

MAURITIUS TIMES

• "Independence Day is a reminder for all of us to stop taking our Independence for granted" — Anamika Mishra

Independence and Nationhood

That's what we are really!

By Sada Reddi  See Page 3

A blended intercultural being where dogmatism, fundamentalism, and totalitarianism of any hue and colour are regarded as alien to the Mauritian psyche



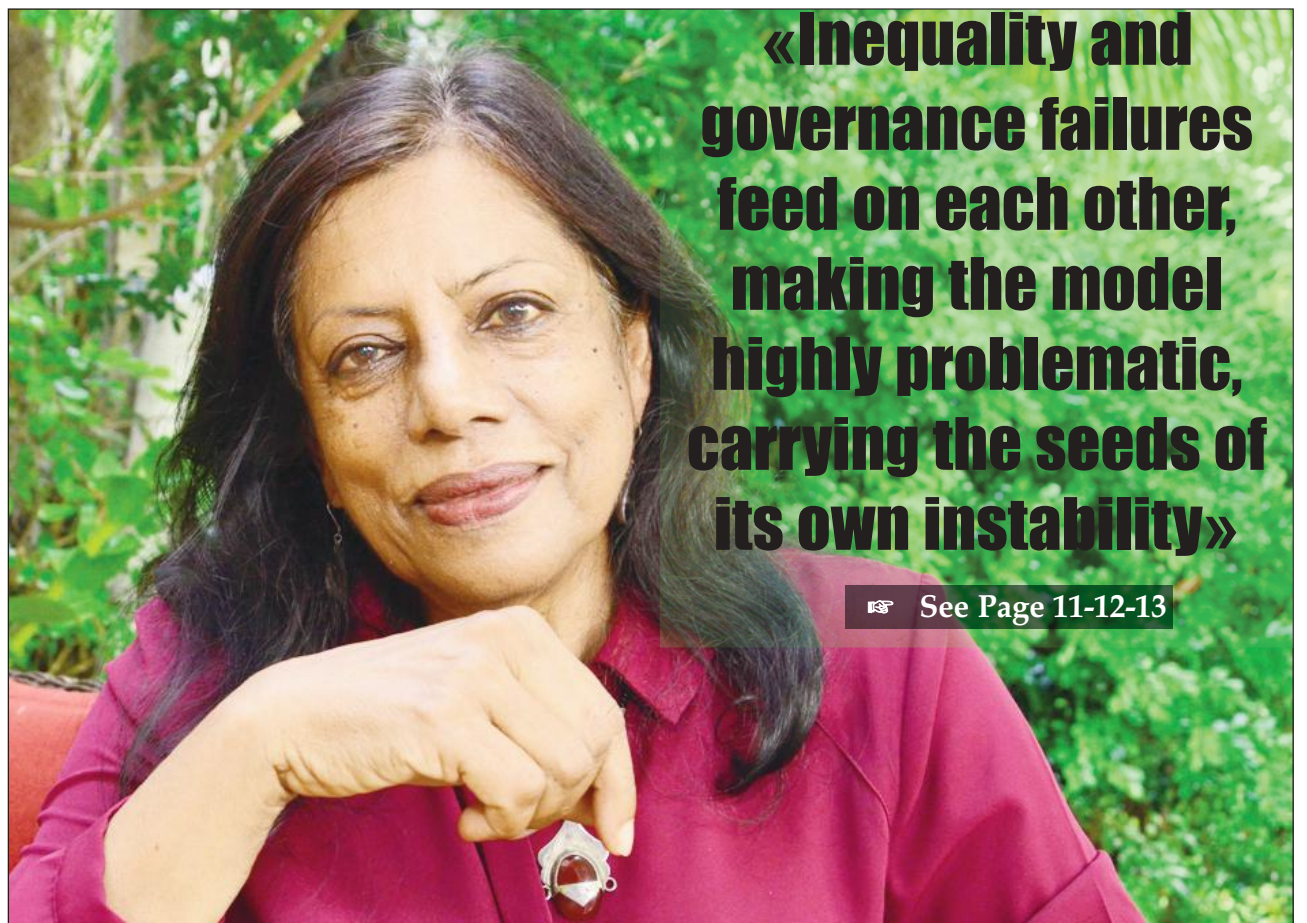
Reflections on State Elections in India



A lot of water has to flow under the bridge to 2024, but the AAP's rise in Punjab may herald a tectonic shift in Indian politics

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Interview: Nalini Burn, Economist & International Consultant



«Inequality and governance failures feed on each other, making the model highly problematic, carrying the seeds of its own instability»

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Bigger Challenges

When the flag of Mauritius was flown for the first time at the Champ de Mars 54 years ago, it was not quite clear what the future of the country would be. We had just emerged from a tumultuous election the year before in which the population appeared to have been torn asunder into two distinct blocs, led respectively by the LP and the PMSD, at loggerheads with each other on partisan lines, compounded by the racial/religious divide.

It goes to the credit of political leaders of that period that, despite the almost desperate situation which prevailed all around at that time, they battled it out to gain independence.

The task of transforming the country was formidable, all the more so as a sizeable portion of the civil service administrative and technical cadres had emigrated in those uncertain years. The force of circumstances was such that, once independence became a fait accompli, the leader of the PMSD was persuaded to join hands with the Labour Party in an overturning political coalition to help prevent the rift which could have brought the country's economy to its knees. This was when the economic diversification of Mauritius was launched in a world with pervasive trade barriers and restrictions. Textiles and tourism were the first blocks to emerge.

The backbone of the new diversification drive was a committed civil service, determined to overcome its lost cadres and the challenges of a new order. A spate of new institutions, namely in tertiary education and manpower training, beefed up their numbers and capacities. We were fortunate that we had such a strong and ingenious civil service. Had it not been for their path-finding sound contribution and the enlightened leadership of the political heads, we could have lost our way. The country's infrastructure was only emerging but people started getting into new jobs in both the public and private sectors. The process was slow at first but it gained pace as markets opened up in the West. In the next two decades after 1968, textile factories were implanted in almost all parts of the island. Simultaneously, pioneering beach hotels were soon joined by others capitalising on the Western markets, particularly France and Reunion Island, where we had established a high-end brand for sea, sun and sand vacations. That helped the growth of our national carrier, MK, when political meddling in management was still restricted.

With these developments came some desirable diversification of forex sources, a basket that was complementary to the politically negotiated sugar prices with the UK and its EU successor protocols. From less than \$500 in 1968, our GDP per capita reached \$ 8,627.8 by the end of 2020 (according to the World Bank) - that's no mean achievement for a country that has gone on diversifying its economic base. Economic development coming in the wake of independence has improved the lot of most households, nothing comparable to the bleak outlook of 1968. Cyclones however awful and damaging, no longer had the crippling effects of Carol in 1960 and we could better ride them out with the evolution from wood/tin sheets to blocks and concrete and the start of social housing projects.

Communal tension, which had raised its head in the pre-independence period, was also doused by the sheer scale of economic uptake as well as the universally applicable public policies followed by the country's various governments. Sectarianism could have thwarted our progress along the path of progress but it didn't because successive governments after independence have ensured that all have equal non-discriminatory access to the free education and free health care that governments have instituted since independence. Social welfare benefits are likewise available to all across the board without discrimination. Tolerance and better mutual understanding of diverse customs, beliefs and traditions in this multiracial place has been a key factor towards the national consolidation we see today.

However, the world we see today holds out similar if not bigger challenges than those faced by leaders of the independence era. New problems have today cropped up: growing inequality in Mauritian society, bleak employment prospects for the young, the crowding out of large swathes of the population from the housing market due to skewed public policy in matters of real estate development, etc.

The protectionist regimes are a thing of the past, and we have today to compete with the rest of the world. Our financial centre has lost part of its attraction with the revision of the double taxation avoidance agreement between Mauritius and India. It is also the object of constant attack and occasionally threatened of being blacklisted. The sugar sector, which is increasing being seen as the 'sunset industry', is being propped up by public finances, and a large proportion of small planters have already abandoned their lands in the wake of falling sugar prices on the world market, non-availability of labour and higher production costs. Its diversification into energy/electricity production and molasses and rum distilleries is still beset by revenue sharing issues. The education sector is not doing well despite all the reform/restructuring programmes initiated by succeeding governments. The continuous decline in the performance of this critical sector is a matter of serious concern for a country which for the past twenty years has been aspiring to be a knowledge hub.

The pandemic has thrown a big spanner in the works and we now face the very real uncertainties of the Ukraine conflict and crisis in Europe. They have come at a time when our national reserves may not provide the central bank any leverage on currency depreciation and inflation, both of which are hitting hard at consumers. Public debt has ballooned as authorities continue on an infrastructure spending spree rather than curtail or postpone some. Our port and maritime management, including the national coast guard, which are vital in any island, let alone one that ambitions to straddle 2m km², are shockingly below par. Drugs and narcotics keep fuelling a black market and take their dramatic social toll. New challenges and problems stare us in the face then, and we will need to pull out all the stops to deal with them while at the same time tackling gnawing inequality and the disparities that threaten to undo all that has been achieved so far.

The Conversation

How the world's defence giants are quietly making billions from the war

Many defence contractors have seen their share prices soar since the war began



The Russian invasion of Ukraine has been widely condemned for its unjustified aggression. There are legitimate fears of a revived Russian empire and even a new world war. Less discussed is the almost half trillion dollar (£381 billion) defence industry supplying the weapons to both sides, and the substantial profits it will make as a result.

The conflict has already seen massive growth in defence spending. The EU announced it would buy and deliver €450 million (£375 million) of arms to the Ukraine, while the US has pledged US\$350 million in military aid in addition to the over 90 tons of military supplies and US\$650 million in the past year alone.

Put together, this has seen the US and Nato sending 17,000 anti-tank weapons and 2,000 Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, for instance. An international coalition of nations is also willingly arming the Ukrainian resistance, including the UK, Australia, Turkey and Canada.

This is a major boon for the world's largest defence contractors. To give just a couple of examples, Raytheon makes the Stinger missiles, and jointly with Lockheed Martin makes the Javelin anti-tank missiles being supplied by the likes of the US and Estonia. Both US groups, Lockheed and Raytheon shares are up by around 16% and 3% respectively since the invasion, against a 1% drop in the S&P 500.

BAE Systems, the largest player in the UK and Europe, is up 26%. Of the world's top five contractors by revenue, only Boeing has dropped, due to its exposure to airlines among other reasons.

Opportunity knocks

Ahead of the conflict, top western arms companies were briefing investors about a likely boost to their profits.

Peter Bloom, Professor of Management, University of Essex

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Sada Reddi

That's what we are really!

A blended intercultural being where dogmatism, fundamentalism, and totalitarianism of any hue and colour are regarded as alien to the Mauritian psyche

As we wake up on the 12th of March, we will not stare at nor start with a blank slate. Instead, we'll wake up deeply aware of our past that we leave behind as we wish our country a happy birthday, good health, and happiness. But these good wishes really depend on us as we continue to prepare ourselves for the future, notwithstanding the fact that we may not be able to imagine what it will be like for coming generations.

We are aware that our National Day has never been one of popular rejoicings that we would have liked to see on that day, partly because the political passions of the past (which by now have faded from the memory of older generations) have fortunately become largely irrelevant for the present and possibly for future generations as well. The lack of true national feeling at the birth of the nation may have contributed to a particular tradition which explains the absence of popular national festivities. Barring the official flag-raising ceremony, a state banquet or a composite musical show, there is little that expresses or generates our sense of belonging on that day.

It is true that students will gather at the traditional school flag-raising ceremony, sing the national anthem, followed by the distribution of cakes and refreshments similar to the celebrations of Empire Day or Coronation Day of yore. There will be the traditional official speeches, and in almost all government and private institutions there will be the usual flag-raising ceremony accompanied by the national anthem; a few government institutions and private companies will fly the national flag. For most people, it is a public holiday like any other - good for a sea-side picnic or business as usual. One should not deplore this state of affairs; this is also the case in all countries where there is no need to beat the patriotic drum in the face of a threatening state.

What makes a nation

However, one issue has always preoccupied the minds of members of the elite class - writers, poets, and other political and social observers: it is the quest for greater national unity since it is perceived that the country lacks certain features which make a nation.

The concept of the nation is a Western one and is derived from eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe following the French revolutionary wars; its classical form has now become obsolete as European societies have become increasingly plural. Another strand in European thought is that of Marxism with its emphasis on secularism and the emergence of a classless society, and the elimination of ethnic and religious loyalties which are considered inimical to a classless society.

Those two strands of thought have had a great influence on the Western-educated elites of the 1970s who were opposed to multiculturalism as a state doctrine. All those normative ideals were a historical aberration and of little relevance to the overwhelming majority of Mauritians who held the view that those strands overlook the cohesion, solidarity, harmony and day-to-day nationhood which have permeated Mauritian society for at least two centuries. Nevertheless, such theories have been useful

for analysing and criticizing public policies by maintaining a critical distance from assumptions, interests, and the urgency of a number of public measures.

Those who want to invent a new society for Mauritius along new lines will normally point to the ethnic conflicts of the past and in recent years or to the mistrust which exists between communities. Admittedly our history has been marked by ethnic conflicts - whether in 1956, 1965, 1968 or in some measure the 1999 riots. It is easy to conclude that those conflicts give a lie to the postcard image of a peaceful and harmonious society. But it is not only with hindsight that one comes to appreciate that those conflicts appear not to have undermined the harmony prevailing amongst our different communities; the majority of the population have distanced themselves from those conflicts despite the loss of lives in 1968 and the unexpected brutality witnessed during the racial conflicts.

Even in the heat of the conflict in Port Louis, there were numerous cases of solidarity and cooperation to give shelter to friends and neighbours across communities in places such as St Francois and Cite Vallijee. Unfortunately, those instances of solidarity have never been recorded. We must also underline that the conflicts were localized, they did not involve vast sections of the population and did not in any case last long. More importantly, they did not wreck for good the harmonious relationships of mutual respect, solidarity, cooperation which exist at all levels of Mauritian society.

My own personal recollections have convinced me that the trigger for those conflicts of 1965 and 1968 were political rather than ethnic factors. My personal experience suggests that they had their origins in the senseless action of one or two people against a background of political tensions which quickly morphed into ethnic conflicts. I personally knew the person (he passed away two years back and was a close friend of the family) who was at the origin of the riots at Trois Boutiques. He was a chief agent of the PMSD and was travelling in a car from Souillac to Mahebourg with two Hindu friends, and they were all in the fish trade.

Arriving at Trois Boutiques, he saw the chief agent of the Labour Party, stopped his car, assaulted him, and drove away very fast. In the political conditions of that time, that incident resulted in ethnic tensions in the south with serious consequences at Trois Boutiques. Even the small group of people who burst into the Odeon Cinema during the 1 pm film show on a Monday afternoon were



Spontaneous outburst of solidarity following Wakashio disaster Pic - Pearl Representation Ltd

“How do we explain our major achievements in every field of life if there was not an underlying unity in the country? How to explain the cooperation, solidarity and mutual help across ethnicities that prevail in every street, neighborhood, village, and town and in the office or at worksites? We stand together not only in the face of calamities but in all kinds of family, religious and political events. Could the spontaneous outburst of solidarity and cooperation have been possible during the Wakashio disaster if we were not one people which can transcend all kinds of boundaries and barriers?”

there to frighten people with their long knives and sticks rather than harm them; the animosity one could have expected was patently absent. At that time the Inspector of Police was known to be in collusion with the PMSD agent, and one could not expect that fact to be recorded in intelligence reports of that time.

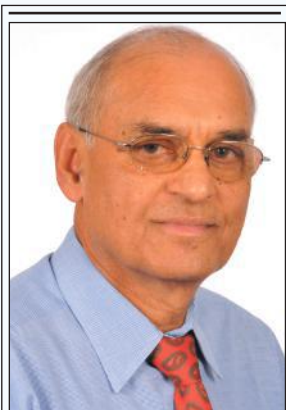
As for the 1968 riots, it really started in 1967 on election day. As a student living in Port-Louis, I went to Plaine Verte on that day at around two o'clock. Earlier a political agent had overturned a car belonging to the PMSD being driven by a lady; when it became apparent that the Independence Party was going to lose the elections in that constituency, a skirmish broke out between political agents of the two main parties. It was only when the wounded sought assistance from their relatives that the political conflict slowly changed into an ethnic one opposing drug and prostitution gangs aligned to the two parties.

An underclass protest

My personal recollections and assessments of those two major riots suggest that they were artificially provoked and contrived by political agents, but they were deplored by most Mauritians at that time. As for the 1999 riots, public resentment was primarily directed at police brutality though it might have had a covert ethnic dimension. The open ethnic conflict only emerged towards the end of the riots which, in my view, was largely an underclass protest. All this is to suggest that ethnic riots had never really undermined the Mauritian way of life, its resilience and our sense of nationhood lived day-to-day and which has been growing steadily at least since the beginning of the twentieth century despite occasional setbacks.

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Of truths, fake truths and selected narratives



Dr R Neerunjun Gopee

Last weekend I was on a video call with a Mauritian medical colleague settled in the USA, as we do from time to time to discuss things other than medicine. After we had exchanged some personal news he began the rest of the conversation by saying that nowadays it is only humourists who can speak the truth to power. In reply, I told him that there must be some... truth in what he had just said, pointing out that in the

English playwright Shakespeare's plays, quite often there was a character called a court jester who would fulfill that role – of speaking truth to the king. In Indian palaces in the olden days there was Birbal, a more refined version who was equally fearless in revealing truths though questions and puzzles addressed to the emperor or to his subjects in the latter's presence.

Using a different literary genre were the authors/compilers of tales in ancient times, in which verities were put into the mouths of animal characters. In India these were the Panchatantra tales, which were first translated by an itinerant Persian who came to India, and took them to his country. There is evidence to suggest that many of the tales that came later, such as the Arabian nights and Aesop's tales, Grimm's and Hans Andersen's tales, as well as the satirical ones of La Fontaine were inspired by that Persian translation of the Panchatantra tales, re-translated. La Fontaine in fact acknowledged as much.

Like La Fontaine's verses, humourists can state truths more pithily. Such as the Chinese Malaysian guy whom I watched a couple of years ago performing to a live audience. And the point about jokes or humour is that you have to decode the subtle, though at times obvious message. So this fellow was sharing with a serious face (*un pince-sans-rire* if I remember my French lessons correctly) his thoughts about the human digestive tract. He laid his hand on his tummy and said, 'this is where the colon is situated', and remarked that the audience surely knew that the function of the colon was to turn food into garbage. And that's why, he said, when the British came to my country, that was called co-lo-ni-zation, because they turned everything into shit!

The whole truth? Surely not, especially from the coloniser's point of view. And that is precisely the point about truth, because in the world of human interactions, everything is relative. In fact, in the system of Hindu philosophy called Vedanta, we learn early on to analyse things from a relative and an absolute standpoint in the quest for discovering the Ultimate Truth that underlies the whole of existence. By definition it can be only unitary and unique, unchanging and timeless. In other words, the Absolute Truth which lies outside of the created world of our daily experience.

All the rest can only be relative or transactional truths, which can fall in one of three categories: truths, fake truths and narratives. Truths are based on facts for which there is verifiable and consistent evidence, and in principle there is only one version. This is the kind of truth that needs to be spoken to power but is not, for fear of reprisal. A local example of this that I can recall goes



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back many years ago when I was present with some friends in the crowd at a political meeting. It was getting a bit dark as the sun had set, and we were planning to leave. As we were moving towards the periphery of the crowd, there were a few people standing near a parked car: according to one of the friends they were from the intelligence unit, and he knew one of them. So he lingered behind to meet the guy and we kept walking until he joined us some minutes later.

'You see,' he said, 'these guys know the truth. They told me that they cannot do anything but present a "good" report about the size of the crowd and what they had overheard while moving around in its midst, otherwise they would be in trouble.' One can dig up several other instances of avoiding to speak truth to power.

Fake truths are different interpretations of the same facts. In the current conflict in Ukraine, a video that went viral showed a tank presumed to belong to the Russians going off-track on a road and running over a car, and it was averred that the driver had died. This was a fake truth – other videos and commentators showed as convincingly that the tank belonged to the Ukrainian army; it was trying to avoid firing at coming from the left side and

thus veered to the right, and the driver of the car was retrieved alive and is well.

Narratives can be either genuine, when they are akin to truths, or imagined: these are either the equivalent of fake truths, or they are entirely imagined and are meant to demonise some person or some country. They are thus *selected* and not selective narratives – the latter would suggest a passive process and allow the peddlers of certain narratives to get away too easily. That, in fact, is the preferred mode of the illiberal li-beral cabal that are known by those who track them to be funded and remunerated to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars, and supported by colluding rich media platforms at global level. Like the warmongers that control power, they have so infiltrated these media that it is their selected narratives that are propagated.

This is the case with some well-known journalists who specialize in demonising India and PM Modi. They are in cahoots with and of a kind with their pushers - with bile-laden pens and minds so veiled in darkness by prejudice and jea-lousy at the rise of India that the brightest light cannot penetrate and burn their gelled mental cobwebs. Creatures and 'saleabrities' of the netherworld of such low morality, if any, that they turn their envy of the moral stature of Modiji into hate and disdain of the man. Just two days ago, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Ms Emine Djaparova, in an interview with Gaurav Sawant of the India Today TV channel who has been covering the situation live from Ukraine, referred to precisely this moral trait of Modiji while expressing the wish and hope that he could mediate between the two warring leaders to bring an end to the conflict.

Right now the world is in the throes of two competing narratives about what is happening in and to Ukraine, one from the West and one from Russia, and which have pitched cousins against cousins in a fight that has already caused deaths and destruction beyond compare. Too deep for tears...

NOTICE FOR BUILDING & LAND USE PERMIT APPLICATION

NOTICE FOR PERMISSION FOR LAND USE

Take notice that I, **Mr Rajendra Koomar Woodun** will apply to the Municipal Council of **Vacoas/Phoenix** for a Building and Land Use permit for a proposed **Development placement of a Container to be used as Store motor vehicles & Tyres at Carreau Lialiance, Vacoas.**

Any person feeling aggrieved by the proposal may lodge an objection in writing to the above-named Council within 15 days from the date of this publication.

Date: 11.03.2022

SCHOOL OF NURSING EMPLOYEES UNION (SNEU) CENTRAL NURSING SCHOOL - CANDOS

All members of the School of Nursing Employees Union are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting which will be held on Thursday 31st March 2022 at 1 pm at the Central School of Nursing, Orbis Court, Quatre Bornes.

AGENDA

1. Reading and approval of last AGM minutes,
2. President's report
3. Treasurer's report
4. Changing of name of Union,
5. AOB

In case enough members do not show off to make a quorum, the meeting will be postponed to Thursday April 2022 at the same time and place and with same agenda

Mrs S Bactora
Secretary

9 March 2022

Reflections on State Elections in India

A lot of water has to flow under the bridge to 2024, but the AAP's rise in Punjab may herald a tectonic shift in Indian politics

Jan Arden

Local assembly elections in five Indian states were completed on Monday with the conclusion of seventh stage voting in Uttar Pradesh (UP). Most Indian observers had presented them as a test of Narendra Modi/BJP popularity and as a forerunner to the 2024 Lok Sabha general elections. We take a look, two days before the actual results are out, at some factors and take-aways from exit polls estimates that have been released by several outlets, while recognizing that exit polls are a depiction of major trends and may sometimes get it terribly wrong (West Bengal in last general elections is a case in point).

BJP anti-incumbency?: Four of these states were indeed governed by BJP-allies as incumbents, including the most populous and decisive state in the Indian heartland, UP, headed by leading figure and Chief Minister (CM) Yogi Adityanath. Would the years of incumbency in the most difficult of periods, with the economic and human costs of the pandemic, law and order, farmer protests, joblessness or the communal and caste factors detract from the BJP and the Yogi's hold on that vast state? While Amit Shah and the Yogi Chief Minister strategized the UP campaign, the Indian Prime Minister personally crisscrossed the state and his Varanasi pilgrimage constituency, forcing prominent leaders of most parties, notably Mamata Banerjee backing the Samajwadi Party (SP), and the Gandhi leadership duet, to attempt upending the BJP powerhouse in this high-octane battle state.

Elsewhere in the other three BJP-run states, exit polls suggest that except for Goa, locked in a narrow contest, anti-incumbency may not be enough to prevent the ruling BJP state coalition to win the stakes in Uttarakhand and Manipur. As for the UP showdown, the exit polls indicate a decisive second win with an absolute majority of the 403 seats for Yogi Adityanath-BJP (220-250 seats) even with a slightly reduced popular vote. The Samajwadi Party, backed by Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress (TMC), would come out as second best (120-150) and the Indian National Congress (5-6) as also-rans.

Despite fiery attempts to communalise the UP elections, rouse anti-Modi Muslim and caste votes, the Yogi-Amit Shah pitch of nationalism, law and order, stability in riding the tough times and "development for all" seems to have held its ground well and this may spell some rethink from Opposition election strategists for the 2024 elections. Mamata Banerjee may not have



Sole mission and motive is UP's development: PM Modi on Yogi govt. Pic- Indian Express

“Despite fiery attempts to communalise the UP elections, rouse anti-Modi Muslim and caste votes, the Yogi-Amit Shah pitch of nationalism, law and order, stability in riding the tough times and “development for all” seems to have held its ground well and this may spell some rethink from Opposition election strategists for the 2024 elections. Mamata Banerjee may not have emerged as the national Gandhi-Indian National Congress (INC) alternative she had hoped for. As for the INC, its continued irrelevance in the Hindu heartland is a reflection of a vacuous political leadership, strategy and philosophy that fails to inspire...”

emerged as the national Gandhi-Indian National Congress (INC) alternative she had hoped for. As for the INC, its continued irrelevance in the Hindu heartland is a reflection of a vacuous political leadership, strategy and philosophy that fails to inspire or enthuse either party workers or the electorate, even though its fortunes were guided in UP by no less a national figure than Priyanka Gandhi.

INC: the Punjab debacle

This is probably a rare feat when the Indian National Congress under its current leadership has bungled state electoral matters so badly that the prospect of snatching defeat from the jaws of what should have been a comfortable victory in the only key state it held and ruled under Capt Amarinder Singh, is now a very real prospect. The humiliation inflicted on long-serving stalwart Capt Amarinder, cursorily ejected and replaced either by Navjot Singh Sidhu or Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi or both in a circus of public recriminations, was clearly planned as a clever and personal Rahul Gandhi strategy to woo Dalits (some 30% of the state) that has backfired thumpingly. The costs and damages will be immense and could be long-lasting as exit polls predict barely 25-30 seats for the INC in the 117-seat Assembly. The clear winner hands down is



Arvind Kejriwal leads AAP's 'victory' March in Chandigarh. Pic - Twitter

the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) of Arvind Kejriwal, with a predicted seat tally well into the 70s, from its surprising entry level of 20 seats in 2017.

If the year-long long farmer protests and marches, whether egged on by the INC or not, were an electoral factor, they are clearly benefiting the AAP, which seems to have better integrated them while exploiting anti-incumbency and the internal squabbles within the INC and its high-command. The single large and meaningful border state, Punjab has been seduced and wrested from Congress by Arvind Kejriwal and its previously modest AAP outfit: this will certainly add more credence to his national anti-BJP leadership challenger option than either of the Gandhis, Mamata Banerjee or any regional political chief.

A lot of water has to flow under the bridge to 2024 of course, but the AAP's rise in Punjab may herald a tectonic shift in Indian politics, as more insiders and big-wigs ingrain and digest the fact that Rahul Gandhi's two previous challenges to the BJP (2014 and 2019) ended nowhere and the INC, as a venerable old national party, has been left largely rudderless for the past three years.

A few weeks ago we noted in this column: *“Failure to hold on to (Punjab) that Indian breadbasket state with border national security issues and an inability to dent the BJP elsewhere may spell considerable snafus in the leadership squabbles affecting the venerable INC party and more high-profile exits of staunch former cadres.”*

We suspect an Indian National Congress leadership that is seen by Indian electors as relying on old-fashioned communo-casteist formulae, as out-of-synch

with India's educated, trained and aspirational younger generations or, sadly, as noisy twitteratis, harping constantly an anti-Indian ethos and negativity on all issues, however minor, may require that dispassionate but hard questions be no longer shelved.

AAP: a tectonic inroad

Otherwise, it risks being displaced or replaced by the far more agile and populist AAP, in what would be a major if not tectonic shift in Indian national politics. As noted by the 'Business Standard' rather warily in January this year, "The party grabbed headlines (in 2021) as Kejriwal and his colleagues began holding political rallies, meetings and other events in poll-bound Punjab, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Goa, promising free education, free and better healthcare services, jobs, unemployment allowance to youth, Rs 1000 per month to women, 24x7 free electricity *et al.*" Against an INC background and history fraught with a variety of corruption allegations, Mr Kejriwal is not shy of boasting his government in the capital city Delhi as a corruption-free model. We recall that the AAP took birth from the idealism of a corruption-free India, at a time when various scams had besmirched the image of the INC (UPA) government led by Manmohan Singh.



The INC's leadership duet - Rahul & Priyanka Gandhi. Pic - The Print

Punjab and the chaotic INC high-command decisions provide Kejriwal and his party the opportunity to demonstrate that they can indeed replicate the Delhi mix of populism and clean governance in a large, more complex state with security concerns. The next two years will undoubtedly then be intriguing times on the Punjab front for Kejriwal, while requiring all his skills to weld together a larger unified Opposition front of regional leaders, with or without the Indian National Congress, that holds sufficient appeal to the Indian national mood and expectancies to mount a challenge in 2024 to the formidable BJP team.

Such an out-turn of the Punjab polls may not have been on the Kejriwal cards but Congress and Rahul Gandhi's own fumbling have opened doors for his future role on the national stage of Indian politics. It remains to be seen how he and the AAP adapt to the challenges and opportunities ahead.



Anil Madan

In The Face of Putin's Nuclear Chicken Gambit, Biden Blinked

In this great game of Super Chicken, Putin won decisively and Biden was a pidge

Vladimir Putin's extended war crimes and genocide against the Ukrainian nation continue without let up and the United States, as well as

its NATO and other allies, stand by helplessly. The United States, a nation that often touts itself the Leader of the Free World, the Greatest Power on Earth, and the Last Best Hope for Mankind, together with these European and NATO allies, self-proclaimed champions of freedom and democracy, are unable, or unwilling to stop the massacre.

The world has just seen a preview of what things will be like without American power responsibly exercised to maintain the rules order writ large. To be sure, there are many who will argue that US adventurism and war-mongering have kept the world in turmoil and resulted in countless deaths and destruction. I concede the point and agree that the war in Vietnam, the second Iraq war and the re-entry to Afghanistan after the initial efforts to dislodge Osama bin Laden, were entirely unnecessary.

But the US has not gone in search of lands to annex or engaged in genocide. Nevertheless, what is going on in Ukraine now, is surely not the end of further aggression by Putin. As well, the specter of Chinese adventurism that it presages is alive. Nor should we have any comfort that in regions throughout the world, autocrats and dictators will be restrained from attacking their neighbors for fear of being called to account.

A charge of genocide should not issue lightly but make no mistake, Putin is conducting a genocide. As Ukrainian women, children and elderly escape the horror before them by the millions, they leave behind husbands, sons, brothers, and fathers, who are being starved to death, left without water or heat, and pummeled by artillery and bombs. The future of Ukraine as a nation is being obliterated before our eyes.

President Biden's gambit to forestall Putin's invasion by threatening stiff economic sanctions failed. Sadly, the failure was predictable, and this is a painful indictment to make. A review of events shows that Biden miscalculated and played his hand poorly. Biden's approach centered on the notion that he could deter Putin by publicly threatening that the most severe economic sanctions would be levied on Russia if Ukraine were invaded. Biden and his advisers seem not to have stopped to consider two elementary points: *first*, whether Putin might find the sanctions tolerable, and *second*, perhaps more importantly, what options to keep in reserve should the threats of economic sanctions not deter Putin. This calculus should have been part of basic strategic planning.

Putin's buildup of armed forces

As we look back at the basic information Biden had, spotting Putin's buildup of armed forces poised to launch an invasion into Ukraine was the easy part. Satellite images from routine reconnaissance confirmed the buildup. Add to that the uncanny accuracy with which US Intelligence discerned Putin's plans even as he and senior Russian officials lied about their intentions and falsely claimed that they were withdrawing forces. The signifi-



Biden & Putin - Pic - Euro News

“Biden declared quite clearly that the US would not send any troops to fight Russian troops. On one level, this may seem prudent. On another level, it told Putin that he had the upper hand. Surely, preventing a Russian invasion of Ukraine was never about US or NATO troops fighting Russian troops. It was about whether Russia would choose to engage not only Ukraine but the rest of the free world. Biden never put this choice to Putin...”

cance of this is not that US Intelligence agencies should be praised for their efforts in discovering what was going on and what was to come, as they surely should be, but that Biden had plenty of time to prepare. Sadly, he booted it.

Biden spent considerable time, and altogether too much precious time, courting European support in public. Chancellor Olaf Scholz came to Washington, D.C., and rather than clearly stating that Germany was ready to cut all oil and gas imports from Russia (an impossible ask of Germany) he mouthed words that the US and Germany were in sync about something to do with the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. Mind you, the pipeline was not yet operational. This empty gesture meant nothing. The truth of the matter is that Germany was never on board with cutting off Russian oil and gas imports. The simple fact is that Germany is dependent on Russia for a huge chunk of its energy needs.

Then Biden declared quite clearly that the US would not send any troops to fight Russian troops. On one level, this may seem prudent. On another level, it told Putin that he had the upper hand. Surely, preventing a Russian invasion of Ukraine was *never* about US or NATO troops fighting Russian troops. It was about whether Russia would choose to engage not only Ukraine but the rest of the free world. Biden never put this choice to Putin. No one suggests that the US and NATO should have threatened nuclear war with Putin. The whole point of strategic nuclear weapons is that if they have any value at all, it is that they will never be used, and the possibility of their use will deter the aggressor. But here, Biden and NATO deterred themselves as defenders while allowing the aggressor to get the advantage.

Putin's response was to issue a series of

warnings: that European countries would be drawn into military conflict if Ukraine joins NATO; that nations imposing sanctions on Russia were declaring war; and that any attempt by “another power to impose a no-fly zone in Ukraine would be considered by Russia to be a step into the military conflict.” He said such a step “would have catastrophic consequences for Europe and the world.” These were undoubtedly veiled threats that he might resort to attacking such countries. Biden and the allies talked themselves into believing that this inevitably meant that Russia would unleash nuclear weapons.

President Biden and his NATO counterparts seem to have swallowed the idea that Putin's threats were credible and the direct con-

frontation with Russia was to be avoided at all costs even while ignoring the obvious fact that they were indeed directly confronting Putin with economic sanctions.

Perhaps it should have occurred to someone that the Generals in Russia were not anxious to end their own lives in a nuclear war and that Putin himself, as crazy as he might be, was not that crazy. In short, would the Russian Generals carry out an order to launch nukes even if Putin were crazy enough to issue such an order? Would Putin, who is cold and calculating, have effectively opted for the destruction of Russia? Of course, we may never find out. Let us hope not.

The major point, however, is that the western powers were not initiating a nuclear war and rather than saying that they would essentially do nothing in the face of Russian aggression other than institute economic sanctions, perhaps all they had to do was make it clear that the US and NATO would defend every inch of Ukraine, and that any escalation was entirely up to Putin. In other words, leave the choice up to Putin whether he was willing to attack US and NATO forces supporting Ukraine. As the US and Russia's predecessor the Soviet Union established a long time ago, there is mutual acknowledgment that there will be no winner in a nuclear war and that nuclear war is not an option. There is nothing to suggest that Putin does not believe this. Despite all his bluster, there is nothing to suggest that Putin was looking for open conflict with the US and NATO. In fact, his warnings to the US and NATO not to get involved suggested that they should not want to get into direct conflict with Russia. Note that this was not the same as saying that he, Putin, wanted such engagement.

● Cont. on page 7

That's what we are really!

• Cont. on page 3

A superficial view of past riots may distort our view of Mauritian society, but this does not mean that the picture is a rosy one. Mistrust between ethnic groups exists as well as a lot of prejudices and stereotypes which generally remain unspoken in the public sphere, but very often burst out in social media or in private circles in the form of jokes and other contemptuous and insulting remarks. Though we still have some work to do to change the mentalities which inform those remarks, equally important are the public policies which must be implemented to eliminate social ills such as poverty, discrimination of any kind, political bias and to ensure that our institutions treat everybody with respect, dignity and fairness in the spirit of our Constitution. In brief,

we need to ensure that all the people must be certain that their self-realization in all spheres of life will not be prevented by government and its many institutions as well as by the old social and economic structures.

Drawing attention to the problems mentioned earlier and the need to find solutions should not deny our living existence as a nation. If not, how do we explain our major achievements in every field of life if there was not an underlying unity in the country? How to explain the cooperation, solidarity and mutual help across ethnicities that prevail in every street, neighborhood, village, and town and in the office or at worksites? We stand together not only in the face of calamities but in all kinds of family, religious and political events. Could the spontaneous outburst of solida-

city and cooperation have been possible during the Wakashio disaster if we were not one people which can transcend all kinds of boundaries and barriers?

It is time we realize that we have achieved so much because we are a nation with certain core values such as respect for each other's language, religion, culture and who express our unity and solidarity in our day-to-day lives. Political scientists and anthropologists have listed a number of structural factors which have helped us to transcend our ethnic differences, but underlying all these factors is our day-to-day nationhood. These values were not necessarily developed in post-Independent Mauritius. We have a long history of social harmony, intercultural interactions and solidarity which has made every Mauritian a bit of everything — as Yvan Martial once said: *'Je suis à la fois chrétien, hindou, tamoul, marathi, musulman, chinois, africain, européen, indien, métis, sang-mêlé de toutes les couleurs, de toutes les cultures.'*

In brief, the Mauritian is a blended intercultural being in whom dogmatism, fundamentalism, and totalitarianism of any hue and colour are regarded as alien to the Mauritian psyche.

Sada Reddi

In The Face of Putin's Nuclear Chicken Gambit, Biden Blinked

• Cont. from page 6

WWII concept of deterrence

Biden had a chance to say that the US and Europe would defend Ukraine against attacks, that such assistance was purely defensive in nature and that the US and NATO stood ready to respond to any Russian aggression with a response of like kind and intensity. This is entirely consistent with the post WWII concept of deterrence.

Now, Putin has all but destroyed Ukraine. And he has stated that western sanctions are akin to a declaration of war. Most recently, he has stated that America has declared economic war against Russia and is waging that war. In other words, Putin has once again seized the initiative and almost any response he takes will be justified by him as Russia's response to a war being waged against it. His Foreign Minister Lavrov has even suggested a severing of diplomatic relations with the West. Should we care? Clearly, diplomacy, even at the highest level, has been totally useless as Biden's and Macron's interactions with Putin have shown.

Biden simply lost control of the narrative. To be sure, Biden was on the right side of the moral issue and indeed on the right side of the argument. But preventing genocide and destruction of a nation involve more than just winning an argument. Sadly, the response of the US and of NATO has been one exhibiting fear of what Russia might do and of being chary of invoking the worst instincts that Putin might

display. So it is that the US repeatedly declares that it has no wish to confront Russia, that it will not transfer Polish MiG jets to Ukraine, and indeed, that it will not take the initiative on many matters. Stoltenberg declares that NATO has no wish to engage Russia, will not employ a NO-FLY ZONE, and will watch as the genocide unfolds.

No one has had the courage to say that the US and NATO will defend Ukraine, will stand up for what is right, and will repel Russian aggression.

In this great game of Super Chicken, Putin won decisively, and Biden was a pigeon.

At this point, given Biden's feckless response, one can predict that China will invade Taiwan and Putin will attack other European countries. Whether China will resort to Putin's playbook of issuing veiled threats of nuclear conflict remains to be seen, but nothing tells us that China has governors restraining its aggression or curbing its disregard of moral issues. The experiences of Tibet, the Uyghurs and Hong Kong are testimony to that. As for Putin, emboldened as he is that even war crimes and genocide bring no response, what is there to act as a bar to his worst instincts and ambitions?

Let us hope that if China invades Taiwan, the president who has been a pigeon, will not be on the outside looking on, a pecking duck.

Cheerz...
Bwana

Poem

Freedom

Dr Mala Modun-Bissessur

Land of the Dodo and Ebony
Basking mid Indian Ocean, South of the Equator
Deserted by Arabs, Portuguese, Dutch
Where later others feasted buried bounty
Left with the key to the mystery.
Some away from the fierce mob in the Old Continent
Stayed on for peace and tranquillity
Brought from the Great Continent Africa
Many working hands to shape the place
Eyed by "frères ennemis" across the Channel
Eager to grab by hook or by crook the Little Star
A change of hands not without a battle
A gentleman's agreement for peaceful co-existence
Saw new Lords at the helm
On was the zeal for development
Arrived indentured workers from the Indian Peninsula

With endurance, perseverance toiled for produce and others
Bore hardship for years hoping for a light
at the end of the tunnel
Mutual respect adaptive cohabitation across time
You have your way, I have my say; you have
your say, I have my way
Gathered several to confer with diplomacy, determination
Round a table with The Leaders of the Great Albion
For the birthright of our people our homeland - *freedom*.
Broad sunlight at the strike of the twelfth hour
Twelfth March 1968 a nation saw the day
On equal footing with other free independent states
Masters of our own fate at last '*Independence,*
Liberté, Aazadi'.
Proudly we bow to thee Mauritius "*The Star*
and Key of the Indian Ocean"
Where before no soul could claim sole ownership.
Today chips, chappatis, chowmien entwined like the
roots of the Kewal
Swing to the beat of the '*dholok*' the rhythm of the segas
The sound of the guitar and the tune of the enchanted flute
Strengthens the brotherhood bond among all of us.
Long Live Independence, Long Live Mauritius.

To Our Readers

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67 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 pandemic, 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.

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 67 years.

We are so grateful that our voice and readership extend far beyond our actual subscription base of loyal well-wishers. But we now need to expand that base of readers who value our independence and commitment to continue improving the paper and reach new audiences.

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Parastatal Boards and Executive Oversight

“Those heading public institutions/parastatals must be seen to be doing their job free of economic and political influences”

Lex addresses the seemingly unresolvable conundrum about the autonomy of heads of parastatal bodies at their intersection with civil servants who are entrenched in their rigid bureaucratic ways, or political appointees who feel they are at liberty to mess up with decisions taken on matters about which they have scant or no knowledge let alone experience. Unless bold and fearless individuals entrusted with high responsibilities call out the bluff, the country will continue to suffer from the inanities of those whose operative mode is genuflection.

LEX

* Sanjeev Ghurburrin, chairman of the Mauritius Port Authority (MPA) has, in a recent interview to *l'express*, been highly critical of alleged “interference” and “slackness” of responsible officers in its parent ministry, namely those at the level of the External Communication Department du Prime Minister’s Office. Isn’t that a serious charge coming from a PM appointee?

It is not only a serious charge. It is a glaring proof of how some civil servants and many advisers, who are not even answerable to the electorate or to Parliament, pull the strings behind the scene allegedly with the connivance of ministers.

Sanjeev Ghurburrin has only laid bare an endemic situation that has set in as a rot in the maladministration of the country since a few years. It needed guts to do that, and he must be congratulated for having said openly what many dare not do for fear of political reprisal.

* **The MPA’s chairman maintains that such sloth and interference would have resulted in the delayed implementation of his reform plan for the Authority. 85% of the MPA’s decisions, he said, have to obtain the clearance of the PMO, but isn’t that how corporate public bodies function in general?**

Some civil servants, fortunately not the majority, are happy with the prevailing situation since a wide-ranging reform, they fear, would threaten the cushy position they occupy thanks to their political allegiance and not necessarily by virtue of their competence and ability to deliver. Why should they bother as long as they have the blessings and protection of their political patrons who mostly do not have any clue of what proper administration means?

* **Mr Ghurburrin also added that the ‘Parent Ministry ena plis pouvvar, get desizion, blok desizion, sanz desizion e a lextrem rod inpoz so desizion’. That’s pretty serious, if true. Aren’t the boards of parastatal bodies supposed to be independent by virtue of the legislations governing them?**

You have used the key word ‘supposed’. But are they really independent? If some of these chaps owe their position at the helm of some public institutions or parastatal bodies to political patronage, would you expect them to be independent? We may have any number of institutions in a country, but the bottom-line is that the independence and integrity of these institutions are enhanced when those heading them are seen to be doing their job free of economic and political influences.

* **The MPA’s chairman also made the point that when matters go wrong, like when three fishing vessels were grounded in the Port waters on 23 February 2022, it’s the MPA which bears the brunt of criticisms - unjustly, he emphasised -, for decisions which remain in abeyance at the level of the supervisory**

cadre at the PMO. In other words, those civil servants

If ICAC had complied with the law, why then should the Integrity Agency have entered a court action? Can you say what the agenda of ICAC is?

and advisers are shielded by virtue of their anonymity. Shouldn’t they be made accountable as well?

There are two ways of looking at the situation.

First, Mr. Ghurburrin could have stayed quiet and borne the brunt of criticisms as many who head institutions do. But he is of a different mettle. Of course, the MPA has a parent ministry over its head and under the Ports Act decisions have to be ratified or approved by the parent ministry. Unfortunately, the word reform is anathema to many civil servants and the so-called advisers.

Second, when you appoint competent people who do not care about the directives coming from politicians, they are simply removed. Look at what happened at Air Mauritius. The government got rid of Megh Pillay with the results that we know.

* **There could however be good reasons for parent ministries to exercise the kind of oversight that’s prevalent given the civil servant’s duty to ensure that taxpayers’ money is spent judiciously - the more so since Mr Ghurburrin seems to favour collaboration with the private sector to ‘accélérer les choses’. How do you react to that?**

If only parent ministries were guided by this philosophy, I would agree. But remember what the famous poet John Milton said in *Paradise Lost*: ‘The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.’ Who would know what goes in the mind of those few civil servants and advisers who are averse to real reform?

It would take a competent and public-spirited minister with knowledge and guts to take the cudgels and get things reformed or changed. Do we have that kind of minister today?

* **It has been said that how the board is constituted will determine in a large measure the future of the organisation. But they have since decades become the dumping ground for political activists and unre-**

“What happened during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic? Contracts involving millions of rupees, our money, were awarded to cronies and pals. This is just but one example and there are many others, but it illustrates what happens when soon after elections political activists are appointed to head public institutions and parastatal bodies...”



turned election candidates usually willing to do the bidding of the ministers. There is not much one can do about that, isn’t it?

On 20 December 1993 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the ‘Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions’, known as the Paris Principles, which states, amongst other guidelines, that “the composition of the national institution and the appointment of its members, whether by means of an election or otherwise, shall be established in accordance with a procedure which affords all necessary guarantees...”

What do we find in Mauritius? Just take the example of the State Trading Corporation: what happened during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic? Contracts involving millions of rupees, our money, were awarded to cronies and pals. This is just but one example and there are many others, but it illustrates what happens when soon after elections political activists are appointed to head public institutions and parastatal bodies.

* **Few parastatals have gone public to denounce another such public body. To its credit, the Integrity Reporting Services Agency (IRSA) has taken the unusual route of dragging another State institution - the ICAC - to court for allegedly failing to fulfil its statutory obligations, as prescribed by the law, to submit detailed reports instead of summary notes on suspected cases of unexplained wealth. What does it take to do that, and why can’t parastatals stand up to interference from whichever quarters?**

There are two institutions that are mandated to combat financial crimes. The Integrity Reporting Services Agency established under the Good Governance and Integrity Reporting Act that is mandated to inquire into cases where a person holds property disproportionate to his income and the ownership of which cannot be satisfactorily explained. Then there is the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) established under the Prevention of Corruption Act that is empowered to investigate corruption offences, money laundering and related matters.

If it’s true that the Integrity Reporting Services Agency is exhibiting some independence in fulfilling its functions under the law, can the same be said of ICAC? If ICAC had complied with the law, why then should the Integrity Agency have entered a court action? Can you say what the agenda of ICAC is?

Biden seeks to repair image through Ukraine crisis leadership

A congressional round of applause and a bump in the polls: US President Joe Biden has newfound political momentum from his handling of the war in Ukraine, but experts warn it might not last, reports AFP.

Last week, the 79-year-old president got a lengthy standing ovation from both Democrats and Republicans in Congress when he underlined America's steadfast support for Ukraine during his State of the Union speech. The moment of strong bipartisanship was remarkable for a country where political divisions run deep, especially ahead of hotly contested midterm elections later this year.

With low polling numbers and his reform projects stalled in Congress, can the US president translate this moment more broadly and benefit from a "rally 'round the flag effect?"

The concept, put forth by political scientist John Mueller in 1970, suggests that during international crises, Americans tend to hold more favourable views of their commander-in-chief.

Apparent gains on the Covid-19 front certainly also play a role, even if they are overshadowed by the war in Ukraine. "We're seeing right now... pretty solid support among the public and even among Republicans for the actions that he's taken," said Emory University political scientist Alan Abramowitz.

Those actions, including broad sanctions on Russia and financial and military support for Ukraine have even "had a modest spill-over effect in terms of his overall approval rating," Abramowitz added.



US President Joe Biden has found a new political momentum from his handling of the war in Ukraine. Pic - Reuters

Presidential 'reset'

Biden's job approval now sits at 42.7 percent, according to polling aggregator FiveThirtyEight — still low, but notably higher than the 40 percent he had on February 27.

As America's oldest president — he was 78 when he took office — Biden is often attacked by Republicans for having low energy and lacking authority. The Ukraine crisis can therefore help Biden "change his image as a leader with the public in general," as well as "gain back some of the grounds that he gave up with the withdrawal from Afghanistan that was... perceived as pretty disastrous," Abramowitz said.

The researcher attributes Biden's bump in popularity largely to improved views within his own party, even though former president Donald Trump embarrassed some fellow Republicans with comments lauding

Russian President Vladimir Putin's intelligence.

For Capri Cafaro, a former Democratic lawmaker in Ohio's state Senate and current professor at American University, Biden is attempting to "reset" his presidency. She points out that during his State of the Union speech, Biden spent a significant portion on Ukraine, but he also highlighted key issues for people across the political spectrum: immigration and police support for conservatives, and abortion rights and welfare for progressives. Out with big transformational plans, in with concrete projects: lower drug prices, rebuild bridges, open factories.

'No-win situation'

But Cafaro also says Biden is "in a no-win situation, no matter what."

"You always run a risk if you're trying to, you know, please everyone. No one really believes that you have a conviction," she said.

The White House will also have to manage the Russia sanctions' collateral damage on the American economy which has already seen record levels of inflation in recent months.

Before Biden unveiled an embargo on Russian oil Tuesday, 71 percent of Americans said they would support actions against Russia even if it raised gas prices, according to a Quinnipiac University survey.

The crisis has also given the president a clear culprit to blame for rising gas prices, which had steadily increased before the Russian invasion.

On Tuesday, Biden told a journalist who asked what he could do to lower prices: "Can't do much right now... Russia is responsible."

Nonetheless, Republicans still intend to make high prices a key point in their election campaigns.

"Today, it is 'Russia's fault.' Before that, it was OPEC's fault. Before that, it was 'because of the virus,'" tweeted Kevin McCarthy, the lead Republican in the House of Representatives.

Moscow says no plan to overthrow Zelensky govt, but 'US must explain bio-weapon'

Russia's foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova on Wednesday said Moscow is not working to topple the Ukrainian government as some progress has been made in the three rounds of the talks held between Russia and Ukraine. In her weekly briefing, Zakharova said Moscow has documented evidence that bioweapons are being developed in Ukraine by the United States.

Referring to the statement of US Under Secretary of state for political affairs Victoria Nuland, Maria Zakharova said that in response to a question, Nuland has confirmed the existence of laboratories for biological research, reports Hindustan Times.

"We are not talking here about peaceful uses or scientific goals," Zakharova said. "What were you up to there?" "These (programmes) were financed by the US Department of Defence."

"The US Defence Department and the presidential administration of the United States are obliged to offi-



Russia's foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova accuses US of developing bio-weapons in Ukraine. Pic - HT

cially explain to the global community, officially, not through talking heads, about the programmes in Ukraine," Maria Zakharova said.

Both Pentagon and Ukraine have already denied the allegations of bio-weapons.

As the conflict enters the 14th day with emerging evidence that Russia is attacking civilian areas, the spokesperson said they are not targeting civilians and even the Russian army's aim is not to occupy Ukraine, or destruction of the statehood, but to "de-Nazify" the country.

Zakharova said Kyiv authorities are blocking evacuation efforts. "Information about humanitarian corridors is deliberately not communicated to the population," she said, adding, "Persons wishing to leave for Russia are forced to evacuate in the Western direction."

Cont. on page 10

North Korea could return to ICBM, nuclear tests this year US intelligence report

North Korea's missile launches could be groundwork for a return to intercontinental ballistic missile and nuclear bomb tests this year for the first time since 2017, the U.S. Directorate of National Intelligence (DNI) said in its annual Worldwide Threat Assessment released on Monday.

On Tuesday, U.S.-based analysts said commercial satellite imagery shows construction at North Korea's nuclear testing site for the first time since it was closed in 2018.

International experts have also reported that North Korea's main nuclear reactor facility at Yongbyon appears to be in full swing, potentially creating additional fuel for nuclear weapons, reports Reuters.

The DNI report, dated Feb. 7, and released ahead of a congressional hearing on Tuesday, said North Korean leader Kim Jong Un remained strongly committed to expanding his nuclear weapons arsenal and ballistic missile research and development.



Representational image. Pic - i0.wp.com

It said the North Korea's continued development of ICBMs, intermediate range ballistic missiles and submarine-launched ballistic missiles showed the country's intention to bolster its nuclear delivery capability.

"In January, North Korea began laying the groundwork for an increase in tensions that could include ICBM or possibly a nuclear test this year - actions that Pyongyang has not taken since 2017," the report said.

The DNI report said it based its assessment on information available as of Jan. 21.

A return by North Korea to ICBM or nuclear testing would be a massive additional headache for the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden, even as he grapples with the crisis caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Amid stalled denuclearization talks, North Korea has suggested it could resume testing nuclear weapons or ICBMs.

It tested a record number of missiles in January, including its largest since 2017, and appears to be preparing to launch a spy satellite.

Yogi Adityanath, contesting first state election, wins stronghold by a landslide



Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister of the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, addresses his party supporters during an election campaign rally. Pic - Reuters

Yogi Adityanath, contesting his first state election in Uttar Pradesh, has won from his home turf by over 73,000 votes. The 49-year-old — fielded by the BJP from Gorakhpur (Urban) — has won the Gorakhpur Lok Sabha seat for five terms (1998, 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014).

Earlier there was speculation that the chief minister will contest from Ayodhya with the Ram temple construction being a core poll issue for the BJP. Despite the opposition's claims that the state was hit by an anti-incumbency wave, the BJP was past the 250-mark in early trends soon after the counting of votes began at 8 am on Thursday, reports Hindustan Times.

The seven-phased elections in

the state were held between February 10 and March 7. Exit polls too had predicted an easy win for the BJP, which has claimed that it has been able to fight the lawlessness that was prevailing in the earlier regimes. A win in UP gives the ruling party a boost ahead of the 2024 national elections. Apart from UP, the BJP has been able to move past the halfway mark in Uttarakhand, and Manipur too.

Kejriwal asks people to join AAP after Punjab win

In his victory speech after the Aam Aadmi Party's spectacular victory in Punjab, AAP national convenor and Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday described the party's win as a "big revolution" and asked people to join his party and contribute to AAP's effort to build a "new India".

Kejriwal's party, which has won 83 seats and is leading on 9 more in a 117-seat assembly, said such a big mandate is "scary".

"This is such a big mandate. It is scary. People have trusted us. We have to fulfil their aspirations. We should not be arrogant. They (political parties) will throw brickbats, but don't get bothered by it. We have to

make India the best," he said as he congratulated AAP's presumptive chief minister Bhagwant Mann.

"The election result of Punjab today is a big revolution. Big people in politics have been dislodged today. Sukhbir Singh Badal lost. Captain Amarinder Singh lost, Channi lost, Prakash Singh Badal lost, Navjot Singh Sidhu lost and Majithia too lost," Kejriwal said, referring to the former chief ministers and the Punjab election's most high-profile candidates who lost to the AAP candidates, reports Hindustan Times.

In a 12-minute speech at the AAP headquarters in central Delhi, Kejriwal also asked people to join the party, showcasing the AAP's many victories in Punjab to demonstrate the power of the common man.

"You might think 'what can I do, I am too small a person'. Do you know who defeated the incumbent CM Charanjit Singh Channi? Labh Singh Ugoke. He works in a mobile repair shop. His mother is a safai karamchari in a government school. His father works on a farm. Such a person has defeated Channi today. We have an ordinary AAP volunteer Jeevan Jyot Kaur who defeated both Sidhu and Bikram Singh Majithia. There is great power in the common people. If you challenge the common people, big people will be dethroned like this," he said.

Pak opposition demands Prime Minister Imran Khan resign in 24 hours

Thousands of Pakistani opposition party supporters rallied on Tuesday to demand that Prime Minister Imran Khan step down or face a non-confidence vote in parliament, accusing him of mismanaging the economy and poor governance.

The opposition campaign, spearheaded by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of assassinated former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, raises the prospect of political turmoil in the nuclear-armed country where the powerful military often determines who rules.

"Resign in 24 hours and face us in an election," Bhutto's son and PPP leader Bilawal Bhutto told the rally just outside the capital, Islamabad, directing his comments at Khan, reports Reuters.

Khan became prime minister in 2018 after leading his upstart party to a general election victory with, his



Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan. Pic - www.thetimes.co.uk

critics said, the backing of the military. Both Khan and the military denied that.

Opposition members and political analysts now say that the former cricket star has lost the backing of

the military but both Khan and the army deny that.

Leaders of the opposition say Khan has lost public support as he struggles with high inflation, a rising current account deficit and depleting foreign reserves.

Khan rejects the accusations and has responded to economic problems with cuts in fuel and electricity prices, while rejecting calls to step down and warning the opposition of unspecified consequences if they force a vote of no-confidence.

Both the opposition and Khan's party are riven by factions but the opposition say they need to win over 11 members of parliament to their side force a no-confidence vote.

Pakistan's next general election is due by 2023.

Interview: Nalini Burn, Economist & International Consultant

«Inequality and governance failures feed on each other, making the model highly problematic, carrying the seeds of its own instability»

Nalini Burn, Economist & International Consultant, shares her views on the changes that have taken place after independence, which despite appearances to the contrary are not as rosy as they seem to be. She is concerned about the rapid erosion of the welfare state model by state capture forces that are as one with overt and covert networks of drugs, big money, corruption and shady businesses.

Mauritius Times: It does not seem the celebration of Mauritius' independence anniversary, to be celebrated symbolically tomorrow, evokes the same feelings and passion that it did 54 years ago. While we could put it down to a few obvious explanations, does it seem to you that we have understood that what independence should mean for us is not just having a President and a Prime Minister, a flag and a national anthem?

Nalini Burn: Over the last years, the official commemoration of Independence Day, has been muted. Yes, it is the only National Day we have. Just a protocolar raising of the flag, perhaps a Covid-compliant state banquet this year and some Rs 30 per school child for the school event.

But I do not think feelings and passions about independence have gone away. Far from it. Its meaning is contested and interpreted in different ways. More of concern: these tensions have just been pushed to the margins to fester and amplify. If one observes the exchanges on many platforms, there is resentment about the state of our politics and who gets to raise the flag as President and Prime Minister.

The recurrent theme is about how dynastic the "alternance" has been over half a century. Behind that are many troubling, divisive themes. About what causes this state of affairs, whether it is the electoral system, the entrenched voting along nepotist, communal lines, the continually controversial question of election finances, the "money politics" that never goes away...I think people do care, even as they resign themselves to vent frustration.

*** Mauritius has however come a long way during the last five decades in different fields - on the economic front, in terms of general well-being, social welfare and generally as far as living together as a nation within the framework of a democratic framework - despite some hiccups, fortunately few. We compare favourably with the rest of Africa, don't we?**

About living together as a nation, perceptions, emotions count so much. And it depends who you are. While many voice how they are better off, there are also persistent narratives about how things have got worse since independence. In fact, it

seems to me that many trace current ills to political independence and hark back to some idyllic "letan lontan". This is not just among the then dominant privileged elites and classes. Being better-off is not attributed to independence as such, while being worse-off specifically points the finger at independence. There seems to be no closure on how contested, divisive and violent the experience of independence has been.

Our colonial past cannot be described as idyllic and rosy. Yet the sense of loss is about living together, especially in Port Louis, before the riots of 1968. The nostalgic memory is that living together was the case even in those times of serious poverty and unemployment. So, there may have been a high expectation of the difference that progress and independence would make, together with apprehension that independence was bound to make prospects worse, depending in whose hands the government would be. Many emigrated at the time of political decolonisation because of this "push" factor, but also the "pull" factor of labour shortages in Europe and Australia at the time.

For those who remained, there are diverse and often conflicting perceptions. We do not have a shared sense of our belonging.

Indeed, more than living together in a country created by colonialism, how and when our different ancestors came to Mauritius counts and is still a source of contention. History is no longer taught as a subject at school, despite the considerable knowledge that could demystify and correct biases. Many myths of legitimising one's national worth are out there. We do have a problem with weighing up historical periods.

Many deplore, with good reason, a perceived dominant view that particularly economic history only seems to meaningfully start with the linking of Mauritius to the British colonial sugar economy as it shifted from slavery to indenture. The creation of a maritime geostrategic hub predating crop production does not seem widely acknowledged as the focus is on sugar.

Today the steady pulling down of many vestiges of tangible built "patrimoine" of the French colonial period is resented.



«Those who have been on the left, anti-imperialist, while accusing the West of hypocritical double standards are guilty of the same double standards by absolutely refusing to see that Putin's Russia is just as imperial, as authoritarian, sectarian supportive of far-right conspiracies and socially conservative misogynist ideologies and theologies...»

«Public officers with any sense of duty complain of the politicised nature of the work, frustrating in no small measure any professional approach to work to their mandate. The cut throat culture of touting for political business has shocked many. Public finance management is more in the limelight over procurement during crises, Covid, and now Ukraine than over what the spending is for. Crises are opportunities to do business with and in the state...»

Those stones and earth are testimony to well over a century prior to indenture, of this hub, of different waves of settlement, whether of colonial settlers from Europe, enslaved, indentured, free skilled artisans and traders mainly from Africa and India.

About coming a long way. I think that the seeds of our achievements have been nurtured from the political struggles, trade union formation and social mobilisation, especially from the 1930s onwards. And in response to our exposure to cyclones and climate-related risks as well as global economic crises. Faced with such shocks, women, specially, have responded by defying taboos, discrimination, conflict and violence, to challenge their depend-

ence on men's power and authority: The sharp drop in fertility, the rapid take-up of jobs in export sectors as in the wake of the 'overpopulation' unemployment and macroeconomic crises followed.

This is still not adequately recognised. And every 8th March women are reduced to applauding the powers that be for their patronage, an exercise of vote building for this constituency of women.

To me, general well-being and social welfare have been built on a developmental state model underpinned by political action. It made Mauritius a beacon, rightly acclaimed. But the path to progress is not irreversible. What economic and social capital we have built and nourished and what natural 'capital' we have extracted, is being depleted- fast. This model valued and sustained public goods – public health, education – as well as other complementary economic and social infrastructure and functioning public services.

Its later neglect created a market for private services. It is on this foundation that our diversified export-import development model (besides sugar) has been based since the 1990s. And from mid-2000s onwards it was particularly highly performing. But only if you use conventional economic indicators like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or Gross National Income. We have been reaping returns from prior investment and from extracting natural wealth.

It is the private market aspect of it which has been highlighted during our "poster boy" heyday of virtuous macroeconomic and economic liberalisation prescriptions, hailed as "miracle". We are told and/or tell ourselves we are a role model. But we do not take this prior investment into account.

This prior advantage, and the fact that we are a small island state, is to a great extent what made us different from the rest of continental Africa. We are in general stunningly ignorant about the diverse continent we are in and its dynamism. Having worked over decades in so many other African countries, I believe that we have no reason to be complacent about how better off we are.

There are many emerging economic areas where many countries in Africa are surging ahead. And if it is conflict, whether ethnic, tribal, resource grabbing, secessions and civil wars that you are referring to, yes, we are a haven compared to fragile states in conflict, cursed by resources and conflicting, multiple identities. But equally, there is a wealth of knowledge about social capital, conflict mediation and resolution in mainland Africa that we could learn from.

* Contd on page 12

'We are in murky waters. Gambling, siphoned funds and illegal drug trafficking thrive in our porous frontiers and financial accounts...'

*Contd from page 11

*** What are the dark spots in the picture today? Persisting inequality in our society, the governance of the country...?**

I would not call them mere dark spots. They are wired into the fabric of our country. We have no reason to be complacent about our democracy and about never becoming a rogue, kleptocratic or failed state. It is not just that ok, on the plus side there is growth, necessary growth and on the minus side is the inequality. Some proponents of our model have also touted it as either necessary and/or inevitable.

The inequality and governance failures feed on each other, making the model highly problematic, carrying the seeds of its own instability. I feel that the extractive and exploitative sugar plantation model is at the heart of our existence as a settler colony. The private public-compact starts early. Many who have benefited from a sugar economy have not really faced a free market, but a state that protected them from all sorts of risks.

It handed out concessions of land and rights to natural resource extraction, disciplined as well as regulated the workers, gave subsidies to, created institutions - the dreaded parastatals -, including financial intermediation institutions to help own land, provide financial capital, insure and incur debt with expected future sugar proceeds as guarantee.

It also compensated out of public funds the loss of slave assets. Other than providing safety nets, the state regulated and arbitrated conflicts between players, including working class and professional institutions such as trade unions. These players became keen to lobby and indeed capture the developmental state.

The biggest exclusion was of those ejected from the sugar economy, with cheaper migrant/indentured labour. The former enslaved apprentices, maroons have been stigmatised for this exclusion and as they sought alternative, marginal livelihoods, some exploiting their land.

So, on the one hand we have a patrimonial capitalism, with entrenched private, male dynasties engaged in wealth accumulation, management and harvesting. It set up the colonial infrastructure to control, police and inhabit remote scattered small islands, without which a sugar plantation economy could not later develop.

On the other hand, those whose forced labour enabled this accumulation of wealth have eked out and sustained livelihoods in the interstices of private unenclosed land and the public domain have been left to fend for themselves with safety nets, mainly in the form of housing after cyclones and welfare payments.

Adopting neoliberalism as from the 2000s has unleashed profit-seeking, business facilitation, seen positively. But it also



« We are in murky waters. Gambling, siphoned funds and illegal drug trafficking thrive in our porous frontiers and financial accounts. The black economy, its dynamics is the big elephant in the room in "having done well". How big is it, what drives it and how does it permeate our institutions? How is the money laundering done and how does it feed into the party finances to sustain and expand the client network? »

nurtured a social and cultural model of individualism, opportunities seeking, privatisation and oriented towards consumption as a lifestyle, as marker of identity, status, even of religious affirmation. Private consumption has been one of the drivers of economic growth.

The pursuit of high income, based on debt, at individual and national levels and wealth rewarding incentives have been the dominant mantra for decades. What happens when there are external shocks, as Covid has laid bare and now geopolitical wars? What are the fallback options? We don't seem to have a vision, strategy and a plan.

This neoliberal mantra has been embedded in every signal and political instruction sent from high up. Speeches, policy documents and budget circulars testify to that. It has been just about the only vision and means of justification of sectoral policies- (do we have them?) of plan (do we have viable ones, implement and monitor them?) and of allocating budgets - in terms of pots of money and not in terms of what the money is to achieve.

With economic liberalisation, a market

oriented, profit-seeking ethos has been encouraged in the public sector, slowly displacing the developmental, welfare state. The state has become a site, an enterprise for business facilitation in the new ideology of development. But what does this mean in the nitty-gritty, in actual transactions?

The ways to regulate to protect public goods and ecological services have just buckled in the wake of business facilitation. There is no effective physical development planning control, just a business-driven land use decision-making process. With the results evident in barely sustainable land use patterns vulnerable to climate change, flooding, encroachment of key ecological sites. The business-facilitating public sector ethos opens the way to corruption, to rent-seeking, permeating all areas of public life.

From business facilitation by the state, we have the capture of the state itself by private interests.

*** What about the shift to a hub of financial services?**

When we look at financial flows and services - money begets money - as a driver of and pillar of economic growth, we are in murky waters. Gambling, siphoned funds and illegal drug trafficking thrive in our porous frontiers and financial accounts. The black economy, its dynamics is the big elephant in the room in "having done well". How big is it, what drives it and how does it permeate our institutions? How is the money laundering done and how does it feed into the party finances to sustain and expand the client network?

In the absence of a moral political compass and of accountability mechanisms, it is rumour, suspicion and anecdote which thrive. Money begetting money dissolves the moral connection between what is being facilitated and what it generates and who benefits. It also dissolves the link between effort, competence and reward. It breaks down trust, a key public good. I don't think I would not call these dark spots

*** Hiccups have been few and rare, as I mentioned earlier, but Rama Sithanan mentioned earlier in an interview to this paper what his in-depth analysis of the voting patterns of the people over the past six decades, has brought home: the average Mauritian's electoral preferences go mostly towards candidates from his/her community. What do you think is keeping alive that communally based reflex?**

Let's unpack some more of that communally-based reflex.

Keep in mind that at national, not just local level, we have an electoral system that is based on geographical constituencies. So, the probability of being elected depends on local affinities and loyalties. Map that with patterns of inheritance and

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social bonding, with extended families still living contiguously, given inheritance and subdivision of plots. I would say, to the extent that people marry within their community and in those with caste-based marriages, you will get caste-based voting patterns.

It is family loyalties that predominate more than work-based ones, particularly when unionisation is not so widespread, weakened, delinked with political ideology. So, religion, community as well as local power relations predominate to attract national level resources locally, rather than aptitude as potential minister and political ideology.

Rival parties compete on the basis of the same electoral lists and addresses. They depend on the ground, fine-grained local knowledge, increasingly assisted now by sophisticated analysts and electoral engineers, often using big data to customise the votes offers.

It also exists because there is a political project to do politics through community/caste variables. And because we have a patrimonial political system, with complex patron-client relations and transactions, based on offering and/or soliciting, bidding for posts, positions, money to the networks. It is an exercise in not just vote capture, but state capture.

It expands - particularly if you are an incumbent government with exclusive access to administrative data, not freely accessible - with the scope for enlarging the portfolio of available posts and matching clientele and being able to extract patronage from private firms, who also finance the elections.

There is also the case that the patron-client relationship extends to relations between interested governments and our own political parties. In this context, community affiliations can become a useful commodity, a constituency to be nurtured, to shore up the patron country's influence and its leverage. Investment decisions are based more on the patron's interest rather than the client country's and are shrouded in opacity. Community is also relevant in geopolitics.

*Contd on page 13

'From business facilitation by the state, we have the capture of the state itself by private interests'

*Contd from page 12

Once this system prevails, majority communities can co-opt other minorities, using the same social relations. And the sheer power of money to shift votes and allegiance in the political market place is not to be underestimated. People sell their services- usually to the highest bidder or the one that can threaten the most retaliatory damage.

*** One could argue however that the communally-based electoral reflex has not come in the way of the country's development and progress. We have survived the hiccups, which have not been long-lasting. We live reasonably well together within and outside the country, there are more interactions across different communities - socially and in the workplace. What's your take on that?**

There is a dearth of social research and research about social trends in this country and about how they may affect voting patterns. Are older people more likely to vote communally, are the young more likely to vote on other criteria? On the other hand, it also appears that broadly targeted populist measures such as pensions, minimum wage regulations, applicable to all those eligible and not communal targeting may also have swung votes. So what is the interplay of all these dynamics and how do they translate into actual votes? Frankly, I don't know.

I will insist that these are not hiccups. Because the combination of money patronage and how that plays out at the family and this community-level or directly at community-level is rather systemic and corroding. I will also claim that it is coming in the way of a country's development and progress. Specially because of the associated state capture by private interests who are in power. They are short-term in their orientations and who may ally with powerful private and/or big power to advance other than the national public interest.

The infected body politic cannot shake it off. It has become endemic. It is in my view, and those of others who may not voice out, hollowing out public institutions, subordinating them to the private interests and motives, encourages loyalty to the patron rather than performance.

The culture of "backing" is discouraging countless talents, who leave. Public officers with any sense of duty complain of the politicised nature of the work, frustrating in no small measure any professional approach to work to their mandate. The cut throat culture of toutting for political business has shocked many. Public finance management is more in the limelight over procurement during crises, Covid, and now Ukraine than over what the spending is for and whether the debt is sustainable. Crises are opportunities to do business with and in the state.



« The pursuit of high income, based on debt, at individual and national levels and wealth rewarding incentives have been the dominant mantra for decades. What happens when there are external shocks, as Covid has laid bare and now geopolitical wars? What are the fallback options? We don't seem to have a vision, strategy and a plan... »

*** On the other hand, what do you think about the unfinished business of "completing the decolonisation process" of the country? We have been to the UN, the International Court of Justice, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) and lately to the Blenheim Reef, but the process remains as elusive as ever. And it appears that it's likely to remain that way with the onset of Cold War II, don't you think?**

Well, this has been well discussed over and over. Apart from the political gains- bearing in mind the dynastic rivalry, symbolic gains have already been substantial. But bear in mind that the government has already declared that it will 'lease back' Diego as a base. However, the existing agreement already seems to permit fishing and to exercise seabed rights.

If one looks at Agalega, over which there is very little information, one wonders what sovereignty really means in terms of a people over its elected representatives. Agalega is our territory, leased and on what terms? We are here mere ignorant subjects.

As far as the ITCLOS is concerned and Blenheim Reef, the reason is over delimitation of territory and competing claims. So, decolonisation means we can engage in conflict resolution with other

states competitively, rather than cooperatively as SIDS. Blenheim Reef, if not all submerged, will lead to further territory gains. For what? The real reason: seabed exploration and exploitation.

We are extending the frontiers of our polluting and extractive economic model. Shifting from the appellation of Blue economy, to Ocean economy says volumes about the priorities. The other UN Conventions on sustaining the seas and global biodiversity will be given short shrift. Who stand to gain from any lucrative transactions?

***What the UN secretary-general, António Guterres stated, in his 2019 new year message, to the effect that 'geopolitical tensions are at their highest level this century, and this turbulence is escalating... leading more and more countries to take unpredictable decisions with unpredictable consequences and a profound risk of miscalculation' have turned out to be premonitory. The writing was on the wall, and the world now is living in dangerous times, isn't it?**

Yes, indeed and again this will marginalise the climate emergency by the way. It takes the reckless military adventure of an autocratic ruler hell bent on recreating the Great Slav Russian Empire, with its theocratic establishment, to throw a - hopefully not nuclear - spanner in the works in current geopolitical alignments.

Europe, for centuries the theatre of bloody wars, is embroiled again in ways that have profoundly shocked its civilian population. How can the attack of a sovereign country be the way to resolve disputes? And without calculating what could be the counter reactions, apart from those he has anticipated, tested and already factored in as positive for the Russian case.

*** What is it that disappoints you the most about the current Russia/Ukraine conflict? The double standards of the**

Western powers and/or that of the mainstream media?

I will not frame my answer in terms of the choices you have given me but nevertheless address them.

First, the conflict or issue goes back centuries, as mentioned, predating the existence of NATO and the USA among the Western powers. Second, what disappoints me, and from some understandably, is the framing of the issue only in terms of the anti-West racist hegemony, and from the post WWII existence of NATO and the Cold War with Warsaw Pact countries.

There is no doubt about the Western powers' being wrong and duplicitous on the Iraq and Libyan Wars of aggression and regime change. But what does that then mean about reacting to Putin doing the same not just for Ukraine but others that he considers as vassal states or those with no right to exist as sovereign state and ripe for supporting separatist parts? Let it happen? No, not on the grounds of the UN Charter, if sovereignty and territorial integrity is to mean anything at all!

The most disappointing part to me is that those who have been on the left, anti-imperialist, while accusing the West of hypocritical double standards are guilty of the same double standards by absolutely refusing to see that Putin's Russia is just as imperial, as authoritarian, sectarian supportive of far-right conspiracies and socially conservative misogynist ideologies and theologies.

They seem to be part of the information war that he has built to great effect. Not using mainstream media as such- do you mean this as a proxy for Western media? but an army of bots and trolls amplifying and giving legitimacy to the disinformation on social media, which it picks up on his own media. They are in alliance with the extreme right. To me this is shattering.

There is so much else about how Putin does not support African freedom fighters and liberation forces. He shores up, through private military contractors, like Wagner, authoritarian military dictatorships (Syria), warlords (Libya), those engaged in territory and resource grabbing in Africa, as foremost military service provider.

*** The most pressing question today in light of the new geopolitical tensions is: How do we position ourselves intelligently and leverage our position? What are your thoughts on that?**

Yes definitely. We have run out of time and geopolitical space! Work out what are in our interests, taking stock of what our situation is and position ourselves, from our vantage point, not of others, as we seem to do presently. Decolonisation does

From the Pages of History - MT 60 Years Ago

5th Year No 186

MAURITIUS TIMES

Friday 28 February, 1958

• *The Youth of a Nation are the trustees of posterity. — Benjamin Disraeli*



B. Ramlallah

The Final Touch

The publication of the findings of the Electoral Boundary Commission gives final shape to the Constitution asked for by the Labour Party soon after it was returned with an overwhelming majority in the general election of August 1953. It will be recalled that in accordance with the

London Agreement (signed by the second delegation from Mauritius in March 1957) only the electoral system had to be devised, all other aspects of the proposed Constitution having been discussed and agreed upon in London by representatives of the various shades of Mauritian political opinion. But the electoral system had to be so devised as would ensure that "each main section of the population of Mauritius shall have adequate opportunity to secure representation in the Legislative Council corresponding to its own number in the community as a whole"; and here lies the main task the Boundary Commission was called upon to carry out.

In devising the electoral system, the Commission had, always in consonance with the London Agreement, to consider that the elections would be held on the basis of universal adult suffrage and also it had to see to it that as far as possible it should be a system which would not encourage voting on communal or religious lines.

* * *

By way of a preliminary survey, the Commission, basing itself on the census of 1952, tries to surmise the strength of the new electorate of the first general election under universal adult suffrage which falls due in August this year and comes to the conclusion that out of an estimated total population of 600,000 there will be approximately 277,500 electors. The figure can be broken down as follows:

Indo-Mauritian Hindu	129,000
Indo-Mauritian Muslim	41,000
Indo-Mauritian Christian	9,000
General Population	91,000
Sino-Mauritian	7,500

The Commission then sets out to decide what is actually meant by the phrase "main section of the population". It does not say what criteria would justify styling a community as 'main' but it is clear that the primary and overriding consideration was religious; the other consideration was of course its numerical strength. Therefore, it concludes that there are three 'main' groups, viz., Hindu, General Population and Muslim.

As regards the other groups, Franco-Mauritian, Sino-Mauritian and Indo-Mauritian Christian, the Commission agrees that they cannot be considered as "main sections of the population" but it does state that "the influence and importance of the Franco-Mauritians and the few per-

sons of United Kingdom origin clearly cannot be measured merely by counting heads".

* * *

Having done the preliminary survey the Commission deals with the demarcation of constituencies which would afford adequate opportunity to the three main sections of the population to secure representation "corresponding to their proportion of the total electorate". The Commission is satisfied that 40 single-member constituencies will meet the situation provided the Secretary of State gives the assurance that (a) the Governor is empowered to nominate a candidate or candidates who though unsuccessful at the polls show they have a reasonable following, (b) the Governor when making nomination will have to aim at securing the "proper proportion" of communal representatives, and (c) the Governor while making use of his power of nomination will "bear in mind that any of the three main sections may well contain important differences of opinion which he should recognize." Acceptance of the provisos laid down by the Commission means going beyond its terms of reference — to which the Secretary of State has acceded.

It goes on to add that the proportion of each community of total electorate is as follows:

**Indo-Mauritian Hindus, just under half;
General Population, just under one-third;
Indo-Mauritian Muslims, just over one-seventh.**

The Commission feels almost certain that the Hindu and General Population communities would, under the new electoral system, return their quota of representatives but it is not as categorical about the Muslim, Franco-Mauritian and Sino Mauritian communities. For these communities the quota of representatives would be obtained either by election or "failing that, by election plus Governor's appointments". But as regards the Muslim community the Commission states specifically that under the proposed electoral system the Muslim community has "a better opportunity of sharing in the future government of Mauritius".

* * *

Now we would like to deal with two other important aspects of the report. First the question of nomination. From the report it is clear that the way in which the nominations will henceforth be made leaves too much power in the hands of the Governor: in fact, he becomes the supreme arbiter in balancing the composition of the Legislature, because as the



Mauritians rallying for Independence in London 1965

Report says "the only safeguard against the possibility of an election resulting in disproportionate representation in the Legislative Council lies in the Governor's power provided for in the London Agreement to nominate up to 12 extra members". What considerations will prevail upon the Governor when it comes to nomination, communal or interest?

The Commission was warned that the electoral system it was asked to devise should "facilitate the development of voting on grounds of political principle and party rather than on race or religion", but the way the constituencies have been demarcated, and it is in accordance with its terms of reference, suggests that the decisive factor was communal. In each of 21 constituencies there is a majority of Hindus, in 8 the General Population is in majority and in one only the Muslims are in majority. We cannot at this stage predict what will happen to party politics here, but we have enough ground to believe that the present Constitution has given it a severe blow. Our new Constitution has now been given the final touch. The whole thing is now on trial but our political future does not look rosy anyway.



1956-2021



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How the world's defence giants are quietly making billions from the war

● Cont. from page 2

Gregory J. Hayes, the chief executive of US defence giant Raytheon, stated on a January 25 earnings call:

We just have to look to last week where we saw the drone attack in the UAE ... And of course, the tensions in eastern Europe, the tensions in the South China Sea, all of those things are putting pressure on some of the defence spending over there. So, I fully expect we're going to see some benefit from it.

Even at that time, the global defence industry had been forecast to rise 7% in 2022. The biggest risk to investors, as explained by Richard Aboulafia, managing director of US defence consultancy AeroDynamic Advisory, is that "the whole thing is revealed to be a Russian house of cards and the threat dissipates".

With no signs of that happening, defence companies are benefiting in several ways. As well as directly selling arms to the warring sides and supplying other countries that are donating arms to Ukraine, they are going to see extra demand from nations such as Germany and Denmark who have said they will raise their defence spending.

The overall industry is global in scope. The US is easily the world leader, with 37% of all arms sales from 2016-20. Next comes Russia with 20%, followed by France (8%), Germany (6%) and China (5%).

Beyond the top five exporters are also many other potential beneficiaries in this war. Turkey defied Russian warnings and insisted on supplying Ukraine with weapons including hi-tech drones - a major boon to its own defence industry, which supplies nearly 1% of the world market.

And with Israel enjoying around 3% of global sales, one of its newspapers recently ran an article that proclaimed: "An Early Winner of Russia's Invasion: Israel's Defense Industry."

As for Russia, it has been building up its own industry as a response to western sanctions dating back to 2014. The government instituted a massive import substitution programme to reduce its reliance on foreign weaponry and expertise, as well as to increase foreign sales. There have been some instances of continued licensing of arms, such as from the UK to Russia worth an estimated £3.7 million, but this ended in 2021.

As the second biggest arms exporter, Russia has targeted a range of international clients. Its arms exports did fall 22% between 2016-2020, but this was mainly due to a 53% reduction in sales to India. At the same time, it dramatically enhanced its



sales to countries such as China, Algeria and Egypt.

According to a US congressional budget report: "Russian weaponry may be less expensive and easier to operate and maintain relative to western systems." The largest Russian defence firms are the missile manufacturer Almaz-Antey (sales volume US\$6.6 billion), United Aircraft Corp (US\$4.6 billion) and United Shipbuilding Corp (US\$4.5 billion).

What should be done

There appears little credible possibility for Ukraine to demilitarise in the face of Russia's continued threat.

There have nevertheless been some efforts to de-escalate the situation, with Nato, for example, very publicly rejecting the request of Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky to establish a no fly zone. But these efforts are undermined by the huge financial incentives on both sides for increasing the level of weaponry.

What the west and Russia share is a profound military industrial complex. They both rely on, enable and are influenced by their massive weapons industries. This has been reinforced by newer hi-tech offensive capabilities from drones to sophisticated AI-guided autonomous weapons systems.

If the ultimate goal is de-escalation and sustainable peace, there is a need for a serious process of attacking the economic root causes of this military aggression. I welcomed the recent

announcement by President Joe Biden that the US will directly sanction the Russian defence industry, making it harder for them to obtain raw materials and sell their wares internationally to reinvest in more military equipment.

Having said that, this may create a commercial opportunity for western contractors. It could leave a temporary vacuum for US and European companies to gain a further competitive advantage, resulting in an expansion of the global arms race and creating an even greater business incentive for new conflicts.

In the aftermath of this war, we should

explore ways of limiting the power and influence of this industry. This could include international agreements to limit the sale of specific weapons, multilateral support for countries that commit to reducing their defence industry, and sanctioning arms companies that appear to be lobbying for increased military spending. More fundamentally, it would involve supporting movements that challenge the further development of military capabilities.

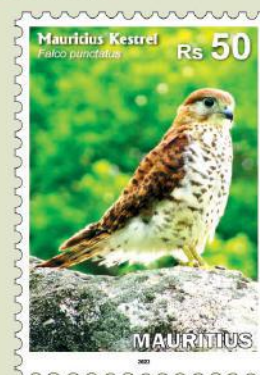
Clearly there is no easy answer and it will not happen overnight, but it is imperative for us to recognise as an international community that long-lasting peace is impossible without eliminating as much as possible the making and selling of weapons as a lucrative economic industry.

Peter Bloom, Professor of Management, University of Essex

The Mauritius Kestrel (*Falco punctatus*)

National Bird of Mauritius

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The Construction of Female Identities in Ancient texts



Dr Geeta Oberoi

On International Women's Day, I was digging some ancient era texts that afforded dignity, freedom, fair treatment and equality to women, as often these texts are criticized as well as relied upon for subordinating female gender and denying them equal and meaningful participation in every walk of the public life.

The most ancient texts are Samhita of the four Vedas: Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva, followed by Vedic literature to explain these Samhita in the form of (i) Bhahmanams attached to different recensions (shakhas); (ii) Aranyakas flowing from Brahmanams but related to these four Vedas; (iii) Upanishads giving philosophical interpretation to Vedic Samhitas; and (iv) Upveda from which technical works like Ayurveda, Dhanurvedya, Gandharvasastra, Arthasastra originate.

After Vedic literature, starts the period of Puranas to explain the Vedas by medium of stories. Puranas were followed by period of Itihas (Mahabharat and Ramayana). Then came the period of Sautras (of Apastamba, Gautama, Vasistha, Baudhayana and many others) followed by Sastra period that saw emergence of numerous Smritis (Manu, Yajnavalkya, Katyayana, Narada, and many others). Both Sutra and Sastras laid down normative framework rather than giving any historical account.

Women in Rgvedic age enjoyed freedom as they could participate in chariot races (RV X.59.10), take an active part in the proceedings of the assembly called sabha and vidhatha (RV I.167.3). They were also engaged in various economic pursuits as indicated by the occurrence of terms such as siri (female weaver - RV X. 71.9), pesaskari (female embroider - Vajasaneyi Samhita XXX.9), bidalkari (female splitter of bamboos - Vajasaneyi Samhita XXX.8), and upalapraksini (women corn-grinder - RV IX.112.2). In such a socio-economic order, women naturally enjoyed some degree of social status.

Women in the Rgvedic period were also free to attend samana or social gatherings. Indologists William Jones, H.T. Colebrooke, Max Muller, Spier and Larisse Bader note that women occupied a dignified place in the Vedas.

Indologists believed that these women even played a part in warfare, social decision-making, and had access to education as well. Further, RigVeda Mandala VIII, Sukta 31, hymns 5 to 9 confirms that Vedic ritual from the beginning had always had a slot for the sacrificer's wife.

The Puranas contrary to prevailing notion strengthened the position of women. The Devi Purana (102.10-11) asked to consider young women as fit to receive gifts dedicated to her. At (91.50), Devi Purana asks to imagine ordinary women as female deities. Further, Balram Das's Lakshmi Purana is a feminist narrative centred on actions of a strong goddess who challenges male Brahminical authority and advocates both feminism and caste equality. This work shows that quintessentially modern values



Women in Rgvedic age enjoyed freedom as they could participate in chariot races, take an active part in the proceedings of the assembly, and engaged in various economic pursuits... Pic - Scroll.in

like human equality, critical and self-reflexive individual were articulated centuries ago in ancient texts.

One similarity between Puranas and Sahnameh written during the Islamic period is that female characters in both works are very strong minded and behave with a self-determination that might even seem inappropriate in the patriarchal context. A number of female characters are highly romantic and even assume the role of mighty warrior and at the same time highly obedient to their father and husband. Saadi-nejad like all of us is left to wonder how the boldness and obedience is achieved by the same characters at same time.

A recent study of ancient texts spread over several centuries and of varied genres such as Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, the great epics, etc., has retrieved several female voices of dissent, sarcasm and satire against the entrenched patriarchal social structure. The Mahābhārata narratives recalling legends of Suvarchalā [Śānti-parva, App. 1, No. 19] and Sulabhā [Śāntiparva, ch.308; Shah 2012: 87,167-68] not only bring out the loud and bold voices of women but also reveal their potential to challenge even the celebrated intellectuals of the day.

Vaidehī (Sītā) of Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa, a docile woman in popular imagery, disapproves Rāma going to the Daṇḍaka forest to protect seers from rākṣasas and admonishes him on 'unprovoked violence'. [Rāmāyaṇa, Āraṇyakāṇḍa, 8.3,23-24,29 – Sheldon Pollock's translation, Vol. III: 100-102]

At brahmodya (debating conclave) convened by King Janaka, intense philosophical śāstrārtha took place between brahmavādinī Gārgī Vāchaknavī and the sage Yājñavalkya in which brahmavādinī Gārgī Vāchaknavī persisted with so many terse questions that the irritated sage asked her to shut up lest her head be chopped off (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, III.6.1).

Same was repeated by Draupadi in the great sabhā of Kauravas where she was brought after her husband Yudhiṣṭhira had lost her in the famous Game of Dice. Draupadi questioned the elders present, including Bhīṣmapitāmaha, 'whether her husband was authorized to put her on stake in the Game of Dice when after putting himself on stake, he had lost and become a slave himself' (Mahābhārata II.60-61). Thus were brought to the fore serious questions.

In Dharmasutra of Apastamba a man is not allowed to abandon his wife (A 1.28.19), daughters are to inherit property of their parents (A 2.14.4), there is no division of property between a husband and a wife, as they have joint

custody of the property (A 2.29.3), a wife is allowed to make gifts and use the family wealth on her own when her husband is away (A 2.12.16-20).

Further, Apastamba and Baudhayana refer to a period when little or no value was placed on the conjugal faith of a woman. The Ramayana too refers to Uttara-Kuru as a land of lovely women who still practice promiscuity with impunity. Even Buddhist literature speaks of this land as a place where women are nobody's chattel or private property. Further, there is no contradiction to practise of polyandry in the period of the Mahabharata.

Katyayanasmṛti analogous to the codes of Manu, Narada and Bṛhaspati, dated between 300 and 600 AD by Kane was the first to define carefully several kinds of stridhana, to lay down woman's power of disposal over her property and to prescribe lines of devolution to stridhana. Further, it is remarkable that smritis of Vasistha, Yajnavalkya, Visnu, Narada assigned the first six places in order of precedence to the actual children of the mother, whosoever the biological father may be. Even illegitimate children were allowed to inherit property of their mother and her husbands.

There is no dearth of literature that can be located in ancient texts that attribute agency to women. The limitation of the space does not allow me to present it over here. However, the purpose of the inquiry was only to show that there is no truth in notion that the position of women was worth of pity only and is improving as the time passes by. On the other hand, it seems to me that women's position more or less have been static and not progressive with the passage of time.

Dr Geeta Oberoi is Professor at the National Judicial Academy, India

SYLVESTER SPORTING CLUB

The Annual General Assembly of Sylvester Sporting Club will be held on Saturday 26 March 2022 at PACO place 17 Route Bassin le cornu Ste Croix.

Agenda

1. President's Report
2. Treasurer's Report
3. Amendments of Rules
4. Elections of office bearers
5. AOB

Date: 11.03.2022

Preventing pandemics costs far less than controlling them

We can pay now or pay far more later. That's the takeaway of a new peer-reviewed study, published Feb. 4 in the journal 'Science Advances', that compares the costs of preventing a pandemic to those incurred trying to control one.

"It turns out prevention really is the best medicine," said Stuart Pimm, Doris Duke Prof of Conservation Ecology at Duke University, who was co-lead author of the study. "We estimate we could greatly reduce the likelihood of another pandemic by investing as little as 1/20th of the losses incurred so far from Covid into conservation measures designed to help stop the spread of these viruses from wildlife to humans in the first place."

A smart place to start, the study shows, would be investing in programs to end tropical deforestation and international wildlife trafficking, stop the wild meat trade in China, and improve disease surveillance and control in wild and domestic animals worldwide.

Covid, SARS, HIV, Ebola and many



other viruses that have emerged in the last century originated in wild places and wild animals before spreading to humans, the study's authors note. Tropical forest edges where humans have cleared more than 25% of the trees for farming or other purposes are hotbeds for these animal-to-human virus transmissions, as are

markets where wild animals, dead or alive, are sold.

"The bottom line is, if we don't stop destroying the environment and selling wild species as pets, meat or medicine, these diseases are just going to keep coming. And as this current pandemic shows, controlling them is inordinately

costly and difficult," Pimm said.

The new study, by epidemiologists, economists, ecologists, and conservation biologists at 21 institutions, calculates that by investing an amount equal to just 5% of the estimated annual economic losses associated with human deaths from Covid into environmental protection and early-stage disease surveillance, the risks of future zoonotic pandemics could be reduced by as much as half. That could help save around 1.6 million lives a year and reduce mortality costs by around \$10 trillion annually.

One key recommendation of the new study is to use some of this money to train more veterinarians and wildlife disease biologists.

Another key recommendation is to create a global database of virus genomics that could be used to pinpoint the source of newly emerging pathogens early enough to slow or stop their spread, and, ultimately, speed the development of vaccines and diagnostic tests.

Healthful food for children is the same as for adults

It is the position of the Society for Nutrition Education and Behaviour (SNEB) that there is no difference between healthful foods for adults and for children aged 2 and older, except for age-appropriate adjustments in texture and portion size, according to a new position paper in the Journal of Nutrition Education and Behaviour, published by Elsevier.

Kids' food is operationally defined as food likely to be consumed by children aged 2-14 years, either at home or in the community. There is a long-held belief that children need different types of foods than adults, and many of these foods are highly processed; energy-dense; and high in saturated fat, sodium, and added sugar. A diet favouring these foods can have significant detrimental effects on children's preferences and tastes, may exacerbate food neophobia or picky eating behaviour sometimes seen in children, and may impact their health in the future.

In the position paper, the authors note that the idea that children need different foods than adults seem to have originated during the alcohol prohibition era when the hospitality industry created children's menus to offset the loss of alcohol sales revenue. Since then, it is known that children over 2 years of age can eat the same healthy foods as adults, but kids' food and menus have become a social norm. This social norm persists because ultra-processed foods like chicken tenders, hot dogs, French fries, and grilled cheese are prevalent in the food environment and they are highly palatable to children.

Nutrition educators play key roles in shifting consumer demand and social norms about food choices. They can do this by creating family and community resilience and healthy adaptation to the ultra-processed food environment, and by promoting the knowledge that children over the age of 2 can eat the same healthy foods as adults eat (while accounting for age-appropriate and nutrition requirements).



Why has nobody found any life outside of Earth?

Astronomers like us are hunting for "Earth-like" planets, but they're not easy to find. And the conditions needed for life to exist have to be just right.

It's likely that if such a planet exists, it will be outside our Solar System, and it's very hard to study planets so far away.

But before we go on, it helps to remember how big the Universe is.

Our place in the Universe

Earth is inside our Solar System, along with the other planets (like Mars, Mercury, and Jupiter) orbiting a star we call the Sun.

But our Solar System is just one of many inside the huge Milky Way galaxy. And the Milky Way is just one of many, many galaxies in the Universe. Plus, we have no way of knowing exactly how big the Universe is beyond what we can directly see.

So while there may be life on other planets, it could be in another solar system in a different part of the Milky Way galaxy. Or in another galaxy far, far away.

We don't have the technology yet to study such far away planets. But we are still trying to collect what clues we can using the technology we've got.

Much of the search for life has focused on trying to find liquid water, because it is essential for all life forms here on Earth.

Cells are mostly made up of water. Many of the chemical reactions that occur in our metabolism can only occur in the presence of water because it is an incredibly good solvent (meaning it will happily dis-

solve most things you put in it).

And water is very common. In fact, the components that make up water (hydrogen and oxygen) are the first and third most abundant elements in the Milky Way galaxy.

Oxygen loves grabbing onto other elements to make different chemicals. This means that we find water almost everywhere we look, from the surface of planets in our Solar System, to the depths of interstellar space.

But for life as we know it to exist, you would need a planet where water exists in a liquid state. Otherwise your cells would freeze or boil away.

Earth is in a perfect position from our Sun to support water in a liquid state. Astronomers call this ideal location from a star the "habitable" or "Goldilocks zone".

Scientists last year discovered that there is permanent liquid water on Mars, which made a lot of people very excited. Water is also inside craters on Mercury, and there are vast water oceans on some of Jupiter's and Saturn's moons.

But we still haven't found life on Mars, or any other planet in our Solar System.

What about outside our Solar System?

Planets outside our Solar System are called exoplanets. They orbit their own stars (as you know, our Sun is really just a big star).

For example, there is an exoplanet called Kepler-22b, which is in the habitable zone of another star called Kepler-22. Kepler 22b is bigger than Earth.



Fainter stars have habitable zones that are closer to them and brighter stars have their habitable zones further away.

Finding a world within a star's habitable zone where liquid water can exist would be a great start to finding life. Unfortunately, we have not perfected the technology for it yet.

But finding a planet with the right conditions for life isn't enough; we need to be able to detect signatures of life itself (scientists call these "bio-signatures"). For example, we can look at a planet's atmosphere and see what gases are in it. If we found a planet with lots of oxygen, we can infer there may be life there.

At the moment, it is not possible to detect biosignatures on Earth-like planets around other stars.

Maybe, Anna, you might be one of the scientists who develops the technology that makes all this possible, and will discover the first inhabited world beyond Earth.

Josh Calcino

PhD Candidate, The University of Queensland

Jake Clark

PhD Candidate, University of Southern Queensland

That's Life

Relocating to Nursing Home

I'm going to a nursing home. I have to.

When life gets to where you are no longer able to take care of yourself completely, your children are busy at work and have to take care of their children and have no time to take care of you, this seems to be the only way out.

The nursing home is in good condition, with clean single rooms equipped with simple and practical electrical appliances. All kinds of entertainment facilities are complete, the food is delicious, the service is also very good. The environment is also very beautiful, but the price is not cheap.

My pension is poorly able to support this. But I have my own house. If I sell it, then money is not a problem. I can spend it on retirement, and the rest will be left as an inheritance for my son.

The son understands very well: "Your money and your property should be enjoyed by you, don't worry about us."

Now I have to consider preparing to go to a nursing home.

As the saying goes: Breaking a family is worth tens of thousands, which refers to many things. Boxes, bags, cabinets, and drawers are filled with all kinds of daily necessities: clothing for all weathers and beddings for all seasons.

I like to collect. I have collected a lot of stamps. I have also hundreds of purple clay tea pots. There are many small collections, and such small items as pendants of emerald and walnut amber, and two small yellow croakers.

I am especially fond of books. The bookshelves on the wall are full.

There are also dozens of bottles of good foreign wine. There are full sets of household appliances; various cooking utensils, pots and pans, rice, oil, salt, noodles, spices, various seasonings, in fact the kitchen is also full. There are also dozens and dozens of photo albums..., looking at the house full of things, I'm worried!

The nursing home has only one room with a cabinet, a table, a bed, a sofa, a refrigerator, a washing machine, a TV, an induction cooker and a microwave oven -- all the things I will really need.

There is no place to store the wealth that I have accumulated throughout my life.

At this moment, I suddenly feel that my so-called wealth is superfluous, and it doesn't belong to me. I just take a look at it, play with it, use



it. It actually belongs to this world.

Whose palace is the Forbidden City? The Emperor thought it belonged to him, but today it belongs to the people and society.

You look at these, you play with these, you use these but you can't take them with you in death.

I really want to donate the things in my house, but I can't get it done. To deal with it has now become a problem. Very few children and grandchildren can appreciate what I have collected. I can imagine what it will be like when my children and grandchildren face with these painstakingly accumulated treasures of mine: all the clothes and bedding will be thrown away; dozens of precious photos will be destroyed; books will be sold as scrap. Collections? If you are not interested, you will dispose of them. The mahogany furniture is not practical and will be sold at a low price.

Facing with the mountain of clothes, I only picked a few favourites; I only kept a set of pots and pans for kitchen supplies, a few books that are worth reading; a handful of teapots for tea.

Bring along my ID card, senior citizen certificate, health insurance card, household register, and of course a bank card. Enough!

It's all my belongings! I'm gone. I bid farewell to my neighbours, I knelt down at the door and bowed three times and gave this home back to the world.

Yes! In life, you can only sleep in one bed, live in one room. Any more

of it is merely for watching and playing!

Having lived a lifetime, people finally understand: we don't really need much. Don't be shackled by superfluous things to be happy!

It's ridiculous to compete for fame and fortune. Life is no more than a bed.

For people over 60 years old, shouldn't we think carefully about how to take the last journey in life? Let go of fantasies and baggage, and of those things that can't be eaten, worn, used.

Be healthy and be happy.

Food for Thought

1. No matter how beautiful and handsome you're just remember: baboons and gorillas also attract tourists.

Stop Boasting

2. No matter how big and strong you are, you will not carry yourself to your grave.

Be Humble

3. No matter how tall you are, you can never see tomorrow.

Be Patient

4. No matter how light skinned you are, you will always need light in darkness.

Take Caution

5. No matter how rich and many cars you have, you will always walk to bed.

Be Contented

Take Life Easy, Life is short.



LAUGHTER
is the best medicine

Hameed

A small boy named Hameed lived in a village in Morocco.

None of his classmates liked him because of his stupidity, especially his teacher, who was always yelling at him, "You are driving me crazy, Hameed."

One day Hameed's mother went to school to check on how he was doing. The teacher told his mother honestly, that her son is simply a disaster, getting very low marks and even she had never seen such a dumb boy in her entire teaching career.

The mother was shocked, withdrew her son from the school and even moved to another town.

25 years later, the teacher was diagnosed with an incurable cardio disease. All the doctors strongly advised her to have an open-heart operation, which only one surgeon could perform...

Left with no other options, the teacher decided to have the operation, which was successful.

When she opened her eyes after the surgery, she saw a handsome doctor smiling down at her! She wanted to thank him but could not talk. Her face started to turn blue, she raised her hand, trying to tell him something but eventually died.

The last thing she saw was dumb Hameed, now working as a cleaner in the clinic, who had unplugged the oxygen equipment to connect his Hoover.

Don't tell me you thought Hameed was a f..... doctor!

The Haircut

One day a florist went to a barber for a haircut. After the cut, he asked about his bill, and the barber replied, 'I cannot accept money from you, I'm doing community service this week.'

The florist was pleased and left the shop.

When the barber went to open his shop the next morning, there was a 'thank you' card and a dozen roses waiting for him at his door.

Later, a cop comes in for a haircut, and when he tries to pay his bill, the barber again replied, 'I cannot accept money from you, I'm doing community service this week.' The cop was happy and left the shop.

The next morning when the barber went to open up, there was a 'thank you' card and a dozen donuts waiting for him at his door.

Then a MP came in for a haircut, and when he went to pay his bill, the barber again replied, 'I cannot accept money from you. I'm doing community service this week.' The MP was very happy and left the shop.

The next morning, when the barber went to open up, there were a dozen MPs lined up waiting for a free haircut.

And that, my friends, illustrates the fundamental difference between the citizens of our country and the politicians who run it. As Margaret Thatcher said: 'Both politicians and nappies need to be changed

Fitness & Exercise

A Strength-Building Workout to Try Right Now

These moves don't need any machines or weights, so you can do them just about anywhere. You can also tailor them to your needs.

What are body-weight exercises? They're exercises that use your body's weight as resistance. They usually target many muscles and help build stability and strength. You don't need any machines or weights, so you can do them just about anywhere. You can also tailor these exercises to your needs. So whether you're a beginner or an expert, you can get big benefits.



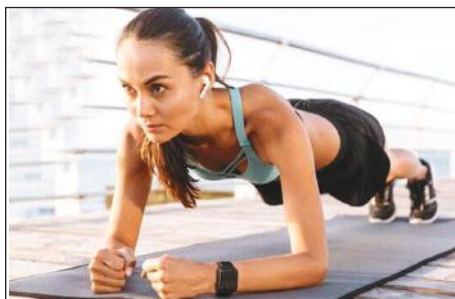
Pushup

This might be the most well-known body-weight exercise. You'll use your triceps and chest muscles the most, since you're pushing up your body weight. At the same time, your deltoids -- the muscles in your shoulder -- support your arms' movement, and your abdominal muscles work to keep your core tight. Don't let your hips or back dip down or arch up. Make controlled, smooth movements.



Squats

They're perfect for making yourself more flexible and building lower body strength. You'll make your lower body and hips more mobile. The main muscles you use are the big ones in your leg, like your quadriceps, hamstrings, hip adductors, and gluteus maximus. Be careful not to put too much weight on the balls of your feet. Instead, squat with your thighs parallel to the ground and push back up through your heels.



Planks

Planking — an exercise where you hold your body up parallel to the ground — is a very versatile exercise with plenty of benefits. If you're looking to strengthen your core, the plank is definitely for you. Core work can help with lower back pain. It'll also ease stress on your spine, which can help improve your posture. You'll get more flexible and gain balance, too.

Mountain Climbers

As the name suggests, this exercise has you imitating the movements you might make as you climb a mountain. These can be a great warmup to a workout or a powerful exercise to practice all on its own. You'll work your legs, core, triceps, and shoulders, but almost every muscle group will get some use, all the while including cardio. Mountain climbers also encourage your body to move in ways you don't usually move.



Pelvic Tilt

To do one of these, lie flat on the floor, lifting your pelvis off the ground while keeping your knees bent and your feet flat. It makes your posture better and strengthens the muscles in your buttocks and core. Don't forget to keep breathing while you're doing this. Try not to lift your shoulders or upper back off the floor.



Burpee

To do this full-body exercise, bring your body down to the ground to do a squat thrust before exploding with a high jump. You'll engage all your major muscle groups. At the same time, you'll work your heart and lungs. Burpees help you build

strength, which can fight back as your body loses muscle as you age.



Single Leg Deadlift

Stand on one leg with a slight knee bend. Focus on keeping your core tight. Then slowly bend forward at your hips and keep that standing knee slightly bent. Although this technically works the whole body, you'll feel it most in your hips and legs. It builds endurance and strength in the muscles below your waist. This exercise also helps build your ancillary muscles -- muscles that improve your balance -- and offers the most resistance on your lower body.



Lunges

These focus on working the muscles in your legs. They're also great for conditioning for sports, particularly ones like soccer, basketball, or tennis, since they all use lunging movements. Make sure that your knee doesn't go farther than your toes and that it stays in the middle over your foot. Don't let your knee roll outward or inward.



Abdominal Crunch

Lie flat on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat. Fold your arms across your chest and raise your shoulders and head off the ground, using your core muscles. It'll strengthen those muscles and make it easier to do most sports and physical activities. Never clasp your hands behind your head when you're doing these crunches. Doing that can not only stop you from targeting the abdominal muscles, but it can also hurt your neck.



Step-ups

Although you don't need any equipment for this one, make sure you have access to a set of stairs. Standing in front of them, you'll push through your main foot and lift your body up onto the step before stepping back into the position you started. Keep your core muscles tight and your back straight. This targets your gluteal muscles, hamstrings, and quadriceps.



Superman

For this, you'll lie flat on your stomach and raise both your legs and arms at the same time. It builds the muscles in your lower back, which can help you ease back pain or avoid it altogether. Just make sure you hold the position for at least 5 seconds to activate your muscles.

Reviewed by Michael W. Smith,
MD - WebMD

Divyanka Tripathi won't play the 'submissive, helpless woman' on screen

Divyanka Tripathi has said she wants to set an example by refusing to play the roles of "helpless and submissive" women on screen. The actor, known for her work in *Banoo Mai Teri Dulhann*, *Yeh Hai Mohabbatein*, and *Cold Lassi Aur Chicken Masala* among others, said she would like to portray strong women characters which could empower other women.

She added that she believes women are beyond the archetype of 'helpless' and obedient characters that they are often portrayed as on Indian television.

The *Khatron Ke Khiladi 11* finalist explained to India Forums why she doesn't want to play such characters, especially in the era of digital awareness. Divyanka added that she believes the portrayal of women as helpless on TV can hold them back from being empowered.

She said, "We are living in such an era in India where phones have reached the most rural areas and that means there is awareness. If I do such a role that shows that women are still being subjected to atrocities or



are only taking care of their family and that is all that her being becomes, this limits the strength of women and their entity. I want to do something beyond that."

The 37-year-old added that she wants to show women as 'multi-taskers'. She said, "I want to make them aware and have them know that they are more powerful than the society portrays them to be. A lot of times, the expectations of people or their thinking about how a woman can only do so much, and they are told that they can

only do this, and not do that, they simply agree to that and sit back. We are prepped for everything; we women are multi-taskers and that is what I want to show."

Divyanka, who hasn't signed a daily soap since *Yeh Hai Mohabbatein* ended three years ago, previously said she doesn't want to be typecast and is patiently waiting for a "power packed role." "Maybe I can play an unpredictable character, like a housewife who is a spy," she told Hindustan Times earlier this month.

Sangita Ghosh: 'Women are not dead after 40, thank god people have realised that'

Sangita Ghosh, who has returned to the small screen with *Swaran Ghar*, is hoping that her new show with Ronit Bose Roy strikes a chord with the audience. The actress spoke exclusively to ETimes TV and revealed what got her back to TV after two years.

Sangita said, "After *Divya Drishti* and *Rishton Ka Chakravatyuh* where I played a negative role, I wanted to get back on a positive note. I am blessed that a lot of shows were offered to me during the pandemic and work kept coming to me but I refused many shows for whatever reasons but when *Swaran Ghar* was offered, I fell in love with the simplicity of the show, the characters and the very realness of storytelling. It is not overdramatic. The emotional quotient of the show is very high and there's a lot of hope in the show and wishful thinking."

She added, "There are situations in life which are tough to face, but the show is about how Kanwal and Swaran shine



through it. It's about their chemistry and how they deal with it. I feel it's a love story between husband and wife, parents and kids, the love nest that they have built in the show and the conflicts that arise in them.

The actress dismissed any comparisons of *Swaran Ghar* with Amitabh Bachchan and Hema Malini's *Baghban*. She said, "It's not *Baghban*. People are drawing parallels and similarities because *Baghban* was about an old couple being

shunted by their kids and not looked after. It's not exactly like that. Swaran and Kanwal are independent people but they are emotionally dependent on their kids. They want the kids to be there and not money. They have no other desire. But when parents build a house, they naturally think of the kids first. It's a natural progression. You want to protect kids and keep them close to you. They also understand that kids need to explore the world but they only want them to come back and ask them about their well-being."

Sangita also opened up about the exciting opportunities women in their 40s are now getting on several platforms. She said, "It's amazing. Women are not dead after 40, thank God people have realised that. I was very excited with *Swaran Ghar*. It's nice whether it's TV or OTT or films. It's not just about 16-year-olds or 20-year-olds. It's across all age groups. Then only you can have different stories otherwise it will all be the same."

YOUR STARS

Sagittarius: Nov 22 - Dec 21

The beginning of the week will bring in bright cheer and good times. Your health will be vibrant. Old nagging ailments will be cured. If you are looking for a change in job or shift in role, you may get good news soon. Those involved in law, medicine, films, music, beauty and related industries, will find new options coming up.

Lucky Numbers: 9, 11, 15, 23, 24, 29

Capricorn: Dec 22 - Jan 19

You will find comfort and understanding with your partner. There may be confusions in your regarding your profession and service-oriented activities. There may also be some misunderstanding with your seniors. Hence clearing all doubts and confusions will be necessary.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 6, 17, 20, 27, 31

Aquarius: Jan 20 - Feb 18

You will gain through property and landed assets. Be aware of those you place your trust as you may be cheated easily. Your emotional relation with your partner will be comforting. You will find clearing of confusions and doubts useful.

Lucky Numbers: 4, 9, 13, 15, 17, 33

Pisces: Feb 19 - Mar 20

By the mid of the week, you will find options for growth. Confusions and irritation in relations will subside as love and understanding will be vibrant. Investments will give you handsome response and return. Your opponents will show enough strength if you are involved in legal matters.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 9, 14, 20, 32, 39

Aries: Mar 21 - Apr 19

You may be interested in buying / renovation of property and change your vehicle. Your relation with seniors and boss will be cordial. By the end of this week, there will be a gain in your finances. Relation with close ones will be pleasant and reassuring.

Lucky Numbers: 19, 26, 29, 31, 35, 37

Taurus: Apr 20 - May 20

Domestic life will be peaceful. Your luck will favour in legal matters. Investments and foreign funds will have good opportunity for growth. Work will progress well, however gain in finances may not be as expected.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 9, 11, 16, 17, 24

Gemini: May 21 - June 20

Long standing ailments will end, provided you manage to discipline your life well. Work and business will show increasing gain this week. Marital scene will be comfortable. Your loved one will appreciate spending time with you. You are also likely to gain through immovable property.

Lucky Numbers: 7, 13, 20, 26, 33, 39

Cancer: June 21 - July 22

If you are appearing for competitions, there are possibilities of success, provided the preparations have been appreciable. Health may need attention in the beginning of the week. The later part however will be filled with enthusiasm and cheer. You may have to pay special attention to your spouse and children.

Lucky Numbers: 3, 10, 15, 19, 20, 30

Leo: July 23 - Aug 22

Love relation will blossom. Resolve all conflicts as early as you can. Travel with your beloved and indulging in shopping together will bring you closer to each other. You may wish to buy some gadgets to bring comfort to domestic life. Marital life will be pleasant.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 7, 18, 19, 24, 36

Virgo: Aug 23 - Sept 22

Those associated with you, will be highly appreciative of your work and aptitude. If you are on a look out for a change in job, it would be advisable to put in extra efforts in the search. There will be financial gain by the mid of the week. Those in love relations, will find comfort and peace.

Lucky Numbers: 17, 20, 30, 36, 39, 40

Libra: Sept 23 - Oct 22

Your efforts will form your destiny. Marital and domestic life will remain comfortable. You will note increase in your finances by the end of the week. Love life and romance will keep you cheered up in the spirit.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 16, 19, 23, 24, 27

Scorpion: 23 Oct - 21 Nov

You will be appreciated socially as you are keen to offer your services for a social cause. You will also gain in finances. You will feel loved and warm with your close ones. Your parents will feel proud of your achievements.

Lucky Numbers: 4, 10, 12, 23, 36, 38

Madhuri Dixit: 'I learnt a lot about life because living in the US'

Madhuri Dixit made her OTT debut last week with Netflix's *The Fame Game*. The show stars her as a Bollywood superstar, something Madhuri knows all too well in real life as well. Madhuri has worked in over 80 films in a career spanning 38 years. Due to her star status in India, true independence was not easy to attain for her.

Madhuri, in a new interview, has said that her parents would accompany her to film sets in India. Her team of almost 20 people would also be around her all the time, so doing her own work was never a thing. However, things changed when she moved to the United States with her husband Dr Sriram Nene, reports Hindustan Times.



Speaking to Bazaar, she said, "I grew up in a very protected environment... My parents used to always accompany me, even when I was working. But once I got married, I began making decisions by myself. I learnt a lot about life because living in the US. When I was in India, there would always be around 20 people fussing over me at all times, but there I was very independent."

"I had to do things on my own, bring up my kids — of course, my mom and mom-in-law would come and help me out whenever I needed. But as you grow older, you mature and learn a lot, and grow as a person with your experiences. Today, I use those experiences when I'm essaying a role," she added.

In another recent interview, Madhuri told Etimes how her mother would make her do her own work. "I mean, even when I was working in films, my mom used to scold me if my room was messed up and things like that. So that's how I was brought up. And that's how I am. When I go home, everything is back in the studio. I see my kids and I see my husband and it's just a different life. I never really lost myself."

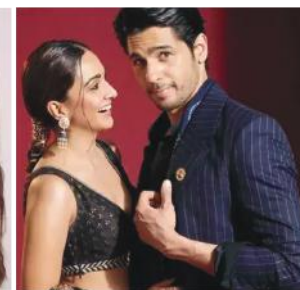
Madhuri and Sriram got married in 1999 and have two sons together.

Hrithik-Saba, Ranbir-Alia: Bollywood couples in love despite vast age differences

Age is just a number and these Bollywood couples have proved the same with their romance! Hrithik Roshan is dating a much younger Saba Azad, while Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt are set to get hitched foregoing a decade-long age gap. ETimes takes a look at B-Town lovebirds who are madly in love despite the huge age difference.

Hrithik Roshan and Saba Azad: The newest couple in town - Hrithik Roshan and Saba Azad, have an age difference of nearly 17 years. From dinner dates to family outings — Hrithik and Saba refuse to hide their romance. A source told BT that Hrithik and Saba met on Twitter after the former shared a video featuring Saba. One thing led to another and the duo started chatting over DMs. Hrithik and Saba's romance is just 2-3 months old but their chemistry seems to have a vibe of eternity!

Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor: Madly in love Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor have an age difference of 10 years. This couple stayed together during lockdown and will also be seen romancing on the silver screen in 'Brahmastra'. Reportedly, Ranbir and Alia are also plan-



ning to take their romance to the next level and get hitched this year.

Arjun Rampal and Gabriella Demetriades: In 2018, Arjun separated from wife Mehr Jesia and found love in Gabriella Demetriades, who is 14 years younger to him. The couple did not get formally hitched yet, but welcomed a baby boy in 2019. From romantic holidays to festive celebrations and dutifully parenting their son Arik — Arjun and Gabriella seem to be crazy for each other.

Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani: 'Shershaah' perfectly captured Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani's onscreen chem-

istry and their romance is often witnessed off camera too. They have an age difference of 8 years but the charm they exude when they are together is unmissable. Despite every effort to hide their relationship, Sidharth and Kiara's secret holidays and outings manage to give fans a sneak-peek of their romance.

Priyanka Chopra, Shriya Saran, Preity Zinta...

Bollywood celebrities who found love across the border

They say love sees no boundaries and the ones who are meant to be together, always find a way. The same applies to Bollywood celebrities who have found love across borders. Stars like Priyanka Chopra, Preity Zinta, Shriya Saran and many others have put behind all their cultural and religious differences and have found a way to be together with their respective partners. ETimes reports...

Priyanka Chopra

Priyanka Chopra surprised one and all when she confessed her love for American singer-actor Nick Jonas. After dating for some time, the couple tied the knot in 2018 at Umaid Bhavan Palace in Rajasthan in a lavish wedding ceremony with only close friends and family in attendance. They recently announced the arrival of their first child together via surrogacy. However, they are yet to reveal the gender of their child.

Preity Zinta

After her sour relationship with Ness Wadia, Preity Zinta found love in Los Angeles-based financial analyst Gene Goodenough. The couple dated for about five years before tying the knot in 2016. The couple recently became proud parents of twins who were born through surrogacy. They have named their bundle of joys Jai and Gia.

Madhuri Dixit

Bollywood's 'Dhak Dhak girl' Madhuri Dixit broke many hearts when she tied the knot with US-based cardiologist Dr Sriram Nene in an arranged marriage in 1999. The actor is believed to be on the top of her career when she took the decision of tying the knot and settling down in the US. The couple is parents to two boys - Arin and Raya. She has now returned to India with her family.



Shriya Saran

Shriya Saran married Andrei Koscheev, a Russian tennis player and entrepreneur residing in Barcelona, in 2018. They both first met in the Maldives. Back then, Andrei doesn't know Shriya was an actress. When he came to know about the fact, he watched one of her films. And to her surprise, he also took her to the places where one of her film songs was shot in St Petersburg. The couple is now blessed with a daughter whom they have named Radha.

Arjun Rampal

After separating from his wife Mehr Jesia, Arjun Rampal found love again in a South African model and actress Gabriella Demetriades. The couple reportedly met for the first time at an after-party of a cricket event. They not only moved in together but have also had a child together whom they have named Arik. Arjun and Gabriella never shy away from expressing their love for each other on social media.

Cinema Sirsa

Castel - Tel Nos - 6867356 / 6971613 / 59119396 / 57069330

NEW MOVIE: JHUND

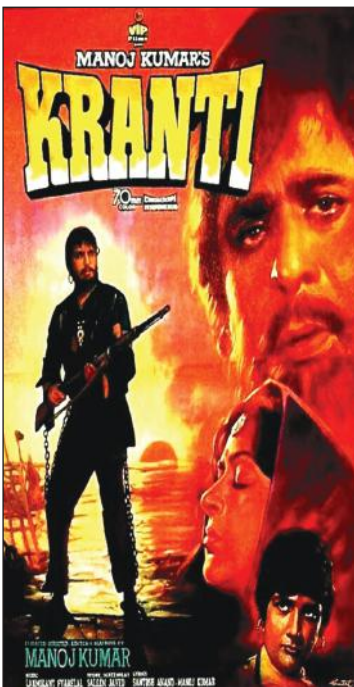
Friday 11 March 2022 To Tuesday 22 March 2022 : 13:15/20:15



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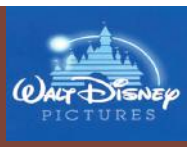
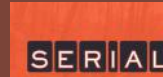
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Programme TV



vendredi 11 mars

MBC 1

07.00 Local: Les Grandes Lines
09.00 Doc: Girls For Future
10.11 Local: Rodrig Prog
12.00 Le Journal
12.30 Serial: Ode To Joy
14.07 MBC Production
14.33 D.Anime: Fangbone
15.20 D.Anime: Cat & Keet
15.27 D.Anime: PAF, Le Chien
16.03 D.Anime: Gummibar & Friend
17.05 Serial: Mustangs FC
17.30 D.Anime: Kid's Planets
18.00 Live: Samachar
18.30 Serial: Surya Pura
18.55 Serial: Jag Jaanani Maa Vaishnodevi
19.30 Journal & La Meteo
20.10 Local: Les Grands Noms...
21.55 Serial: Madam Secretary
23.20 Le Journal
23.35 Mag: Eye On SADC

MBC 2

07.00 DDI Live
10.00 Band Khirkiyan
11.18 Tawaan
12.00 Film: Pariyenum Perumal
Starring: Kathir, Anandhi, Yogo Babu
15.00 Live: Samachar
15.20 Serial: Aamhi Doghi
15.42 Serial: Bommarillu
16.07 Serial: Sondha Bandham
16.25 Serial: Wafa Lazim To Nahin
16.47 Serial: Imtihaan
17.05 Kulfi Kumarr Bajawala
17.25 Serial: Chhanchhan
18.00 Serial: Colourful Bone
18.30 Mag: DDI Mag
19.05 Journal Kreol
19.26 Serial: Radha Krishna
19.58 Serial: AAS (Urdu Serial)
20.40 Local: Anjuman
21.00 Local: Urdu Programme

MBC 3

07.00 Mag: Border Crossing
07.25 Mag: Tomorrow Today
07.51 Doc: La Route De La Soie
10.15 Doc: A Passion For Helping
11.10 Mag: Eco India
14.22 Mag: Nouveau Look Pour...
15.26 Doc: A Passion For Helping
16.21 Mag: Eco India
17.02 Mag: Border Crossing
19.00 Student Support Prog...
19.30 Mag: Euromaxx
20.05 Doc: Quand L'Histoire Fait...
20.30 Local: News (English)
20.45 Doc: Forces Of Nature
21.37 Doc: Volcano Stories
23.23 Doc: Dogs & US
00.04 Mag: World Stories
00.31 Mag: Our Voices
00.42 Mag: Euromaxx
01.08 Doc: Quand L'Histoire Fait Dates

Cine 12

01.30 Film: Man Trouble
03.48 Film: Nana's Secret Recipe
05.14 Tele: Marimar
05.42 Tele: Rubi
06.00 Serial: Billions
09.00 Serial: 19-2
09.45 Tele: Teresa
10.35 Tele: I Forgot I Loved You
11.00 Serial: Reef Doctors
12.00 Film: Nana's Secret Recipe
13.30 Tele: Marimar
14.45 Film: Man Trouble
16.40 Serial: 19-2
17.26 Serial: Billions
18.10 Tele: La Femme De Lorenzo
19.00 Tele: I Forgot I Loved You
19.34 Serial: Backstage
20.05 Tele: Les Trois Visages D'ana
20.30 Serial: Killjoys
21.15 Film: A Perfect Match
Avec: Emily Alatalo, Chad Connell

Bollywood TV

07.00 Film:
11.12 / 20.30 - Radha Krishna
11.43 / 21.00 - Anupamaa
12.12 / 21.30 - Mere Sai
12.42 / 22.00 - Agnihera
13.12 / 22.03 - Yeh Teri Galiyan
13.55 / 22.30 -
Bade Acche Lagte Hai
14.30 / 23.00 - Main Maik Chali Jaungi Tum Dekhte Rahiyo
15.00 / 21.46 -
Yeh Hai Mohabbatein
15.25 Film: Pukar
Starring: A. Bachchan, Zeenat Aman, R. Kapoor, Tina Munim
18.00 Live: Samachar
18.30 Kundali Bhagya
19.00 Udaariyaan
19.38 Bhakharwadi
20.08 Siddhi Vinayak
20.38 Radha Krishna

samedi 12 mars

06.02 D.Anime: Invention Story
06.29 D.Anime: Gon
06.53 D.Anime: Oum Le Dauphin...
07.01 D.Anime: Cosmic Quantum...
07.52 D.Anime: Paf, Le Chien
08.26 D.Anime: The Hive
09.35 Serial: My Perfect Landing
10.00 Local Prod: Lavi Zoli An XXL
12.25 Le Journal
12.46 Tele: Teresa
15.20 D.Anime: Cat & Keet
15.23 D.Anime: PAF, Le Chien
15.41 D.Anime: Robot Trains
16.46 D.Anime: Panda Fanfare
17.15 Mag: Human Nature
18.00 Samachar
18.30 Taare Zameen
19.30 Journal & La Meteo
20.10 Message Of Hon Pravid Kumar Jugnauth
21.25 Film: Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk

07.00 Film: Shatranj Ke Khiladi
10.00 Bade Acche Lagte Hai
11.03 Serial: Dikri Vahalno Dariyo
12.00 Serial: Nanda Saukhyia Bhare
12.26 Serial: Mooga Manasulu
12.49 Serial: High School
13.13 Annakodiyum Ainthu Pengalum
13.36 Anu Pallavi
15.00 Live: Samachar
15.25 Film: Aa Ab Laut Chalen
Starring: Rajesh Khanna, Akshaye Khanna, Aishwariya Rai
18.13 DDI Magazine
19.00 Live: Journal Kreol
19.30 Serial: Radha Krishna
20.06 Serial: Vikram Betaal Ki Rahasya Gatha
20.29 Serial: Porus - Ep 5
21.00 Film: Kranti
Starring: Dilip Kumar, Manoj Kumar, Shashi Kapoor

06.00 Doc: Dogs & US
06.42 Mag: World Stories
06.54 Mag: Our Vocies
07.25 Mag: Euromaxx
07.53 Doc: Quand L'Histoire Fait...
11.00 Doc: Craft Chocolate
11.43 Mag: World Stories
11.54 Mag: Our Voices
13.11 Doc: Forces Of Nature
15.00 Student Support Prog...
18.02 Mag: Future Mag
18.31 Mag: In Good Shape
19.00 Mag: The 77 Percent
20.30 Local: News (English)
21.10 Des Montagnes Du Monde
21.27 The Language Of Whales
22.09 Doc: Legendary Hotels
23.34 Mag: Future Mag
00.03 Mag: In Good Shape
00.29 Mag: The 77 Percent
00.55 Mag: Check In
01.21 Mag: Sky Eye

01.28 Film: A Perfect Match
03.04 Serial: Seal Team
03.46 Beauty And The Beast
04.16 Serial: Hawaii Five-0
05.33 Tele: Tanto Amor
06.00 Serial: Killjoys
06.45 Serial: Anomalia
09.16 Beauty And The Beast
09.58 Serial: Hawaii Five-0
10.45 Film: A Perfect Match
12.15 Serial: Seal Team
13.30 Serial: Reef Doctors
15.00 Tele: Muneca Brava
16.15 Serial: Killjoys
17.00 Film: The Book Of Henry
18.41 Serial: Rich Man, Poor Man
19.40 Serial: Backstage
20.05 Tele: Les Trois Visages D'ana
20.30 Series: Killjoys
21.15 Film: The Patriot, Le Chemin De La Liberté

04.05 Radha Krishna
04.36 Anupamaa
05.03 Mere Sai -- Shradha Aur...
05.33 Agnihera
06.00 Yeh Teri Galiyan
06.29 Bade Acche Lagte Hai
06.38 Chhanchhan
06.57 Ishaaron Ishaaron Mein
07.18 Siddhi Vinayak
08.02 Yeh Teri Galiyan
09.42 Motu Patlu
10.00 Siddhi Vinayak
12.18 Serial: Bhakharwadi
14.13 Anupamaa
16.05 Pavitra Rishta
18.00 Samachar
18.30 Film: Manikarnika
Star: Kangana Ranaut, Jishu Sengupta, Danny Denzongpa
20.51 Serial: Namah
21.12 Serial: Naagin Season 3

dimanche 13 mars

06.02 D.Anime: Spongo, Fuzz and...
06.22 D.Anime: Gon
06.45 D.Anime: Oum Le Dauphin...
07.00 D.Anime: Commic Quantum...
09.00 D.Anime: Les Triples
10.00 Local: Zafan Nou Zil
11.00 Local Production: Nu Rasinn
12.00 Le Journal
12.40 Tele: Teresa
14.05 Local: Elle - No 179
15.20 D.Anime: Cat & Keet
15.35 D.Anime: PAF, Le Chien
15.49 D.Anime: Robot Trains
16.27 D.Anime: Gummibar & Friend
17.20 Mag: Human Nature
18.00 Live: Samachar
18.30 Local: Yeh Shaam Mastani
19.30 Le Journal
20.20 Local Production
21.25 Film: Extorsion
Avec Eion Bailey, Barkhad Abdi...

07.00 Film: Sajjan Ki Saheli
08.44 DDI Magazine
11.00 Serial: Azhagu
11.23 Jag Jaanani Maa Vaishnodevi
11.46 Surya Pura
12.10 Film: Behen Hogi Teri
14.13 DDI Magazine
15.00 Live: Samachar
15.20 Serial: Mooga Manasulu
15.45 Serial: He Mann Baware
16.12 Serial: Sondha Bandham
16.30 Local: Yaadein
17.03 Serial: Siya Ke Ram
17.43 Chacha Bhatija
18.30 Local: Tipa Tipa Nu Avance
19.00 Live: Journal Kreol
20.05 Serial: Mann Mein Vishwas...
20.48 Serial: CID
21.33 Serial: Naagin Season 2

06.00 Mag: Future Mag
06.29 Mag: The 77 Percent
06.59 Mag: Check In
09.42 Doc: Legendary Hotels
10.25 Doc: Antarctica
11.10 Mag: Future Mag
11.40 Mag: In Good Shape
12.03 Mag: The 77 Percent
12.36 Mag: Check In
13.26 Les Montagnes Du Monde
14.11 The Language Of Whales
16.20 Mag: Future Mag
18.00 Mag: Magnifique
19.00 Mag: The Inside Story
20.01 Doc: Planet Home
20.30 Local Prod: News (English)
21.37 Doc: Tresors Oublies De...
22.56 Island Of White Antelopes
23.38 Mag: Magnifique
00.05 Mag: Future Mag
00.34 Mag: The Inside Story

02.04 Film: The Book Of Henry
03.45 Film: Billy Lynn's Long...
05.33 Tele: Tanto Amor
06.15 Serial: Killjoys
07.00 Film: Signed. Sealed...
08.30 Serial: Airwolf
09.19 Film: Billy Lynn's Long...
11.05 Film: The Book Of Henry
12.44 Serial: Dynasty 2
13.25 Serial: Reef Doctors
15.32 Tele: Muneca Brava
17.00 Serial: Killjoys
17.45 Serial: Dynasty 2
18.36 Serial: Deux Flics A Miami
19.31 Mag: Top 100 Famous....
19.38 Serial: Backstage
20.05 Tele: Les Trois Visages D'ana
20.30 Serial: New Amsterdam
21.54 Film: White Reindeer
Avec: Nathan Williams, Kim Park
23.25 Tele: Le Prix Du Désir

01.00 Serial: Siddhi Vinayak
01.29 Bhakharwadi
03.40 Anupamaa
05.52 Pavitra Rishta
08.00 Motu Patlu
08.11 Ishaaron Ishaaron Mein
10.03 Jaana Na Dil Se Door
11.39 Yeh Hai Mohabbatein
14.00 Agnihera
16.00 Jijaji Chhat Par Hain
17.00 Punar Vivaah
18.00 Live: Samachar
18.30 Film: Kesari
Starring: Akshay Kumar
20.36 Naagin Season 3
21.18 Bade Acche Lagte Hai
23.28 Yeh Hai Mohabbatein
01.00 Ishaaron Ishaaron Mein

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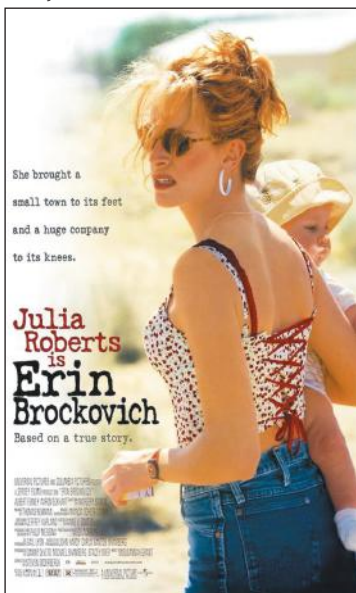
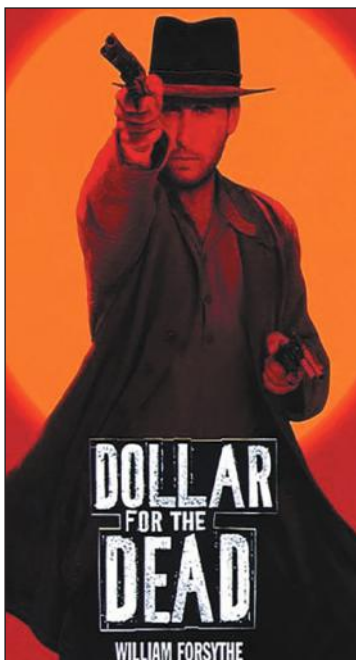
06.27 Mag: Eye On SADC
07.00 Local Prod: Nu Rasinn
07.55 Local Prod: Music Tour 2022
09.00 Doc: Hard Landing
09.45 Local: Les Grandes Lignes
11.00 Mag: Le Saviez-Vous?
11.30 Tele: Les Trois Visages D'ana
12.00 Le Journal
12.30 Serial: Ode To Joy
14.00 Local: Zafan Nou Zil
14.30 D.Anime: Fangbone
15.28 D.Anime: Cat & Keet
15.35 D.Anime: PAF, Le Chien
15.49 D.Anime: Ubongo Kids
17.00 Serial: Mustangs FC
17.31 Mag: The World Is Yours
18.00 Live: Samachar
18.30 Serial: Namah
19.30 Le Journal
20.40 MBC Production
21.10 Film: Le Chateau De Carte

07.00 DDI Live
10.00 Serial: Kundali Bhagya
12.10 Film: Loafer
Stars: Dharmendra, Mumtaz, K.N. Singh
14.00 Mag: DDI Mag
15.00 Live: Samachar
15.30 Serial: Aamhi Doghi
15.52 Serial: Bommarillu
16.15 Serial: Sondha Bandham
16.24 Serial: Wafa Lazim To Nahin
16.45 Serial: Imtihaan
17.03 Kulfi Kumarr Bajawala
17.30 Serial: Vandhal Sridevi
18.03 Serial: Colourful Bone
19.00 Live: Journal Kreol
19.30 Serial: Radha Krishna
20.02 Local: Programme In Telugu
20.31 Film: Lisaa 3D
Star: Anjali Sam Jones
Makarand Deshpande

06.00 Mag: Magnifique
06.55 Mag: The Inside Story
07.24 Mag: Destination Culture
09.25 Doc: Tresors Oublies...
11.26 Mag: Magnifique
13.21 Doc: Planet Home
16.09 Island Of White Antelopes
16.51 Mag: Magnifique
17.50 Mag: Le Saviez Vous?
18.00 Mag: EcoAfrica
19.00 Mag: Africa 54
20.30 Local Prod: News (English)
20.53 Mag: Luana's Kitchen
23.30 Mag: EcoAfrica
00.18 Mag: The 77 Percent
00.44 Mag: Africa 54
01.10 Mag: In Good Shape
01.36 Mag: Luana's Kitchen
02.02 Doc: Builders Of The Future
02.27 Mag: Science Ou Fiction
03.01 Mag: Global 3000

03.50 Film: Extortion
05.35 Tele: Marimar
05.59 Tele: Rubi
06.23 Serial: New Amsterdam
07.55 Film: Billy Lynn's Long...
09.45 Tele: La Femme De Lorenzo
10.35 Tele: I Forgot I Loved You
11.00 Serial: Reef Doctors
12.00 Film: Extortion
13.35 Tele: Marimar
13.56 Tele: Rubi
14.45 Film: Billy Lynn's Long...
16.39 Serial: New Amsterdam
18.08 Tele: La Femme De Lorenzo
19.00 Tele: I Forgot I Loved You
19.38 Serial: Backstage
20.05 Les Trois Visages D'Ana
20.30 Serial: Anomalia
21.15 Film: Rage
With: Nicolas Cage, Rachel Nichols

08.00 Taare Zameen Par
11.16 / 20.30 - Radha Krishna
11.47 / 21.00 - Anupamaa
12.30 / 21.30 - Mere Sai
12.48 / 22.00 - Agnihera
13.18 / 22.03 - Yeh Teri Galiyan
14.00 / 22.30 -
Bade Acche Lagte Hai
14.30 / 23.00 - Main Maik Chali Jaungi Tum Dekhte Rahiyo
15.00 / 21.46 -
Yeh Hai Mohabbatein
15.21 Film: Pyaar Diwana Hota Hai
Starring: Govinda, Rani Mukerji
18.00 Live: Samachar
18.30 Kundali Bhagya
19.00 Udaariyaan
19.31 Serial: Bhakharwadi
20.01 Siddhi Vinayak
20.30 Radha Krishna
21.00 Anupamaa



Programme TV



SERIAL



MBC 1	MBC 2	MBC 3	Cine 12	Bollywood TV
mardi 15 mars 06.30 Local: Arsiv 240 07.15 Local: Evasion 08.00 Magazine 10.15 Local: Lavi Kontinye 10.30 Mag: Arts.21 10.55 Mag: Le Saviez-Vous? 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Les Grands Noms Internation 12.30 Serial: Ode To Joy 14.30 D.Anime: Fangbone 15.20 D.Anime: Cat & Keet 15.48 D.Anime: Ubongo Kids 17.05 Serial: Mustangs FC 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Serial: Jijaji Chhat Par Hain 18.55 MBC Production 19.30 Journal & La Meteo 20.10 Local: Autour Des Valeurs... 21.10 Film: Nana's Secret Recipe Avec Linda Bradshaw, Nancy L. Gray 23.00 Le Journal	mardi 15 mars 07.00 DDI Live 10.00 Serial: CID 12.00 Film: Zamana Rajesh Khanna, Rishi Kapoor, Poonam Dhillon 14.00 DDI Magazine 15.00 Live: Samachar 15.20 Aamhi Doghi 15.43 Bommarillu 16.07 Sondha Bandham 16.25 Serial: Wafa Lazim To Nahin 16.49 Serial: Imtihaan 17.10 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 17.31 Serial: Premabhishekam 18.00 Serial: Colourful Bone 18.30 Local: DDI Magazine 19.00 Journal Kreol 19.30 Serial: Radha Krishna 20.06 Local: Tamil Programme 20.30 Film: Akeli Mat Jaiyo Rajendra Kumar, Meena Kumari, Agha	mardi 15 mars 06.00 Mag: Eco@Africa 06.26 Mag: The 77 Percent 07.54 Mag: Luana's Kitchen 09.37 Mag: Washington Forum 10.03 Doc: Coding Art 14.57 Mag: Washington Forum 16.05 Mag: Destination Culture 16.40 Mag: Eco@Africa 17.06 Mag: The 77 Percent 17.32 Mag: Africa 54 18.00 Mag: Rev: The Global Auto... 18.30 Mag: Healthy Living 18.46 Mag: Red Carpet 19.01 Student Support Prog... 19.30 Mag: Made In Germany 20.01 Mag: Magnifique 20.30 Live: News 20.45 Mag: Le Saviez-Vous? 20.53 Doc: Nature's Keepers 21.45 Doc: Les Grand Mythes 22.11 Mag: Close Up	mardi 15 mars 01.32 Film: Rage 02.57 Serial: Reef Doctors 03.40 Film: Operation Chromite 05.26 Tele: Marimar 05.51 Tele: Rubi 06.14 Serial: Anomalia 07.00 Film: Le Chateau De Carte 09.45 Tele: La Femme De Lorenzo 10.35 Tele: I Forgot I Loved You 11.01 Serial: Reef Doctors 11.45 Film: Operation Chromite 13.40 Tele: Marimar 14.05 Tele: Rubi 14.45 Film: Le Chateau De Carte 16.40 Serial: 19-2 17.29 Serial: Anomalia 18.11 Tele: La Femme De Lorenzo 19.00 Tele: I Forgot I Loved You 20.05 Tele: Les Trois Visages D'ana 21.15 Film: All About Nina Avec: Mary Elizabeth Winstead..	mardi 15 mars 06.50 Film: Pyaar Diwana Hota Hai Cast: Govinda, Rani Mukerji 11.38 / 19.27 - Radha Krishna 11.59 / 20.57 - Anupamaa 12.30 / 21.27 - Mere Sai 13.09 / 22.07 - Agnipheera 13.35 / 22.37 - Yeh Teri Galiyan 14.04 / 23.07 - Bade Acche Lagte Hai 14.30 / 21.59 - Main Maikhe Chali Jaungi Tum Dekhte Rahiyo 14.53 / 22.25 - Yeh Hai Mohabbatein 15.28 Film: Pyaar Ka Saaya 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Serial: Kundali Bhagya 18.59 Udaariyaan 19.30 Bhakharwadi 20.00 Serial: Siddhi Vinayak
mercredi 16 mars 07.15 Local: Profil 07.35 Local: Priorite Sante 09.00 Doc: Tresors Oublies... 10.15 MBC Production 10.30 Mag: Tomorrow Today 12.00 Le Journal 12.30 Serial: Ode To Joy 13.15 MBC Production 14.35 D.Anime: Fangbone 15.20 D.Anime: Cat & Keet 15.27 D.Anime: PAF, Le Chien 15.48 D.Anime: Ubongo Kids 16.05 D.Anime: Gummibar & Friend 17.05 Serial: Mustangs FC 17.30 Mag: The World Is Yours 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Serial: Jijaji Chhat Par Hain 18.55 MBC Production 19.30 Journal & La Meteo 20.30 MBC Production 21.25 Film: Original Gangster 23.00 Le Journal	mercredi 16 mars 07.00 DDI Live 10.00 Suhani Si Ek Ladki 12.00 Film: Ghar Ghar Ki Kahani Starring Mahesh Kothare and Nirupa Roy 14.17 DDI Magazine 15.00 Live: Samachar 15.23 Aamhi Doghi 15.46 Bommarillu 16.07 Sondha Bandham 16.25 Serial: Wafa Lazim To Nahin 16.49 Serial: Imtihaan 17.10 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 17.31 Serial: Kulvadhu 18.00 Serial: Colourful Bone 18.30 Local: DDI Magazine 19.00 Journal Kreol 19.30 Serial: Radha Krishna 20.06 Programme In Marathi 21.00 Film: Dosti Girl Star: Vijay Gite, Pooja Malekar, Sanketh Pathak	mercredi 16 mars 06.00 Mag: Rev: Global Auto... 06.26 Mag: Healthy Living 07.33 Mag: Made In Germany 08.02 Mag: Magnifique 09.46 Mag: Close Up 15.46 Local: Rodrig 16.36 Doc: Beyond Men And... 17.16 Mag: Le Saviez Vous? 18.00 Mag: Motorweek 19.00 Student Support Prog... 19.35 Mag: The Inside Story 20.30 Local: News (English) 20.45 Local: Business Connect 22.00 Doc: Olivia's Garden 22.26 Mag: Science Ou Fiction 22.52 Mag: Business Africa 23.18 Mag: Focus On Europe 23.44 Mag: Le Saviez Vous? 00.35 Mag: Motorweek 01.01 Mag: Vous Et Nous 01.31 Mag: Arts.21	mercredi 16 mars 01.28 Film: All About Nina 03.33 Film: A Perfect Match 05.18 Tele: Marimar 05.35 Tele: Rubi 05.59 Serial: Anomalia 06.41 Film: Nana's Secret Recipe 09.00 Serial: Deux Flics A Miami 09.45 Tele: La Femme De Lorenzo 10.35 Tele: I Forgot I Loved You 11.01 Serial: Reef Doctors 12.00 Film: A Perfect Match 13.30 Tele: Marimar 14.45 Film: Nana's Secret Recipe 16.38 Serial: Deux Flics A Miami 17.20 Serial: Anomalia 18.05 Tele: La Femme De Lorenzo 19.00 Tele: I Forgot I Loved You 19.30 Serial: Backstage 20.30 Serial: Pine Gap 21.15 Film: Dollar For The Dead Avec: Emilio Estevez, William Forsythe, Jordi Mollà	mercredi 16 mars 07.00 Film: Pyaar Ka Saaya 11.31 / 20.06 - Radha Krishna 12.00 / 20.26 - Anupamaa 12.30 / 20.02 - Mere Sai - Shrad.. 13.01 / 20.46 - Agnipheera 13.29 / 21.09 - Yeh Teri Galiyan 14.05 / 21.50 - Bade Acche Lagte Hai 14.32 / 22.15 - Main Maikhe Chali Jaungi Tum Dekhte Rahiyo 14.47 / 21.46 - Yeh Hai Mohabbatein 15.25 Film: Maine Dil Tujhko Diya Starring Sohail Khan, Sameera Reddy, Sanjay Dutt 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Kundali Bhagya 19.00 Udaariyaan 19.30 Serial: Bhakharwadi 20.00 Siddhi Vinayak
jeudi 17 mars 06.00 Local: Klip Seleksion 06.45 Local: Son Ladan Mem 07.15 Local: Lavi Zoli An XXL 09.00 Local: Ekir Kreol Morisien 10.30 Mag: In Good Shape 12.00 Le Journal 12.30 Serial: Ode To Joy 13.12 MBC Production 14.33 D.Anime: Fangbone 15.20 D.Anime: Cat & Keet 15.27 D.Anime: PAF, Le Chien 16.01 D.Anime: Gummibar & Friend 16.34 D.Anime: Panda Fanfare 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Serial: Jijaji Chhat Par Hain 19.30 Le Journal 20.30 Local: Autour Des Valeurs... 20.45 Film: C K Kompany With Tusshar Kapoor, Anupam Kher, Rajpal Yadav, Raima Sen, Mithun Chakraborty	jeudi 17 mars 07.00 DDI Live 10.00 Serial: Vikram Betaal Ki Rahasya Gatha 11.07 Serial: Mann Mein Vishwas... 12.00 Film: Rani Aur Lalpari 15.00 Live: Samachar 15.20 Serial: Aamhi Doghi 15.43 Serial: Bommarillu 16.04 Serial: Sondha Bandham 16.27 Serial: Wafa Lazim To Nahin 16.48 Serial: Imtihaan 17.05 Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala 17.30 Local: Amrit Vaani 18.00 Serial: Colourful Bone 18.30 Serial: Ghar Pahucha Da... 19.30 Serial: Radha Krishna 20.04 Local: Les Grandes Lignes 20.59 Local: Profil 21.14 Film: Erin Brockovich With Julia Roberts, Albert Finney, Aaron Eckhart	jeudi 17 mars 06.30 Mag: Vous Et Nous 06.55 Mag: Arts.21 07.29 Mag: The Inside Story 09.42 Mag: Science Ou Fiction 10.29 Mag: Focus On Europe 11.45 Mag: Motorweek 15.53 Mag: Business Africa 17.37 Mag: Motorweek 18.00 Mag: Eco India 19.00 Student Support Prog - G7 19.30 Mag: Tomorrow Today 19.56 Mag: Shift 20.15 Mag: 70th Edition Of The Miss World Pageant 2021 22.45 Doc: La Ville Passe Au Vert 23.36 Mag: Le Saviez Vous? 23.44 Doc: Concorde 00.27 Mag: Eco India 00.53 Mag: Border Crossing 01.19 Mag: Le Saviez Vous? 01.27 Mag: Tomorrow Today	jeudi 17 mars 01.25 Film: Rage 02.51 Serial: Reef Doctors 03.46 Film: Dollar For The Dead 05.38 Tele: Rubi 07.07 Film: Signed, Sealed... 09.00 Serial: 19-2 09.45 Tele: La Femme De Lorenzo 10.37 Tele: I Forgot I Loved You 11.00 Serial: Reef Doctors 12.00 Film: Dollar For The Dead 13.36 Tele: Marimar 14.45 Film: Signed, Sealed... 16.10 Serial: 19-2 16.53 Mag: Red Carpet 18.05 Tele: La Femme De Lorenzo 19.00 Tele: I Forgot I Loved You 19.36 Serial: Backstage 20.05 Tele: Les Trois Visages D'Ana 20.30 Serial: Billions	jeudi 17 mars 07.00 Film: Maine Dil Tujhko Diya Starring Sohail Khan, Sameera Reddy, Sanjay Dutt 11.27 / 19.54 - Radha Krishna 11.56 / 20.11 - Anupamaa 12.25 / 20.32 - Mere Sai 13.13 / 21.09 - Agnipheera 13.42 / 21.24 - Yeh Teri Galiyan 13.54 / 21.50 - Bade Acche Lagte Hai 14.30 / 22.15 - Main Maikhe Chali Jaungi Tum Dekhte Rahiyo 15.00 / 21.46 - Yeh Hai Mohabbatein 15.21 Film: Yeh Lamhe Judaai Ke Star: Shah Rukh Khan, Raveena Tandon, Mohnish... 18.00 Samachar.. 18.30 Kundali Bhagya 18.59 Udaariyaan



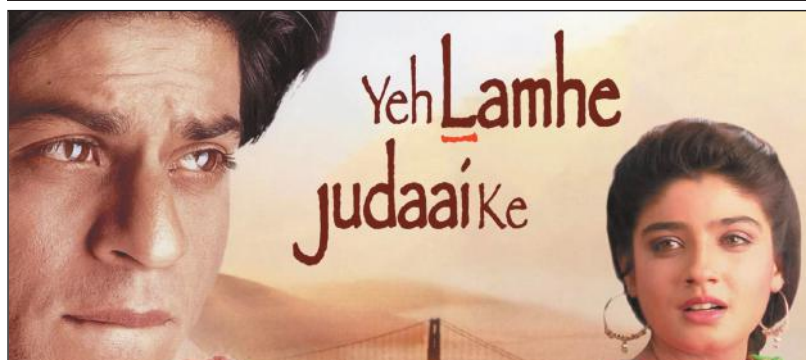
jeudi 17 mars - 15.30

Star: Shah Rukh Khan, Raveena Tandon, Mohnish...



jeudi 17 mars - 20.45

Stars: Tusshar Kapoor, Anupam Kher, Rajpal Yadav, Raima Sen, Mithun Chakraborty



Ukraine, an American Obsession with Russia



Nita Chicooree-Mercier

For the past eight years Russian President Vladimir Putin has tried to draw the attention of the European Union, mainly Germany and France, to the violation of Minsk 2, by Ukraine, but both countries hardly responded to Russia's concerns over systematic aggression by Ukraine against the autonomous Russian-speaking eastern regions of Donetsk, Luhansk and Donbas. (The Minsk agreements were a series of international agreements which sought to end the war in the Donbas region of Ukraine.)

The pledge to give autonomy to the 95% Russian-speaking population was taken in the first Minsk Agreement in December 2014 by Ukraine in the presence of German and French representatives. Ukraine violated its commitment by trying to integrate the autonomous regions, and conducting a policy of rewriting history, erasing the Russian past and the Russian language, and launching military attacks on the autonomous regions which took a heavy toll of 14,000 victims in Donbas in recent years, and more than one million people fled to Russia for protection.

The conflict escalated into a full-fledged war with Ukraine. World media are drawing a skewed picture of the causes that led to the war and presenting the Russian attacks in a most superficial manner. The power of the media to arouse emotional reaction is very strong and is amplified a million times with social media networks. Binary reasoning of media spokespersons and commentators, who are well-versed in creating a Western film with a simplistic version with the aggressor and the victim, the tyrant and the oppressed, still works with world public. To acute observers of the political development in the tense zone near Russian borders, images of flames flaring up and black smokes rising up to the sky at night in the war zone are the ultimate result of Russia's exasperation with the American strategy backed by ringleaders of the European Union to undermine Russian influence in the buffer zone between Europe and the East, and reduce Russian sphere of influence, which makes Ukraine a geo-strategic and geo-political asset to address



Russia's security concerns. Putin's message is that the West cannot go on shooting from the shoulders of Zelensky, the Ukrainian President.

US intervention in Russian sphere

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev had an agreement with US President G. Bush whereby NATO would not take advantage of a weakened Russia to extend its membership to the former Soviet states. NATO was created to defend member-states against attacks perpetrated by non-NATO members. With the dismantlement of the Warsaw pact, it should have become obsolete, yet it continued expanding and strengthening itself. Unilaterally, without the mandate of the UN, NATO allies headed by the US bombarded Yugoslavia and Serbia in the 1990s. Over the years NATO lured 15 ex-Soviet republics into its fold.

In 1991 Ukraine kept Crimea, a 95% Russophone and Russophile population, which was given to it by President Khrushchev in 1954 as a token in memory of the loyalty of Cossacks from Crimea who sought Russia's help to oust the Poland-Lithuanian rulers from Ukraine in 1654. Subsequently, at the end of 18th century, Poland ceased to exist, the western part of what became Ukraine later came under Austrian Habsburg rule while the rest of it to the east went to Russia.

The Austrians were chased away by the Russians in 1914. The National Republic of Ukraine was created by Lenin in 1917. Germany took hold of Kiev in 1918 at the end of WWI. Internal clashes between various factions engendered a chaotic situation, which ended up with Ukraine's integration in the Russian empire with the capital of Ukraine at

Kharkov. Nationalist aspirations led Ukrainians to collaborate with Nazi Germany in 1941, and they widely participated in the extermination of Jews.

The US violated its own agreements

In 2001, George W. Bush demanded that former Soviet states join NATO before obtaining European Union membership. Russian élites were horrified to see Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Czech Republic join NATO. In 1991 independent Ukraine signed an agreement with Russia, whereby Russia would pay an annual rent to maintain its fleet in the port of Sevastopol in Crimea, which was fully developed by Russia during the Soviet era. America challenged the agreement in the following years.

In 2004 the Orange Revolution in Ukraine to undermine Russian influence was allegedly backed by the West. V. Putin was determined not to allow NATO forces in its backyard, and tried to uplift Russia from the decline started under Yeltsin's rule. Ukraine and Belorussia were vital to protect Russia from NATO forces. The chief advisor of Democrats, an official of Polish origin, convinced Obama that taking away Ukraine from Russian influence was the best means to finish off Russia and obtain geo-strategic and geo-political advantage.

The 2013-14 Maidan Revolution in Ukraine was orchestrated by the US to stage a coup, topple the pro-Russia elected president, install a pro-US ruler and detach Ukraine from Russia. The stakes were clearly understood by Putin. Gorbachev mistook the West for friends. Boris Yeltsin was a weak ruler with corrupt mafiosi oligarchs hanging around him.

They watched powerlessly the bombing of Serbia for 200 days, the expansion of NATO and former Soviet states going West. Putin recognizes geopolitical realities, does not dream of re-creating the Soviet past contrary to the propaganda aired in the media, but will not give up on Ukraine with the support of loyal ally Belorussia. So, in 2014 Putin took back Crimea. World media presented the Russian initiative as an outrageous invasion which supposedly shocked the international community.

The past 8 years in Ukraine

Even before 2014, Ukraine began an ultra-nationalist policy of erasing Russian political, historical and cultural ties with Ukraine. Russian language was forbidden in Ukraine, and over the years Russian-speaking population of Donetsk and Luhansk have been constantly harassed and attacked. Ukraine's breach of agreements and brutal assault on the provinces by its far-right were hardly commented in mainstream world media.

Russian president's repeated attempts to engage Germany and France on the violation of the Minsk accord fell on deaf ears. From Russia's standpoint, Kyiv has obeyed Washington, Berlin and Paris for the past ten years. The aim of the pogroms carried out by Ukraine was to cut off economic ties between Ukraine and Russia.

Putin opines that the appetite of the West will never be satisfied, and that the EU members are merely acting as stooges of the US in a bid to lay their hands on the rich resources in the vast territory of Ukraine, gain economic, geo-strategic and military advantages, and totally cut off Russia from Ukraine. Today the writing is on the wall.