delive.. 09.00 Serial: Chicago Fire 09.45 Tele: Daniella 10.35 Tele: Tanto Amor 11.01 Serial: The Good Doctor 12.00 Film: UFO/OVNI: Sur La Piste 13.30 Tele: Muneca Brava 14.20 Mag: Hollywood On Set 14.45 Film: Signed, Sealed, Deliver.. 16.44 Serial: Chicago Fire 17.23 Serial: Absentia 18.05 Tele: Daniella 19.00 Tele: Tanto Amor 20.05 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir 20.30 Serial: Absentia 21.15 Film: Terminator 3 23.00 Tele: Muneca Brava	08.00 Film: Setters 12.04 / 19.54 - Sanjivani 12.26 / 20.11 - Radha Krishna 12.44 / 20.32 Agnphera 13.09 / 21.09 - Bade Acche Lagte Hai 13.28 / 21.24 - Zindagi Ki Mehek 13.51 / 21.59 - Naagin Season 3 14.33 / 22.25 - Ikyawann Yeh Hai Mohabbatein 15.37 Film: Jaane Jigar Starring: Jackie Shroff, Ayub Khan, Mamta Kulkarni 18.00 Live: Samacher 18.30 Kundali Bhagya 18.52 Serial: Ek Rishta Saajhedari Ka 19.15 Mere Angne Mein 19.33 Siddhi Vinayak
07.00 Dessin Anime 10.35 Serial: Heidi, Bienvenida A... 11.10 Tele: Soleil Levant 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir 12.50 Prod Indepen: Met Seryer 14.00 D.Anime: The Hive 14.30 D.Anime: Kid Lucky 14.53 D.Anime: The Twisted Whisk.. 15.04 D.Anime: Kung Fu Panda 15.30 Film: Archie Chien Robot 17.00 Serial: Mustangs FC 17.30 Live - Covid-19 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Serial: Jamai Raja 18.55 Local: Arogya - Body Stress.. 19.30 Journal & La Meteo 20.10 Local: MBC Production 21.05 Film: Meet The Blacks 22.33 Magazine: Close Up 23.10 Local: Le Journal	10.00 Pyar Ka Dard Meetha... 11.17 Suhani Ek Ladhi 12.00 Film: Dillagi Stars: Hema Malini, Dharmendra, Mithu Mukherjee 15.00 Serial: Ek Deewana Tha 15.22 Aamhi Doghi 15.44 Mooga Manasulu 16.10 Apoorva Raagangal 16.30 Serial: Suno Chanda 16.53 Serial: Achra Ke Moti 17.12 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 17.33 Serial: Kulvadh 18.00 Serial: Colourful Bone 18.30 Serial: DDI Magazine 19.00 Mag: Sur Mesure 19.30 DDI Magazine 20.00 Programme In Marathi 22.04 Film: Zombie Rivals Stars: Eltong Chong, Wong Lung, Pierre Kirby... 23.00 Live: DDI Live	06.00 Rev: The Global Auto... 06.26 Doc: A Passion For Helping 06.52 Mag: Check In 07.20 Mag: Made In Germany 07.53 Doc: Ville En Fête 10.05 Local: Klip Seleksion 10.47 Doc: Concorde - The Fall Of 11.58 Doc: A Passion For Helping 12.24 Mag: Check In 12.59 Mag: Made In Germany 13.25 Doc: Ville En Fête 13.51 Doc: Olivia's Garden 15.09 Mag: Close Up 16.19 Doc: Concorde - The Fall Of 17.04 Mag: Rev: The Global Auto.. 17.30 Doc: A Passion For Helping 18.00 Mag: Motorweek 18.30 Mag: Vous Et Nous 19.00 Student Support Prog... 19.26 Mag: Le Saviez Vous? 19.29 Doc: Garden Party 20.02 Mag: Tendance XXI	00.20 Serial: Absentia 01.31 Film: Terminator 3 02.55 Serial: The Good Doctor 03.57 Film: Nessie & Me 05.26 Tele: Muneca Brava 06.45 Film: Sense And Sensibility 09.00 Serial: Chicago Fire 09.44 Tele: Daniella 10.35 Tele: Tanto Amor 11.01 Serial: The Good Doctor 12.00 Film: Nessie & Me 13.30 Tele: Muneca Brava 14.45 Film: Sense And Sensibility 16.46 Serial: Chicago Fire 17.26 Serial: Absentia 18.05 Tele: Daniella 19.00 Tele: Tanto Amor 20.05 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir 20.30 Serial: 19-2 21.15 Film: Alvarez Kelly 23.11 Tele: Muneca Brava 23.53 Serial: Chicago Fire	08.00 Film: Jaane Jigar 12.04 / 20.06 - Sanjivani 12.24 / 20.26 - Radha Krishna 12.46 / 20.02 - Agniphera 13.10 / 20.46 Bade Acche Lagte Hai 13.30 / 21.09 - Zindagi Ki Mehek 13.53 / 21.31 - Naagin Season 3 14.35 / 21.46 - Ikyawann 14.36 / 21.59 - Yeh Hai Mohabbatein 15.39 Film: Phata Poster Nikhla Hero Starring: Shahid Kapoor, Ileana D'Cruz 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Kumkum Bhagya 18.51 Ek Rishta Saajhed Ka 19.13 Mere Angne Mein 19.35 Siddhi Vinayak
06.00 Local: Klip Seleksion 06.45 Local: Sur Prise 08.53 D. Anime: Investion Story 10.10 D. Anime: Astrology 10.35 Serial: Heidi, Bienvenida A... 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir 13.00 Mag: Urban Gardens 13.05 Local: RDV Muzikal 14.00 D.Anime: The Hive 14.30 D.Anime: Sindbad and The 7.. 14.41 D.Anime: Kid Lucky 14.53 D.Anime: The Twisted Whisk.. 15.30 Film: Snow Queen 3 17.05 Serial: Mustangs FC 17.30 Live - Covid-19 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Jamai Raja 18.55 Local: Tirth Yatra 19.30 Le Journal 20.15 Film: Shaadi Ka Laddoo	10.00 Karm Phal Data Shani 12.05 Film: Kotwal Saab Starring: Shatrughan Sinha, Apama Sen, Utpal Dutt 14.08 Mag: DDI Magazine 15.00 Serial: Ek Deewana Tha 15.21 Aamhi Doghi 15.47 Mooga Manasulu 16.05 Apoorva Raagangal 16.32 Serial: Suno Chanda 16.51 Serial: Achra Ke Moti 17.13 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 18.00 Serial: Colourful Bone 18.30 Serial: Ghar Pahucha Da... 19.00 Mag: Sur Mesure 20.05 Local: Les Grandes Lignes 21.12 Local Prod: Profil 21.25 Film: The Hurt Locker Starring: Jeremy Renner, Anthony Mackie, Brian Geraghty	06.00 Mag: Motorweek 06.25 Mag: Vous Et Nous 07.29 Doc: Garden Party 08.22 Doc: The World From Above 09.43 Mag: Initiative Africa 10.08 Mag: Focus On Europe 10.34 Doc: Starting Strong 11.53 Mag: Vous Et Nous 15.02 Mag: Business Africa 15.27 Mag: Focus On Europe 16.40 Mag: Motorweek 17.06 Mag: Vous Et Vous 17.50 Mag: Japan Video Topics 18.00 Mag: Eco India 18.30 Mag: Shift 19.00 Student Support Prog... 19.30 Mag: Tomorrow Today 20.05 Doc: Amazing Gardens 20.30 Local: News (English) 21.32 Doc: 360 GEO 22.25 Doc: Duck Academy	01.28 Film: The Pirate 03.21 Serial: The Good Doctor 04.03 Film: Archie Chien Robot 2 05.33 Tele: Muneca Brava 06.15 Serial: 19-2 06.57 Film: Alvarez Kelly 09.00 Serial: Chicago Fire 10.35 Tele: Tanto Amor 11.01 Serial: The Good Doctor 12.00 Film: Archie Chien Robot 2 13.30 Tele: Muneca Brava 14.45 Film: Alvarez Kelly 16.41 Serial: Chicago Fire 17.21 Serial: 19-2 18.05 Tele: Daniella 19.00 Tele: Tanto Amor 20.08 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir 20.30 Serial: 19-2 21.15 Film: Get Out 22.59 Tele: Muneca Brava 23.41 Serial: Chicago Fire	08.00 Film: Phata Poster Nikhla Hero 12.05 / 19.54 - Sanjivani 12.22 / 20.11 - Radha Krishna 12.44 / 20.32 Agniphera 13.07 / 21.09 - Bade Acche Lagte Hai 13.29 / 21.24 - Zindagi Ki Mehek 13.48 / 21.46 - Naagin 14.35 / 21.59 - Ikyawann 14.47 / 22.52 Yeh Hai Mohabbatein 15.20 Film: Inteqam Starring: Manoj Bajpayee, Isha Koppikar, Nethra Raghuraman 18.00 Samachar 18.30 Kundali Bhagya 18.51 Ek Rishta Saajhed Ka



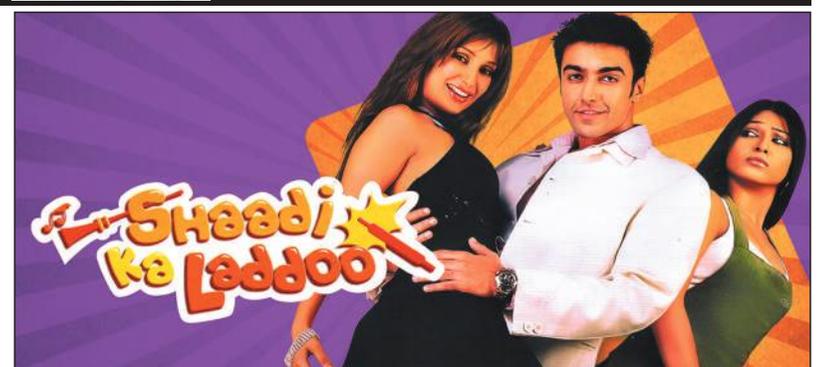
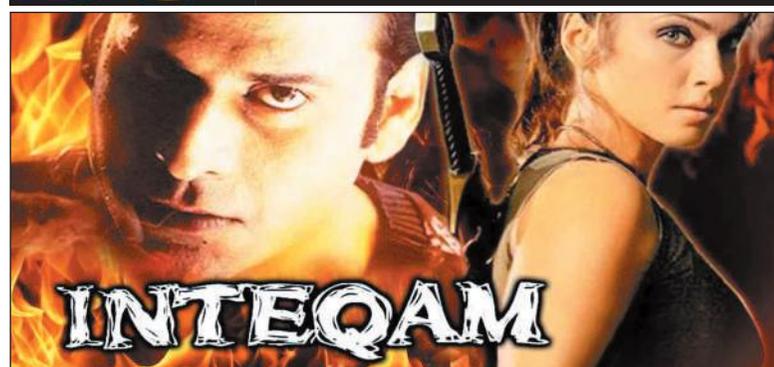
Jeudi 8 avril - 15.20

Star: Manoj Bajpayee, Isha Koppikar, Nethra Raghuraman



Jeudi 8 avril - 20.15

Stars: Sanjay Suri, Mandira Bedi, Aashish Chaudhary



The Audit Report: 'Same old, same old' or a harbinger for change?

← Cont. from page 4

It was hoped that the Audit Report would bring new evidence on the dubious cases of award of contract under Emergency Procurement (EP) rules for the provision of equipment and medical supplies in relation to Covid-19. Unfortunately, the audit investigations were obstructed by the refusal by the Ministry of Health to provide access to critical files on the excuse that these had been secured by ICAC. Elsewhere, NAO auditors could find no documentary evidence in respect of Rs1.7 billion spent on purchases of medical products and for a payment of Rs72.3 million by the Ministry of Commerce.

Indeed, access to records was one of the biggest constraints that the NAO staff faced in carrying out the 2019-20 audit. For the Safe City Project, for example, the Police Service invoked a confidentiality clause in the contract with Mauritius Telecom to deny access to vital information. At the Ministry of Environment, documents in respect of 13 contracts of a total value of Rs574.2 million were not produced to the auditors. On the whole, as at 31 January 2021, only 40% of ministries and departments had submitted their Annual Report on Performance for the financial years 2019-20 and 2018-19.

Nevertheless, the available information, albeit partial and incomplete, provides a particularly damning account of the conditions under which Rs14 billion worth of medical products were procured. It transpires that some Rs1 billion was disbursed by the STC for the purchase of medical products and subsequently claimed from the Ministry of Health even if it was the Ministry of Commerce which commissioned the transaction – in many cases, independently, and without knowledge, of the Ministry of Health. Indeed, the Ministry of Health had diluted “its accountability for and ownership of [Rs1.7 billion worth of] medical products purchased during the Covid-19 period.” This resulted in various irregularities, such as Rs94 million paid for defective ventilators and Rs853.7 million paid for medical disposables to companies with no previous

dealings with the government. These supplies came at exorbitant prices – up to 67 times higher than the last price paid by the Ministry of Health – and, as of October 2020, delivery of 37 drugs ordered under EP was still under way.

It is beyond the scope of this short article to highlight all the cases where fundamental principles of good governance were flouted, resulting in the loss or waste of public funds. The Audit Report is particularly critical of the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Health for abdicating their responsibilities to ensure rule-based procurement, and thus to safeguard the interest of Government.

While the NAO appreciates the difficult situation engendered by the pandemic, it blames the Ministry of Health for not preparing and deploying an effective contingency plan. This lack of preparedness seems to cut across all spheres of government and, coupled with the characteristic lack of competence in various sectors and the capture of decision-making by pseudo-intellectual advisors, the government's machinery is screeching painfully to meet the people's expectations.

The Audit Report makes a number of recommendations to address shortcomings in the management of procurement, contracts and assets, to ensure compliance with legislations and to guarantee value for money. This is not new; however, given the unprecedented scale of inefficiency and gaping waste highlighted by the Report, the recommendations are more than ever urgent.



“In several other projects, value for money was not obtained, and the contracted services were not delivered despite substantial additional cost incurred. The most glaring example, perhaps, is a project to design and implement a Human Resource Management Information System at the Ministry of Public Service. Seven years after the contract was awarded, not a single module of the project has been operationalized, and the government has now decided to scrap the project after spending Rs422 million on it!”

Independently of the Report, the Ministry of Finance has asked all ministries to target a 25% cut in their recurrent budgets in view of the upcoming Budget exercise. Perhaps this measure – if only it had the power of a directive – could signal the instauration of a value-for-money culture in Government, which up till now has remained elusive.

History suggests that the most difficult reforms have occurred at the peak of protracted crises. So, the time for change is now. Conversely, the kind of systematic looting that the Report highlighted suggests a Mafia-style plan orchestrated at some higher helm, in many cases allegedly by some people we had elected to serve us. Will this change?

Dr Vinaye Ancharaz

The price of global pandemic responses has been to make many other diseases worse



Understanding the importance of timely cancer treatment is nothing new. Wikimedia Commons

← Cont. from page 2

Even in the 19th century, doctors and patients alike were acutely aware of the importance of timely treatment. As I argue in my book, *The Cancer Problem*, the “do

Doctors lamented the patients who, “because of their praiseworthy modesty”, consulted too late for effective treatment. Medical textbooks designed to be read by patients told their readers that “were proper means used in due time, a

not delay” principle in cancer treatment has its origins in the early 1800s. Surgeons implored cancer sufferers to seek their advice as soon as they had identified any unexpected lumps or bumps. And in their writings, patients expressed extreme distress at waiting for a diagnosis or cure.

cancer might often be prevented; but after the disorder has arrived at a certain height it generally sets all medicine at defiance”.

Looking at this longer history of cancer reminds us of the emotional and physical costs of any delays. After all, even if these waits have only minimal effects on patients' survival or long-term health, we must also think about the psychological trauma of living in limbo. Particularly when that limbo is associated with cancer, a disease that has long carried with it a sense of profound anxiety, so much so that in the 19th century it was often termed “the dread disease”. It is often understood as an alien invader, now very much outstaying its welcome.

As the Covid-19 crisis slowly abates,

we must not just look back with regret at the number of people killed by the virus or celebrate the success of vaccines. We must instead assess the pandemic's impact in the round and consider the physical as well as emotional costs of a disease that turned our world upside down. When the next pandemic comes, we must be prepared to not only treat the victims of epidemic disease but to continue to provide the fundamental healthcare services we need to stay both healthy and happy.

Agnes Arnold-Forster
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and Healthcare, University of Bristol