

MAURITIUS **TIMES**

• *“Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” – John F. Kennedy*

Qs
&
As

Competition Commission v Betamax

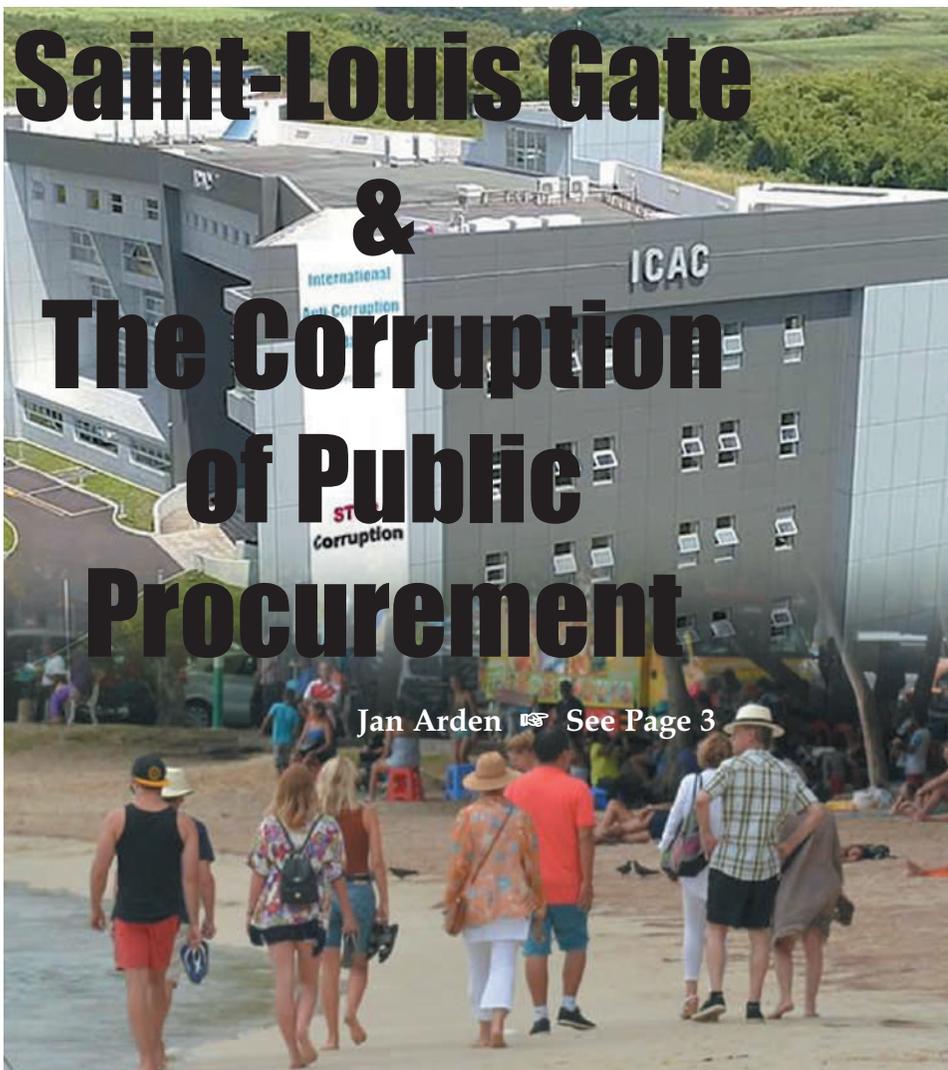
“Political considerations are invading the judicial province, and that is very dangerous”

See Page 8-9



Saint-Louis Gate & The Corruption of Public Procurement

Jan Arden See Page 3



The Superpower Paradox - Unusable Power

IMAGES

TALIBAN CELEBRATE US DEFEAT



The paradox of great power is that in the modern world, it can seldom be used, and the superpower's advantage is often temporary

By Anil Madan See Page 4-5

Opening of Frontiers

As has been planned and announced quite some time back, the authorities will be going ahead with the opening of our frontiers starting 1st October 2021. A communiqué was issued from the Ministry of Health and Wellness about the new measures that would be effective as from Friday, covering: activities in fitness centres; access to social halls, village halls, community centres, social welfare centres, youth centres and CABs; places of worship; markets; religious events & ceremonies; weddings and funerals. The measures include restrictions on the number of people attending in these venues, control of entry and exit, alphabetical order where applicable, and recommendations as to vaccination, social distancing and ventilation.

It is pertinent to remind ourselves that the opening comes at a time when for several weeks running we have been witnessing daily cases of Covid by the dozens, accompanied by a rising number of deaths. Clearly, the disease is now widespread in the community, and with the arrival of tourists the risk of further spread and their bringing in new variants is definitely going to increase. This is the same pattern that has been observed elsewhere when there has been loosening of restrictions and opening of internal or external borders, and there is no way we can escape that trend.

Of course, we do understand that sooner or later we would have had to open up, because all operators and all sectors of the economy are feeling acutely the effects of the rolling lockdowns, besides the social suffering that they inflict as well because people of all ages have had enough of not being free to meet family and friends freely. On the other hand, schools have reopened and there have been hiccups, but by and large not only are children and older students happy to be back and engage in their usual learning and leisure activities on the playgrounds, there is relief among many parents as well. It is also salutary that children have been seen wearing their masks, when playing too.

It could be said that overall the habit of wearing the mask has caught on as people have become more aware of the suffering that Covid disease can cause. In fact, whereas when the cases were few and far apart at the initial stages, hardly anyone knew someone who had contracted the disease, now the reality has changed. There is hardly any person or family who does not know someone who has been infected, and perhaps someone who has died too. This is surely an indication that confirms the community spread.

It has now become more than imperative that there is no disconnect or discordance between the information being put forth by the central government at the level of the PMO's High-Level Covid-19 Committee and that from the Ministry of Health and Wellness, as has often seemed to be the case. This throws doubt in the public and creates a mistrust between them and the government, which is inimical to the eventual control of Covid. With the opening of frontiers, there must be additional clear communication exercises on a regular basis on the part of the authorities. They must not hide the true figures nor hide behind numbers. It is best for people to know exactly what is happening.

And the government must anticipate likely scenarios or problems, and not wait for people to suffer unnecessarily or for pressure to be applied before taking action on sensitive matters. Like, for example, in the matter of the disposal of the dead, where this paper had canvassed several times for a more humanitarian approach, which has mercifully been now instituted.

Let us keep our fingers crossed and hope for the best as frontiers open, and this will be premised on everyone rigorously implementing recommended measures.

The Conversation

Covid will likely shift from pandemic to endemic — but what does that mean?

Most people hadn't used the word 'pandemic' before. Now it's time to understand the term 'endemic' and find out what to expect when Covid changes shape



Pic - EPA/JASON SZENES

Most people are wondering when and how the Covid pandemic will end and there are still no easy answers.

The word “endemic” is regularly mentioned, especially among public health leaders and experts as they discuss potential future scenarios. So, it's important to define exactly it would mean for Covid to be endemic.

Scientists predict Covid will become endemic over time but there will still be sporadic outbreaks where it gets out of control. The transition from pandemic to endemic will likely play out differently in different locations around the world.

'Outbreak', 'Epidemic', 'Pandemic' and 'Endemic'

First let's recap the public health terms people have been increasingly using in conversation over the last 18 months. These words cover the lifecycle of disease and include “outbreak”, “epidemic”, “pandemic” and “endemic”.

An outbreak is a rise in disease cases over what is normally expected in a small and specific location generally over a short period of time. Foodborne diseases caused by Salmonella contamination provide frequent examples of this.

Epidemics are essentially outbreaks without the tight geographical restrictions. The Ebola virus that spread within three West African countries from 2014-2016 was an epidemic.

A pandemic is an epidemic that spreads across many countries and many continents around the world. Examples include those caused by influenza A(H1N1) or “Spanish Flu” in 1918, HIV/AIDS, SARS-CoV-1 and Zika virus.

Finally, the normal circulation of a virus in a specified location over time describes an endemic virus. The word “endemic” comes from the Greek endemos, which means “in population”. An endemic virus is relatively constant in a population with largely predictable patterns.

Viruses can circulate endemically in specific geographical regions, or globally. Ross River virus circulates endemically in Australia and the Pacific island countries, but is not found in other regions of the world. Meanwhile, rhinoviruses which cause the common cold circulate endemically around the world. And influenza is an endemic virus we monitor for its epidemic and pandemic potential.

What's the usual path from pandemic to endemic look like?

Over time and thanks to public health efforts from mask wearing to vaccination, the pandemic could disappear like small pox and polio did — or it might gradually become endemic.

Lara Herrero & Eugene Madzokere
Griffith University

● Cont. on page 11

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Saint-Louis Gate & The Corruption of Public Procurement

We trust that ICAC has the beef and hat to demonstrate convincingly for the external watching world that we are not quite the banana republic that our notorious listings and local antiques make us out to be

Jan Arden

The Saint-Louis Gate financial and corruption scandal has emerged again after the last bout of episodic activity late last year when ICAC investigators, back from Scandinavia, hailed the extensive critical help received and promised rather rapid outcomes. The affair has been treated several times here and elsewhere but some historical perspective is worth going over.

The Central Electricity Board's (CEB) love saga with the Scandinavian turn-key power supply contractor Burmeister & Wain Scandinavian Contractor (BWSC) does not date from 2015 and the company would certainly contend that its winning bids over the past 30 years, are due to its track-record for reliability in the provision of goods and services it was commissioned for and its intimate knowledge of the electricity generation and distribution network in Mauritius and those responsible for it at different decision-making or influencing levels.

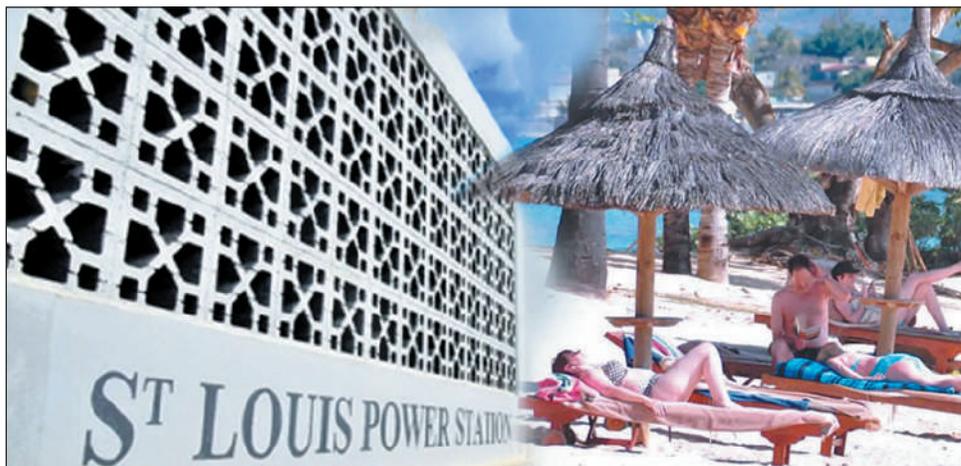
That certainly should have facilitated things for the country to benefit from up-to-date turbine technologies, shipment and commissioning of the large consignments and whatever coordinated ground and civil works that had to be undertaken on site through a reliable local contractor, which seems to have been PADCo lately.

That could be the narrative of either or any from the preferred contractor (BWSC), the buyer (CEB), the local contractor (PADCo), the decision-makers in a non-Emergency context (Central Procurement Board), the appeal bodies (Independent Review Panel), the Energy Ministry and the political brass. A rather warm and cozy relationship that seemed to have every justification to be and to incrust itself, barring the odd appeal from any supplier feeling it had been unfairly weeded out of a tender, either through cleverly restrictive specifications drafting or a less than above board assessment and recommendation.

In conditions when a ministerial certificate for Emergency Procurement is issued for whatever reason, matters seem even simpler for tender allocation with virtually no appeal procedures. On top of that, if the preferred contractor somehow gets access to confidential strategic planning documents related to the country's energy and electrical demand forecasts, or the supply requirements and their proposed future induction, it is far better placed than any would-be competitors that might upset the cozily humming appletart.

Late 2014, when tender requirements controversially seemed to favour a single supplier, which coincidentally turned out to be BWSC, the tender was accordingly and rightly cancelled to be re-issued. By that time a new government and a new ministerial and institutional setup (CEB, CPB, IRP, etc.) were commandingly at the helm. But as could be expected by any punter as a bankable certainty, BWSC (and its local contractor PADCo) won the re-tendered exercise, albeit at a package fee of some Rs 750 million above its 2014 bid offer. The project, cloaked under Emergency procedures disbarring any meaningful appeal to controversial elements but bringing them to public attention, was duly completed on schedule within the 18-month specified period, and there was much rejoicing in institutional officialdom and the new political nomenclature on handing-over in October 2017.

It is a matter of history that it was only after an anonymous tip-off from Africa in 2018 followed by immediate



“In and during the pandemic, the Mauritian population has been made the silent witness to several large players queuing up for public funds for salvage under terms and conditions that remain largely confidential, in particular with regard to their own contribution from accumulated reserves, equity funds and past dividend pay-offs when the weather was normal. Some big names are traditionally all-inclusive enclosures, with minimal effort at sharing the spoils, even loathe to accommodate the most well-dressed locals for a day's lunch...”

investigations by the external law cabinet Poul Schmith, that BWSC Headquarters concluded in 2019 that a small group of high-level staff, in connection with sale of projects in Africa (including Mauritius), had acted against the company's principles and policies against corruption.

After acting promptly by dismissing five employees and reporting two others to police, BWSC commendably approached the international African Development Bank (ADB), accepting to be disbarred from international projects in 2020 for twenty-one months, in return for a longer-term reputation recovery now that considerable damage had been done. The funding agency ADB conducted its own inquiry and concluded that it is “more likely than not”, that BWSC engaged in corrupt and fraudulent practices in relation to a project in Mauritius.

After the issue was raised in Parliament in June 2020, the Central Electricity Board's management board stepped down and was replaced. Under a gathering firestorm of public and Opposition pressure, Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth had to dismiss his deputy, who was also Energy and Public Utilities minister, Ivan Collendavelloo who had apparently been named in the investigation. Institutional cadres are now being called in to explain their involvement. The next politically exposed person (PEP) of note to be roped in last week, is Prof Swaley Kasenally over allegations ranging from six free tickets and Rs 0.5 million of cash benefits through local contractor PADCo.

While not condoning any hanky-panky in public procurement, this is somewhat surprising when allegations in the press about the PADCo conduit for alleged bribery monies are reported at about Rs 38m in the Saint Louis gate affair to some Rs 200m in the combined BWSC local projects in Mauritius and Rodrigues. The Professor immediately alleged that the investigative authorities, namely ICAC, are rushing into hasty overdrive through the pressures that must have been exerted at the level of the FATF/ESAAMLG audit completed earlier this month, necessary for exiting the notorious grey and blacklists.

If that thesis has some grounding, it may not be beyond reasonable assumption that independent investigative or regulatory authorities may not have had an entirely smooth

ride under vigilant probing by FATF auditors of their activities and high-profile trials or results secured.

We trust that ICAC has the beef and hat to conduct this model case of corruption under the tropics without fear or favour and demonstrate convincingly for the external watching world that we are not quite the banana republic that our notorious listings and local antiques make us out to be. A reputation for clean and good governance built up patiently and skillfully over decades, a role-model for Africa and Least developed countries, a blue-eyed boy of European capitals cannot continue with its blithe careening run without immense costs to the country as it struggles for a post-pandemic reset in a world order that is not averse to asking tough questions.

Tourism & Hospitality

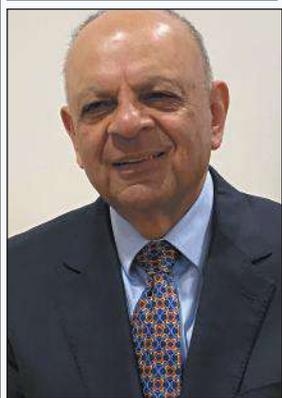
World Tourism Day 2021 falls on this 27th September and our industry, not spared from the Covid-19 cataclysm, either in direct or indirect activities, cannot wait for a controlled re-opening that should help save jobs and finances, without placing national health onto very risky shores. The dissonances from Health statistics and high-level communication have contributed significantly to population distrust and wariness that even its weariness with the restrictions cannot erase. However, we trust that, after months of hand-wringing, the authorities have their plans and systems in readiness with pre-defined alert levels and correlate responses should the re-opening prove more problematic than hoped for.

This year's theme celebrates 'Tourism for Inclusive Growth', an attempt for an upbeat booster that has to be adapted to the reality of every destination's main concerns, but seems to reflect that while the sector is a boon for foreign exchange inflows and hospitality industry related jobs, it is more often than not a cloistered island of prosperity for owners and investors, with only some crumbs available for smaller units, the indirect jobs and more generally, the population at large, the latter bearing the costs of living increase through differential tourist spending power.

In and during the pandemic, the Mauritian population has been made the silent witness to several large players queuing up for public funds for salvage under terms and conditions that remain largely confidential, in particular with regard to their own contribution from accumulated reserves, equity funds and past dividend pay-offs when the weather was normal. Some big names are traditionally all-inclusive enclosures, with minimal effort at sharing the spoils, even loathe to accommodate the most well-dressed locals for a day's lunch. We await the Tourism Minister's declination of what the World Tourism theme and the support of public funds during the pandemic means under our sun.

The Superpower Paradox – Unusable Power

The paradox of great power is that in the modern world, it can seldom be used, and the superpower's advantage is often temporary



Anil Madan

The withdrawal of all its remaining forces from Afgha-nistan marks yet another war that America lost or, at least, did not win. Some say that this result was a foregone conclusion.

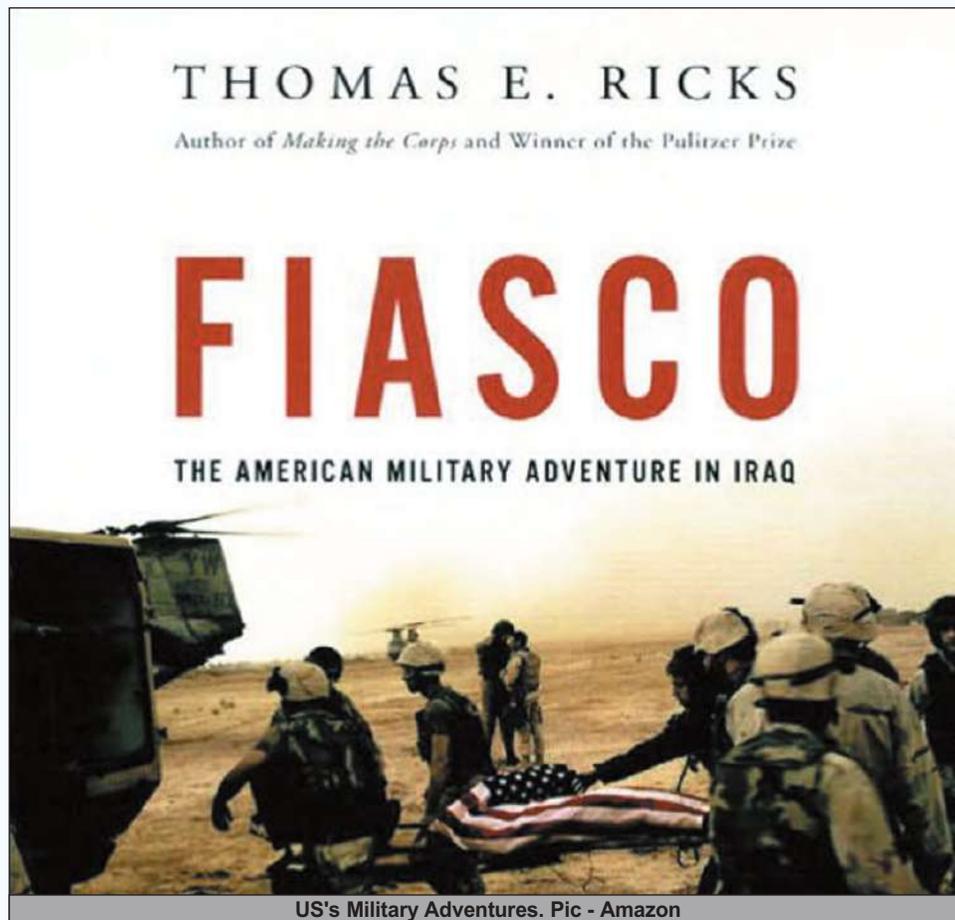
Certainly, to a discerning observer, President Trump's negotiations with the Taliban in 2020 culminating in the agreement to withdraw all US and NATO forces by May 2021 made it clear who really was in control and would eventually rule Afghanistan. For the US to have agreed to negotiate with the Taliban and not insisted that President Ashraf Ghani's government be at the table, thus succumbing to the Taliban's refusal to negotiate with what they described as an "American puppet" confirmed that the Taliban must have had a decided political and tactical upper hand.

True, the deal with the Taliban included a commitment to negotiate a ceasefire with the Ghani government but this was illusory. It was no more than a half-hearted commitment that the Taliban would try to reach an accord with Ghani. Strange indeed, that the government of a country whose fate is about to be decided, is not included in the negotiations from the onset.

The obvious question is why did this latest Afghan war end this way? How is it that the most powerful country with overwhelming firepower could not handle the Taliban? The same question, repeated after almost every major modern-day overseas intervention has vexed American post-war diplomacy and militarism since the end of World War II.

The three major post-war conflicts, the Korean war, the Vietnam war, and the second Gulf War in Iraq suggest that overwhelming military superiority is no guarantee of victory. The more important lesson from these conflicts has been the recognition that the very definition of "victory" has been elusive. And even where there has been no actual military intervention, America's threats to use overwhelming force have not been an effective approach. Thus, Kim Jong Un and the Iranian Ayatollahs have not been brought to heel.

Aside from the major conflicts mentioned, American president after American president has not been able to resist the temptation to dispatch troops, bombers, aircraft



US's Military Adventures. Pic - Amazon

carriers, and destroyers around the world even against minor "enemies" as best exemplified by Ronald Reagan's Grenada adventure. The one consistent lesson to learn from all this is that if you empower an American President to deploy America's great military strength, the temptation is not easily resisted. But there is another lesson hidden in this experience and that is of the paradox that all the power that the US has at its disposal can seldom be unleashed to subdue an enemy -- even if the "enemy" can be defined or identified. A more subtly hidden lesson is that America has often had trouble defining and identifying who the enemy really is and therefore lacked an appropriate target against which to direct its massive force.

As the negotiations with the Taliban were being concluded, President Trump blustered: "If bad things happen, we'll go back with a force like no one's ever seen," and "If for any reason they come back to our country, we will go wherever they are and use power the likes of which the United States has never used before, and I'm not even talking about nuclear power."

This begs the question why the US had not already deployed power the likes of which the US has never used before to do away with the Taliban. If it had been possible to defeat the Taliban in that way, surely the war would not have lasted twenty years.

President Trump was not reticent about engaging in bluster and threats in other situations. In his first ever address to the United Nations in 2017, he said: "Rocket Man is on a suicide mission." That moniker for Kim Jong Un of North Korea was Trump's derisive reference to recent missile tests by the so-called Hermit Kingdom. Trump went on to say: "The United States has great strength and patience, but if it is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy

North Korea." In a comical sequel to this belligerence, Trump would later declare that he and Kim had fallen in love. It's hard on the heart to destroy someone with whom you are in love.

And when Iran threatened reprisals after the assassination of General Soleimani, Trump said that the US would respond to any Iranian action with "1000 times greater in magnitude."

Trump had barely uttered his words about the total destruction of North Korea when the left-leaning media types predictably went nuts with dire warnings that Trump was unstable and leading the world toward nuclear holocaust. But Trump was not the only American President to muse about the destructive potential of America's power. President Obama too had made a similar statement without provoking much reaction from either the left or the right media types. Perhaps this was because Obama used slightly more tempered language in saying: "We could, obviously, destroy North Korea with our arsenals. But aside from the humanitarian costs of that, they are right next door to our vital ally, the Republic of Korea."

We all remember that when President George W. Bush spoke of going to war in Iraq in 2003, there was much talk of "shock and awe" to start the war. And under President Nixon, the US engaged in carpet bombing of Cambodia in a failed effort to cut the Viet Cong's supply lines.

America's lack of success

The answer to America's lack of success in its overseas military adventures is both simple and complex. At a very high level, the use of strategic nuclear weapons is out of the question. There are two reasons for this.

First, in the post-war era, perhaps the greatest value strategic nuclear weapons have is to deter nuclear attacks by others.

Second, no overseas military adventure since World War II has involved the goal of destroying totally another country or a part of it. Japan was, of course, the one exception because it had attacked Pearl Harbour. But the decision to drop two nuclear bombs on Japanese cities had profound consequences for America. Of course, the nuclear attacks forced Japan to surrender. But the attacks left a deep scar on the American psyche.

There were charges that President Truman had overstepped the bounds of decency and humanity. And, of course, there were charges of racism with the suggestion that the US would not have used nuclear weapons against a white European country.

If one reflects on Trump's recalling an airstrike against Iran because he learned that hundreds of civilians would be killed, one gets a sense of how much pressure is on American presidents to avoid civilian casualties.

The Nuremberg Trials at which Nazis were brought to justice for war crimes created the seeds for an American pledge not to engage in similar conduct. Indeed, the prosecution of Lieutenant William Calley for the My Lai massacre in Vietnam reflected American ambivalence about using massive firepower against other countries and a commitment to avoiding atrocities against innocent civilians.

Afghanistan to destroy those countries but, in a strange reflection of American naïveté, to save them.

● Cont. on page 5

The Superpower Paradox – Unusable Power

● Cont. from page 4

In Vietnam, it was the Domino Theory at play. If America did not stop the Communist advance in Vietnam, other countries in Indochina and Asia would be in line to fall.

In Afghanistan, the effort was aimed at capturing Osama bin Laden and punishing the Taliban for harbouring him. It was only after the second infusion of American troops into Afghanistan – readers will remember that President Bush withdrew American forces to focus on the Iraq war but then went back into Afghanistan – that the Karzai government was set up and America's focus changed to setting up a sort of liberal democracy that would, among other things, treat women as equals. Noble goals, to be sure, but given that the Afghan government was not truly representative of the country, not a liberal democracy, and given that to this day, there are reports of corruption at the highest levels, the effort was doomed to fail.

If strategic nuclear weapons were not the answer and overwhelming air power used for carpet bombing was not the answer, what about American ground force superiority combined with air support? And what about tactical nuclear weapons?

Suppress a belief

The problem with American ground force superiority supported by air power is that the wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, and indeed, the conflict in Syria had no defined enemy. Yes, to some extent, Saddam Hussein, Bashar al-Assad, Kim Jong Un, and the Iranian Ayatollahs are seen as the embodiment of evil by the US. But destroying those individuals was not the goal of the US. Misguided as it may be, the goal has been either to suppress a belief or an ideology, or, in the case of Afghanistan and Iraq, hope that a government supported and propped up by the Americans would in time come to be accepted by the people.

But one cannot shoot at a policy or drop bombs on beliefs or on ideology. Often, in these overseas interventions, the US itself is viewed as the enemy or unwelcome occupier. Here we have learned that Democracy is not an exportable commodity.

This brings us to the subject of tactical nuclear weapons. I bring this issue up not because it is a serious choice for an American victory, but precisely because it is not.

In the mid-1960s the failure to interrupt the Viet Cong's

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US-China. Pic - Foreign Affairs

“As we watch China's ascendancy and its increasingly militaristic approach in the South China Sea and in space, one wonders if President Xi Jin Ping will be as hesitant to use overwhelming force. Certainly, China's actions in Hong Kong, Tibet, on the mainland itself, and in the Pacific Ocean give cause for worry...”

supply lines and continuing excursions into South Vietnam raised frustrations to the point that the possibility of using nuclear force was considered. Here, we are speaking only of tactical nuclear weapons, strategic weapons having been excluded from consideration. A study was conducted by a Pentagon group of consultants known as the Jasons or the Pentagon's "Wise Men." They concluded that the use of tactical nuclear weapons was a really bad idea. An article from *National Interest* notes that there had been not infrequent talk among some of the military people involved in planning the war effort, that 'a few nukes' dropped on strategic locations, North Vietnamese-Laotian border, would close off routes from North to South Vietnam for good.

The essence of the study is captured in this sentence: "Those conclusions were eye-opening. Although a RAND Corporation study estimated that one tactical nuclear weapon equalled twelve conventional bombing attacks, the Jasons concluded that an all-nuclear 'rolling thunder'-style bombing campaign would require 3000 tactical nukes a year. Not even the massive US nuclear production complex could support that kind of use." It does not take much imagination to also realize that America could not then send its troops into zones contaminated with nuclear fallout and radiation.

What we can learn from all of this is that if the superpower's objective does not include taking over the foreign country, there is no point in undertaking military action in the first place. Nor is the use of overwhelming conventional force possible without inflicting massive casualties on civilians and the foreign country's infrastructure. It is difficult to make an argument that destroying another country's people and infrastructure is the way to spread democracy. The very principles that motivate the impulse to spread democracy are the principles that counsel against such use of force. This is another aspect of the paradox of unusable power.

As we watch China's ascendancy and its increasingly militaristic approach in the South China Sea and in space, one wonders if President Xi Jinping will be as hesitant to use overwhelming force. Certainly, China's actions in Hong Kong, Tibet, on the mainland itself, and in the Pacific

Ocean give cause for worry. One should not assume that other nuclear powers faced with existential threats will not retaliate. There is, therefore, a serious downside to any contemplated use of massive force by China outside its own borders.

This may sound Pollyannaish, but the great powers really do have much more to gain from robust and healthy competition than from military conquest. Ultimately, military conquest on a grand scale is unachievable. We see that despite the breakup of the Soviet Union, its successor Russia, albeit much depleted is still a powerful and dangerous force. So too will America be a powerful and dangerous force no matter how successfully China is able to dominate the oceans or space with its burgeoning military.

The paradox of great power is that in the modern world, it can seldom be used, and the superpower's advantage is often temporary because it cannot garner the support of the population at large.

Cheerz...
Bwana

MAURITIUS TIMES To Our Readers

65 years ago, *Mauritius Times* was founded with a resolve to fight for justice and fairness and the advancement of the public good. It has never deviated from this principle no matter how daunting the challenges and how costly the price it has had to pay at different times of our history.

We are determined not to abandon this line of action, which is the cardinal principle of our *raison-d'être*. This is what has given *Mauritius Times* a unique standing in the local publishing world.

Our production circumstances have changed since last year with the onset of the Covid-19 lockdown, and we have had to move to the digital platform. We have since March 2020 freely circulated the paper via WhatsApp and by email, besides making it available on our website.

However, with print journalism in Mauritius and across the world struggling to keep afloat due to falling advertising revenues and the wide availability of free sources of information, it is crucially important for the *Mauritius Times* to still meet its cost of production for it to survive and prosper.

Readers will no doubt appreciate that it takes a lot of time, hard work, money and the continued support of our contributors to produce the *Mauritius Times* - as we have done without interruption in these last 65 years. We can only continue doing it with the support of our readers.

We hope you'll continue to support the paper by taking a subscription or by making a recurring donation through a Standing Order to our not-for-profit Foundation. Our future will be secure with the support of our readers and well-wishers.

The Editorial Team

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Social Democratic Party leader and his wife Britta Ernst react after first exit polls for the general elections in Berlin. Pic - Reuters/Wolfgang Rattay

German Social Democrats beat conservatives in vote to decide Merkel successor

Germany's Social Democrats narrowly won Sunday's national election, projected results showed, and claimed a "clear mandate" to lead a government for the first time since 2005 and to end 16 years of conservative-led rule under Angela Merkel.

The centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) were on track for 26.0% of the vote, ahead of 24.5% for Merkel's CDU/CSU conservative bloc, projections for broadcaster ZDF showed, but both groups believed they could lead the next government.

With neither major bloc commanding a majority, and both reluctant to repeat their awkward "grand coalition" of the past four years, the most likely outcome is a three-way alliance led by either the Social Democrats or Merkel's conservatives, reports Reuters.

Agreeing a new coalition could take months, and will likely involve the smaller Greens and liberal Free Democrats (FDP).

The SPD's rise heralds a swing left for Germany and marks a remarkable comeback for the party, which has recovered some 10 points in support in just three months to improve on its 20.5% result in the 2017 national election.

Scholz, 63, would become the fourth post-war SPD chancellor after Willy Brandt, Helmut Schmidt and Gerhard Schroeder. Finance minister in Merkel's cabinet, he is a former mayor of Hamburg.

Scholz's conservative rival Armin Laschet, signalled his bloc was not ready yet to concede, though his supporters were subdued.

Schmidt ruled in the late 1970s and early 1980s in coalition with the FDP even though his Social Democrats had fewer parliamentary seats than the conservative bloc.

Covid-19 slashed life expectancy by most since World War II: Oxford study

The coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic reduced life expectancy last year by the largest amount since World War II, Reuters reported citing a study by Oxford University. The study showed that life expectancy dropped by more than six months compared with 2019 in 22 countries and reductions in life expectancy were seen in 27 countries out of the 29, including the United States, Europe and Chile.

According to data by worldometers.com, 4,761,895 people have succumbed to Covid-19 till now across the world and the US continues to top the death toll at 706,317, followed by Brazil and India.

The study revealed that there was a greater reduction in life expectancy for men than women in the majority of the countries. "The fact that our results highlight such a large impact



According worldometers.com, 4,761,895 people have succumbed to Covid-19 till now. Pic - Reuters

that is directly attributable to Covid-19 shows how devastating a shock it has been for many countries," said Dr Ridhi Kashyap, co-lead author of the paper, reports Hindustan Times .

Deaths due to Covid-19 among people over 60 years contributed more significantly towards the increase in mortality, the Oxford University study also showed.

WHO looking at reviving probe into origins of Covid-19: Report



WHO to revive probe into COVID-19 origins. Pic - AP

The WHO is reportedly considering reviving its probe into the origins of the ongoing pandemic of Covid-19. This latest development, reported by the Wall Street Journal, follows reports from August that stated that the global health body has set up a new expert group to continue its study into the origins of the virus, which allegedly originated from a laboratory in China's Wuhan.

The WSJ report states that the WHO has assembled a team of 20 scientists to look for new evidence, adding that this new group, which

comprises specialists in laboratory safety and biosecurity, and experts in geneticists, may be tasked with determining whether Sars-CoV-2, the Covid-19 causing virus, emerged from a laboratory. The experts may also be asked to conduct a broader inquiry into the possibility of future virus risks and their links with human behaviour, according to the report.

Its initial study concluded that the data provided by Chinese scientists was "insufficient" to answer key questions about the origins of the virus. Separately, an inquiry conducted by the United States, too, remained "inconclusive."

China had reacted angrily to the Joe Biden-ordered investigation, with the former's vice foreign minister, Ma Zhaoxu, saying that the United States should "stop poisoning" the international cooperation on the exercise, reports Hindustan Times.

World Tourism Day 2021: Know its history, significance and theme

World Tourism Day is observed every year on September 27 to mark the anniversary of the adoption of the Statutes of the Organization in 1970, paving the way for the establishment of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

UNWTO was established on this day in 1980 to create awareness on how tourism affects social-cultural, political and economic values globally and the role of tourism within the international community.

On World Tourism Day, UNWTO urges people to highlight the ability of tourism. "By celebrating this day, we state our commitment that, as tourism grows, the benefits that come will be felt at every level of our broad and diverse sector, from the biggest airline to the smallest family business," ZurabPololikashvili, UNWTO's secretary general, said in his official message, reports SusmitaPakrasi of Hindustan Times.

This year the theme of World

Tourism Day is 'Tourism for Inclusive Growth'. It aims to help people associated with the tourism sector in every possible way. UNWTO has urged businesses, tourists, UN agencies, member states and non-members to "celebrate tourism's unique ability to ensure that nobody is left behind as the world begins to open up again and look to the future".

*Contd on page 7

Jinnah's statue destroyed in blast by Baloch Liberation Army

A statue of Pakistan's founder Moham-mad Ali Jinnah was destroyed in a blast in the port city of Gwadar in Balochistan province, Dawn reported on Monday. Jinnah's statue, which was erected earlier this year, was blown up by an explosive device placed beneath it. The blast was claimed by the banned Baloch Liberation Army.

Gwadar Deputy Commissioner Major (retd) Abdul Kabir Khan said that the militants had entered the area, considered a safe zone, masquerading as tourists, reported BBC Urdu. While no arrest has been made so far, Khan told the Urdu language station that police are looking into the matter from all angles, assuring that the culprits will be caught soon, reports Hindustan Times.



The blast was claimed by the banned Baloch Liberation Army. Pic - HT

"The demolition of Quaid-e-Azam's statue in #Gwadar is an attack on Ideology of Pakistan. I request authorities to punish the perpetrators in the same way as we did with those behind the attack on Quaid-e-Azam residency in Ziarat," Balochistan's former home minister and current Senator Sarfraz Bugti tweeted.

Bugti was referring to a 121-year-old building, which the Baloch militants blasted and raked with gunfire.

Balochistan has been witnessing a spate of violence for several years, mostly due to the activities of the Baloch National Army. Recently, the BLA had targeted a motorcade of Chinese engineers at the Gwadar East Bay Expressway project in which two local children were killed and a Chinese national was injured.

Huawei case: Xi personally gave order, ensured safe return of Meng, says China



Hua didn't elaborate on what Xi specifically did, but said diplomats followed through to see that Meng received consular help. Pic - /1stnews.com

President Xi Jinping handed down orders for handling the case of Huawei Technologies Co. executive Meng Wanzhou, China said, as Beijing seeks to cast her release as a diplomatic win over the US.

"General Secretary Xi Jinping made important instructions," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said Monday at a regular press briefing, referring to the 68-year-old's title as head of the ruling Communist Party.

Hua didn't elaborate on what Xi specifically did, but said diplomats followed through to see that Meng received consular help, and that solemn representations were lodged with the US and Canada, "asking them to drop the charges and ensure her safe return."

The Huawei chief financial officer returned to Shenzhen on Saturday after admitting she had misled HSBC Holdings Plc about the telecom company's business with Iran, in violation of US sanctions. The agreement with federal prosecutors ended an almost

three-year extradition battle in Canada as the US sought her prosecution, reports Bloomberg.

At the same time, China released Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, who were detained on spying charges in what critics in the US and Canada denounced as "hostage diplomacy." On Monday, Hua asserted that the two cases weren't connected, saying the Canadians' release was "totally different."

Meng's return meets one of China's key demands to improve relations that have soured since a trade war erupted during the Trump administration. The deal comes two weeks after President Joe Biden called Xi in frustration over Beijing's move to link progress on climate change with other demands, including her release as well as lifting sanctions and removing punitive tariffs.

China had insisted the US take the first step to improving ties, with Foreign Minister Wang Yi saying earlier this month that America "should meet China halfway."

Avoid shifting goalposts: Indian envoy to China on border row

India's ambassador to China, Vikram Misri, has urged China to separate the ongoing border tension in eastern Ladakh from the larger boundary dispute, saying the primary concern now is to restore peace and tranquility along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and not resolving the decades-long boundary disagreement.

Speaking at a virtual India-China track-II dialogue last week, Vikram Misri said day-to-day affairs along the disputed border should be addressed through existing established agreements and protocols, which are not to be confused with the long-term mechanisms in place for the final resolution.

Vikram Misri was referring to the ongoing 16-month long military tension along the LAC in eastern Ladakh, which has plunged Sino-India bilateral ties to the worst chill in decades, reports AP.

The Indian ambassador was addressing an event co-hosted by the School of International Studies of Sichuan University (SCU), China Centre for South Asian Studies and the New Delhi-based Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses last Friday.

Vikram Misri addressed the gathering, which included Chinese envoy to India, Sun Weidong, on a day when India blamed China's "provocative behaviour" and unilateral attempts to alter status quo on the LAC for disrupting bilateral ties, rejecting Beijing's con-

tention, on the same day, that the Indian side was responsible for the deadly Galwan Valley clash last year.

In his speech, Vikram Misri listed two other "obstacles" in the current difficult ties with China: one-sided view of concerns and sensitivities, and viewing bilateral relations through the prism of relations with other countries.

The Indian ambassador brought up the



The Indo-Tibetan Border Police jawans celebrate the 75th Independence Day at the banks of Pangong lake, in Leh, Ladakh last month. Pic - ANI

problems that students and separated families in India were facing because of stringent visa restrictions implemented by China in the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Thousands of Indian citizens who work, study or whose spouses work in China are stranded in India because of Beijing's hard visa rules.

The Chinese government has so far not given any indication when it will open its borders to Indian citizens.

Singapore reports over 1,900 Covid-19 cases, highest since start of pandemic

Singapore's health ministry reported 1,939 Covid-19 cases on Sunday, which is the highest since the beginning of the pandemic in the country.

A recent rise in cases after the relaxation

of some Covid-19 measures has prompted Singapore to pause further reopening. More than 80% of its population has been vaccinated against Covid-19, reports Reuters.

Compiled by Doojesh Ramlallah

Competition Commission v Betamax

“Political considerations are invading the judicial province, and that is very dangerous”

LEX

The unilateral cancellation of the contract for affreightment between the STC and Betamax in 2015, without sufficient consideration for international legal and contractual obligations, was finally resolved in the latter's favour by the Law Lords, who reversed the judgment of the Supreme Court. The judicial matter however unpalatable should have rested there, were it not for the attempts to make parallel judgments through a recently appointed Commission of Inquiry and the actions of the Competition Commission. Lex shares his legal views below.

*** What are the circumstances under the Competition Act 2007 that would trigger an investigation by the Commission?**

The Competition Act of 2007 provides for a number of situations that are restrictive of free competition. Collusive agreements between enterprises that consist in fixing the selling or purchase prices of the goods or services; sharing markets or sources of the supply of the goods or services; or restricting the supply of the goods or services to, or the acquisition of them from, any person with a view to significantly prevent, restrict or distort competition.

Bid rigging will occur when one party to the agreement agrees not to submit a bid or tender in response to an invitation for bids or tenders; or agrees upon the price, terms or conditions of a bid or tender to be submitted in response to such a call or request. When bid rigging is collusive, it is prohibited.

A vertical agreement between enterprises shall, to the extent that it involves resale price maintenance is illegal. However, a supplier or producer may recommend a minimum resale price to a reseller of goods or services provided that the recommendation is not binding.

A monopoly situation also exists in relation to the supply of goods or services of any description where 30% or more of those goods or services are supplied, or acquired on the market, by one enterprise; or 70% or more of those goods or services are supplied, or acquired on the market, by three or fewer enterprises.

*** Is the Commission empowered to take appropriate remedial actions under the law in the event that a business concern or practice is found to be contrary to the monopoly provision of the Competition Act? What remedies can it impose and their ceiling, if any, in case of a financial penalty?**

After an investigation, the Commission may give directions to the person or enterprise concerned to put a stop to any practice that consists in restricting competition. During an investigation or prior to an investigation, a person or enterprise may give an undertaking to put a stop to any situation or practice that restricts competition. The law provides that an enterprise may offer a writ-



should be taken to cease the restriction of competition. Or undertakings may be given by the offending person or enterprise. The Commission will monitor whether the directions are being complied with or whether the undertaking given is being complied with.

Where the Commission determines that an enterprise has failed, without reasonable excuse, to comply with a direction or undertaking, the Commission may apply to the Judge in Chambers for a mandatory order requiring the enterprise to make good the default within a time specified in the order.

However, the Commission shall consider any representations the enterprise wishes to make before an application is made before a Judge in Chambers.

*** Does the law provide for any appeal against any order of the Commission?**

Any party who is dissatisfied with an order or direction of the Commission may appeal to the Supreme Court against that order or direction, within 21 days of the date of the order or direction of the Commission.

*** We learn from the Competition Commission's website that it has Me Mahmad Aleem Bocus as its Chairperson, Mr Alberto Mariette, Vice Chairperson, Me Candhayalallsing Seebaluck CSK & Mrs Vedwantee Bikhoo as Commissioners. It is a "parastatal, under the aegis of the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection", but "however independent of Government in its decision-making". Where does the Competition draw its independence from? The Constitution?**

Section 32 of the Competition Act states that "where the Executive Director exercises his power to investigate in a case involving a restrictive business practice, he shall not be subject to the direction, or control of, any other person or authority". The Executive Director is appointed by the President of the Republic on the advice of the Prime Minister given after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition.

However, let me add that R. Laxman wrote in this very paper on 4 February 2019:

'If a proper referendum were to be held today on the independence of our institutions, the result might astound us. We have in this country many institutions that should be independent. The perception is that many are not, although they may be in actual fact. Maintaining institutional autonomy vis-à-vis the government of the day and political parties is very important as it reflects on the kind of democracy that we practise. The process of recruiting people to serve in institutions is as important for an institution's independence as those who are selected to do so.'

ten undertaking to the Commission to address any concern that has arisen, or is likely to arise, during an investigation in respect of a restrictive agreement subject to investigation, a monopoly situation or a merger situation.

As regards financial penalties, the law provides in Section 5(3): 'Where the Commission imposes a financial penalty on an enterprise, the financial penalty shall not exceed 10 per cent of the turnover of the enterprise in Mauritius during the period of the breach of the prohibition up to a maximum period of 5 years.'

*** The Competition Commission has on 7 Sept 2021 launched an investigation into "a suspected abuse of a monopoly situation by the Bhunjun Group of Companies and Betamax Ltd in the supply of petroleum products" to the STC. Does the law allow the Commission to open an investigation on its own, or can it only do so following a complaint by the public or an aggrieved party?**

“Most of our institutions are not independent; they toe, or have to toe, the line of the government of the day, especially those chosen by the political masters to head certain institutions. On the other hand, what is the point of having a clause in the law providing for consultations with the Leader of the Opposition when we know that the latter's views would just be brushed aside?”

The Competition Commission can start an investigation of its own volition or on a complaint.

*** The Competition Commission's press release mentions that if its Executive Director, Mr Deshmuk Kowlessur, finds at the end of its investigation that "the conduct of the Bhunjun Group and/or Betamax Ltd amounts to a reviewable monopoly situation..., he may recommend the Commissioners to impose appropriate directions on the concerned enterprise(s). What is the nature of the remedies it can impose in this particular case?**

The Commission may give directions that measures

● Cont. on page 9

'Which concern holds the monopoly position? Betamax or STC?'

● **Cont. from page 8**

We must not kid ourselves. Most of our institutions are not independent; they toe, or have to toe, the line of the government of the day, especially those chosen by the political masters to head certain institutions. On the other hand, what is the point of having a clause in the law providing for consultations with the Leader of the Opposition when we know that the latter's views would just be brushed aside? Look at the appointments in an important institution like the Electoral Commission...

* **It's almost after 12 years since the STC/Betamax contract of affreightment was entered (27 November 2009), that the Competition Commission has on 7 Sept 2021 launched an investigation. The public interest would have been best served if the Commission had started an investigation when the contract was in operation, not five and a half years after its termination in January 2015. That has been a long time in the making, isn't it?**

The matter must be viewed differently. Once the Lepep government assumed political power in 2014, they became a law unto themselves. They believed they could do anything from arresting political opponents without evidence to putting an end to contracts or agreements entered into by the preceding government.

So, when they put an end to the Betamax contract, they believed that was the end of the matter especially after the erroneous judgment of the Supreme Court. Little did they realize that they would be condemned not only by international arbitrators but more significantly, would be rebuked by the Privy Council.

It would seem that this legal humiliation has been difficult for the current government to digest. This might explain why they have appointed a commission of inquiry to examine the circumstances in which the contract was awarded to Betamax, a decision that is being challenged before the Supreme Court and which may ultimately find its way to the Privy Council.

Not content with setting up a commission of inquiry, the Competition Commission has started an investigation into the alleged monopoly that Betamax practised on the award of the contract.

* **The Commission does not inform us on its website whether there has been any precedent like the one at hand wherein it had started an investigation after such a long time-lag. Does the law allow it to do that unlike the MRA which is barred from making an assessment for a period beyond three years preceding the current tax year?**

There have been a few decisions with regard to dominant position, mergers, collusive behaviour, competition issues regarding the cement market. It does not appear the Competition Commission is time barred to start an investigation - the Betamax investigation is a case in point.



“The irony of the situation is that it is the STC that is the sole importer of petroleum products. Betamax became the agent of the STC and not the importer by virtue of a contract. Unlike the cement market where the STC can import cement along with other enterprises, petroleum products are imported by STC only. Which concern holds the monopoly position? Betamax or STC?”

* **The Commission's investigation will assess whether the Bhunjun Group of Companies and Betamax Ltd, have engaged in relation to the supply of freight services for petroleum products to the STC, in conducts which are contrary to the Competition Act. It's not looking into the sale and distribution of petroleum products by the STC, so the question of the STC being the direct beneficiary of the Betamax-STC contract cannot arise, isn't it?**

The irony of the situation is that it is the STC that is the sole importer of petroleum products. Betamax became the agent of the STC and not the importer by virtue of a contract.

Unlike the cement market where the STC can import cement along with other enterprises, petroleum products are imported by STC only. Which concern holds the monopoly position? Betamax or STC?

* **We understand that "being in a monopoly position is not a breach in itself. It is the abuse of the monopoly situation that constitutes to be a breach of the Act". Is there however a case for an investigation into the operation and conduct of the STC in this particular transaction in relation to the importation, supply and distribution of petroleum products?**

This what the law says:

In reviewing a monopoly situation, the Commission shall take into account -

(a) *the extent to which an enterprise enjoys or a group of enterprises enjoy, such a position of dominance in the market as to make it possible for that enterprise or those enterprises to operate in that market, and to adjust prices or output, without effective constraint from competitors or potential competitors;*

(b) *the availability or non-availability of substitutable*

goods or services to consumers in the short term;

(c) *the availability or non-availability of nearby competitors to whom consumers could turn in the short term; and*

(d) *evidence of actions or behaviour by an enterprise that is, or a group of enterprises that are, a party to the monopoly situation where such actions or behaviour that have or are likely to have an adverse effect on the efficiency, adaptability and competitiveness of the economy of Mauritius, or are or are likely to be detrimental to the interests of consumers.*

* **It appears that the principle of the Betamax-STC contract of affreightment was approved by the Cabinet in 2009. Does that make of the then Cabinet culpable of any breach of the Competition Act?**

No. Cabinet approved a deal, and STC imported through Betamax.

* **The Commission's press release informs us that its monopoly investigation is being conducted "with due regards to the judgements of the Supreme Court and the Privy Council on the case involving Betamax and State Trading Corporation". What's your take on that?**

The issue of monopoly was never raised either before the Supreme Court or the Privy Council. The Supreme Court found that the contract was illegal whereas the Privy Council after a thorough analysis of the relevant statute and regulations found the contrary.

“It would seem that this legal humiliation has been difficult for the current government to digest. This might explain why they have appointed a commission of inquiry to examine the circumstances in which the contract was awarded to Betamax, a decision that is being challenged before the Supreme Court and which may ultimately find its way to the Privy Council. Not content with setting up a commission of inquiry, the Competition Commission has started an investigation into the alleged monopoly...”

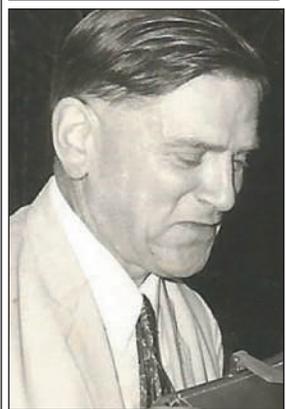
Had the issue of monopoly been raised, we would have been fixed. Since we have a final decision from the highest court, the Privy Council, that the contract was legal, is the Competition Commission now trying to give a parallel judgment that the contract may have been illegal on account of a monopoly situation? This is simply shocking. Political considerations are invading the judicial province, and that is very dangerous.

From the Pages of History - MT 60 Years Ago

4th Year No 173

MAURITIUS TIMES

Friday 29 November 1957

• *Let us do the work of men while we bear the form of them.* -- John Ruskin

Peter Ibbotson

The Education Bill

Who Rules? Minister or Director?



We now have a ministerial system in Mauritius. No one would, however, think so after going through the new Education Bill in which we read "There shall be a Department of Education, the head of which shall be the Director of Education who shall have control of the educational system of the colony and shall be responsible for the general progress and development of such system."

Surely the Minister of Education is the person who should be in charge of the general progress and development of the educational system and who should ensure "the effective direction, development and co-ordination of all educational and co-ordination of all educational activities in the Colony"? I have in mind the opening of the 1944 Education Act which governs education in England and Wales: "It shall be lawful for His Majesty to appoint a Minister... whose duty it shall be to promote the education of the people of England and Wales and the progressive development of institutions devoted to that purpose and to secure the effective execution by local authorities, under his control and direction, of the national policy for providing a varied and comprehensive educational service in every area."

Yet everywhere throughout the new Educational Bill we see references to the Director being granted the power to do this, that or the other. All these references should be to "the Minister"; the Minister of Education and Institutions is now the head of the education service, and this fact should be recognised in the legislation affecting his department. It is, of course, the Minister of Education who is responsible for the development and initiation of policy; it is the Minister Education who is responsible for all that happens in his department. Legislation should make clear the actual state of affairs.

Success of MT Campaign

One part of the new Bill is a reform for which the *Mauritius Times* has for a long time been asking. I refer of course to the proposed Part III in which are detailed certain steps which are designed to ensure that at least minimum standards obtain in all schools. All schools which are not Government schools must be registered; and their managers and teachers must also be registered. Clearly the operation of this section will have an important and beneficial effect on the many private

schools which are to be found all over the colony.

There are now 76 private secondary schools in Mauritius; not all are blameworthy, but equally not all are praiseworthy. In Central Flacq, where there is only one primary school, there are three private secondary schools; this state of affairs leads to cut-throat competition which is not in the best interests of education.

In so far as the proposed Part III deals with the control and inspection of private schools, it appears to be modelled on the English 1944 Education Act; the relevant sections of that Act are the result of a Ministry (then Board) of Education enquiry in 1931. Only this year, 13 years after the 1944 Act became law, has it been found possible to put into effect all the provisions relating to the control of private schools in England and Wales; let us hope that the proposed Part III will be put into effect at once after the bill becomes law.

For this Part, I repeat, I have every praise; especially as I have written on the subject on several occasions in the *Mauritius Times* and have called for action similar to that now contemplated.

Wrong System

The system of promotion to secondary education by means of a once-for-all competitive examination, entry to which depends on passing a previous competitive once-for-all examination, is wrong. It is utterly contrary to enlightened educational practice and development in such a country as England.

It is contrary to practice in such forward and highly developed countries as the USA and USSR where secondary education is open to all and where there is no qualifying barrier to be surmounted before the pupil can pass from the primary stage to the secondary. In England, there are 146 separate education authorities, and there are virtually 146 separate methods of qualifying for different types of secondary schools maintained by the authorities: grammar, technical, modern or combinations of these types. But over the past few years, it

has become more and more realised that a once-for-all examination is not a fair way of testing a child's aptitude and ability to profit from a particular course of secondary education.

More and more, educationists are realising that the child's whole scholastic record is important. In many areas, the child's record throughout the primary school is taken into account in determining what sort of secondary school he shall go to. This should be the case in Mauritius. The old, once-for-all examination should be scrapped as the only means of determining the child's fitness for a secondary school (most of the secondary schools in Mauritius are of the type which in England we know as "grammar" schools).

If an examination must be held (and if it is, I repeat it should be taken into account in conjunction with the child's primary school record) then it should not be of the type now held. The present examination papers in Mauritius are of the type known as "traditional", and research into similar examination papers used in some, but not any, parts of England, has shown that these "traditional" papers are less reliable as prognosticators of fitness for secondary educational of a particular type than papers known as "standardised tests". These tests should be introduced into Mauritius in place of the present kind of papers; and the Intelligence Test should be introduced as well. The intelligence test is useful since its results are less able to be influenced by persistent coaching than the traditional types of examination paper. The standardised test papers, too, are less susceptible to the effects of persistent coaching, and using the primary school record as one criterion for fitness for secondary education offsets the effects of a year segregated in the special scholarship class.

The new Bill contains no provision which will make it impossible for a few urban primary schools to continue their special scholarship classes. The children selected for these classes have an immediate advantage over their rural-dwelling fellows; and over their fellows at town schools where there is no scholarship class. The scholarship classes and the present set-up of the Junior Scholarship examination favour the chances of success of the town-dwelling boy against the village-dwelling boy; of the child whose mother-tongue is an Oriental language.

One condition of entry to the Junior Scholarship examination which is not written into the Bill, which ought to be there, is a condition that candidates must have spent at least two full school years in attendance at a Government or aided primary school. This will help to curb these well-to-do persons who send their children to the fee-paying junior departments of the secondary schools and thus, by being able to afford fees at so early a stage in the child's school career, virtually ensure that he will win a place in the secondary school. (Compare the free-paying direct grant grammar schools in England - this last sentence is especially for the benefit of the Director of Education and expatriate secondary school teachers).

As regards a common seniority list and a reform of the Junior Scholarship system a great opportunity has been lost. We can only hope that MLC's interest in educational reform and in securing equality of educational opportunity for all will take the chance of moving amendments in Committee. But as regards the inspection and control of private schools, a great stride forward is to be taken. On this, we congratulate the Department.

Microbiome: 'good' gut bacteria really could help you lose weight – new study

We have trillions of microbes in our gut – and each do something different for our body

Ana Valdes & Amrita Vijay
University of Nottingham

The trillions of microbes inside of our gut play many very important roles in our body. Not only does this “microbiome” regulate our metabolism and help us absorb nutrients from food into the body, it can also influence whether we are lean or obese.

Recent research even suggests that our gut microbiome can influence our ability to lose weight. Researchers from the University of Washington in the US found that the presence of specific “good” microbes in the gut of people dieting to lose weight affected how many pounds they were able to lose.

To understand what effect a person's gut microbes have on weight loss, the researchers looked at 105 overweight people, all of whom were enrolled in a year-long weight loss programme. To track their weight loss, the researchers recorded participants' starting body mass index (BMI).

The scientists also recorded the levels of certain blood markers of metabolism – such as cholesterol levels – to understand



how easily each participant could burn fat. And stool samples were collected at the beginning and end of the study to determine which microbes were present in each participant's gut – and at which levels.

The researchers then compared people who had lost weight (at least 1% of their bodyweight on average each month) to those whose weight had remained the same. They discovered that various blood markers related to metabolism were only minimally different between those who did and didn't lose weight.

But really different were the types of gut microbes that the two groups had. In people who lost more weight, they had more beneficial bacterial enzymes in the gut. These enzymes helped to break down complex carbohydrates (like those found in whole grains) into simple sugars, which makes them easier to digest and potentially less likely to store them as fat.

The authors also found that the growth of bacterial colonies – in particular the bacteria *Prevotella* – help to produce higher levels of healthy substances like short-chain fatty acids. These substances are known to reduce inflammation, which may facilitate weight loss.

Weight loss

We know from other research that a person's genes can influence their risk of becoming obese – though there's no clear evidence that genetics also influences the ability to lose weight. But this recent study shows us that the type of bacteria in a person's gut when they start a diet are better than cholesterol and other substances

that relate to a person's ability to burn fat at predicting how much weight a person will lose.

Though the researchers have shown this link between gut microbiome and weight loss, there is still much we don't know – including needing to verify these findings in a larger group to show these bacteria are actually involved in weight loss. The study's participants were also taking part of a commercial weight loss programme. This means the group may not be representative of the general population, which is another reason why further research is needed.

But if these findings are verified, they could be very promising for people looking to lose weight and keep it off, as a person's gut microbiome can be modified – unlike their genes. The next step will be finding out how people looking to lose weight can increase these specific fat-burning bacteria, either through diet by including probiotics and prebiotics, or by more advanced treatments such as fecal microbiota transplantation – a procedure in which stool from a healthy donor is placed in a patient to replace good bacteria that are missing in the patient.

Previous clinical trials have already shown that certain types of bacteria present in probiotics help lose weight. But those studies only measured a couple of types of bacteria used in probiotics. The researchers from this study tested all bacteria present in a person's gut – strengthening the argument that gut microbes are crucial for weight.

● Cont. from page 2

Host, environment and virus factors combine to explain why some viruses are endemic while others are epidemic.

When we look at the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid, we see it is infecting human hosts with no prior immunity.

In terms of environment, the virus transmits better in cold, dry, crowded, close-contact, confined settings with poor ventilation.

Each virus has its own characteristics, from speed of virus replication to drug resistance. The new Covid strains are transmitted faster and cause different symptoms.

Viruses are more likely to become endemic if they become adapted to a local environment and/or have a continuous supply of susceptible hosts. For Covid these would be hosts with low or zero immunity.

How long will it take for Covid-19 to become an endemic disease?

Scientific mathematical modelling provide some idea of likely Covid epidemic outcomes.

Covid will likely shift from pandemic to endemic — but what does that mean?



A drive-through vaccination hub in Sydney. AAP/Dan Himbrechts

Most public health experts currently agree Covid is here to stay rather than likely to disappear like small pox, at least for a while. They expect the number of infections to become fairly constant across years with possible seasonal trends and occasional smaller outbreaks.

Globally, the road from pandemic to endemic will be a rocky

one. In Australia our national and state leaders are announcing future plans to reopen businesses and eventually borders. The process of doing this will result in the second nation-wide epidemic of Covid. People will die and our health systems will be challenged. Vaccination rates will protect many, but there are still those who won't, or can't get vaccinated.

Herd immunity (from vaccination or infection) will play a key role in ensuring we move towards an endemic Covid.

With time, scientists predict Covid will become more prevalent among unvaccinated youths or those without prior exposure to the virus. This is what happens with common cold coronaviruses. Despite periodical spikes in case-loads each season or immediately after relaxation of economic, social, and travel restrictions, Covid will eventually become more manageable.

It won't be the same everywhere

Countries will not enter an endemic phase at the same time because of variable host, environmental, virus factors including vaccination rates. The availability and rollout of booster vaccine shots each year or season will also shape this path. Poor vaccine coverage could allow the virus to continue at an epidemic level for

longer. In a location where immunity wanes quickly and there are no booster shots available, Covid could go from endemic back to epidemic.

Once we see a stable level of SARS-CoV-2 transmission indicating a new “baseline” of Covid, we will know the pandemic has ended and the virus is endemic. This will likely include minor seasonal trends as we see now with flu.

The most important thing we can do to help reach a safe level of endemic Covid is to get vaccinated and continue to adhere to Covid-safe practices. By doing this we protect ourselves, those around us, and move together towards an endemic phase of the virus. If we don't work together, things could turn for the worse very quickly and prolong the end of the pandemic.

Lara Herrero & Eugene Madzokere
Griffith University

What really makes us happy might surprise you

Tipping the scales away from work may not be the wisest way to recalibrate your work-life balance

Finding the right work-life balance is by no means a new issue in our society. But the tension between the two has been heightened by the pandemic, with workers increasingly dwelling over the nature of their work, its meaning and purpose, and how these affect their quality of life.

Studies suggest people are leaving or planning to leave their employers in record numbers in 2021 – a “great resignation” that appears to have been precipitated by these reflections. But if we’re all reconsidering where and how work slots into our lives, what should we be aiming at?

It’s easy to believe that if only we didn’t need to work, or we could work far fewer hours, we’d be happier, living a life of hedonic experiences in all their healthy and unhealthy forms. But this fails to explain why some retirees pick up freelance jobs and some lottery winners go straight back to work.

Striking the perfect work-life balance, if there is such a thing, isn’t necessarily about tinkering with when, where and how we work – it’s a question of why we work. And that means understanding sources of happiness that might not be so obvious to us, but which have crept into view over the course of the pandemic.

Attempts to find a better work-life balance are well merited. Work is consistently and positively related to our wellbeing and constitutes a large part of our identity. Ask yourself who you are, and very soon you’ll resort to describing what you do for work.

Our jobs can provide us with a sense of competence, which contributes to wellbeing. Researchers have demonstrated not only that labour leads to validation but that, when these feelings are threatened, we’re particularly drawn to activities that require effort – often some form of work – because these demonstrate our ability to shape our environment, confirming our identities as competent individuals.

Work even seems to make us happier in circumstances when we’d rather opt for leisure. This was demonstrated by a series of clever experiments in which participants had the option to be idle (waiting in a room for 15 minutes for an experiment to start) or to be busy (walking for 15 minutes to another venue to participate in an experiment). Very few participants chose to be busy, unless they were forced to make the walk, or given a reason to (being told there was chocolate at the other venue).

Yet the researchers found that those who’d spent 15 minutes walking ended up significantly happier than those who’d spent 15 minutes waiting – no matter whether they’d had a choice or a chocolate or neither. In other words, busyness contributes to happiness even when you think you’d prefer to be idle. Animals seem to get this instinctively: in experiments, most



Completing stressful tasks gives us a unique and valuable form of happiness. Rawpixel.com/Shutterstock

would rather work for food than get it for free.

Eudaimonic happiness

The idea that work, or putting effort into tasks, contributes to our general wellbeing is closely related to the psychological concept of eudaimonic happiness. This is the sort of happiness that we derive from optimal functioning and realising our potential. Research has shown that work and effort is central to eudaimonic happiness, explaining that satisfaction and pride you feel on completing a gruelling task.

On the other side of the work-life balance stands hedonic happiness, which is defined as the presence of positive feelings such as cheerfulness and the

relative scarcity of negative feelings such as sadness or anger. We know that hedonic happiness offers empirical mental and physical health benefits, and that leisure is a great way to pursue hedonic happiness.

But even in the realm of leisure, our unconscious orientation towards busyness lurks in the background. A recent study has suggested that there really is such a thing as too much free time – and that our subjective wellbeing actually begins to drop if we have more than five hours of it in a day. Whiling away effortless days on the beach doesn’t seem to be the key to long-term happiness.

This might explain why some people prefer to expend significant effort during

their leisure time. Researchers have likened this to compiling an experiential CV, sampling unique but potentially unpleasant or even painful experiences – at the extremes, this might be spending a night in an ice hotel, or joining an endurance desert race. People who take part in these forms of “leisure” typically talk about fulfilling personal goals, making progress and accumulating accomplishments – all features of eudaimonic happiness, not the hedonism we associate with leisure.

The real balance

This orientation sits well with a new concept in the field of wellbeing studies: that a rich and diverse experiential happiness is the third component of a “good life”, in addition to hedonic and eudaimonic happiness.

Across nine countries and tens of thousands of participants, researchers recently found that most people (over 50% in each country) would still prefer a happy life typified by hedonic happiness. But around a quarter prefer a meaningful life embodied by eudaimonic happiness, and a small but nevertheless significant amount of people (about 10-15% in each country) choose to pursue a rich and diverse experiential life.

Given these different approaches to life, perhaps the key to long-lasting wellbeing is to consider which lifestyle suits you best: hedonic, eudaimonic or experiential. Rather than pitching work against life, the real balance to strike post-pandemic is between these three sources of happiness.

Lis Ku

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Tips for Growing a Successful Business

To succeed in business today, you need to be flexible and have good planning and organizational skills. Many people start a business thinking that they'll turn on their computers or open their doors and start making money, only to find that making money in a business is much more difficult than they thought.

You can avoid this in your business ventures by taking your time and planning out all the necessary steps you need to achieve success. Whatever type of business you want to start, using the following tips by Chris Seabury of Investopedia can help you be successful in your venture.

1. Get organized

To achieve business success you need to be organized. It will help you complete tasks and stay on top of things to be done. A good way to be organized is to create a to-do list each day. As you complete each item, check it off your list. This will ensure that you're not forgetting anything and completing all the tasks that are essential to the survival of your business.

2. Keep detailed records

All successful businesses keep detailed records. By doing so, you'll know where the business stands financially and what potential challenges you could be facing. Just knowing this gives you time to create strategies to overcome those challenges.

3. Analyze your competition

Competition breeds the best results. To be successful, you can't be afraid to study and learn from your competitors. After all, they may be doing something right that you can implement in your business to make more money.

4. Understand the risks and rewards



The key to being successful is taking calculated risks to help your business grow. A good question to ask is "What's the downside?" If you can answer this question, then you know what the worst-case scenario is. This knowledge will allow you to take the kinds of calculated risks that can generate tremendous rewards.

Understanding risks and rewards includes being smart about the timing of starting your business. For example, did the severe economic dislocation of Covid-19 provide you with an opportunity (say, manufacturing and selling face masks) or an impediment (opening a new restaurant during a time of social distancing and limit-

ed seating allowed)?

5. Be creative

Always be looking for ways to improve your business and make it stand out from the competition. Recognize that you don't know everything and be open to new ideas and different approaches to your business.

6. Stay focused

The old saying "Rome wasn't built in a day" applies here. Just because you open a business doesn't mean you're going to immediately start making money. It takes time to let people know who you are, so stay focused on achieving your short-term goals.

7. Prepare to make sacrifices

The lead-up to starting a business is hard work, but after you open your doors, your work has just begun. In many cases you have to put in more time than you would if you were working for someone else, which may mean spending less time with family and friends to be successful.

8. Provide great service

There are many successful businesses that forget that providing great customer service is important. If you provide better service for your customers, they'll be more inclined to come to you the next time they need something instead of going to your competition.

9. Be consistent

Consistency is a key component to making money in business. You have to keep doing what is necessary to be successful day in and day out. This will create long-term positive habits that will help you make money in the long run.

The Bottom Line

According to 2019 data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, approximately 20% of new businesses fail during the first two years of being open, 45% during the first five years, and 65% during the first 10 years. Only 25% of new businesses make it to 15 years or more.¹ If you want to be among that 25%, rigorous attention to these nine tips is the smart way to get there.

Work Smarter

Don't let video calls drain your energy

Let's face it, video calls are exhausting. But there are a few things you can do to conserve your time and energy. Start by avoiding multitasking. It may be tempting to try to get other work done while you're listening in, but switching between tasks can cost you as much as 40% of your productivity.

Next, cut down on distractions. Close your browser tabs, put your phone away, and stay present. You can take short breaks during longer calls by minimizing the video, or just looking away from your computer now and then. You can also take a step back and ask yourself whether you even need a video meeting. Check your calendar to see if there are any conversations that you could have over Slack or email instead.

And finally, don't feel obligated to make every conversation a video call. Especial-

ly when you're talking to people outside your organization, a phone call is probably just fine. Taking these steps may feel hard at first, but they will help prevent you from feeling drained at the end of another workday.

This tip is adapted from "How to Combat Zoom Fatigue," by Liz Fosslien and Mollie West Duffy -- *Harvard Business Review*

Working parents, set your priorities together

With summer here, many working parents are wondering how they're possibly going to balance their work and home life. If you have a spouse or a parenting partner, here's how you might work out a plan together. First, take a few minutes individually to jot down your thoughts on these questions: What matters most to you in this period? Is it a particular work project or a relationship you want to foster? Are you focused on your next career transition? Or your kids' education? What are your parenting principles during this time? Do you need to loosen screen-time restrictions? How involved in homeschooling do you want and need to be? Once you've written down your thoughts, share them with your partner, and work together to find common priorities. Write down what you agree on, and revisit your arrangement every week to make sure you're on the right track. A contract like this can help couples thrive in the best of times, but it becomes even more critical in the midst of a crisis.

This tip is adapted from "How Dual-Career Couples Can Work Through the Coronavirus Crisis," by Jennifer Petriglieri -- *Harvard Business Review*

Is your team focused on the right priorities?

In the first months of the Covid-19 crisis, many teams were grappling with the new reality of working from home. Now that it seems that many will be working remotely for the foreseeable future, it's a good time to take stock of whether your teams are still focused on the right priorities. Ask your team leaders to evaluate their short and long-term objectives: Are they still relevant to your current situation? They'll likely need to make some adjustments - teams that are still operating as they did six months ago may be cause for concern. Make sure you assess the team's adjusted priorities against any revised company

projections: Do their scope, output, and timing still make sense given the new reality? If not, determine whether the team's work can be shifted to create value in the current environment, or whether you need to reorganize to meet new needs. Regular check-ins on your team's priorities increase the chance that you'll identify small problems early, allowing you to ensure they don't become big issues later.

This tip is adapted from "How to Prepare Your Virtual Teams for the Long Haul," by Mark Mortensen and Constance Noonan Hadley -- *Harvard Business Review*

Fasting can be an effective way to start a diet

Several of four diseases of affluence occur at the same time in this 'deadly quartet': obesity, high blood pressure, lipid metabolism disorder and diabetes mellitus. Each of these is a risk factor for severe cardiovascular conditions, such as heart attack and stroke. Treatment aims to help patients lose weight and normalise their lipid and carbohydrate metabolism and blood pressure. In addition to exercise, doctors prescribe a low-calorie and healthy diet. Medication is often also required. However, it is not fully clear what effects nutrition has on the microbiome, immune system and health.

A research group led by Dr Sofia Forslund and Prof Dominik N. Müller from the Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine in the Helmholtz Association (MDC) and the Experimental and Clinical Research Center (ECRC) has now examined the effect a change of diet has on people with metabolic syndrome. "Switching to a healthy diet has a positive effect on blood pressure," says Andras Maifeld, summarising the results. "If the diet is



preceded by a fast, this effect is intensified."

The researchers used stool samples to examine the effects of the fast on the gut microbiome. Gut bacteria work in close contact with the immune system. Some strains of bacteria metabolise dietary fibre into anti-inflammatory short-chain fatty acids that benefit the immune system. The composition of the gut bacteria ecosystem changes drastically during fasting. Health-promoting bacteria that help to reduce

blood pressure multiply. Some of these changes remain even after resumption of food intake.

Together with scientists from the Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research and McGill University, Canada, Forslund's working group conducted a statistical evaluation of these results using artificial intelligence to ensure that this positive effect was actually attributable to the fast and not to the medication that the volunteers were taking.

If a high-fibre, low-fat diet fails to deliver results, it is possible that there are insufficient gut bacteria in the gut microbiome that metabolise fibre into protective fatty acids. "Those who have this problem often feel that it is not worth the effort and go back to their old habits," explains the scientist. It is therefore a good idea to combine a diet with a fast. "Fasting acts as a catalyst for protective microorganisms in the gut. Health clearly improves very quickly and patients can cut back on their medication or even often stop taking tablets altogether." This could motivate them to stick to a healthy lifestyle in the long term.

Factors that may predict next pandemic

Modelling from the Sydney School of Veterinary Science suggests pressure on ecosystems, climate change and economic development are key factors associated with the diversification of pathogens (disease-causing agents, like viruses and bacteria). This has potential to lead to disease outbreaks.

The research, by Dr Balbir B Singh, Prof Michael Ward, and Associate Prof Navneet Dhand, found a greater diversity of zoonotic diseases (diseases transmitted between animals and humans) in higher income countries with larger land areas, more dense human populations, and greater forest coverage.

The study also confirms increasing population growth and density are major drivers in the emergence of zoonotic diseases. The global human population has increased from about 1.6 billion in 1900 to about 7.8 billion today, putting pressure on ecosystems.

Associate Prof Dhand said: "As the human population increases, so does the demand for housing. To meet this demand, humans are encroaching on wild habitats. This increases interactions between wildlife, domestic animals and human beings which increases the potential for bugs to jump from

animals to humans."

Other zoonotic diseases that have recently devastated human populations include SARS, avian (H5N1) and swine (H1N1) flu, Ebola and Nipah -- a bat-borne virus.

The researchers discovered country-level factors predicting three categories of disease: zoonotic, emerging (newly discovered diseases, or those diseases that have increased in occurrence or occurred in new locations), and human.

Zoonotic diseases: land area, human population density, and area of forest. Areas with high zoonotic disease diversity include Europe, North America, Latin America, Australia, and China.

Emerging diseases: land area, human population density and the human development index. Areas with high emerging disease diversity include Europe, North America,

Human diseases: high per capita health expenditure, mean annual temperature, land area, human population density, human development index and rainfall. Areas with high human disease diversity include North America, Latin America, China and India.

"Countries within a longitude of -50 to -100 like Brazil, developed countries like United States and dense countries such as India were



predicted to have a greater diversity of emerging diseases," Prof Ward said.

The researchers also noted weather variables, such as temperature and rainfall, could influence the diversity of human diseases. At warmer temperatures, there tend to be more emerging pathogens.

The analyses demonstrate that weather variables (temperature and rainfall) have the potential to influence pathogen diversity. These factors combined confirm human development -- including human-influenced climate change -- not only damages our environment but is responsible for the emergence of infectious diseases, such as Covid-19.



Why do we say 'OK'?

The word 'OK' has only been around for 180 years, but it's become the most spoken word on the planet



Of all the words in the English language, the word "OK" is pretty new: It's only been used for about 180 years.

Although it's become the most spoken word on the planet, it's kind of a strange word. Sometimes it's spelled out - "okay" - and sometimes just two letters are used: "OK." Other times, periods separate the two letters: "O.K."

I'm a syntactician, which means that I'm someone who looks at the structure of language. I also study words and how they change over time.

For example, the word "silly" used to mean "happy" and now means "foolish." Sometimes new words develop, like "stan," which means a person who's obsessed with a celebrity, and "exomoon," a moon outside our solar system.

Linguists - the term for people who study languages - don't always know why these shifts happen. Usually they're in response to social changes or scientific discoveries. But the largest dictionary of the English language, the Oxford English Dictionary, is always adding new words. In fact, it added 1,400 new words in June 2019 and will add even more words two more times this year.

"OK," whose earliest usage is 1839, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, generally means things are good or alright.

So why did people start to say "OK"?

We aren't entirely sure. But some linguists point to how, in the early 19th century, humorous abbreviations were in vogue. Young people would write things like "KG," which stood for "know go," an intentional misspelling of "no go," when they meant something was impossible. It was a way to play with language.

Likewise, experts think "OK" likely emerged as an abbreviation of "oll korrekt" - which was a jokey way of saying "all correct." Others say that it derives from "Old Kinderhook," a nickname for former U.S. President Martin Van Buren, or that it comes from Choctaw, a Native American language.

The nice thing about "OK" is that it's so versatile. It can be used as a noun, a verb, an adjective, a conjunction or an interjection. It's also competed, over time, with "alright" and "all right" - words and phrases that have identical meanings.

One last important thing to know: If you like to play Scrabble, it's alright - and even OK - to use "OK" when playing. Just within the past year, it became an accepted word.

Elly van Gelderen, Professor of English, Arizona State University

Relationships

Ways of staying strong through divorce

No one enters a marriage thinking that it's going to end someday. People always look forward to a lifetime of companionship and togetherness, but things rarely turn out the way we expect them to be.

Not all marriages manage to stand the test of time and end up in divorces. With a divorce, comes a lot of pain and suffering. When you have spent a significant amount of time with a person and loved them, their absence from your life is shattering. Thus, here are some ways to stay strong through a divorce.

Recognize that it took courage to divorce

It is not at all easy to get a divorce. Many people resign themselves to staying in bad marriages out of fear. They are afraid of staying alone, of change, of taking a risk, etc. Finding the courage to divorce takes guts. Therefore, congratulate yourself for wanting a better life. The positive things about divorce will reveal themselves with time.

Let your emotions out

Divorce will take you through a roller-coaster ride of emotions. In addition to emotions related to lifestyle changes, divorce may bring up other memories of loss, abandonment, and loneliness. Allow yourself to feel all these emotions; let your tears flow. It is better to release these feelings than to keep them bottled up because they can resurface later and cause more harm.

Give yourself time to recover

Don't think that you will get over the pain in a few days. Post-divorce pain is going to strike you in phases, and recovery also involves several steps. Thus, you need to give yourself time to grieve. Stay strong and positive.

Be kind to yourself

Yes, you too might have made many mistakes that led to the divorce. But there's no point in beating yourself up for what happened in the past. Part of staying strong through a divorce should include daily practices of treating yourself with kindness.

Start rebuilding yourself

Use the divorce to rediscover yourself. Do everything you stopped doing because your partner didn't like them or had no interest in doing them with you. Doing



activities that you put aside during your marriage will help in staying positive during the divorce.

Take care of your diet and fitness

Though you might feel like not eating at all and staying in your bed all day, you need to take care of your health. This involves eating right and exercising. Thus, eat a balanced diet, including fresh fruits and vegetables, and practise plenty of outdoor movement, where the sunlight will help you enhance your spirits.

Travel

Travelling solo is a great way to build a sense of fearlessness, which can help you survive divorce emotionally. Book a trip to somewhere you have never been. Discovering the place can help you remain positive. Also, booking a vacation to a new place will allow you to look ahead and dream a little.

Health, Diet & Lifestyle Tips

8 mistakes people make when they're getting sick

Some of your habits might be making your symptoms worse. See what not to do when you start to feel under the weather. Advice from Michael W. Smith, MD

When you're sick, you want to get better as quickly as possible. But some of your habits may actually make your symptoms worse. Avoid these common cold and flu missteps so you can stay on the road to recovery.

1. You try to power through. Don't keep up with your usual routine. Your body needs energy to fight off that cold or flu virus. Make rest a priority. Cancel those plans and stay home from work or school. Along with helping your body recover, you'll also keep from spreading those germs around.

2. You ignore flu symptoms. You usually don't need to see a doctor for a run-of-the-mill cold. But call them if you have signs of the flu, such as a high fever, body aches, and fatigue. They can give you an antiviral drug such as oseltamivir (Tamiflu) or zanamivir (Relenza). If you take one in the first 48 hours that you're sick, you can ease your symptoms and shorten your illness by 1 or 2 days.

3. You skimp on sleep. Not getting enough weakens your immune system, which makes it harder for you to battle that infection. One study found that people who get less than 6 hours of shut-eye a night are four times more likely to get sick than those who log at least 7. So go to bed early and take naps during the day. Are your symptoms keeping you up? Soothe a nighttime cough with a little honey, and run a humidifier to help you breathe easier.

4. You bug your doctor for an antibiotic. That prescription won't make you feel better. Antibiotics only kill bacteria, and colds and the flu are caused by viruses. Nearly one-third of antibiotic prescriptions are unnecessary. This can raise your risk of side effects, such as diarrhea and allergic reactions. It also contributes to a huge global health problem: antibiotic resistance. That's when bacteria get used to the drugs, so they don't work anymore.

5. You don't drink enough. When



your throat aches, it's not as easy to gulp down liquids. But when you stay hydrated, you can thin your mucus and break up congestion. It can also fend off headaches. Make sure you drink plenty of water. For extra relief, sip a warm beverage like herbal tea or broth. Research shows that it can help ease cold symptoms such as fatigue or a sore throat.

6. You skip meals and snacks. You might not have much of an appetite, but it's important to eat something. Calories and nutrients will fuel the immune cells that attack cold and flu viruses. The result: You may get better faster. Try eating a bowl of chicken soup. Research shows that this classic may actually relieve some of those symptoms.

7. You light up. Smoking damages your lungs and irritates your throat. That can make your cold symptoms worse. So, ditch the cigarettes and vape pens and steer clear of secondhand smoke.

8. You stress out. A hormone your body makes when you're stressed is hard on the immune system. It also increases inflammation, which can make your stuffy nose even worse. Make an effort to focus on relaxing and recovering, and you may be back on your feet sooner.

'Waking up just one hour earlier could reduce a person's risk of major depression'

Asweeping new genetic study indicates that if someone who normally goes to bed at 1 a.m. goes to bed at midnight instead and sleeps the same duration, they could cut their risk by 23%; if they go to bed at 11 pm, they could cut it by about 40%.

"We found that even one-hour earlier sleep timing is associated with significantly lower risk of depression," said researcher Celine Vetter from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Some research suggests that getting greater light



exposure during the day, which early-risers tend to get, results in a cascade of hormonal impacts that can influence mood.

Others note that having a biological clock, or circadian rhythm, that trends differently than most peoples' can in itself be depressing.

More than 340 common genetic variants, including variants in the so-called "clock gene" PER2, are known to influence a person's chronotype, and genetics collectively explains 12-42 per cent of our sleep timing preference.



An elderly lady visits the doctor for a regular check-up...

After the check-up the doctor asks "anything else?" The old gal replies that yes, indeed there is something else but it's quite embarrassing.

The doctor assures her that being a doctor, nothing fuses him. So, she continues, "You see doctor, I've got terrible gas, funny thing is it's silent and odourless. In fact, I've let go several times during this visit and I bet you had no idea."

To this the doctor replies that he has just the thing for her, then prescribes some medication to be taken twice daily and to come see him in a week.

The next week she returns and states, "Not sure what you gave me there doc... but I toot just as much as before, it's still silent but now they are deadly!"

So, the doctor retorts, "Great! Now that we've cleared up your sinuses, let's work on your hearing!"

Deaf and dumb accountant

Once a gangster employed a deaf and dumb accountant. For years all went well between them till one day the mobster decided to double-check his books and found that he was short by \$1 million. Enraged, he called the accountant who came with his brother who could speak the sign language.

"Ask your brother where my \$1 million is gone.?" the furious gangster swore at his brother.

After a quick exchange the brother reported that the accountant knew nothing about the missing amount.

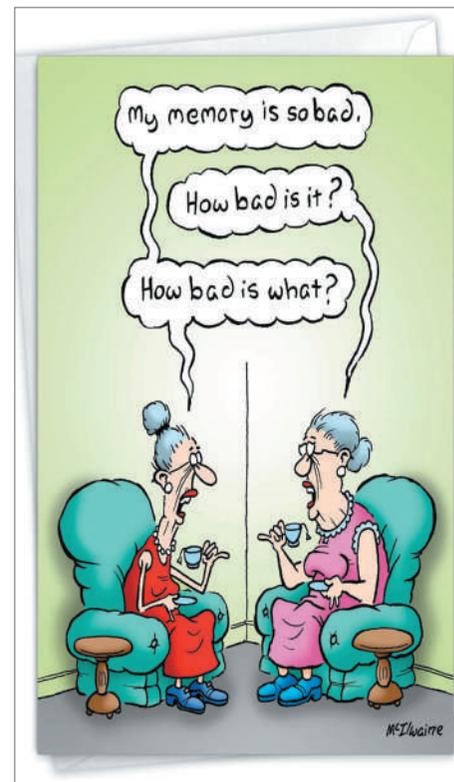
The angry mobster then pulled his gun and held it on the accountant's head. "You tell your brother that if he does not tell me in the next minute, I'll blow his fucking brains out."

The brother duly translated the message and the accountant signalled back that the money was hidden under a bed in his house.

"He said, you haven't got the guts to do it!" replied the brother.

Female medical examination

During the medical examination of a female patient, the British doctor says, "Your heart, lungs, pulse and blood pressure are all fine. Now let me see the part



that gets you ladies into all kinds of trouble."

The lady starts taking off her undies, but is interrupted by the doctor.

"No! No!... Just stick out your tongue!"

Aunty from the neighbourhood went to buy slippers.

The shopkeeper first cleaned her feet with sanitizer. Then washed it with soap, wiped with towel, then gave her chappal.

Aunty selected a pair, paid and started to leave.

Shopkeeper asked her, 'Do you need anything else?'

Aunty: 'I also wanted to buy bra and panties, but after seeing your service, I have changed my mind.'

Many senior executives find talking with management consultants invaluable. My friend, a no-nonsense businessman who works for a large firm, is not one of them. Halfway through their meeting, and noting my friend's terse answers, the consultant asked, "How do you cope with managerial stress?"

"I don't," came the gruff reply. "I cause it."

-- Clive Attwaters

When asked her opinion on punctuality, an applicant for an office job assured me she thought it was extremely important. "I use periods, commas, and question marks all the time," she said.

-- Mel Roberts

I work for a chartered bank in Ottawa, but my support unit is in Toronto. A colleague from the support unit e-mailed me to say she was missing a report due from one of my clients.

I e-mailed back that I had faxed it to her earlier that morning and to check another file because the two reports were faxed at the same time.

"Thanks," she replied when she found it, "but please don't staple files together when you are faxing them to us."

-- Denise Losier

Life's Lessons

"Don't ever shut up again!"

The first teaching day was a professor of law school. The first thing he did was ask for the name of a student sitting in the front row: What's your name?

- My name is Nelson.

- Get out of my class and don't come back! he ordered.

Nelson was confused. The teacher walked towards him. He got up fast, got his stuff and left class.

Everyone was scared and indignant, but no one spoke.

- Very good! Let's start. What are laws for? the professor asked.

Students were still afraid, but slowly began to answer the question.

- To have order in our society.

- No! No! No! No!

- Make people who make mistakes pay for their actions.

- No! No! No! No! Does anyone know the answer to this question?

The young girl timidly spoke to ?? To advance justice,"

- Finally! Justice! But what is justice??

Everyone was getting mad at the professor's attitude. But they kept responding.

- Protect people's rights...

- Ok. And what else?

- Differentiate good from evil, reward those who do good...

- Okay... so answer the question, did I do the right thing by kicking Nelson out of class?

Everyone was silent, no one answered.

- I want a unanimous answer!

- No!

They responded with one voice.

- Can you say I have committed an injustice?

- Yes!

- "And why didn't anyone do anything about it? Why do we want laws and rules if we don't have the will to apply them? Each of you has a duty to speak when you witness injustice. Everybody! Everybody! Everybody! Everybody! Don't ever be silent again!

Go get Nelson. After all, he is your teacher, I am from another class.

You know, when we don't stand up for our rights, dignity disappears, and dignity cannot be negotiated."

Doris Carrier

Poem

The Home in my Heart

-- Karina Lagdameo-Santillan

There are times

When I feel a deep longing
To make my way back there.

The home, deep in the recesses
Of the heartland.

There, I can rest a bit.
Feel the inspiring warmth of a love-
An unending love that never dies.

The path twists and turns, overgrown
With thick, prickly brambles
Roots of ancient trees, fallen leaves.

The path is impenetrable at times.
But the home, it is there. I am sure.

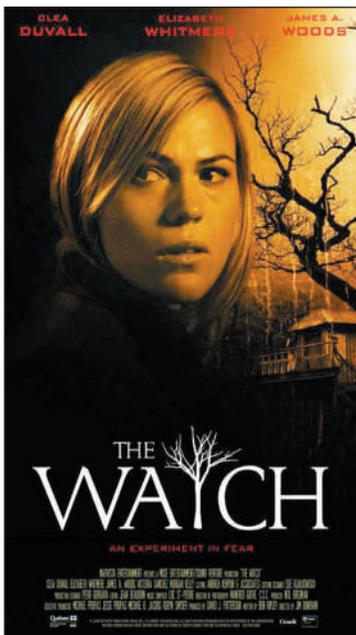
Head, heart and hands have come together
Building this timeless home
Through days lived in the passing of time.

And so, quietly, once more,
I go.

A Filipina from Manila, Philippines, a longtime humanist and creative director and advertising communications professional for many years, Karina Lagdameo-Santillan has been active in the Community for Human Development.

CINE 12

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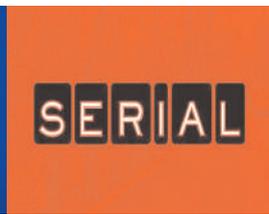
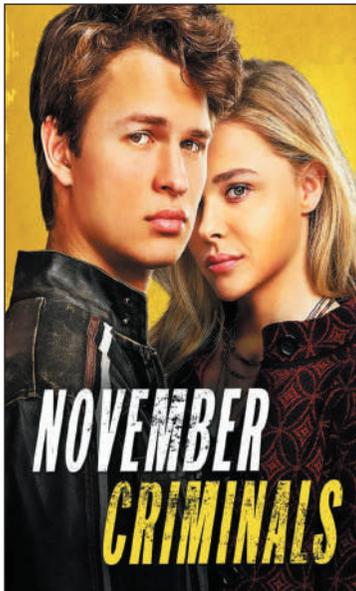
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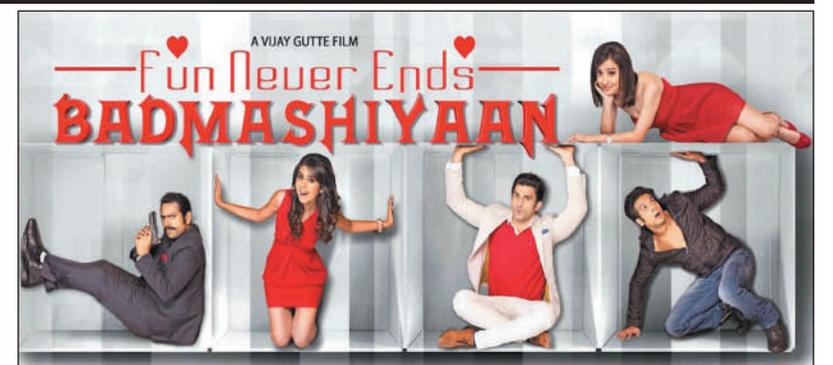
Jeudi 30 septembre - 21.15



MBC 1	MBC 2	MBC 3	Cine 12	Bollywood TV
<p>mardi 28 septembre</p> <p>06.50 Local: Crime Watch 09.45 Local Prod: Passerelles 10.55 Mag: Le Saviez Vous? 11.10 Tele: Sinu, Rio Des Pasionés 12.00 Le Journal 12.30 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir 13.00 Local Prod: Come On Let... 13.55 Serial: Heidi, Beinvenida... 14.35 D.Anime: Twirlywoos 14.47 D.Anime: The Garfield Show 15.22 D.Anime: Wishfart 16.00 D.Anime: HTDT 17.10 Serial: Mustangs FC 17.35 Mag: Sur Mesure 17.50 Mag: Japan Video Topics 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Serial: Jijaji Chhat Par Hain 19.30 Journal & La Meteo 20.10 Local: Autour Des Valeurs... 20.40 Local Prod: Generations J 21.10 Film: Hollows Grove</p>	<p>07.00 DDI Live 08.00 Educational Prod: Grade 3 10.15 Educational Prod: Grade 4 12.30 Film: Shankar Shambhu Star: Ajit, Master Bhagwan, Bindu, Feroz Khan 15.00 Serial: Zindagi Ki Mehek 15.23 Serial: Aamhi Doghi 15.43 Serial: Bava Maradullu 16.04 Serial: Apoorva Raagangal 16.28 Serial: Aatish 16.49 Serial: Imtihaan 17.05 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 17.30 Telugu - Premabhishekam 18.00 Serial: My Little Princess 18.30 Local Prod: Abhay Charan 19.30 Serial: Radha Krishna 20.04 Local: Tamil Programme 20.30 Film: Nastik Star: Amitabh Bachchan, Hema Malini, Pran</p>	<p>06.00 Mag: Eco@Africa 06.52 Mag: World Stories 07.33 Mag: In Good Shape 09.00 Educational Prog: Grade 5 11.30 Educational Prog: Grade 8 14.03 Doc: 360 GEO 14.55 Mag: Global 3000 15.47 Doc: Dogs & US 16.32 Mag: Eco@Africa 17.23 Mag: World Stories 18.00 Mag: Rev: The Global Auto... 18.45 Mag: Healthy Living 19.00 Student Support Prog... 19.34 Mag: Made In Germany 20.05 Mag: Magnifique 20.40 Doc: Builders Of The Future 22.21 Doc: Charles Pathé & Léon 23.23 Local: Klip Seleksion 23.31 Mag: Rev: The Global Auto And Mobility show 23.57 Mag: Healthy Living</p>	<p>01.38 Film: Hollows Grove 02.58 Serial: Chicago Med 03.39 Film: Amazing Grace 05.36 Tele: Muneca Brava 06.57 Film: Alvarez Kelly 09.00 Serial: When Calls The Heart 09.52 Tele: Teresa 10.55 Tele: I Forgot I Loved You 11.01 Serial: Chicago Med 11.40 Film: Amazing Grace 13.38 Tele: Muneca Brava 14.17 Mag: Hollywood On Set 14.45 Film: Alvarez Kelly 16.35 Serial: When Calls The Heart 17.24 Serial: S.W.A.T 18.05 Tele: Teresa 19.00 Tele: I Forgot I Loved You 20.05 Tele: Les Trois Visages D'ana 20.30 Serial: S.W.A.T 21.15 Film: The Watch 22.45 Tele: Muneca Brava</p>	<p>08.00 Film: Chaand Kaa Tukdaa Starring Sridevi, Salman Khan, Shatrughan Sinha 12.04 / 19.54 - Radha Krishna 12.24 / 20.11 - Chupke Chupke 12.48 / 20.32 Mere Sai 13.09 / 21.09 - Agniphera 13.27 / 21.24 - Bade Acche Lagte Hai 13.50 / 21.59 - Zindagi Ki Mehek 14.16 Serial: Maharakshak 14.53 / 22.25 - Sethji 15.21 Film: October Star: Varun Dhawan, Banita Sandhu, Gitanjali Rao 18.00 Live: Samacher 18.30 Kundali Bhagya 18.51 Serial: Ishaaron Ishaaron... 19.17 Bhakharwadi</p>
<p>mercredi 29 septembre</p> <p>06.30 Local: Generations J 09.30 Local Prod: Moments Forts... 11.00 Tele: Sinu, Rio Des Pasionés 12.00 Le Journal 12.20 Local: Autour Des Valeurs 12.25 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir 12.51 Local: Groov'in 14.29 Serial: Heidi, Bienvenida A... 14.35 Prod: Twirlywoos 14.46 D.Anime: The Garfield Show 14.53 D.Anime: Baby Boss 15.21 D.Anime: Wishfart 15.33 D.Anime: Spirit 17.13 Serial: Mustangs FC 17.41 Mag: Sur Mesure 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Serial: Jijaji Chhat Par Hain 18.55 MBC Production: Ragapriya 19.30 Journal & La Meteo 20.20 Local: MBC Production 21.15 Film: Dead On Arrival 23.00 Le Journal</p>	<p>07.00 DDI Live 08.00 Educational Prog: Grade 3 10.15 Educational Prog: Grade 4 12.30 Film: Swarg Narak Star: Sanjeev Kumar, Jeetendra 15.00 Serial: Zindagi Ki Mehek 15.33 Aamhi Doghi 15.55 Bava Maradallu 16.16 Apoorva Raagangal 16.39 Serial: Aatish 16.58 Serial: Imtihaan 17.16 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 17.37 Serial: Kulvadhu 18.00 Serial: My Little Princess 18.30 Local: Abhay Charan 19.00 Zournal Kreol 19.30 Serial: Radha Krishna 20.06 Programme In Marathi 21.00 Film: Parambi - Marathi 22.31 DDI Live</p>	<p>06.00 Rev: The Global Auto... 06.26 Mag: Healthy Living 06.56 Mag: Check In 07.49 Mag: Magnifique 08.15 Doc: Builders Of The Future 09.00 Educational Prog: Grade 5 11.30 Educational Prog: Grade 8 14.00 Doc: Tea War, The Adventure 14.55 Mag: Close Up 15.21 Local: Klip Seleksion 16.32 Mag: Rev: The Global Auto... 18.00 Mag: Motorweek 18.38 Mag: Arts.21 19.00 Student Support Prog - G7 19.47 Les Montagnes Du Monde 20.30 Local: News (English) 20.40 Doc: Zenith 21.59 Mag: Business Africa 22.24 Mag: Focus On Europe 22.50 Doc: Losing Sleep 23.32 Mag: Motorweek 23.58 Mag: Vous Et Nous</p>	<p>01.24 Film: Astronaut 03.54 Serial: Chicago Med 03.45 Film: Legionnaire 05.13 Tele: Muneca Brava 05.52 Serial: S.W.A.T 06.34 Film: The Watch 09.10 Serial: When Calls The Heart 09.45 Tele: Teresa 10.35 Tele: I Forgot I Loved You 11.01 Serial: Chicago Med 12.00 Film: Legionnaire 13.34 Tele: Muneca Brava 14.46 Film: The Watch 16.37 Serial: When Calls The Heart 17.23 Serial: S.W.A.T 18.08 Tele: Teresa 19.00 Tele: I Forgot I Loved You 20.05 Tele: Les Trois Visages D'ana 20.30 Serial: Billions 21.15 Film: Modern Life Is Rubbish 22.52 Tele: Muneca Brava 23.33 Serial: When Calls The Heart</p>	<p>08.00 Film: October Star: Varun Dhawan, Banita Sandhu 12.04 / 20.06 - Radha Krishna 12.24 / 20.26 - Chupke Chupke 12.44 / 20.02 - Mere Sai - Shrad... 13.10 / 20.46 - Agniphera 13.34 / 21.09 - Bade Acche Lagte Hai 13.56 / 21.50 - Zindagi Ki Mehek 14.18 / 22.15 - Maharakshak 14.54 / 21.46 - Sethji 15.21 Film: Angrezi Mein Kehte Hain Starring: Sanjay Mishra, Pankaj Tripathi, Brijendra Kala 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Kundali Bhagya 18.51 Ishaaron Ishaaron... 19.15 Bhakharwadi 19.38 Serial: Siddhi Vinayak 20.05 Serial: Redha Krishna</p>
<p>jeudi 30 septembre</p> <p>06.00 Local: Klip Seleksion 06.45 Local: Fee Main 07.20 D.Anime: Fam Rakonte 10.30 Mag: Tomorrow Today 11.10 Tele: Sinu, Rio Des Pasionés 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir 13.50 Serial: Heidi, Bienvenida A... 14.54 D.Anime: The Garfield Show 15.03 D.Anime: Baby Boss 15.28 D.Anime: Wishfart 15.41 D.Anime: Spirit: Au Galop... 17.12 Serial: Mustangs FC 17.45 Mag: Sur Mesure 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Serial: Jijaji Chhat Par Hain 18.55 Local: Tirth Yatra 19.30 Le Journal 20.30 Film: Badmashiyaan Stars: Sidhant Gupta, Suzanna Mukherjee, Gunjan Malhotra</p>	<p>07.00 DDI Live 08.00 Educational Prog: Grade 3 10.15 Educational Prog: Grade 4 12.30 Film: Shalimar 15.00 Serial: Zindagi Ki Mehek 15.27 Aamhi Doghi 15.43 Bava Maradallu 16.05 Apoorva Raagangal 16.32 Serial: Aatish 16.50 Serial: Imtihaan 17.07 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 17.27 Local: Amrit Vaani 18.00 Serial: My Little Princess 18.28 Serial: Ghar Pahucha Da... 19.00 Zournal Kreol 19.30 Serial: Radha Krishna 20.06 Local: Les Grandes Lignes 20.32 Local: Retrovizor 21.14 Film: November Criminals Stars: Ansel Elgort, Chloë Grace Moretz, Tessa Albertson...</p>	<p>06.00 Mag: Motorweek 06.26 Mag: Vous Et Nous 07.19 Doc: Garden Party 07.48 Les Montagnes Du Monde 08.31 Doc: Zenith 09.00 Educational Prog: Grade 5 11.30 Educational Prog: Grade 8 14.03 Mag: Sculptures, Ni Muses... 15.20 Mag: Focus On Europe 16.32 Mag: Motorweek 16.58 Mag: Vous Et Nous 18.00 Mag: Eco India 18.30 Mag: Shift 18.42 Mag: Sur Mesure 19.00 Student Prog Grade 7 19.30 Mag: Tomorrow Today 20.30 Local: News (English) 20.45 Doc: Car Wars 21.31 Doc: 360 Geo 23.41 Mag: Eco India 00.19 Mag: Sur Mesure</p>	<p>03.50 Film: Spinning Man 05.26 Tele: Muneca Brava 06.07 Serial: Unforgotten 06.53 Film: Modern Life Is Rubbish 09.00 Serial: When Calls The Heart 09.45 Tele: Teresa 10.35 Tele: I Forgot I Loved You 11.00 Serial: Chicago Med 12.00 Film: Spinning Man 13.35 Tele: Muneca Brava 14.45 Film: Modern Life Is Rubbish 16.46 Serial: When Calls The Heart 17.28 Serial: Unforgotten 18.13 Tele: Teresa 19.00 Tele: I Forgot I Loved You 20.05 Tele: Les Trois Visages D'ana 20.30 Serial: Billions 21.17 Serial: Rich Man, Poor Man 22.14 Film: Triassic World Avec: Hayley J Williams, Thomas Varga, Joel Berti</p>	<p>08.00 Film: Angrezi Mein Kethte Hain Starring: Sanjay Mishra, Pankaj Tripathi, Brijendra Kala 12.05 / 19.54 - Radha Krishna 12.24 / 20.11 - Chupke Chupke 12.48 / 20.32 - Mere Sai 13.07 / 21.09 - Agniphera 13.36 / 21.24 - Bade Acche Lagte Hai 13.57 / 21.50 - Zindagi Ki Mehek 14.18 / 22.15 - Maharakshak 15.03 / 21.46 - Sethji 15.20 Film: R... Rajkumar Starring: Shahid Kapoor, Sonakshi Sinha, Sonu Sood 18.00 Samachar 18.30 Kundali Bhagya 18.51 Ishaaron Ishaaron Mein 19.14 Serial: Bhakharwadi</p>

B TV Jeudi 30 septembre - 15.20 Star: Shahid Kapoor, Sonakshi Sinha, Sonu Sood

mbc:1 Jeudi 30 septembre - 20.30 Stars: Sidhant Gupta, Suzanna Mukherjee, Gunjan Malhotra



Corruption in state-owned companies hurts low skilled workers the most: we show how

Corruption and fraud make a few rich households richer. But the already poor and low-skilled lose their jobs and become poorer

State-owned enterprises are companies in which government owns, directly or indirectly, more than 50% of the shares. Worldwide, states own 10% of the largest companies. In South Africa, state-owned enterprises play a significant role in the important sectors of mining, energy, communications, air and rail transport.

Some state-owned entities loom large over the economy. Eskom, for example, accounts for about 95% of electricity generated in South Africa and is responsible for the transmission and distribution networks. Transnet controls the entire non-passenger rail transport system and the country's ports and pipelines.

State-owned enterprises were initially designed to promote effective and efficient service delivery in the country. They are a big part of South Africa's economic growth and development strategy. The strategy aims at diversifying the economy and requires state-owned entities to provide services and infrastructure to the private sector.

Global experience shows that when state-owned enterprises are well managed and good governance is in place, state-owned enterprises can provide essential commodities and services to the population at affordable cost. The reverse is also true. When they are poorly managed, state-owned enterprises directly affect the poor the most. The poor are the most vulnerable to failure by the state and its entities. The poor performance can manifest itself through ineptitude, corruption and generally poor delivery of public services.

Often, state-owned enterprises receive advantageous treatment by the state. They may get discounted funding, government supported guarantees, direct subsidies and favourable regulatory treatment. They are also often exempted from antitrust enforcement and insolvency regulations.

Lastly, they are directly linked to the governmental budget through guarantees, bailouts, foreign investments and debts.

But state-owned enterprises are often vulnerable and prone to corruption. This can severely undermine their performance. In addition, governmental support can result in lower production efficiency and poor economic performance. This is because the protection they get often insulates them from competition.

In South Africa, for example, citizens frequently experience electricity power cuts. These are the result of the poor performance of the state-owned utility, Eskom. Numerous witnesses at the commission into allegations of state capture



and corruption pointed to favouritism, fraud and corruption at Eskom and Transnet.

Given the big role state-owned enterprises play in the South African economy, it is important to understand their impact on economic growth. Equally important is understanding how these effects are transmitted throughout the economy.

So, we used a macroeconomic modelling simulation framework to explain how reduced economic performance and reduced foreign investments influence the economy.

Our findings are that the inefficiencies of state-owned enterprises and high levels of corruption within them do spill over to the rest of the economy. These negative spillovers include reduced economic growth and income as well as job losses, leading to increased risk of poverty. Low skilled workers in particular are the most affected. This is the cohort that has also been hard hit by COVID-19 because the industries in which they are employed have been most affected by reduced economic activity.

The channels through which the performance of state-owned enterprises is transmitted to the rest of the economy that we analysed are the same for other countries too, developing as well as developed.

A spiral effect

The poor performance of state-owned enterprises has a cascading effect throughout the economy. The channel is as follows. It first raises their operating

costs, which in turn affects companies and economic sectors that are directly dependent on the services provided by the state-owned enterprises. This reduces the domestic and international competitiveness of these sectors.

It eventually spreads to the entire economy. This makes the country's exports less competitive. As a result, exporting firms reduce production and eventually lay off workers. This increases unemployment, which in turn reduces household income and therefore household consumption, which is one of the drivers of growth.

In time, economic growth weakens, further reducing the economy's capacity to create jobs. Weakened growth also implies reduced savings, investment and lower tax collection by government. This further constrains the government's ability to increase various transfers and welfare redistribution efforts.

Fraud and corruption also lead to mistrust in government by citizens and by domestic and foreign investors. This hampers investment, which slows down economic growth, causing further increases in unemployment.

While corruption and fraud make a few rich households richer, the poor and low-skilled lose their jobs and become poorer.

Our analysis helps establish the direct and quantified links to increases in inequality and poverty.

Conclusion and outlook

Government ownership of certain busi-

nesses can ensure that citizens and industries have access to important commodities and services at affordable prices. But government ownership on its own doesn't guarantee these outcomes.

Government's participation in economic activity can open the door to corruption and fraud. The negative effects of the subsequent underperformance won't be limited to state-owned enterprises. They spread throughout the economy, and eventually affect economic growth, unemployment, household income and consumption.

The only winners in this vicious circle are the minority of a few rich and politically powerful individuals. The poor families of low- and unskilled workers bear the brunt of a weak economy.

The priority for the South African government should be to restore the competitiveness of state-owned enterprises to create a virtuous cycle of increased citizen and investor confidence, which in turn will lead to higher economic growth.

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Martin Henseler**
Université Le Havre Normandie

Ramos Emmanuel Mabugu,
Prof, Sol Plaatje University

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