

MAURITIUS TIMES

• In a democracy, the people get the government they deserve. — Alexis de Tocqueville

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Transparency, Accountability and the MIC

The global economic devastation wrought by the Covid-19 pandemic compelled governments to undertake unprecedented fiscal interventions. Financial packages worth trillions of dollars were deployed to support livelihoods, save jobs, and stabilize economies. While this strategy helped prevent immediate economic collapse, it also raised serious questions about transparency, accountability, and the equitable use of public funds. For Mauritius, a small island economy with limited resources, these concerns resonate deeply.

The creation of the Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd (MIC) as a Special Purpose Vehicle under the aegis of the Bank of Mauritius (BOM) epitomized the government's response to the pandemic's economic fallout. Backed by an initial allocation of Rs 60 billion, later expanded to some Rs 80 billion, the MIC aimed to mitigate systemic risks to the banking and financial sectors while supporting "distressed" companies. Since the monies came not from the BOM reserves, it was the equivalent of printing money on a massive scale, which was to have dire consequences down the road (devaluation of the currency, impairment of BOM's financial standing, spiralling cost of living, etc). Moreover, from its inception, the MIC's operations have been cloaked in opacity. Public concern and criticism grew louder, particularly as questions remained unanswered about the criteria for disbursement, the beneficiaries, and the outcomes of this significant injection of public funds into the economy.

Public funds are, by definition, a national asset. Whether raised through taxation, borrowing, or central bank disbursements, these funds belong to the people and should be utilized with the utmost care and accountability. When these funds are deployed to save private enterprises, it becomes even more imperative to establish and enforce clear rules and conditions to ensure their effective use. Democracy demands that public money be spent in ways that are transparent, fair, and consistent with the public interest. Unfortunately, the MIC's track record falls short of these expectations. Despite assurances that the MIC would operate with full transparency, its operations remained shrouded in secrecy, with officials often citing confidentiality clauses as a reason for non-disclosure. This lack of openness is not only counter-productive but also fundamentally undemocratic. The public deserves to know how their resources are being used, especially when those resources are being deployed to support private enterprises.

The principle of burden sharing must underpin any bailout of private enterprises using public funds. It is unacceptable for governments to socialize losses while allowing profits to remain privatized. If public money is used to save a company, that company should be required to make sacrifices and demonstrate accountability to the public. This approach not only ensures the fair use of funds but also helps to maintain public trust and support for government interventions. In an earlier interview to this paper during the time the MSM was at the helm, Rajiv Servansing outlined a framework for conditionalities that should govern the allocation of public funds to private enterprises. His suggestions included requiring companies that previously distributed substantial dividends to shareholders to call on those shareholders for recapitalization before seeking state aid. He also argued that companies receiving soft loans or other financial support from the state should suspend dividend payouts until those obligations have been fully repaid. Additionally, the state should have the right to convert part of its financial assistance into equity stakes in these companies, ensuring that public funds are not only a temporary lifeline but also a long-term investment in the nation's economic future. Rajiv Servansing further recommended prohibiting share buybacks and involuntary redundancies for as long as companies remain indebted to the state. These conditions represent a balanced and fair approach to ensuring that public funds are used responsibly and to the benefit of the entire population.

Despite these compelling arguments, it would seem the MIC has failed to adopt or enforce such rigorous conditionalities. The lack of transparency surrounding its operations exacerbates concerns about its effectiveness and fairness. Dr Rama Sithanen, the current Governor of the Bank of Mauritius, recently disclosed that Rs 56.8 billion of the MIC's funds had been disbursed to 60 companies as of September 2024, with Rs 23.6 billion still available. While this disclosure provides some insight, it raises further questions about the evaluation criteria used to select recipients, the mechanisms for monitoring the use of funds, and the MIC's capacity to recover its investments.

Moreover, the argument that confidentiality clauses prevent the disclosure of information about the MIC's operations is both unconvincing and troubling. The

2023 Annual Report



MIC Mauritius Investment Corporation
Securing our Future

assessment of its performance. Such an audit should evaluate not only the financial returns on the MIC's investments but also their broader economic and social impact. For example, did the MIC's interventions succeed in saving jobs and stabilizing key sectors of the economy? Were funds allocated equitably and based on transparent criteria? What expertise did they call on to evaluate assets, equity or lands bartered for public funds? Have some of those company majors returned to healthy profitability post-MIC intervention and how much have they reimbursed of the outlays? These are some of the questions that must be answered to assess the MIC's effectiveness and justify its continued operation.

In conclusion, the MIC's operations must undergo substantial reforms to uphold transparency, accountability, and alignment with the public interest. Citizens must be kept informed about how their re-sources are being used and the rationale behind key decisions.

This requires proactive communication from government officials and the MIC. When citizens are informed and engaged, they are more likely to support government initiatives and less likely to succumb to suspicion or misinformation.

The government and the MIC therefore bear a moral and democratic obligation to clearly disclose how public funds have been utilized and whether strict conditions governed their allocation. Only such measures can restore public trust. The new government, elected on a platform of openness and transparency, must ensure that the opacity surrounding public fund disbursements in mega-projects like Metro, Safe City and Air Mauritius Holdings Ltd becomes a relic of the past.

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Gouvernance économique

La MIC, une société privée opérant avec des fonds publics

Le contrat entre la MIC et ses clients est une forme juridique qui n'enlève rien à la nécessité de veiller à ce que les transactions soient légales et transparentes, et qu'il y ait des poursuites en cas de maldonne

La conférence de presse du gouverneur de la Banque de Maurice, Rama Sithanen, sur la gestion de la Mauritius Investment Corporation (MIC), une filiale de la banque, a éclairci certaines zones d'ombre sur cette entité, mais elle n'a pas résolu tout le mystère qui entoure ses opérations. Elle soulève plus de questions que de réponses sur une société dite privée mais tirant son capital de fonds publics fournis par la Banque centrale. Voilà un modèle d'antinomie économique que l'ancien gouvernement a légué au pays comme un symbole de sa mauvaise gouvernance généralisée.

Pour mieux comprendre cette problématique, il faut d'abord situer le contexte historique de la MIC et examiner son bilan à ce jour avant de traiter les questions fondamentales qu'elle soulève en termes de structure institutionnelle, d'éthique des affaires et de gestion des risques financiers.

Contexte historique

La MIC est une société d'investissement qui est une filiale détenue à part entière par une société mère (Banque centrale). Elle fut créée en mai 2020 avec un capital de Rs 81 milliards pour venir en aide (par voie de prêts, d'obligations d'entreprise ou d'achat d'actions) à des compagnies privées en mal de fonds de roulement durant la pandémie de la Covid-19. Dès la création de la MIC, nous avions anticipé un problème de gouvernance institutionnelle découlant des relations entre parties liées (une société mère et sa filiale) agissant sous le contrôle du gouvernement, ce qui impliquait un manque de transparence dans les affaires et des décisions d'investissement dictées par la politique plutôt que par l'impératif économique.

Dans un article sous le titre "MIC: un changement de vocation pour la Banque centrale", paru dans l'édition du 26 mai 2020 de ce journal, j'avais souligné le fait anormal que la Banque centrale se départait de son rôle exclusif de régulateur de la politique monétaire pour devenir un opérateur économique (investisseur). D'ailleurs, le FMI aussi a critiqué ces deux rôles antinomiques en demandant à la Banque centrale de transférer la MIC à une société d'investissement de l'État. Les légistes débattront de la question de savoir si le rôle de régulateur-opérateur n'est pas ultra



“Ce qui est encore plus anormal, c’est le fait que la Banque centrale, un organisme public, ait créé une société d’investissement privée sous la Loi des Compagnies (*The Companies Act*) tout en la dotant d’un capital provenant de fonds publics. Le subterfuge est évident: il s’agissait pour le gouvernement à l’époque de soustraire la MIC du contrôle du Parlement et, partant, de la surveillance du Bureau national de l’Audit (*National Audit Office*), en lui conférant un statut privé. Un subterfuge semblable a été utilisé pour mettre des entreprises commerciales contrôlées par l’Etat (notamment Airport Holdings Ltd et SBM) à l’abri de toute question parlementaire en arguant du secret (de la confidentialité) des opérations commerciales...”

vires à la loi constitutive de la Banque centrale.

Ce qui est encore plus anormal, c'est le fait que la Banque centrale, un organisme public, ait créé une société d'investissement privée sous la Loi des Compagnies (*The Companies Act*) tout en la dotant d'un capital provenant de fonds publics. Le subterfuge est évident: il s'agissait pour le gouvernement à l'époque de soustraire la MIC du contrôle du Parlement et, partant, de la surveillance du Bureau national de l'Audit (*National Audit Office*), en lui conférant un statut privé. Un subterfuge semblable a été utilisé pour mettre des entreprises commerciales contrôlées par l'Etat (notamment Airport Holdings Ltd et SBM) à l'abri de toute question parlementaire en arguant du secret (de la confidentialité) des opérations commerciales.

L'Etat est l'actionnaire majoritaire dans ces entreprises mais refuse de rendre compte de leurs actions au Parlement. Pour sa part, la MIC rend compte à un conseil d'administration nommé par la Banque centrale, sur lequel le gouverne-

ment exerce un contrôle de facto. L'Etat-mère traite la Banque centrale comme une filiale qui, elle, possède la MIC comme une filiale.

Bilan passif

Globalement, la MIC a un bilan légèrement positif à ce jour du point de vue comptable. Pour l'année financière se terminant le 30 juin 2024, elle a fait des bénéfices de Rs 400 millions (contre Rs 212 millions pour l'année précédente) et elle a des actifs de Rs 82,8 milliards (le capital de Rs 81 milliards converti en investissements plus des bénéfices accrus).

Cependant, des questions se posent sur la capacité de la MIC de recouvrer les fonds qu'elle a déboursés à des compagnies dans les années à venir sous forme d'obligations remboursables (*redeemable debentures*). Le tableau 1 indique que sur Rs 81 milliards de fonds disponibles, Rs 56,8 milliards furent investis au 30 septembre 2024 dans 60 entreprises et Rs 23,6 milliards n'avaient pas été encore déboursés.

Table 1: MIC Investment as of Sep 30, 2024

Sector	Investees	Rs Million	Share
Accommodation/Food Service	29	17,820	31.35%
Manufacturing	9	3,165	5.57%
Arts Entertainment	2	225	0.40%
Real Estate	3	1,015	1.79%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	4	8,228	14.48%
Construction	3	415	0.73%
Others	10	25,966	45.69%
Sub-total	60	56,834	100.00%
Funds not disbursed		23,600	
Total of funds		80,434	

Les investissements de la MIC ont été faits sous forme de prise de participation au capital d'entreprise par l'achat d'actions, d'obligations remboursables et d'achat de biens (immeubles/terres). Le tableau 2 donne la répartition des investissements par type d'instrument financier. Selon un communiqué de la MIC, au 30 septembre 2024, Rs 535 millions d'obligations ont été remboursées entre juin 2020 et septembre 2024.

On note que Rs 25 milliards ont été investis dans l'actionnariat d'Airport Holdings Ltd (AHL), soit 49% de son capital. Si la MIC devait vendre les actions d'entreprise qu'elle a achetées ou si elle devait récupérer les obligations remboursables, l'évaluation de ces instruments porterait un risque de pertes compte tenu de la valeur de marché actuelle des actions et des obligations, comparée à leur valeur nominale. La MIC pourrait-elle vendre 49% du capital d'AHL sans fragiliser davantage Air Mauritius, sa filiale principale, qui fait des pertes?

Table 2: Investment types as of Sep 30, 2024

Type	Rs Billion	Share
Equity in AHL	25.00	31%
Debentures	21.87	27%
Land	7.80	10%
Equity	2.43	3%
Uncommitted Funds	23.60	29%
Total	80.70	100%

The Scandals Being Unearthed: What Now?

Jan Arden

Many incoming ministers will likely uncover the extent of the suspected murky realities left behind by their predecessors, their advisors, and higher-level administrative cadres. They may require time to sift through the situation and distinguish the wheat from the chaff. This challenge is especially pronounced at the Ministry of Finance (MOF), a portfolio held by the Prime Minister himself. Supported by Junior Minister Damry and a team of professionals at the PMO, the Ministry produced the much-anticipated *State of the Economy* report last Friday. This report serves as an absolutely essential prerequisite to evaluating the options, modalities, and potential impacts of the government's iconic campaign pledges.

Meantime, the new BoM Governor Rama Sithanen and his deputies have been busy assessing thoroughly the nexus between the former MOF, the nominees at the BoM and other regulatory bodies (FSC) which have resulted in easy printing of helicopter monies to the tune of billions and the transformation of the Central Bank into an excitedly eager player in the business sector through the MIC. An informed analysis of these documents — shocking in the duplicities they reveal on many fronts — is best left to professionals here and elsewhere. However, a few critical questions must be raised from the perspective of the 62% of voters who cast their hopes for Change against a formidable opponent and its diverse allies.

Will the defaulters, scammers and corrupt be vigorous-



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ly taken to task in the appropriate setting of formal charges in courts of law and justice seen to be done, however powerful, well-connected or wealthy the active and passive proponents of defrauding the public purse?

Will a legal/constitutional team be tasked with recommending all necessary amendments so that such blatant abuses by a close-knit coterie, working in concert, cannot ever take the country hostage again?

How could the observed derailments occur under the

nose, eyes and guardianship of our elite higher cadres of the civil service — once a source of national pride? How do we establish safer mechanisms to protect civil servants who offer their best advice rather than yielding to external pressures like bending willows in a storm? What tangible value have these cadres brought to Boards and parastatals, particularly the lucrative ones that consistently attract a rush of nominations from the top echelons? Shouldn't allowances be capped or pooled for annual distribution among these leaders, thereby significantly curbing the indecent scramble for such positions?

Our audit process, which needs to be strengthened, is unfortunately an after-the-fact mechanism that reports dismally on the billions of public funds wasted, with little or no action taken against the blatant culprits. Should it evolve into a branch with the primary mandate of supervising, monitoring, and raising alarm bells when significant deviations occur,

such as the cancellation of public tenders?

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An Education Roadmap

Education has been a disaster running on steroids since 2016 and the forceful introduction of the Nine Year Schooling reform. Let's see some of the key elements.

Engulfing some Rs 21 billion or nearly 9.5% of the national budget, the system, despite all the hard work put in by thousands of dedicated teaching and support personnel, is a fiasco at both ends of the spectrum. Some 3-5% of the academically-minded will emerge through years of continuous competition to reach University studies. That is simply an unacceptably low figure. As for those without the family support and a bent or interest in academic studies but certainly with a variety of other untapped skills and talents, some 35% are ejected as failures after nine years of academic schooling and, according to pedagogues, 50% without basic literacy and numeracy. That is equally unacceptable.

As for the notorious Extended Stream, designed for those found at the bottom of the academic scale after six years, it predictably failed to deliver any meaningful results. It is a structural failure that no amount of well-intentioned plastering can correct. We won't bore readers with the familiar stories of education output mismatch, nor of the demoralisation of teachers treated by circular notices, nor of the PSEA's absurdities, nor again of institutions closed for fear of rainy patches and overflowing drains, nor of the increasing trends of school-yard bullying or rowdy indiscipline that the new Minister of Education has inherited. A sad and sorry plight indeed.

To his credit, Mahend Gungapersad has been demonstrating tremendous energies on the education to secondary sector front, through a series of meetings and consultations with all interested parties, public and private, trade unions,

stakeholders and institutions under his aegis. As a past rector, he would appreciate fully the need for key staff at IVTB House to ensure that the «rentrée scolaire» at pre-primary and primary goes through with minimum hitches. From text-books, teacher and head teacher availabilities, subject matter concerns, admissions procedures and processes to preparedness for heavy rains or cyclonic conditions, each and every level of responsibility must accept and share the overriding concern for educating our children in the best conditions with current resources.

Several well-received measures have been announced and some already implemented, including marching orders for the previous PSEA director and the previous Minister's coterie of NYS advisors, an immediate end of the *fiat* that excluded 3-credit holders to pursue their HSC, while assuring stakeholders of his attachment to delivering high standards in learning. The Extended program will be abolished with transition measures for the coming year and mobiles will be prohibited during class-hours.

Where the Minister needs some more time with his key team of advisors is to consider a revamp and removal of the unnecessary exam and competitive pressures generated by the NCE and the intelligent replacement of the Extended Stream. In practice, that means developing a more open, more inclusive and more equitable education system, that delivers quality academic teaching and numbers to tertiary, while providing an intelligent pathway for the non-academically minded not to be branded as «failures» as they pursue their personal development and their unrecognised talents.

While the announcement of an *Assises* for Education in April is most welcome, these events often focus on countless important details without providing a clear roadmap for



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the future. The saying that 'a camel is a horse designed by a committee,' especially a large one, must be kept in mind. However, the Minister's earnest efforts in education deserve to succeed, and even those administrative cadres associated with the NYS need to tag along.

With all the attention focused on education, the Human Resource responsibilities also under the Minister's purview, have received less attention but clearly there is scope here to rationalise and optimise the sector with fresh eyes and energies.



David Snoxell

Chagos Treaty: A Good Deal for the UK and Mauritius Despite Delays

It should be possible for the treaty to be agreed by Parliament in time for both parties to sign it before President Biden leaves office on 20 January

There have been unexpected delays to concluding a UK/Mauritius treaty on Chagos.

One was the decision by Prime Minister Ramgoolam to review the agreement which Mauritius and the UK made public in a joint statement on 3 October, just before the election timetable was announced. This should not have been a surprise since the PM had not seen the agreement before the election, so wanted time to consider its details. We await the recommendations of the review he commissioned on 29 November.

Given that Dr Ramgoolam and his legal adviser Philippe Sands were the architects of the litigation which led to the 2017 ICJ Advisory Opinion and the UNGA resolution which endorsed it, one would expect the Prime Minister to want to take forward the agreement with any improvements that both sides have agreed for the treaty. It will then be signed by both parties and go to the UK Parliament for discussion. As primary legislation concerning the legal status of Diego Garcia and the winding up of a former colony is required the treaty may not be ratified until 2026.

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Another issue has been the opposition in the British Parliament and media to returning the Archipelago to Mauritius on the grounds that it would weaken the western alliance and security of the joint UK/US base by enabling China to establish itself in the Archipelago under Mauritian sovereignty. This anti-China fear mongering is a specious argument but has appeal for those who don't want what they regard as British



Pic -apnews.com

“The agreement is a skilful compromise between the different interests of the UK, US and Mauritius. Without it Chagossians will continue to be prevented from resettling, the US base will lack security and legitimacy, the decolonisation of Mauritius will remain incomplete and Britain in violation of international law. After 60 years, acknowledging Mauritian sovereignty and returning the archipelago to its rightful owner is a courageous foreign and defence policy achievement of Conservative and Labour governments...”

territory to be “surrendered.”

A further argument used against the agreement is that the Chagossians do not want Mauritius to get control of their islands. They want the Archipelago to remain British. Some Chagossians in the UK and politicians are calling for a referendum of all Chagossians to decide on this issue. Those who deploy this line conveniently ignore the fact that the majority of Chagossians live in Mauritius and support the agreement restoring sovereignty to Mauritius, as the only means by which they will be allowed to return and resettle in the islands. A referendum that included Chagossians in Mauritius would result in a majority for the agreement. In any case in international law a referendum would apply to the entire population of Mauritius including Chagossians.

An editorial in *The Times* on 2 December deployed all these arguments and more, alleging that Dr Ramgoolam denounced the proposed agreement as ‘high treason’. Nothing could be further from the truth. In a letter on 3 December to *The Times* I wrote:

“I disagree with your editorial's opposition to the Chagos agreement (‘Crown Jewel’, Dec 2). Negotiations with Mauritius were initiated by the British government and were announced in parliament on November 3, 2022, by the foreign secretary, James Cleverly. Although considerable progress was made by two Conservative govern-

ments it was the present government that reached an agreement widely supported by MPs. After two years and 13 sessions, this is hardly ‘indecent haste’ [as you describe it]. The agreement is soundly based in international law, mirroring Britain's position on Ukraine. It provides long-term security for the UK/US base, which reflects Donald Trump's ‘America first’ policy, enables Chagossians to return to their islands and ensures that Mauritius remains in the western alliance.

The agreement is a skilful compromise between the different interests of the UK, US and Mauritius. Without it Chagossians will continue to be prevented from resettling, the US base will lack security and legitimacy, the decolonisation of Mauritius will remain incomplete and Britain in violation of international law. After 60 years, acknowledging Mauritian sovereignty and returning the archipelago to its rightful owner is a courageous foreign and defence policy achievement of Conservative and Labour governments.”

As Stephen Doughty, Foreign Office Minister responsible for the negotiations stated in a recent answer to a Parliamentary Question from the shadow Foreign Secretary:

“This agreement is in the shared interests of both Mauritius and the UK, including by ensuring the long-term and effective operation of the joint UK-US base on Diego

Garcia. It has been welcomed by our mutual partners the US and India and opens a new era of security and economic cooperation. We look forward to working with the new Mauritian Government to finalise the Treaty and will update the House in due course on timelines for signature and laying of the Treaty following the usual process.”

The Chagos Islands All-Party Parliamentary Group met on 10 December and continues to support the agreement. Members are meeting Mr Doughty on 18 December to discuss the process for ratification and to explore the potential for resettlement on Diego Garcia.

A letter to *The Times* of 6 December from Richard Gifford, Solicitor to the Chagos Refugees Group commented:

“Your editorial ‘Crown Jewel’ declares the UK/Mauritius agreement to recognise Mauritian sovereignty of Chagos to be ‘de-meaning and unwelcome to the original island inhabitants evicted by the British in the late 1960s and dumped on Mauritius.’ You further assert: ‘Britain has now denied them a homeland again by giving [Chagos] away to a distant island with no valid historical claim.’

There is no such ‘denial’. Mauritius has consistently undertaken to resettle Chagossians (all citizens of Mauritius) who wish to return. Further, it is inconceivable that the prime minister of Mauritius, Dr Ramgoolam, will reject the deal given that he initiated the legal claim to sovereignty of Chagos when he took the UK to a UN Tribunal in 2010 claiming that the UK was ‘not a coastal state’ in Chagos. He succeeded, leading to the International Court of Justice's binding decision that Chagos was and remained part of Mauritius.

Objections from Chagossians come from those who have settled in Britain and have lost interest in Mauritius. The majority of Chagossians remain in Mauritius and have welcomed the agreement as the only means of restoring their right of return.”

Assuming there is no further delay it should be possible for the treaty to be agreed by Parliament in time for both parties to sign it before President Biden leaves office on 20 January. A treaty will enhance and enrich the UK/Mauritius bilateral relationship and provide a means of greater cooperation and partnership between our two countries which have an historic relationship going back 225 years.

David Snoxell has been Coordinator of the Chagos Islands (BIOT) APPG since 2008. He was British High Commissioner to Mauritius, 2000-04, and Deputy Commissioner of the BIOT, 1995-7



Vinaye
Ancharaz

The State of the Economy and Road Ahead

The government faces the Herculean task of stimulating the economy and consolidating the financial situation while delivering on its electoral promises. This should be feasible if the pledges are toned down

There have been rumours, and some anecdotal evidence, that the MSM government had tampered with macroeconomic indicators to make the economic situation look better than it was. I have always decried such manipulation of economic data in my numerous radio and newspaper interviews, the latest being the previous edition of *Mauritius Times* last Friday.

Upon assuming office, the Alliance du Changement government undertook an audit of public finances and an objective situational analysis of the economy. The report on the state of the economy was tabled in Parliament last Tuesday, sparking extensive discussion both inside and outside the House. In short, the report makes several damning revelations, confirming what many had feared until now: the economic boom that the former Minister of Finance alluded to in his press conference just days before the general election is a mere statistical illusion. Together with the findings on the MIC, the report paints a rather bleak picture of the current state of economic affairs and exposes numerous sectoral and structural challenges.

1. Key findings

GDP and economic growth

GDP growth is the most significant indicator of the economic health of a country and, unsurprisingly, this variable took center-stage in the report. I have repeatedly said that the GDP growth figures churned out by the MSM government since 2020 were inflated by miscalculations of GDP. The report suggests that growth rates were exaggerated across several sectors, most notably in construction, where the sectoral growth



“Metro Express Ltd will need some Rs1.2 billion annually as from financial year 2026-27 for capital and interest payments on loans amounting to Rs16 billion. One wonders where this sum would come from, given that the company has accumulated heavy losses since it came into operation. Another case is the STC's Price Stabilization Account (PSA), which currently shows a deficit of Rs3.4 billion, casting doubt on the government's ability to cut petrol prices in any meaningful way. Finally, the report confirms the financial mess in which the national airline finds itself. With negative equity to the tune of Rs 10.4 billion, Air Mauritius is deemed insolvent...”

rate for 2024 was revised from 38.8% down to 25%. Consequently, the growth rate for 2024 is estimated to be 5.1%, much lower than the forecast of 6.5%.

As an economist, I have always trusted the IMF more than Statistics Mauritius, which unfortunately had become an agency of the Ministry of Finance under the MSM government. In its April 2024 report, the IMF projected a GDP growth rate of 4.9% for 2024, which isn't far from the updated estimate of 5.1%.

The IMF also revealed, and the State of the Economy report confirms, that, in USD terms, nominal GDP in 2023 was no different from GDP in 2019 prior to the pandemic. In real terms, it was lower. This suggests that the Mauritian economy has just come out of the hole it had slipped into when the economy contracted by a massive 14.5% in 2020.

And yet, during this time, the MSM government behaved as if the economy was going full throttle: the national minimum wage, set at Rs8,500 in January 2018, was raised to Rs 16,500, prompting a salary re-alignment that further added to the financial burden of already-distressed enterprises; the basic retirement pension increased from Rs 9,000 in December 2019 to Rs14,500 most recently; and CSG revenue has been squandered in income allowances of all sorts. In fact, the report shows that the payment of pensions accounted for the biggest chunk of the increase in government debt in the last ten years, that is, Rs

101 billion out of Rs 275 billion, or 37%.

Investment and trade

The report confirms the long-term decline in the domestic investment rate – from an average 21.9% before 2014 to 18.5% during 2015-2023. If public investment in the tramway is excluded, the investment rate would be even lower, suggesting some crowding out of private investment.

Exports too have declined in volume terms, suggesting that the uptick in the value of merchandise exports since 2020 that Dr Padayachy proudly showcased as an unmistakable sign of economic progress is, in fact, largely a price effect due to the depreciation of the rupee. With investment and exports down, consumption has been the engine of growth in recent years. This is unsustainable, more so since over 70% of the foreign direct investment (FDI) in recent years has flowed into property development, depriving the manufacturing sector of a critically needed lifeline and perpetuating food security as an elusive concept.

Monetary policy

The most shocking revelation of chapter 3 of the report (on monetary policy) is that the MIC was created entirely with helicopter money! In fact, the capital injection of USD 2 billion (equivalent to Rs 81 billion) out of the central bank's reserves never took place. The transaction was simply an accounting gimmick that amounted to BoM printing Rs 81 billion. This brings the total amount of printed money to Rs 154 billion (including Rs 18 billion to pay pension-related debt in January 2020 and Rs 55 billion given as a one-off grant to the government in July 2020).

No wonder this massive spurt of liquidity into the economy provoked a long-term decline of the rupee. The rupee has depreciated by 46% vis-à-vis the US dollar since the MSM government took office in December 2014. That means you need about twice as many rupees to buy a dollar today than you did in December 2014. The impact on inflation has been huge.

Inflation is on a downward trend, falling from a peak of 10.8% in 2022 to an estimated 3.7% by the end of this year, and bottoming out at 3.5% in the near future according to the IMF. However, lower inflation should not be mistaken for falling prices! First, the low inflation rate is due to the so-called base effect (that is, the inflation rate is calculated on a higher price level). More important, it means that prices will keep rising, albeit at a slower rate. Finally, inflation has become systemic: it is here to stay. The report tracks the increase in price of several consumer products between October 2019 and October 2024, showing that, for many commodities, the price hike has been substantial.

“It is difficult to ascertain the cost of the 14th month bonus in the absence of specific details about its form. Assuming that the bonus is capped at Rs 50,000, a ballpark estimate of the total cost is Rs 8.5 billion, of which some Rs 6.5 billion will fall on the private sector. The MSM government borrowed Rs 101 billion over the past 10 years to implement its promise of a pension hike to Rs 13,500. The new government also could borrow to pay the 14th month bonus, assuming that this is a one-off perk to employees and that, by stimulating the economy and boosting government tax revenue, it would prove partly self-financing...”

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Labour market

The unemployment rate, although low at 6.3% in 2023, is difficult to reconcile with the prevailing situation of labour shortage across a wide range of sectors, notably agriculture and retail trade. It is a sign of a systemic skills mismatch, which has gone on unaddressed. This skills mismatch is reflected in a high number of skills-related underemployed, that is, people who are overqualified in their current job. There is also some degree of 'time-related underemployment', that is, having time available for extra work.

The true rate of unemployment, adjusting for labour underutilization, works out to 23.2% in 2023, hardly a cause for celebration. Moreover, youth unemployment (17.8% among those aged 16-24) and unemployment among women (8.5% as of September 2024) remain high while female activity rate (the share of women of working age who are employed or looking for a job), at 47.5%, is well below the average in industrialized countries (67%).

Budget deficit and public debt

The budget deficit in recent years has been significantly underestimated. For example, the updated budget deficit for the financial year 2023-24 turned out to be 5.7% of GDP, significantly higher than the 3.9% announced in the Budget. The outlook for 2024-25 is not very positive either, with the budget deficit projected at 6.7% of GDP, compared to initial estimates of 3.4%. This is due to a combination of revenue shortfall and expenditure overruns.

Higher budget deficits imply increased government borrowing requirements and higher debt. The public sector debt has more than doubled over the past 10 years. As a share of GDP, the national debt stood at 83.4% in June 2024, higher than the estimated 76.5%, and is projected to edge up to 84.5% at the end of the current financial year. Significantly, the debt-GDP ratio has remained above the statutory ceiling of 80% since 2019-20 – a testimony to the MSM government's appalling fiscal management.

Contingent liabilities

Many public entities are steeped in debt and continue to incur massive deficits.

Metro Express Ltd. will need some Rs1.2 billion annually as from financial year 2026-27 for capital and interest payments on loans amounting to Rs16 billion. One wonders where this sum would come from, given that the company has accumulated heavy losses since it came into operation.

“In its April 2024 report, the IMF projected a GDP growth rate of 4.9% for 2024, which isn't far from the updated estimate of 5.1%. The IMF also revealed, and the State of the Economy report confirms, that, in USD terms, nominal GDP in 2023 was no different from GDP in 2019 prior to the pandemic. In real terms, it was lower. This suggests that the Mauritian economy has just come out of the hole it had slipped into when the economy contracted by a massive 14.5% in 2020. And yet, during this time, the MSM government behaved as if the economy was going full throttle: the national minimum wage, set at Rs8,500 in January 2018, was raised to Rs 16,500, prompting a salary re-alignment that further added to the financial burden of already-distressed enterprises...”

The State of the Economy and Road Ahead



“Other than a matter of national pride, having a national airline is undeniably a must for a country that thrives on its vocation as a tourist destination. The State of the Economy report reveals – perhaps unsurprisingly, but shockingly nonetheless – that Air Mauritius is insolvent and needs a significant capital injection to keep it afloat. At least Rs10.4 billion is needed to recapitalize the company. A restructuring plan may require additional financing. I believe the government is incapable of mobilizing such funds in the immediate term. Hence, strategic partnerships to save MK should be high on the government's agenda....”

Another case is the STC's Price Stabilization Account (PSA), which currently shows a deficit of Rs 3.4 billion, casting doubt on the government's ability to cut petrol prices in any meaningful way. Finally, the report confirms the financial mess in which the national airline finds itself. With negative equity to the tune of Rs 10.4 billion, Air Mauritius is deemed insolvent.

2. Constraints and challenges

The second part of the report takes stock of the challenges to the long-term growth of the Mauritian economy. Many of these constraints (such as growing labour shortages, rising production costs and stagnating productivity) are structural and cut across sectors. There are also various sector-specific challenges facing traditional and emerging sectors (such as digital services, biotechnology and renewable energy).

Moreover, Mauritius is heavily dependent on imported fossil fuel-based energy, which weighs substantially on the balance of payments and hinders the green energy transition. The country has committed to reducing its carbon emissions by 40%, increasing the share of renewable energy in its energy mix to 60%, and phasing out coal by 2030. With six years to go, these targets seem out of reach. Mauritius also needs to mobilize Rs 300 billion to implement its climate-related commitments, 70% of which for climate change adaptation purposes.

The report concludes with a critical review of pressing social issues in the educational and health sectors as well as the ageing population, which has major social and economic implications.

3. What next?

The report has led to speculation on the government's ability to make good on its immediate electoral promises, notably reducing petrol prices and granting

the 14th month bonus. The deficit in the Price Stabilization Account limits the quantum of petrol price cuts that the government can afford to implement. On the other hand, government finances are running low, with higher projected budget deficits and hardly any cash left in special funds. Moreover, slashing taxes to reduce petrol prices is at variance with the 14th month bonus proposal. Cutting taxes will further squeeze public finances while paying the additional bonus will require billions in additional funding.

Fulfilling the promise of lower petrol prices and a 14th month bonus

I believe that the government will fulfill its promises. However, the people should not expect too much. According to rumours, petrol prices may fall by Rs 5 to Rs 10. This is reasonable and financially prudent. Even if well below public expectation, a price cut in this range will make some impact, and by stimulating economic activity, it may allow the government to retrieve part of the foregone tax revenue.

Implementing the 14th month bonus proposal may prove to be trickier, more for its legal than financial implications. One would recall that the salary realignment that was unilaterally decided by the MSM government and imposed on all employers in September 2024 led to a backlash by the private sector, with Business Mauritius asking the courts for a judicial review of the regulation. The 14th month bonus could provoke a similar reaction. This has led many to wonder if the government would pay the additional-month bonus on behalf of all employers, except those with deep pockets. In that case, a related question is whether the measure will apply to all employees.

If the aim is to provide some relief from the high and rising cost of living, then it is likely that the proposal, just like annual salary compensations, should target the most impacted, namely the poor.

Dr Vinay Ancharaz

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The Education Debate

Ms Nita Chicooree-Mercier's article on Education last week highlights some important deficiencies in our education system. May I add a few observations of my own. The over-riding aspect of our education is the poor quality of education dispensed by government-funded teaching institutions, and the consequential reliance of Mauritian parents on private tuition, usually dispensed by teachers of these same government-funded institutions. What seems to be lacking is a code of ethics for teachers, on the lines of the Hippocratic Oath. Far too often we hear the complaint that a child has been neglected in class because he or she does not attend the teacher's private after-hour classes.

The national education policies of the country seem to be dictated by the views of the mainstream press. Their opinions and taunts must be set aside. They yet have to learn that not every Mauritian is like Raoul Rivet, Marcel Cabon or Pierre Renaud, Paul Domingue or Robert d'Unienville, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam or Sookdeo Bissoondoyal, that not every Frenchman is like Evariste Galois or Voltaire, not every Englishman is like Isaac Newton or William Shakespeare, not every American is like Benjamin Franklin or Ernest Hemingway, not every African is like Leopold Sedar Senghor or Nelson Mandela, and not every Indian is like Mahatma Gandhi or Srinivas Ramanujan (if they have heard of him). You can take a horse to water, but there is no point in trying to make him drink if he does not want to. Putting children of all abilities in the same teaching class is a waste of national resources – wasting the time of able children and wasting the efforts of the teachers. Some setting and streaming is a must.

Some Government policies may also be responsible. I have compiled the performance of our students at the Cambridge SC examinations in English, French and Mathematics for the years 2012 and 2023, grouping together those



“On the question of the number of Credits for the right to sit for the Higher School Certificate, I think it should be up to the Examining Body to set the standards, and not the Government. Any citizen should have the right to sit for any exam if he or she meets the requirements of the Examining Body, including the payment of the fees for the purpose. This nonsense of the government paying the exam fees of all students should be done away with; it is another of the freebies dished out for vote-catching purposes. Indigent parents may be offered loans under some assistance scheme...”

who have scored a Credit 4 or better. The results are set out in the table: **‘Performance of Mauritian students at Cambridge SC Exams’**. In each of English and Maths there are two options: I have combined the data from the two options in both cases to get an overall picture. These results show some decline in performance in English (7.16%) and Mathematics (14.39%), but a whopping decline of 38.29% in French.

In my time (that's sixty to seventy-five years ago), French used to be the easiest subject, and most students used to score “Very Good” in it, under the system of scoring then in force. Now it appears to have become the most difficult. This in my view a direct consequence of the introduction of the phonetic system of spelling introduced into our classes

under the name of “Kreol”. All Hindu socio-cultural organizations had met at the Hindu Maha Sabha HQ and petitioned the government against the adoption of the system, calling for a French-

based system. No attention was paid to our petition. It would seem that some people in positions of authority were dazzled by the information that the proposers of the system were specialists in **phonetics** (My God! What extraordinary people!). Little did they know that the science of phonetics was born in India 3000 years ago and that the progenitors were Sanskrit scholars.

Even at this belated hour I would like to refer them to two books by western scholars: 1) “Phonetics in Ancient India” by W. Sidney Allen (OUP) – he has also written books for the general reader on Latin and Greek, and 2) “Modern Linguistics in Ancient India” by John J. Lowe, (CUP) – he is Associate Professor of Sanskrit at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Oxford.

We also pointed out the shortcomings of the script – which may be good for the West Indies but which falls short of the expectations of the majority of Creole speakers in this country. The government is caught in a web of its own making.

On the question of the number of Credits for the right to sit for the Higher School Certificate, I think it should be up to the Examining Body to set the standards, and not the Government. Any citizen should have the right to sit for any exam if he or she meets the requirements of the Examining Body, including the payment of the fees for the purpose. This nonsense of the government paying the exam fees of all students should be done away with; it is another of the freebies dished out for vote-catching purposes. Indigent parents may be offered loans under some assistance scheme.

Performance of Mauritian students at Cambridge SC Exams in 2012 and 2023 compared

(Compiled from online MES SC Statistics)

Subject	2012			2023			Decline
	Total Examinees	Total Scoring Credits 1-4	% Success Rate	Total Examinees	Total Scoring Credits 1-4	% Success Rate	
English (both syllabi combined)	16900	4294	25.41%	14800	3492	23.59%	7.16%
French	16895	7849	46.46%	14831	4252	28.67%	38.29%
Mathematics (both A & D combined)	16813	4626	27.51%	14709	3464	23.55%	14.39%

About Pensions and Pensioners

Dr Vinaye Ancharaz's Interview in last week's MT was most instructive and interesting; so also, was the editorial “Audit and the Road Ahead.” Even so, I would like to bring up one or two points which has been irking me for some time.

What used to be called “Old Age Pension” (OAP) is now being called “Basic Retirement Pension” (BRP). A large proportion of the recipients of this pension have never been in regular employment and/or have never “retired” from household work. I am not grudging the

fact that they receive this assistance from the government, but under no circumstances can what they get be equated to the Pension that workers who contribute to a Pension Fund or a Savings Fund receive following their retirement or their temporary or permanent incapacitation.

The outgoing government was thoroughly confused about the purpose and management of the NPF and the NSF. They behaved as if these funds were their own money and could dispose of them as they liked.

These funds belong to the workers who have contributed towards them, albeit with some assistance from their employers, and the government has absolutely no right to touch them. They should have been invested and managed as all pension Funds around the world are. Technically, the payments to the concerned pensioners should come out of the profits earned by the Fund and should not be a load on the taxpayer.

Furthermore, workers in need of assistance should not have to call on Social Welfare offices to get the assistance they need.

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About Pensions and Pensioners

Cont. from page 8

How can a disbursement by a Pensioner's Fund be called Government charity? Besides, one hears heart-rending stories about the treatment of workers applying for assistance, unless they happen to belong to a group affiliated in some manner to the official concerned. The Workers' Pension Fund should have its own employees and its own team of doctors.

The case of Civil Service retirees (of which I am one) is, in my view, a sad one. After an average of thirty to thirty-five years of service, one becomes a parasite on society. About seventy-five to a hundred years ago, we were a poor community. Every father's ambition in those days was for his child to get a job in the Civil Service or in teaching: the attractions were security of tenure and a pension on retirement. My own father was an example: when I was a child (and used to wash his feet) he would encourage me to sit for the London Matriculation examination and get a job in the Civil Service. The thought of becoming a parasite on society did not bother him or anybody else.

“Every father's ambition in those days was for his child to get a job in the Civil Service or in teaching: the attractions were security of tenure and a pension on retirement...

Times have changed. Every parent wants his or her child to become a professional in some field or other and get on in life without expecting favours from any party – unless he or she happens to be in the good books of what in Mauritius has come the termed as 'Lakwizin'...”

Times have changed. Every parent wants his or her child to become a professional in some field or other and get on in life without expecting favours from any party – unless he or she happens to be in the good books of what in Mauritius has come the termed as “Lakwizin”.

But the Civil Service continues to be a major employer. Well after my retirement from the Civil Service, some government thought up the brilliant idea of establishing a Pension Fund for Civil Servants as well and make token payments to that fund for every civil servant. I have not heard much about that fund lately, and as far as I am aware, my pension comes from the Consolidated Fund, making of me a parasite on society. In this respect, a relative of mine, who is a retiree from Air Mauritius, is much better off – his pension is paid by Swan Insurance Co. Ltd, to which company Air Mauritius pays the monthly pension contributions of its staff, augmented by its own share of these contributions as required by law.

I would urge the Government to make similar arrangements for the payment of pensions to Civil Servants. We don't want to be parasites on society.

Paramanund Soobarah

Analyse

Gouvernance économique

La MIC, une société privée opérant avec des fonds publics

Suite de la page 3

Les informations dévoilées à ce jour révèlent que des fonds de Rs 56,8 milliards ont été déboursés à une large gamme d'entreprises privées, dont certaines méritaient sans doute l'aide consentie alors que d'autres (certains hôtels et constructeurs) paraissent avoir eu accès aux facilités grâce à leur proximité politique. Comment expliquer, par exemple, qu'une école de comptabilité a obtenu Rs 55 millions et qu'une agence de sondage peu fiable a obtenu Rs 45 millions (en dollars)? Est-ce qu'elles obéissaient au critère d'activité économique génératrice d'emplois? S'il y a eu des carences dans l'évaluation des demandes d'aide ou des malversations dans les déboursements de fonds, les autorités devraient faire l'enquête nécessaire afin de déterminer s'il y a eu des fraudes.

En arguant que la confidentialité des transactions bancaires empêche la divulgation des informations appropriées sur les malversations, les autorités semblent vouloir tempérer les attentes concernant des poursuites éventuelles. Or, il s'agit-là de l'usage de fonds publics durant la période de la pandémie.

Confidentialité des transactions

Dans un article du 2 juin 2020 dans ce journal, sous le titre “MIC, a new model of corporate finance that raises more questions than answers”, j'avais fait le commentaire suivant: “Although funding of economic operators by the MIC with the use of equity and quasi-equity instruments is a transaction between the MIC and public/private companies, the MIC's capital is public funds to the extent that it originates from the BOM. Public funds are not only funds raised by government through taxes and borrowings. Since the BOM belongs to the country as a Public Interest Entity, its funds are public, not private. The MIC's provision of equity or quasi-equity funds to third parties will amount to a stimulus package.



“Si l'Etat devait prendre en charge la MIC pour la convertir en une société d'investissement de l'Etat, il pourrait vendre les actions de Rs 25 milliards dans AHL aux investisseurs privés. La vente de 49% du capital d'AHL permettrait à l'Etat de garder le contrôle (51%) de ce conglomérat tout en s'assurant d'avoir un partenaire stratégique privé qui donnerait un nouveau souffle à la gestion d'Air Mauritius. L'Inde a privatisé Air India. Une semi-privatisation d'Air Mauritius ne ferait pas de mal...”

Calling a rose by any other name does not negate the fact that it is a rose.”

Les autorités ont avancé l'argument que la MIC, comme une entité privée, a un devoir de confidentialité en vertu des contrats qui la lient à des clients privés. Soit. Cela n'empêche pas la Banque centrale de référer à la police ou à la FCC des cas suspects de fraude ou de malversation.

Le statut privé d'une entité légale (MIC) est une forme juridique. Il faut considérer l'essentiel, soit la nature des relations ou des transactions. En vertu de la théorie de la substance sur la forme (*Substance Over Form-Theory*) dans la comptabilité et le droit commercial, il faut considérer la réalité économique des relations ou des transactions au-delà de leur forme juridique. Le contrat entre la MIC et ses clients est une forme juridique qui n'enlève rien à la nécessité de veiller à ce que les transactions soient légales et transparentes, qu'elles répondent à des critères raisonnables et objectifs, et qu'il y ait des poursuites en cas de malodonne.

Dans certaines lois, y compris la loi fiscale et la loi sur le blanchiment d'argent (AML-

CFT), il y a des exceptions à la confidentialité des transactions qui permettent aux autorités de faire une demande *ex parte* devant une Cour de justice pour avoir accès aux renseignements confidentiels d'une personne ou d'une entité suspecte de blanchiment d'argent, de fraude ou de toute autre malversation.

Avenir de la MIC

Tôt ou tard, le gouvernement devrait prendre une décision sur une solution institutionnelle alternative à la MIC (comme recommandé par le FMI) pour libérer la Banque centrale du fardeau de sa filiale, dont la perte de valeur de ses investissements plombe le bilan de la banque. Si l'Etat devait prendre en charge la MIC pour la convertir en une société d'investissement de l'Etat, il pourrait vendre les actions de Rs 25 milliards dans AHL aux investisseurs privés. La vente de 49% du capital d'AHL permettrait à l'Etat de garder le contrôle (51%) de ce conglomérat tout en s'assurant d'avoir un partenaire stratégique privé qui donnerait un nouveau souffle à la gestion d'Air Mauritius. L'Inde a privatisé Air India. Une semi-privatisation d'Air Mauritius ne ferait pas de mal...

Prakash Neerohoo



Anil Madan

Inelastic on Plastics

Back in 2022, the OECD, comprising 38 member countries, issued a report estimating that the amount of plastic waste produced globally is on track to almost triple by 2060, with around half ending up in landfill and less than a fifth recycled.

The world consumes somewhere between 450-500 million metric tonnes (500-550 million US tons) of plastics per year. Estimates vary, but roughly less than 10% of plastics are recycled. Over 20 million metric tonnes of plastic waste end up in the environment every year.

Plastic consumption is expected to reach somewhere between 1,200 to 1,300 metric tonnes by 2060. Not surprisingly, growth is expected to be fastest in developing and emerging countries in Africa and Asia, although OECD countries are expected to produce more plastic waste per capita than their non-OECD counterparts.

Based on a 2022 resolution: "End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument", the United Nations Environment Assembly convened an inter-governmental negotiating committee in Busan, Republic of Korea, to begin work on a draft treaty to be completed by the end of 2024. The idea was to develop an international legally binding agreement on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. The document could also include voluntary approaches to address the full life cycle of plastics. Since then, sessions have been held in Uruguay, France, Kenya, Canada, and most recently in South Korea.

Global crisis

Not surprisingly, negotiators in Busan did not reach agreement on a treaty to address the global crisis of plastic pollution. Talks will resume next year. At the most recent meeting, negotiators were at an impasse over whether the treaty should aim to reduce the total amount of plastic production, or control the toxic chemicals used in plastics manufacture, or whether the best approach was to address the problem through waste management.

In his opening remarks, Luis Vayas Valdivieso (Ecuador), Chair of the intergovernmental negotiating committee, said that plastic pollution constituted an urgent and insidious threat to ecosystems, economies and human health. The magnitude of the crisis was evident; without significant intervention, the amount of plastic entering the environment annually by 2040 was expected to nearly double compared to 2022.

Urgent and insidious threats on a grand scale often yield to more parochial interests. So, it was in Busan. Countries and business constituencies championed their perceived interests, here resisting curbs on plastic production, there resisting changes to the chemistry of plastics, and elsewhere promoting the role of waste management. As a result, the delegates ended up with only a very rough draft of a potentially agreeable document. Quite frankly, the document reads like a not particularly well-crafted word salad of conflicting thoughts and is unlikely to produce anything worthwhile in a long time.

Maria Ivanova directs the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs at Northeastern University and has been a delegate or observer at the treaty negotiations since they began. Appearing on the NPR program *Living on Earth*, she explained that although "everyone agrees that we do have a problem, the sticking point is: where do we start? Do we begin with the extraction of fossil fuels from the ground, which can turn into plastics? Do we start at the design stage, or do we focus on the point at which these products are discarded and improve our waste management systems? This is the key point of contention: Where does the life cycle begin? For the high-ambition coalition, they argue

that the life cycle starts with the extraction of these fuels from the ground — at the very beginning of obtaining these resources. While for those countries that said we need a better waste management system, for them, the life cycle starts a bit later."

Prompted by the host's questioning, she agreed that many of the countries that produce fossil fuels, the feed stock for plastic, are pushing for a better waste management system to address plastic pollution.

Fossil fuel lobbyists

The result of the lobbying is that there is a group that seeks an agreement that does not limit production of plastics. They are supported by the fossil fuel lobbyists. The companies that sell branded goods, such as Coca-Cola and Unilever favoured a strong, ambitious treaty, but one wonders if this was merely a subterfuge, that of taking a seeming pro-consumer position without any risk since a treaty was unlikely in any event.

Ivanova summarized her take on the negotiations. First, there was what she called "a no agreement option." Given that the differences among the parties were too great to bridge, the conference would end with no agreement. The second was what she called "an agreement of the willing," some 100 countries seeking a global treaty that regulates the entire life cycle of plastics. Of course, such an agreement would not be universal, so not really a ratifiable treaty. The third option was to find a consensus with the oil producing countries that did not want to start at the beginning of extraction life cycle, but to focus on waste.

The third option could not succeed without the countries that wanted to start with curbing production to agree that production would be out of the agreement and start at the design stage. The rest of the countries then would have to agree to have chemicals regulated or controlled in the design stage. Ultimately, there was no agreement.

Curbing pollution from plastics is indeed an urgent and pressing problem. Whether plastics pollution can be brought under control at all without limiting severely the use of plastics altogether is not clear. And cutting plastics use seems to have little chance of success. The enormous profits that plastics generate, and the intricate way in which plastics have become a part of the daily lives of humans around the world, suggest that the economic and social forces needed to break the cycle simply will not engender much support.

Plastic pollution on a grand scale is well recognized. Much less attention has been paid to microplastics which have now been found in the human body and in the bodies of animals. They are found in the brains of humans and in the reproductive organs. Plastics have polluted every part of the earth and the oceans, from the deepest trench to the highest peak on earth. The health effects of plastic pollution are still being catalogued but there are strong associations with various forms of cancer, neurological diseases, stroke, cardiac and endocrine disruptions.

The recycling of plastics myth

Is a realistic treaty possible? There are many who



“Plastic pollution on a grand scale is well recognized. Much less attention has been paid to microplastics which have now been found in the human body and in the bodies of animals. They are found in the brains of humans and in the reproductive organs. Plastics have polluted every part of the earth and the oceans, from the deepest trench to the highest peak on earth. The health effects of plastic pollution are still being catalogued but there are strong associations with various forms of cancer, neurological diseases, stroke, cardiac and endocrine disruptions...” - Pic - Nature News

believe that recycling of plastics is a myth and any attempt to solve the problem solely through waste management is nothing more than greenwashing. When Coca-Cola sponsored the COP27 conference in Egypt in 2022, Greenpeace noted that the company produces around 120 billion oil-based plastic bottles annually. It asserted that around 99% of the bottles are produced with fossil fuels. Greenpeace noted that in the US only 5% of plastics are recycled as it called out the "failed toxic plastics recycling myth."

Meanwhile the treaty on plastics is not the only initiative underway. As plastic waste multiplies, many of the companies that produce or use plastics have held out the promise that their packaging will be mostly recyclable or biodegradable. Coca-Cola, for example, issued a statement committing itself to collect and recycle a bottle or can for each one it sells, and declared that it shares the goal of eliminating waste from the oceans.

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation, a UK-based charity committed to creating a circular economy, has set up the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment that aims to either eliminate plastic waste or make it part of a sustainable circular economy. Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Nestle and Unilever are among more than 80 corporate signatories to this initiative.

In 2022, Sander Defruyt, the leader of New Plastics Economy initiative that co-manages the Global Commitment, noted that there was a widespread failure among signatories representing more than 20% of the global plastic packaging market to meet targets on waste reduction. "There is a lack of a credible pathway forward," he said. Defruyt was referring primarily to an ongoing reliance on single-use packaging used for food, snacks and cosmetics.

The flexible packaging which is convenient, very efficient at preserving food and other goods, represents 40% of consumer items sold in plastic packaging worldwide. This stuff is largely unrecyclable at scale.

The lessons are clear and not encouraging. We will need new technologies to develop polymers that are recyclable or biodegradable. And then, when they degrade, we have to guard against seepage of chemicals making up such products into the oceans and waterways.

Cheerz...
Bwana



Dr R Neerunjun Gopee

Man today: The imperative need to be truly human

We need to multiply the steps to man. So that we may go beyond and eradicate the evil that is destroying the world

With all the wars and threats to war that the world is witnessing today, along with the daily doses of conflicts, crimes and violence that fill media headlines daily, no rational person will deny that there is an urgent need for man to humanize himself so that peace prevails. For that, we need a change of mindset based on a better understanding of ourselves as being not separate but part of nature. This implies that we should live both guided by her laws, and also uplift ourselves by transcending them where possible.

Scientists have been in the forefront of the search for the secrets and laws of nature. For example, they are sending more and more sophisticated telescopes into space to take a 'peek' at what is happening at the outer reaches of the universe. The idea is to try and figure out how the universe has come about, that is, the origin of the stars, planets, asteroids and other meteors that fly about in the big void that is space. Much of that void, according to scientists, is filled with something called 'dark matter', a kind of special energy that accounts for some of the unexplainable phenomena observed by astronomers. In fact, it is believed that dark energy possibly makes up for most of the universe.

A related issue is about man. Where did we come from? I am reminded here of a story I read in an old *Readers'*

Digest. There was this little schoolgirl who was doing her homework one night, writing an essay entitled 'My family'. She asked her father (who was not watching TV, as there was none in those days when fathers and mothers spent more time with their children), 'Daddy, where did I come from?'

'A stork brought you,' answered the father.

'And where did you come from?' asked again the daughter.

'Oh,' replied Daddy, 'a bigger stork brought me'.

'And what about Grandma, who brought her?'

'Father Christmas, in his sledge.'

The girl completed her essay, kissed her dad good-night and went to bed. Before he turned in himself, dad went over to have a look at the exercise book left open on the writing table. This is what he read: 'As far as I have been able to ascertain, there has been no sex in this family for the past three generations.'

And that was in the days before AIDS had burst on the world stage!

The question of the origin of the universe is tied up, inevitably, to that of the origin of life and of that of man. One school of thought believes – that is, holds as true without possessing any valid evidence for the same – that God created everything, including man. In His own image. That's rather scary, one would think: is present-day cruel killer-man on rampage around the world the image of his God? As Bertrand Russell, the great mathematician-philosopher-logician asked, 'Did God create the lowly centipede?' What for? To be crushed by man's boots?

Scientists, on the other hand, have been accumulating more and more evidence to show that life may have started from small beginnings in the ocean and



“The question of the origin of the universe is tied up, inevitably, to that of the origin of life and of that of man. One school of thought believes – that is, holds as true without possessing any valid evidence for the same – that God created everything, including man. In His own image. That's rather scary, one would think: is present-day cruel killer-man on rampage around the world the image of his God? As Bertrand Russell, the great mathematician-philosopher-logician asked, 'Did God create the lowly centipede?' What for? To be crushed by man's boots?” Pic - mahomes.infipereira.gov.co

that it then evolved over millions of years. Man is a product of that evolution, according to the biologist-naturalist Charles Darwin.

According to this theory, therefore, man is part of nature, subject to its laws like other creatures and objects that exist and interact with each other.

One such law, for example, is the Law of Gravity, well-known to all students of science: gravity is a force that makes one object attract another. Which is why, for example, we tend to fall towards the earth when we leap from a certain height. But can we go against gravity? Well, yes, to a certain extent. Every time we climb a staircase or fly a plane, that is what we are doing. In other words, we are under the influence of nature and its laws, of

which we are an inextricable part, but we can also escape this influence when we need to. We are not, in other words, slaves of nature. We can consciously choose not to be so.

In *The Step To Man* by John R. Platt, a prominent physicist, book which was published in the 1960s, he argued that we may be biological products, but what made us different and unique was that we were 'humanised', namely that we had developed qualities that made us transcend our biological nature, which is focused on sheer survival.

The 'step to man', therefore, was to rise above the primary, instinctive needs necessary for physical living and draw inspiration from the more refined intellectual and aesthetic planes. At these levels, we would discover goodness and beauty in objects, events and relationships. The mundane material concerns, once satisfied, would no longer use up all our energy and time. We would be satisfied with the basic minimum required to maintain good health and material comfort, and the rest of ourselves would then turn outwards, towards our fellow beings in greater need. We would then also seek and perform noble tasks and pursue good for its own sake irrespective of whether we individually obtained anything in return immediately or even in a foreseeable timeframe.

The physicist, whose discipline is the one in fact that has discovered the physical laws of nature, was echoing Swami Vivekananda who, more than a century ago, exhorted us: 'Be master of yourself, stand up and be free, go beyond the pale of these laws. For these laws do not absolutely govern you; they are only part of your being. First, find out that you are not the slave of nature, never were and never will be. ...Know that, and you will control both good and evil. Then alone will the whole vision change.'

In the 'own image' God model, we have a readymade scapegoat; we can always lay the blame on someone else. But in the 'step to man' model, we are made responsible for ourselves and our acts – and be accountable for them too.

Science, thus 'humanized', is a force that can free man from his shackles and truly liberate the world. We need to multiply the steps to man. So that we may go beyond and eradicate the evil that is destroying the world...

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New Zealand eyes 'golden visa' reforms to attract wealthy migrants

New Zealand's government is planning changes to its so-called "golden visa" program to attract more wealthy immigrants who invest in the country.

The Active Investor Plus Visa that historically lured rich individuals to New Zealand and raked in an average \$580 million a year has languished after rule changes in 2022. Just 35 applications have been fully approved in the past two years, equating to \$211.2 million of nominated investment funds, according to data from Immigration New Zealand.

"We are conscious that the last government changed those settings and we saw a marked decline in the number of investors," Finance Minister Nicola Willis said in an interview Thursday in Wellington. "You can expect to see announcements from us on that in the coming weeks."

Willis said the center-right government has already progressed reforms to speed up overseas investment applications and

will change legislation next year to emphasize that the nation requires foreign capital to achieve its economic objectives. She said investor migrants bring much more than just money, reports Bloomberg.

"It's also the networks, the expertise, the experience, the ideas that they bring with them," Willis said. "There are many examples throughout the country where investor migrants, while they may make initial investments, then go on to make other investments and become more engaged in the economy in a range of ways which are helpful."

Under current settings, applicants for the visa must commit to at least NZ\$5 million of direct investment or NZ\$15 million of passive investment such as in listed equities. That compared to a NZ\$3 million starting threshold under the old criteria. Bonds and property, historically popular investments in New Zealand, are no longer eligible.

Asked whether changes to the visa



The Active Investor Plus Visa that historically lured rich individuals to New Zealand and raked in an average \$580 million a year has languished after rule changes in 2022. Pic - New Zealand Herald

program may include removing the English-language test, Willis said she would leave Immigration Minister Erica Stanford to make her announcement.

A bugbear for some foreigners wanting

to invest in New Zealand is an inability to buy a house in the country, the consequence of a ban imposed in 2018 on outsiders — other than those from Australia and Singapore.

Willis' National Party campaigned before the 2023 general election on a relaxation of that ban, proposing to allow foreigners to buy a home valued at NZ\$2 million or more, but that policy was blocked by the New Zealand First Party during the formation of the coalition government.

Since then, New Zealand First leader Winston Peters has said he's open to allowing foreigners to buy expensive houses if they also invest in the country.

While the agreement not to relax the ban remains in place, "as we progress reforms to the Overseas Investment Act and investor migrant settings, we'll have a range of discussions and we'll see where they land," Willis said.

Donald Trump invites China's Xi Jinping to his inauguration: A gesture of diplomacy amid trade tensions

US President-elect Donald Trump has extended an unprecedented invitation to Chinese President Xi Jinping to attend his inauguration ceremony next month, according to multiple sources reported by CBS. This invitation could be seen as part of Trump's broader strategy to engage with China, especially at a time when he has threatened to impose additional tariffs on the world's second-largest economy.

Historically, Chinese leaders have never attended a US presidential inauguration. In fact, no foreign head of state has participated in such an event in over a century. According to State Department records dating back to 1874, foreign dignitaries are typically represented at presidential inaugurations by ambassadors rather than heads of state. Xi's potential attendance would therefore be a groundbreaking diplomatic move, signaling the importance of US-China relations under Trump's presidency.

Political and Practical Risks for Xi

Despite the diplomatic significance of the invitation, Xi's attendance would come with substantial political risks and practical challenges. Attending such an event could expose him to criticism within China, where leaders are cautious about their image and actions on the international stage. Moreover, the January weather in Washington is notoriously cold, and the discomfort of sitting outside for hours during an event like the inauguration — especially considering the viral memes from President Joe Biden's inaugura-



US President Donald Trump and China's President Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China. Pic - Reuters

tion in 2021—could add a layer of unease for Xi.

Additionally, Trump's often unpredictable nature during public appearances could add further risks. The President-elect has a history of veering off-script during speeches, making surprise announcements or jokes that don't always land well. Just this week, he mistakenly referred to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as the "governor" of the "Great State of Canada," underscoring the unpredictable nature of his public persona.

Trump's Diplomacy and Xi's Stance

Trump has been actively courting foreign leaders ahead of his inauguration, meeting with leaders such as French President Emmanuel Macron and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. In recent weeks, he has communicated with Xi, though he declined to elaborate on the contents of their discussions. The two leaders last met in person at the G20 summit in Japan in June 2019.

Despite his engagement with Xi, Trump's administration has ramped up its rhetoric regarding China, particularly focusing on trade issues. The President-elect has proposed

sweeping tariffs on Chinese goods, including the possibility of imposing 60% duties. He also warned that if China fails to assist the US in curbing the flow of fentanyl across the southern border, an additional 10% tariff could be implemented. In

response, Xi has expressed a desire to maintain stable relations with the US but has also laid down firm boundaries, including warning against interference in China's internal affairs or any actions that might challenge the Communist Party's control.

In his final meeting with Biden, Xi emphasized "four red lines" that the US should not cross, particularly concerning Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Communist Party's political authority. These remarks underscore the potential for heightened tensions between the two countries, especially as trade and technology disputes continue to unfold.

Trump's China Policy: A Mixed Approach

Trump's policy towards China is marked by a mix of hardline rhetoric and strategic engagement. On one hand, he has appointed a number of China hawks to key positions in his incoming administration, including Representative Mike Waltz as national security adviser and Senator Marco Rubio as Secretary of State. Both of these figures have been vocal critics of China, advocating for a stronger stance and economic decoupling from Beijing.

William and Kate could become king and queen 'sooner than they would have expected'

Prince William and Kate Middleton could become king and queen sooner than they expected as the present monarch, King Charles, continues to battle cancer, a royal biographer has suggested.

"Although the King is carrying out his duties with typical determination, he has had to accept limitations during his cancer treatment," Sally Bedell Smith told People in an article published on Wednesday, reports HT.

"As a result, William has been taking on more responsibilities, and he and Kate have been preparing for their future roles sooner than they would have expected," Smith added.

Charles was coronated in May 2023. Less than a year later, it was announced that he had been diagnosed with cancer.

A source told the outlet that "there's a sense of calm before the storm" for Kate and William. "They are next in line for the biggest job of their lives, and of course, Kate's health has taken priority, but it's also allowed everyone to take a step back and figure out what's important right now," the insider added.

William attended the official reopening of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris on behalf of the king this month, which many viewed as an indication that he is already readying for his future role. It has been tough for the Prince of Wales as his wife — and not just his father — was diagnosed with cancer too. Kate shared in a video in March, following a long absence from the public eye, that the diagnosis had come as a "huge shock" and they had kept the information private until their kids had time to "understand and process the news before it was made public." Kate and William are parents to Prince George, 10, Princess Charlotte, 8, and Prince Louis, 5.

Americans are becoming less welcoming toward immigrants living in the United States illegally

A recent Reuters/Ipsos poll has shown that Americans are becoming less welcoming toward immigrants living in the United States illegally, a shift that has occurred since Donald Trump's first presidency. Despite this trend, the poll also revealed that many Americans remain wary of harsh measures like using detention camps for immigrants, which Trump has promised to implement as part of his deportation plans.

The poll, conducted between December 5-10, 2023, found that 33% of respondents now believe that most or all immigrants without legal status should be allowed to stay in the United States. This is a decline from 39% in a similar survey conducted in 2017, early in Trump's first term. The share of respondents advocating for the deportation of most or all immigrants remained relatively stable at 53%, compared to 51% in 2017. The percentage of people uncertain about the issue has risen, with 14% of respondents now unsure, up from 9% in 2017.

This shows a modest hardening of views on immigration, though it also signals potential political risks for Trump if his administration moves aggressively with mass deportations.

Opposition to detention camps

One of the key findings from the poll is the significant opposition to harsh measures like detention camps for immigrants awaiting deportation hearings. Only 30% of respondents supported the idea that illegal immigrants should be arrested and placed in detention camps, while 53% disagreed. Another 17% were unsure or declined to answer. This suggests that while many Americans support some form of deportation, they are less willing to endorse extreme measures that could lead to family separations or indefinite detention.

Republican pollster Whit Ayres noted that Trump



Poll showed a modest hardening of views on immigration among many Americans.
Pic – Middle East Monitor

could risk losing support if his immigration policies result in tearing families apart, especially if "Dreamers", immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children, are deported. "Most Americans are not going to support deporting a father who is a sole breadwinner of a family of American citizens," Ayres said.

Trump's focus on immigration

In the 2024 election, immigration was a central issue, with 27% of poll respondents naming it as the top priority for Trump during his first 100 days in office. This is higher than any other policy area. Trump has vowed to implement tough measures on both legal and illegal immigration, including the deportation of record numbers of people living in the U.S. illegally. In an interview with NBC News, Trump reiterated his position, saying, "I don't want to be breaking up families, so the only way you don't

break up the family is you keep them together and you have to send them all back."

Despite Trump's tough rhetoric, the rising share of immigrants in the U.S. population, now at 14%, the highest level in over a century, presents a growing challenge for the incoming administration. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security estimates there are 11 million immigrants in the country without legal status as of 2022.

The costs of deporting all immigrants in the U.S. illegally are staggering. The American Immigration Council estimates that it would cost an average of \$88 billion annually to deport everyone living in the country illegally. Trump's border czar, Tom Homan, has similarly estimated that the deportation effort would require a comparable sum.

Political Divide on Immigration Views

The poll revealed a sharp political divide on immigration. Support for allowing immigrants without legal status to stay has fallen significantly among Republicans, from 18% in 2017 to just 9% in 2023. In contrast, Democrats have remained largely consistent, with 61% supporting immigrants staying, only slightly down from 63% in 2017.

Among Hispanics, a group that swung heavily toward Trump in the 2024 election, support for allowing immigrants to stay fell to 47%, down from 54% in 2017. Among Black respondents, support dropped more significantly, from 58% in 2017 to 36% in 2023. This decline in support for immigrants staying without legal status was particularly pronounced among Republican voters, signaling that immigration could become a key battleground in future elections.

Google unveils Gemini 2.0: The tech giant's most advanced AI yet

Google has officially introduced its most sophisticated artificial intelligence model to date, Gemini 2.0, which brings the tech giant closer to its vision of a "universal assistant." This new AI model was unveiled on Wednesday, with Google CEO Sundar Pichai calling it the beginning of the company's "next era" in AI — what he referred to as the "new agentic era."

Gemini 2.0 marks a significant leap forward in AI capabilities. One of the standout features of the model is its advancements in multimodality—the ability to process and output not just text, but also images and audio. This will enable the development of AI agents that are far more versatile, capable of engaging with multimedia information such as videos, images, and even code. Pichai emphasized that these new capabilities would bring Google closer to creating a truly universal assistant.

This development follows the release of Gemini 1.0 in December 2023, which made significant strides in understanding and organizing multimedia data. With Gemini 2.0, Google aims to make these advancements not only more comprehensive but also more useful.

A New Era of Digital Assistants

Google has introduced the concept of the AI agent, a digital helper designed to

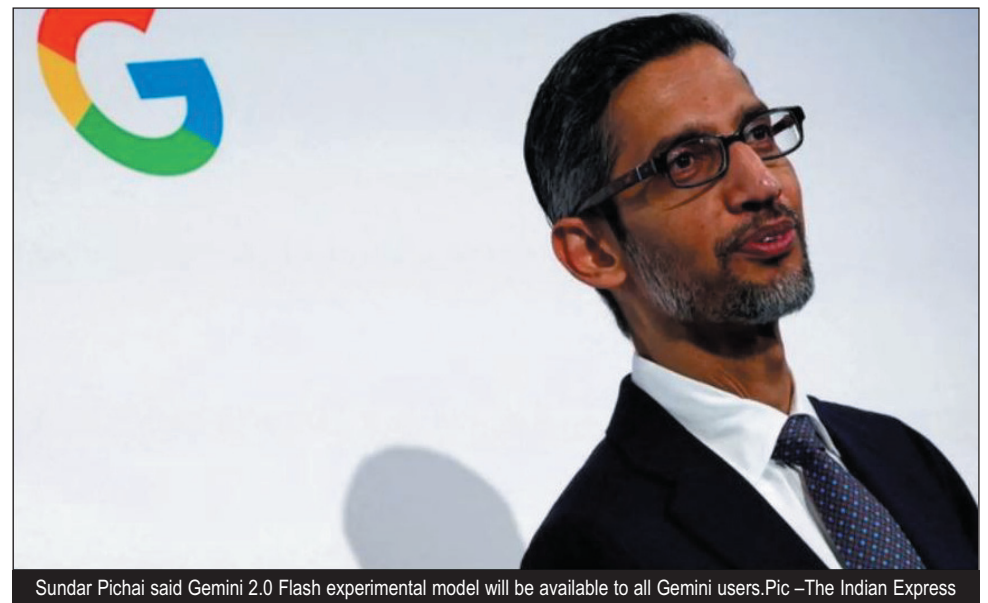
not only sense its surroundings but also to make decisions and take actions to accomplish specific goals. This marks a shift from static AI systems to more dynamic, decision-making entities that can interact with and respond to real-world scenarios.

Pichai noted that Gemini 2.0 Flash, an experimental model of the AI, would be available to all Gemini users, further opening up the possibilities for experimentation and application.

Google has also launched a new feature within Gemini 2.0 called Deep Research. This feature uses advanced reasoning and long-context capabilities to act as a research assistant, capable of exploring complex topics and producing comprehensive reports. It's designed to assist users in tackling complicated research tasks, making it a powerful tool for academics, professionals, and curious individuals alike.

Powered by Google's Trillium Hardware

Gemini 2.0 is powered by Google's custom-built Trillium hardware, specifically its sixth-generation Tensor Processing Unit (TPU), which is now available to all customers. According to Google, TPU Trillium was instrumental in both the training and inference processes that powered Gemini 2.0's capabilities,



Sundar Pichai said Gemini 2.0 Flash experimental model will be available to all Gemini users. Pic – The Indian Express

ensuring that the model performs at the cutting edge of AI technology.

Sundar Pichai expressed his excitement for the future, stating, "If Gemini 1.0 was about organizing and understanding information, Gemini 2.0 is about making it much more useful. I can't wait to see what this next era brings."

The release of Gemini 2.0 had an immediate positive impact on Google's financial performance, with Google's stock climbing more than 4% on Wall Street. This followed a previous surge of 3.5%

following the announcement of the company's groundbreaking quantum chip, Willow. The combination of these innovations signals a strong forward momentum for the tech giant.

Looking ahead, Gemini 2.0 Flash will be made generally available in January, alongside additional model sizes. Google has also promised to expand the Gemini 2.0 model to more of its products in early 2025, indicating a broader integration of this advanced AI across its ecosystem.

Titmuss: The Man and His Mission

By Dookhee Rai

The word “Titmuss” has become very common among Mauritians. It is being heard everywhere, especially in public meetings over the past twelve months. On some occasions, it has been the topic of debate in the Legislative Council. It is currently occupying a large space in the press.

Professor Richard Morris Titmuss, who directs the mission bearing his name, is already among us in our cyclone-stricken country. His expert advice is sought throughout the Commonwealth and even in America. He is considered one of the highest authorities on pensions. Several times he has advised the British Government on its allocation. The Titmuss Mission will advise the Government of Mauritius on establishing a social security scheme.

Endowed with charming manners, the fifty-two-year-old R.M. Titmuss is lean and has a lined face with large, brown eyes. Usually shy, he looks people directly in the face and ponders deeply before answering questions. He gives the impression of being worried.

Titmuss’s parents were farming people living in Bedfordshire. When Richard was fifteen, his father suddenly died, and the poor lad had to leave school to help his mother and younger siblings. He later confessed that at school, he learned little except how to play cricket and football.

With great difficulty, he managed to get a temporary job as a clerk at one of the big insurance companies, where he spent his twenties and early thirties. He was initially a supporter of the Liberal Party. Often, he attended meetings discussing the wars in Abyssinia and Spain, where he met his future wife at a youth hostel. After his marriage, he began writing books and critically reflecting on a social system where many died needlessly due to poverty, and where people had to choose between limiting their families and sinking into, or avoiding, lower class status.

Proved unfit for active service in World War II, in 1942, he transitioned from the insurance world to the Civil Service. Sir Keith Hencock, who was in charge of the Civil History of the war, was greatly impressed by Titmuss’s writings. As a result, he was asked to join the team. This led to the book *Problems of Social Policy*, which established his reputation and brought him worldwide fame. In it, he argued that social services are an organic part, a mirror, of the society that provides

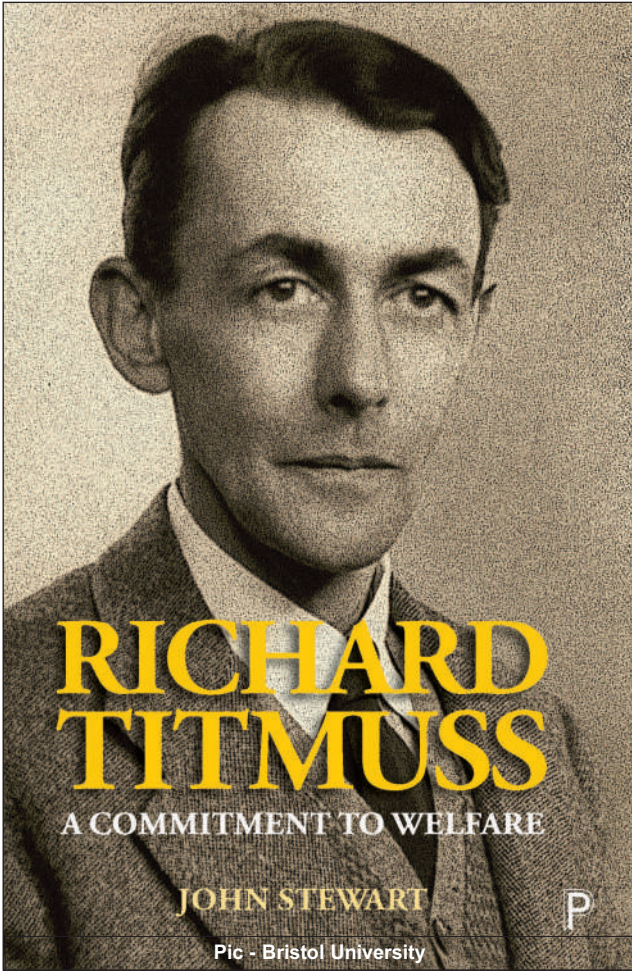
them.

Professor Titmuss aims to bring about changes that would limit inequalities in society, especially those arising from sickness, parenthood, and old age. Although not an extreme egalitarian, he is deeply afraid of what might happen if the mass-market consumption economy, copied from the US, is superimposed on a profoundly class-conscious society such as the British one.

Titmuss is particularly concerned about the organization of men and the growing power of large insurance companies. He sees in Britain a tendency towards “private opulence and public squalor.”

Undoubtedly, he has been worrying about these issues for many years. He is never unconcerned about people and their problems. Perhaps the core of his political creed is that when human unhappiness is avoidable, it is one’s duty to find out why.

To him, politics is not a fascinating game but a necessary means by which well-considered ideas can be put into action. He has always sought remedies. It was an experience that transformed him from a Liberal into a Socialist — a Socialist convinced by the social problems he observed in Britain in the 1940s. Titmuss had the most direct and significant in-



fluence on the electoral programme of the Labour Party in the last campaign.

The Tories, too, have followed Labour’s lead in stating that half pay upon retirement is desirable. The first proponent in this field was Professor Titmuss. In fact,

he and his team set out to prove that it might not only be desirable but also possible. Titmuss is, above all, a researcher with a deep respect for established facts and a deep mistrust of theories that are not yet proven. He starts with the misfortunes of people and works out a remedy. He pays equal attention to both the cure and the patient.

Titmuss drafted plans to save the Nation from the miseries it had known before the war. He was convinced that the Welfare State was merely a means to an end. It is a set of rules and arrangements designed to banish want and make people happy. Nevertheless, if people are still unhappy, it is the rules, not the people, that are wrong and must be changed. He also maintains that there is no point in making plans until you know the facts.

In 1950, Richard Morris Titmuss was appointed Professor of Social Administration at the London School of Economics (LSE). This was a remarkable achievement, particularly because he had never before taught at a university nor even attended one as a student.

Such is the calibre of the man at the head of a mission striving to solve some of our most intricate problems, and we have every hope that he will be crowned with success, for he is obviously the right man in the right place.

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The State of the Economy and Road Ahead



● Cont. from page 7

This line of thinking suggests that the 14th month bonus could be capped at some income level, say Rs 50,000. Those earning up to Rs 50,000 may receive a full 14th month bonus. For those earning above Rs50,000, the payment could be a flat Rs 50,000 irrespective of salary, or payment on a regressive basis up to a certain limit.

It is difficult to ascertain the cost of the 14th month bonus in the absence of specific details about its form. Assuming that the bonus is capped at Rs 50,000, a ballpark estimate of the total cost is Rs 8.5 billion, of which some Rs 6.5 billion will fall on the private sector. The MSM government borrowed Rs 101 billion over the past 10 years to implement its promise of a pension hike to Rs 13,500. The new government also could borrow to pay the 14th month bonus, assuming that this is a one-off perk to employees and that, by stimulating the economy and boosting government tax revenue, it would prove partly self-financing.

A Moody's downgrade?

The report's findings that the budget deficit and government debt figures have been drastically understated; that the setting up of the MIC was financed by printing money; that all special funds have been swept clean; that several state-owned enterprises are financially distressed; and that the national airline is insolvent could be ground enough for Moody's to slap us with a credit downgrade. The slightest slip-up will send the country's credit rating into the 'non-investment grade' or 'junk' category, with adverse repercussions on foreign investment and external borrowing. This could lead to a further deterioration of the economic situation.

On the other hand, the report can reassure credit rating agencies, investors and international institutions that this government is serious about fixing the eco-

“The MIC was created entirely with helicopter money! In fact, the capital injection of USD 2 billion (equivalent to Rs 81 billion) out of the central bank's reserves never took place. The transaction was simply an accounting gimmick that amounted to BoM printing Rs 81 billion. This brings the total amount of printed money to Rs 154 billion... No wonder this massive spurt of liquidity into the economy provoked a long-term decline of the rupee. The rupee has depreciated by 46% vis-à-vis the US dollar since the MSM government took office in December 2014. That means you need about twice as many rupees to buy a dollar today than you did in December 2014. The impact on inflation has been huge...”

nomy and that the investigation that uncovered the past regime's misdoings is the first step in the process. The government could also communicate, in writing, to Moody's, its good intentions and strategic plans to help allay any fears of further economic deterioration.

A hike in interest rates?

The report suggests that the rupee's depreciation was triggered by money-printing and sustained by a misguided monetary policy. Specifically, paragraph 25 of the report notes that interest rates on USD-denominated financial assets have been persistently higher than on rupee-denominated assets. This situation makes it attractive to hoard USD and/or to invest in USD-denominated assets, thereby increasing the demand for USD and pushing the dollar ever higher relative to the rupee.

Redressing this imbalance may call

for a hike in the key rate. However, monetary tightening may compromise economic growth while increasing the debt service burden on (mostly) middle-income families and dampening consumption. The authorities should therefore carefully weigh the pros and cons of a rise in the key rate.

Will MK fly again?

Other than a matter of national pride, having a national airline is undeniably a must for a country that thrives on its vocation as a tourist destination. The State of the Economy report reveals – perhaps unsurprisingly, but shockingly nonetheless – that Air Mauritius is insolvent and needs a significant capital injection to keep it afloat. At least Rs10.4 billion is needed to recapitalize the company. A restructuring plan may require additional financing.

I believe the government is incapable of mobilizing such funds in the immediate term. Hence, strategic partnerships to save MK should be high on the government's agenda. The best option would be a local partner, which preferably has

experience in the aviation industry. Alternatively, partnerships with friendly countries' national airlines (Air India?) could be considered.

4. Final word

The Alliance du Changement government has inherited an economy beset by poor economic policies, institutional failures and a plethora of structural constraints and social pressures. The economy has recovered from the pandemic but remains vulnerable. The government, therefore, faces the Herculean task of stimulating the economy and consolidating the financial situation while delivering on its electoral promises. This should be feasible if the pledges are toned down to reflect the new economic reality and if the government gives recourse to debt in the short term while focusing on bringing the debt-GDP ratio under the 80% limit in the coming years. The government has been given a clear mandate to implement change and it should take full advantage of it.

Dr Vinaye Ancharaz

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Mauritius Times

God Rode the Brooklyn Subway

Marcel Sternberger, a meticulous man of nearly 50 with bushy white hair, warm brown eyes, and the lively energy of a Hungarian czardas dancer, had a daily routine. Every morning, he boarded the 9:09 Long Island Railroad train from his suburban home to Woodside, NY, where he switched to a subway heading into the city.

On January 10, 1948, however, fate intervened. That morning, Sternberger impulsively decided to visit his ailing Hungarian friend, Laszlo Victor, in Brooklyn. Altering his usual route, he switched to a Brooklyn-bound subway at Ozone Park, spent the morning at Victor's home, and then boarded a Manhattan-bound subway mid-afternoon to head to his Fifth Avenue office.

Here is the incredible story that unfolded:

As Sternberger entered the crowded subway car, he noticed there was no chance of a seat. Just then, a man by the door suddenly stood up to leave, allowing Sternberger to slip into the vacant spot. He rarely initiated conversations with strangers but, as a photographer, he often analyzed people's faces. The man beside him, likely in his late 30s, caught his attention with an expression of deep sorrow.

The man was reading a Hungarian-language newspaper. Acting on a whim, Sternberger said in Hungarian, "I hope you don't mind if I glance at your paper."

The man, surprised but polite, replied, "You may read it now. I'll have time later."

During their 30-minute ride, the two struck up a conversation. The man introduced himself as Bela Paskin and began recounting his story.

A law student when World War II began, Paskin had been conscripted into a German labor battalion and sent to Ukraine. Captured by the Russians, he was forced to bury German soldiers. After



the war, he trekked hundreds of miles back to his hometown of Debrecen, Hungary, only to find strangers living in his family's home.

Searching for his wife, he visited their old apartment, but it, too, was occupied by strangers. No one had heard of his family. As he left, crushed with grief, a boy called after him, "Paskin bácsi! Paskin bácsi!" (Uncle Paskin). The child, the son of former neighbors, delivered devastating news: the Nazis had deported his entire family, including his wife, to Auschwitz.

Heartbroken, Paskin fled Hungary, crossing borders on foot until he reached Paris. In October 1947, he immigrated to the United States.

As Sternberger listened, Paskin's story seemed eerily familiar. He had recently met a Hungarian woman named Marya at a friend's home. She, too, was from Debrecen and had been deported to Auschwitz. She had survived by being transferred to a German munitions factory, but her entire family perished in the gas chambers. Sternberger had been so moved by her story that he had written down her address and phone number.

Would it be possible?

As they neared Sternberger's stop, he asked cautiously, "Was your wife's name Marya?"

Paskin turned pale. "Yes," he whispered. "How do you know?"

Urging Paskin to get off with him, Sternberger led him to a phone booth at the station. He dialed the number he had for Marya, praying she would answer. Remarkably, she did—she was alone at home and, despite her habit of ignoring the phone, decided to pick up that day.

Sternberger asked Marya to describe her husband. Her details matched perfectly. He handed the receiver to the trembling Paskin, who managed to stammer, "This is Bela! This is Bela!" before breaking down in tears.

Unable to speak further, Paskin handed the phone back. Sternberger reassured Marya and arranged for Bela to take a taxi to her address.

The reunion that followed defied words. Bela and Marya, each believing the other had perished, were suddenly, miraculously reunited.

Reflecting on the events of that day, Sternberger could not dismiss the series of coincidences: his uncharacteristic decision to visit his friend, the subway detour, the man vacating his seat, and the chance encounter with Paskin. Was it merely coincidence—or did God ride the Brooklyn subway that afternoon?

Forum

Dawood Rawat's comeback

The news of Dawood Rawat's comeback was widely known, though without a confirmed date. His return to his homeland, alongside his wife, Aisha, marks another positive development in the era of freedom and renewal we have been experiencing since 11 November 2024.

I have known Dawood since the early 1980s. I have witnessed his tireless dedication as an employee of British American Insurance, rising through the ranks to become Chairman Emeritus of the BAI Consortium. By the early 2010s, the consortium had grown significantly, posing a challenge to the entrenched oligarchy. Dawood has always been a man who treated everyone equally, regardless of status or wealth. He embodies the essence of Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*, where true nobility is rooted in character, not privilege. Today, he is reaping the rewards of his integrity and kindness, surrounded by family and friends.

In my view, Dawood's return is also due to his Karma—"the universal causal law by which good or bad actions determine the future modes of an individual's existence," as understood in Indian philosophy. Dawood's good deeds have not only paved the way for his return to Mauritius as a free man but have also coincided with the nation's transition from autocracy to democracy.

Some may have thought that Dawood's story had come to an end, but like the Phoenix, Dawood has risen from the ashes, reclaiming his rightful place to contribute to reshaping Mauritius's business model.

Leckrani & Jeenarain Soobagrah

SAGITTARIUS: NOV 22 - DEC 21

Optimism fuels your week, inspiring new ideas and ventures. Financially, it's a favourable period for long-term planning. Social connections strengthen, bringing joy and support. Physical activities like hiking enhance well-being.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 10, 16, 22, 29, 38

Capricorn: Dec 22 - Jan 19

Hard work pays off as career goals align. Financially, prudent decisions lead to stability. Emotional connections deepen with meaningful conversations. Prioritize mental health by managing your workload effectively.

Lucky Numbers: 4, 9, 12, 17, 25, 34

AQUARIUS: JAN 20 - FEB 18

Innovation and collaboration drive success in professional projects. Financial gains are likely through strategic decisions. Friends and loved ones provide encouragement. Meditation or yoga helps maintain inner peace.

Lucky Numbers: 3, 8, 15, 21, 28, 36

PISCES: FEB 19 - MAR 20

Creativity flourishes, making this an excellent time for

YOUR STARS

GEMINI: MAY 21 - JUNE 20

Dynamic energy propels career ambitions. Networking opportunities strengthen your position. Be cautious with financial risks and double-check details. In love, listen more to foster intimacy. Focus on mindfulness to reduce stress.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 9, 12, 18, 25, 37

CANCER: JUNE 21 - JULY 22

Professional achievements bring recognition, boosting confidence. Financial opportunities come your way, act decisively. Relationships flourish through acts of kindness. Balance work and personal time to avoid burnout.

Lucky Numbers: 4, 10, 16, 22, 26, 33

LEO: JULY 23 - AUG 22

Leadership skills shine, helping you steer projects to success. Be mindful of budgeting; minor oversights could lead to stress. Romantic surprises add excitement mid-week. Maintain a fitness routine to sustain your energy.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 6, 11, 17, 24, 30

VIRGO: AUG 23 - SEPT 22

Meticulous planning ensures progress in work and personal goals. A financial windfall might come unexpectedly, so use it wisely.

Support from loved ones strengthens your resolve. Prioritize digestive health with mindful eating.

Lucky Numbers: 3, 9, 15, 21, 26, 35

LIBRA: SEPT 23 - OCT 22

Harmony returns as conflicts resolve amicably. Financially, it's a good time to reassess savings plans. Relationships thrive with shared experiences. Dedicate time to hobbies to nurture creativity and joy.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 8, 14, 19, 23, 32

SCORPION: 23 OCT - 21 NOV

Intense focus helps you complete pending tasks. Financially, proceed with caution; avoid unnecessary expenses. Romantic interactions bring clarity, deepening your bond. Engage in stress-relieving activities to stay balanced.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 7, 13, 18, 27, 31

Why teenagers often make unwise decisions

Adults generally make better decisions than adolescents, and this improvement leads to more sophisticated and specific choice behaviors, according to a study published on November 14 in PLOS Biology by Vanessa Scholz, Lorenz Deserno, and colleagues from the University of Würzburg, Germany.

The process of learning and decision-making evolves significantly from adolescence into adulthood. During adolescence, individuals undergo developmental changes in key decision-making behaviors, such as goal-directed actions and the influence of motivation on choices. However, adolescents also consistently display high levels of "decision noise," which refers to the tendency to make suboptimal or inconsistent choices.

The relationship between these factors—the development of more sophisticated decision processes and higher decision noise—remains unclear. It's possible that the emergence of specific decision-making strategies could be influenced by age-related changes in decision noise.



To explore this, Scholz, Deserno, and their team analyzed data from 93 participants aged 12 to 42 years. The participants completed three reinforcement learning tasks: one assessing motivational influences on decisions, one measuring adaptive decision-making in response to changing environments, and one evaluating goal-directed behavior.

The results showed a strong correlation between

decision noise across all three tasks. Importantly, the researchers found that decision noise levels mediated age-related improvements in decision-making sophistication and overall task performance. This suggests that noise, a less specific decision factor, plays a role in the development of more complex and effective decision-making strategies.

One possible explanation for these findings is the limited availability of cognitive resources in adolescents due to the ongoing development of brain regions related to cognitive control. With fewer cognitive resources available, adolescents may rely more on simpler, less accurate decision strategies, making them more vulnerable to emotional, social, and motivational influences.

Overall, this study offers new insights into the computational processes behind the developmental changes in decision-making. The authors suggest that future research could explore the neural basis of decision noise and its implications for neurodevelopmental disorders.

As the authors conclude, "Teenagers often make sub-optimal, 'noisy' decisions. While these noisy decisions tend to decrease with age, this decrease is linked to the development of more complex decision-making abilities, such as planning and flexibility."



What is the universe expanding into if it's already infinite?

The universe is constantly expanding, but how do scientists think about what it's expanding into?

When you bake a loaf of bread or a batch of muffins, you put the dough into a pan. As the dough bakes in the oven, it expands into the baking pan. Any chocolate chips or blueberries in the muffin batter become farther away from each other as the muffin batter expands.

The expansion of the universe is, in some ways, similar. But this analogy gets one thing wrong – while the dough expands into the baking pan, the universe doesn't have anything to expand into. It just expands into itself.

It can feel like a brain teaser, but the universe is considered everything within the universe. In the expanding universe, there is no pan. Just dough. Even if there were a pan, it would be part of the universe and therefore it would expand with the pan.

Even for me, a teaching professor in physics and astronomy who has studied the universe for years, these ideas are hard to grasp. You don't experience anything like this in your daily life. It's like asking what direction is farther north of the North Pole.

Another way to think about the universe's expansion is by thinking about how other galaxies are moving away from our galaxy, the Milky Way. Scientists know the universe is expanding because they can track other galaxies as they move away from ours. They define expansion using the rate that other galaxies move away from us. This definition allows them to imagine expansion without needing something to expand into.

The expanding universe

The universe started with the Big Bang 13.8 billion years ago. The Big Bang describes the origin of the universe as an



The universe is full of stars, galaxies and planets – it's expanding every day. NASA/JPL-Caltech/University of Wisconsin via AP

extremely dense, hot singularity. This tiny point suddenly went through a rapid expansion called inflation, where every place in the universe expanded outward. But the name Big Bang is misleading. It wasn't a giant explosion, as the name suggests, but a time where the universe expanded rapidly.

The universe then quickly condensed and cooled down, and it started making matter and light. Eventually, it evolved to what we know today as our universe.

The idea that our universe was not static and could be expanding or contracting was first published by the physicist Alexander Friedman in 1922. He confirmed mathematically that the universe is expanding.

While Friedman proved that the universe was expanding, at least in some spots, it was Edwin Hubble who looked deeper into the expansion rate. Many other scientists confirmed that other galaxies are moving away from the Milky Way, but in 1929, Hubble published his famous paper that confirmed the entire universe was expanding, and that the rate it's expanding at is increasing.

This discovery continues to puzzle astrophysicists. What phenomenon allows the universe to overcome the force of gravity keeping it together while also

expanding by pulling objects in the universe apart? And on top of all that, its expansion rate is speeding up over time.

Many scientists use a visual called the expansion funnel to describe how the universe's expansion has sped up since the Big Bang. Imagine a deep funnel with a wide brim. The left side of the funnel – the narrow end – represents the beginning of the universe. As you move toward the right, you are moving forward in time. The cone widening represents the universe's expansion.

Scientists haven't been able to directly measure where the energy causing this accelerating expansion comes from. They haven't been able to detect it or measure it. Because they can't see or directly measure this type of energy, they call it dark energy.

According to researchers' models, dark energy must be the most common form of energy in the universe, making up about 68% of the total energy in the universe. The energy from everyday matter, which makes up the Earth, the Sun and everything we can see, accounts for only about 5% of all energy.

Outside the expansion funnel

So, what is outside the expansion funnel?

Scientists don't have evidence of anything beyond our known universe. However, some predict that there could be multiple universes. A model that includes multiple universes could fix some of the problems scientists encounter with the current models of our universe.

One major problem with our current physics is that researchers can't integrate quantum mechanics, which describes how physics works on a very small scale, and

gravity, which governs large-scale physics.

The rules for how matter behaves at the small scale depend on probability and quantized, or fixed, amounts of energy. At this scale, objects can come into and pop out of existence. Matter can behave as a wave. The quantum world is very different from how we see the world.

At large scales, which physicists call classical mechanics, objects behave how we expect them to behave on a day-to-day basis. Objects are not quantized and can have continuous amounts of energy. Objects do not pop in and out of existence.

The quantum world behaves kind of like a light switch, where energy has only an on-off option. The world we see and interact with behaves like a dimmer switch, allowing for all levels of energy.

But researchers run into problems when they try to study gravity at the quantum level. At the small scale, physicists would have to assume gravity is quantized. But the research many of them have conducted doesn't support that idea.

One way to make these theories work together is the multiverse theory. There are many theories that look beyond our current universe to explain how gravity and the quantum world work together. Some of the leading theories include string theory, brane cosmology, loop quantum theory and many others.

Regardless, the universe will continue to expand, with the distance between the Milky Way and most other galaxies getting longer over time.

Nicole Granucci

Instructor of Physics, Quinnipiac University



The Elderly Couple

Two elderly people living in a senior apartment complex had known each other for a couple of years. One evening, there was a community supper in the big activity centre. The two were at the same table, sitting across from one another. As the meal went on, he took a few admiring glances at her and finally gathered the courage to ask, "Will you marry me?"

After about six seconds of careful consideration, she answered, "Yes. Yes, I will."

The meal ended, and with a few more pleasant exchanges, they went to their respective places.

The next morning, he was troubled. "Did she say 'yes' or did she say 'no'?" He couldn't remember.

Try as he might, he just could not recall — not even a faint memory.

With trepidation, he went to the telephone and called her.

First, he explained that he didn't remember as well as he used to.

Then he reviewed the lovely evening they'd had.

As he gained a little more courage, he inquired, "When I asked if you would marry me, did you say 'Yes' or did you say 'No'?"

He was delighted to hear her say, "Why, I said, 'Yes, yes I will,' and I meant it with all my heart."

Then she continued, "I am so glad you called because I couldn't remember who had asked me!"

The Man and the Three Girlfriends

A man was dating three ladies and wanted to decide who to marry. So, he gave them each \$10,000 and observed what they did with the money.

The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



Though Naaman was an accomplished military leader it became obvious in **2 Kings 5** that math was NOT his strength back when attending Eastpoint Military Academy.

The first one did a total makeover, which included a fancy hairstyle, makeup, and several new outfits. She then dressed up for the man and said, "I have done this to make myself more attractive to you because I love you so much."

The man was impressed.

The second woman went gift shopping for the man. She bought him a new smartphone, a watch, and some flashy clothes. As she presented these gifts to him, she said, "I've spent all the money on you because I love you so much."

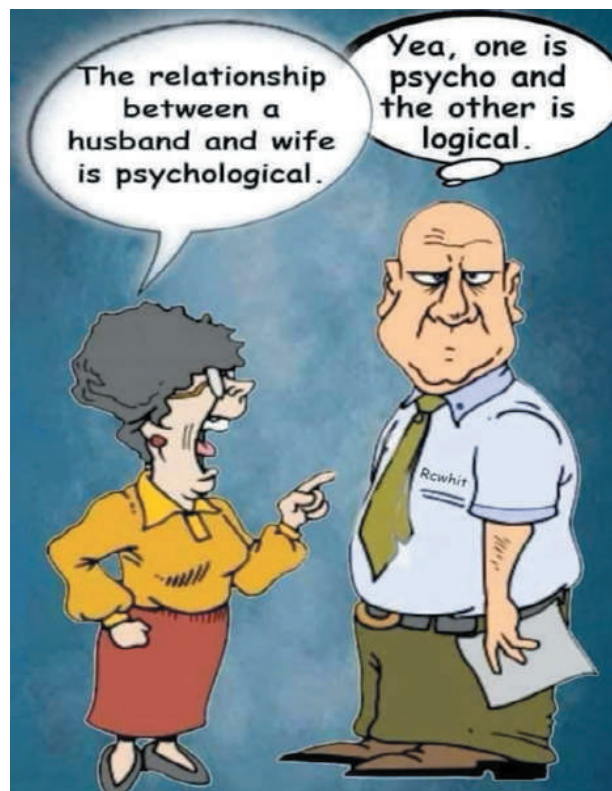
The man was again impressed.

The third one invested the money in the stock market. She earned \$40,000 and gave him back his \$10,000. She then deposited the remainder in a joint account. She told him that she wanted to secure their future because she loved him so much.

Obviously, the man was very impressed.

The man thought for a long time about what each woman had done with the money. In the end, he married the one with the biggest buttocks...

Men, men, men!!



Misunderstood Zipper Mishap

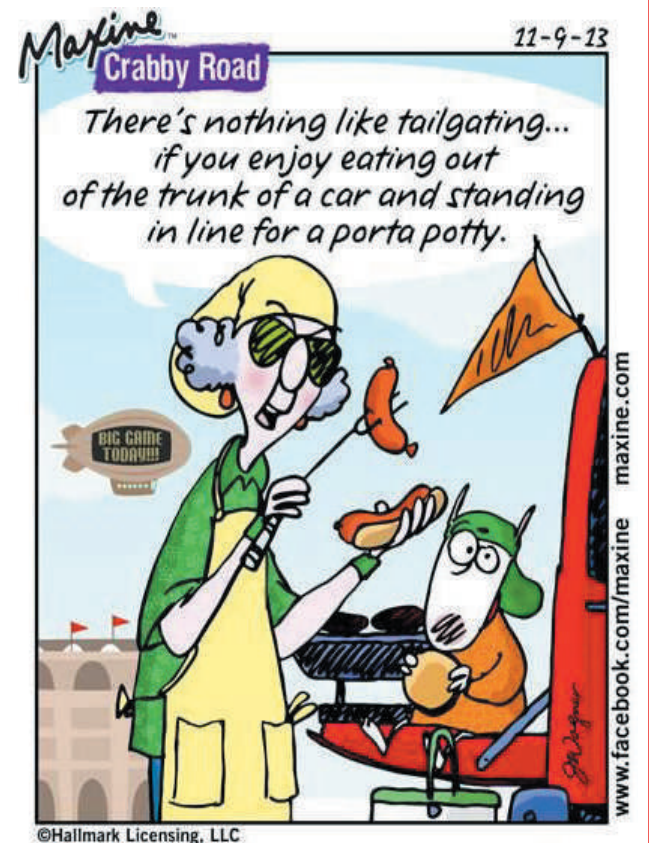
As the bus approached a stop, a young woman realized how difficult it would be to get in. Her dress was too tight for her to climb up easily, her hands were full of bags, and the line of people behind her didn't seem to be in a charitable mood. She thought the best thing to do was to loosen her dress, so with great effort, she stretched her hand behind her and pulled the zipper down halfway.

When that didn't seem to help, she pulled it down all the way. Just then, the bus pulled up, and still unable to climb, she was both shocked and offended when a guy standing behind her picked her up and put her on the bus. Turning, she protested, "How dare you touch me?"

The man replied, "Well, after you pulled my fly down, I kind of figured you wanted company."

Vegas Windfall and a Touching Plea

A man hit a big jackpot on a slot machine in Las Vegas.



As the machine was paying out, but before the pit boss reached the lucky winner, a guy approached him and pleaded, "I don't like disturbing you during your big moment, but my wife is sick and needs an operation. Could you kindly spare me three thousand dollars of your winnings?"

The man said, "Well, I truly sympathize with you. However, how can you assure me that you're not going to gamble it away?"

The guy replied, "Oh, I got gambling money. This is for something more important."

The Grammar Lesson Backfires

The teacher asked the little boy if he was going to the school party. "No, I ain't going," was the reply.

The teacher corrected the child, "You must not say 'I ain't going.' You must say, 'I'm not going.'" And to impress the point, she elaborated, "'I am not going,' 'he is not going,' 'we are not going,' 'you are not going,' 'they are not going.' Now dear, can you say it?"

The little boy nodded and, smiling, replied, "They ain't nobody going."

Dernière confidence de Mamie avant sa mort...

Mamie, proche de la mort, est dans son lit... Papy est à ses côtés...

Mamie lui demande : "Va dans le grenier, au fond à gauche, tu trouveras une boîte..."

Papy monte au grenier, et y découvre, sous la paille, une petite boîte contenant 3 œufs et 15 000 euros...

Il retourne auprès de Mamie sur son lit de mort et lui demande :

"C'est quoi ces 3 œufs ?"

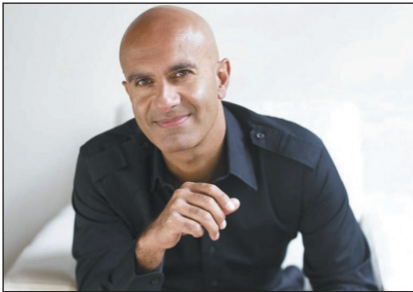
Mamie lui répond : "Chaque fois que je n'avais pas d'orgasme avec toi, pendant ces 50 ans d'amour, je mettais un œuf dans cette boîte..."

Papy, très fier de n'y trouver que 3 œufs en 50 ans d'amour, demande alors : "Et les 15 000 euros ?"

Mamie lui répond : "Chaque fois que j'en avais une douzaine, j'allais les vendre au marché !"

Let's Talk Success

Elon Musk's Top Habit for Winning



A crisis offers a unique opportunity to build a more agile and efficient company — one that thrives when the storm has passed. But where should you begin?

Start by resetting your mindset. Your daily performance mirrors your most dominant beliefs. Until your faith in success outweighs your fears, you'll remain trapped in uncertainty.

If you asked me about the primary source of Elon Musk's success at Tesla, I'd point to his intellectual brilliance and disciplined work ethic. Yet, above all, his triumph lies in how he views the world.

Musk is a pure possibilitarian — a person of limitless vision with little fear or self-doubt. We act in alignment with our mental narrative, so rewiring your mindset can help you overcome worry, recognize opportunities, and gain the confidence to achieve extraordinary things — especially when most people are

paralyzed by fear.

Over the years, I've had the privilege of advising eminent business leaders. From that experience, I've identified eight dominant mindsets that fuel productivity, regardless of circumstances. Here they are:

Mindset #1: If people don't laugh, the dream is too small.

Ridicule is a symptom of originality. If your ideas to grow your business during turbulent times are met with skepticism, it's likely because they are bold and innovative.

Mindset #2: The journey will be hard, but the voyage will be worth it.

Mastery is achieved when ordinary people commit to doing extraordinary things, despite the challenges.

Mindset #3: A remarkable dream requires a remarkable team.

Great leaders surround themselves with individuals who are smarter, faster, and more talented. Building a world-class team is essential to achieving extraordinary goals.

Mindset #4: Fortune favors the relentless.

Resilience is your greatest asset. Adversity always hides opportunities. The moment you feel like giving up is often the moment you need to press forward the most.

Mindset #5: The one who delivers the most value wins.

This is the perfect time to surpass your competition by exceeding expectations. Deliver astonishing value, or risk becoming irrelevant.

Mindset #6: Exceptional results come from exceptional routines.

Success stems from discipline — your morning routines, nightly rituals, diet, and work habits. Growth and adaptation are part of your design. Start small but commit to habits that unleash your genius.

Mindset #7: Yesterday's success is today's baseline.

Legendary leaders don't rest on their laurels. They continuously improve, ensuring that today is better than yesterday.

Mindset #8: If it's not fun, why do it?

Infuse your work with a spirit of playfulness. Even mundane tasks can be made enjoyable. Approach challenges with creativity, and your brain will naturally find solutions.

In these times of change, adopting these mindsets can help you lead the field, find hidden opportunities, and turn a crisis into your finest hour.

Robin Sharma
Humanitarian & Leadership
Missionary



Workplace Realities

Key Lessons for Professional Success

- Your Boss is Not Your Friend:** Regardless of how close you are, always maintain professional boundaries.
- Walls Have Ears:** Be cautious about whom you confide in at work. A listening ear may also be a flippant mouth.
- Focus on Results:** Your employer is concerned about results. How you achieve your goals is up to you. No excuses.
- Office Gossip:** There's often someone who reports on office happenings to the boss. Be aware of who might be sharing more than just official information.
- Signs of Trouble:** If you're removed from projects, someone is asked to understudy you, or you get demoted without clear reasons, it may indicate you're being considered for termination.
- Keep Private Matters Private:** As much as possible, separate your personal life from your work life. You might be under scrutiny for personal achievements without realizing it.
- Not Everyone Will Like You:** Some colleagues may dislike you for reasons beyond your control, such as your appearance, mannerisms, or accomplishments. Accept that not everyone will be a fan.
- Read Non-Verbal Cues:** Pay attention to body language, tone, pitch, and pace of voice. Studies show that 38% of communication is para-verbal and 55% is non-verbal, with only 7% being verbal.
- Learn from the Best:** There will always be that "exceptional colleague" who excels and gets recognition. Instead of feeling disdain, observe what they're doing differently and learn from them.
- Primary Aim:** While building positive relationships at work is important, remember your main goal is to get the job done and go home.

That's Life

Reflections by Robert Drake

Sometimes,

I feel I want to go back in time...
Not to change things, but to feel a couple of things twice.

Sometimes,

I wish I was a baby for a while...
Not to be walked in the pram, but to see my mother's smile.

Sometimes,

I wish I could go back to school...
Not to become a child again, but to



spend more time with those friends I never met after school.

Sometimes,

I wish I could be back in college...
Not to be a rebel, but to really understand what I studied.

Sometimes,

I wish I was a fresher at my work...
Not to do less work, but to recall the

joy of the first pay check.

Sometimes,

I wish my kids were younger...
Not because they grew fast, but to play with them a bit more.

Sometimes,

I feel I still had some more time to live...

Not to have a longer life, but to know what I could give to others.

Since the times

that are gone can never come back, let's enjoy the moments as we live them from now on, to the fullest.

Let's Celebrate Our Remaining Life

Every Moment, Every Day.

That's Life

Money has different names

- In church, it's called **offering**.
- In marriage, it's called **bride price**.
- In school, it's called **fees**.
- When you owe someone, it's

called **debt**.

- When you pay the government, it's called **tax**.
- In court, it's called a **fine**.
- In hospitals, it's called **bills**.
- In tenancy, it's called **rent**.
- In competition, it's called a **prize**.
- Government retirees call it **pension**.
- From boss to workers, it's called **salary**.

- From master to subordinates, it's called **wages**.
- When you borrow from a bank, it's called a **loan**.
- To kidnappers, it's called **ransom**.
- Illegally received in the name of service, it's called a **bribe**.
- In the police station, it's called **bail**.

The question is: When a boyfriend gives money to his girlfriend, what is it called?

Life's Lesson

The Reality of Life

By the time a lion reaches a certain stage in its life, it can no longer hunt, kill, or defend itself. It roars and roars until it weakens, eventually being surrounded by hyenas, nibbled, and devoured. The hyenas don't even wait for it to die before dismembering it.

Life is short, and what happens to the lion also happens to us humans. We won't be young forever. We won't always be the strongest. We won't always be on top. We won't always be the boss or the king of the jungle.

As long as God and life give us opportunities, let's practice humility, avoid arrogance, and refrain from mistreating others. Because sooner or later, life will present us with a bill, and we will reap what we have sown.

Relationships

Frida Kahlo's Timeless Reminder The Unspoken Truth about Emotional Labour Women often bear in Relationships

Frida Kahlo's poignant words to her husband serve as a timeless reminder of the emotional labour women often bear in relationships:

"I'm not asking you to kiss me or to apologize when I think you're wrong. I won't ask you to hug me when I need it most, or to tell me I'm beautiful, even if it's a lie. I won't ask you to write me sweet words, call me to share how your day went, or tell me you miss me."

"I won't ask you to appreciate what I do for you, to care for me when my soul is weary, or to support my decisions. I won't even ask you to listen when I have a thousand stories to share. I won't ask you for anything -- not even to stay by my side forever. Because if I have to ask, I don't want it anymore."

This declaration strikes at the core of an issue many women face -- the expectation that they must ask, even beg, for basic love, respect, and care that should come naturally in a relationship. In a world where strong women like Draupadi in the Mahabharata endured immense suffering without demanding what was rightfully theirs, it's time men understand that women should not have to request the love, respect, and support they inherently deserve.



Indian culture, rich with examples of resilient women, also shows how they often bore their burdens alone. Sita, in the Ramayana, followed her husband Rama into exile, enduring hardship while remaining steadfast in her love and loyalty. Yet, she was subjected to trials, her worth questioned, and her voice often unheard. Like Sita, women today should not have to prove their worth or ask for the respect they deserve by virtue of their strength.

A man who truly loves and respects a woman understands that it's his duty to be there for her, without her having to ask. The essence of a relationship lies in mutual respect and understanding. Just as Shakuntala in Kalidasa's epic waited patiently, believing in the strength of her love without needing validation, modern women deserve partners who intuitively understand and value their contributions, emotions, and needs.

The emotional labour that women perform every day - from nurturing their families to balancing careers --

should not go unnoticed. A man should step up to share that load without needing to be prompted. He should offer support when her soul is weary, listen when she has a thousand stories to share, and stand by her side through thick and thin -- not because she asked, but because he understands it's what she deserves.

In Indian society, women like Rani Lakshmibai, who fought bravely for her kingdom and people, symbolize the strength and resilience that should be celebrated and respected. A man should not wait until his partner is weary from battle to offer his support. Instead, he should be by her side from the start, sharing in both her struggles and triumphs equally.

True strength in a man lies not just in his ability to provide but in his ability to understand, empathize, and act without needing to be asked. He should not require reminders to appreciate what his partner does, to care for her when she is weary, or to celebrate her achievements. It is his responsibility to recognize and value her contributions without her having to seek validation.

Women should never feel they must diminish themselves or ask for the bare minimum in a relationship. The true measure of a man is in his ability to recognize the worth of the woman by his side and to meet her needs with respect, love, and understanding -- without her having to utter a word.

Frida Kahlo (1907–1954) was a renowned Mexican artist, best known for her deeply personal and symbolic paintings that often depicted her struggles with physical and emotional pain, as well as her complex identity. Kahlo's art and personal story have inspired countless people, particularly in the feminist and LGBTQ+ communities, for her courage in embracing her identity, her unapologetic expression of pain and vulnerability, and her ability to challenge societal norms, especially regarding gender, beauty, and the female experience.

Breaking Bad Habits: How Everyday Choices Impact Your Well-Being

Cracking your knuckles might annoy those around you, but it could also weaken your grip strength and lead to swollen hands over time. The sound you hear is caused by tiny bubbles popping in the synovial fluid that lubricates your joints. Fortunately, studies suggest this habit doesn't increase your risk of arthritis.

Bite Your Nails

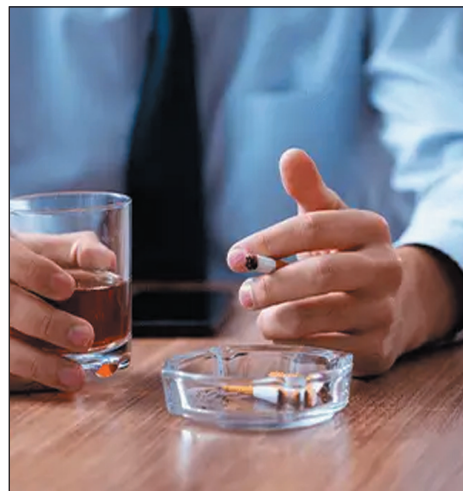
Nail-biting can harm your teeth and the delicate skin around your nails, potentially leading to infections. This habit also increases the chance of spreading germs to your mouth, heightening your risk of colds and other illnesses. To curb nail-biting, keep your nails trimmed or manicured and manage stress through exercise or relaxation techniques.

Cheat Yourself on Sleep

Skipping sleep doesn't just make you groggy—it increases your risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, and depression. Chronic sleep deprivation also impairs memory and learning. Aim for 7–8 hours of sleep nightly to support your overall health.

Blast Your Headphones

Listening to loud music through headphones can cause long-term hearing damage. Prolonged exposure to sounds above 75 decibels, equivalent to a vacuum cleaner's volume, is linked to hearing loss and cognitive decline, especially in



each day can make a difference.

Smoke Cigarettes

The risks of smoking are well-known, ranging from lung cancer and heart disease to stroke and respiratory issues. Smoking also accelerates skin aging. If you want to quit, consult your doctor about cessation programs and medications for support.

Drink Too Much Alcohol

Excessive alcohol consumption can lead to high blood pressure, liver disease, digestive problems, and an increased risk of cancer. Moderation is essential: no more than one drink per day for women and two for men. If you struggle with over-drinking, seek professional advice.

Overeat

Consuming large portions, especially of unhealthy foods, can result in weight gain and chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease. Opt for smaller portions and prioritize nutrient-rich foods like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to support your health.

Skip Breakfast

Skipping breakfast often leads to overeating later and disrupts your metabolism. Studies show that starting your day with a balanced breakfast containing protein, fiber, and healthy fats can help control appetite and boost metabolism.

Let Stress Pile Up

Chronic stress can increase your risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, and digestive issues. It also weakens the immune system and disrupts sleep. Practice mindfulness, meditation, yoga, or deep breathing exercises to manage stress effectively.

Ignore Your Gut Health

Your gut health significantly affects digestion, immunity, and mood. Poor diet, stress, and inadequate sleep can harm your gut microbiome. Support gut health with a fiber-rich diet, fermented foods, and probiotics.

Drive Distracted

Using your phone or engaging in distractions while driving significantly raises the risk of accidents. Distracted driving is responsible for numerous injuries and fatalities annually. Stay safe by keeping your focus on the road and avoiding phone use while driving.

Forget to Get Screened

Preventive health screenings help detect problems early. Regular check-ups, including mammograms, colonoscopies, and cholesterol tests, can catch issues before they become severe. Talk to your doctor about screenings appropriate for your age and risk factors.

Medically Reviewed by Carol DerSarkissian, MD - WebMD

Stree 2: Bollywood's Record-Breaking Phenomenon of 2024

It has been an intriguing year for Indian cinema. With *Pushpa 2* smashing records and *Laapataa Ladies* heading to the Oscars, Bollywood's overall track record continues to feature fewer hits and more misses. Even the industry's signature formula — ensemble casts, massive budgets, and high-octane promotions — has largely failed to deliver consistent blockbusters. Yet, amid this mixed bag of outcomes, one film has risen above the rest to rewrite history, reports by Sanjana Ray.

Google's annual report for 2024 reveals that *Stree 2* is the most searched film of the year, surpassing popular contenders like *Kalki 2898 AD*, *Singham Again*, and *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3*. Not only has this horror-comedy sequel captivated audiences, but it has also emerged as the highest-grossing Hindi film of all time in India, grossing a staggering Rs 857.15 crore (approximately \$857.15 million) worldwide and over Rs 600 crore (approximately \$600 million) domestically.

Directed by Amar Kaushik, *Stree 2* stars Rajkummar Rao and Shraddha Kapoor in lead roles, reprising their characters from the 2019 blockbuster *Stree*. The film also features stellar performances by Pankaj Tripathi, Abhishek Banerjee, and Aparshakti Khurana.

According to industry tracker Sacnilk, as well as reports from Hindustan Times and DNA, *Stree 2* surpassed Shah Rukh Khan's *Jawan* and *Pathaan*, Ranbir Kapoor's *Animal*, Sunny Deol's *Gadar 2*, and Aamir Khan's *Dangal* to claim the top spot. Remarkably, it became the first Hindi film to cross the Rs 600 crore (approximately \$600 million) mark in domestic earnings, breaking *Jawan*'s previous record of Rs 582.31 crore (approximately \$582.31 million).

A Triumph of Modesty

Unlike many Bollywood blockbusters with sky-high budgets, such as Rohit Shetty's *Singham Again* (Rs 350 crore (approximately \$350 million)), *Stree 2* was produced on a modest budget of Rs 50 crore (approximately \$50 million), according to Moneycontrol. This makes it one of the most profitable Indian films of all time. Its success underscores the power of compelling storytelling and strategic execution over extravagant spending.

Rajkummar Rao, who earned Rs 6 crore (approximately \$6 million) for his role, and Shraddha Kapoor, who received Rs 5 crore (approximately \$5 million), both featured as GQ Men of the Year 2024 winners. Speaking about the film's success, Kapoor said, "Success like this



isn't just my own to claim — it's good news for the industry overall. Because it tells you something we all desperately want to hear: that there's a chance that people will come to theatres. And that really drives you to do work that brings people in. It validates your choices."

Rao echoed similar sentiments, crediting the film's achievements to a collective effort: "Its success can't be down to any one of us; it happened

because of the film *Amar* (Kaushik, the director) made, the vision Dinoo (producer Dinesh Vijan) had, the reach, the marketing, the distribution, and more importantly, the kind of love the first part got."

Stree 2 is the fourth installment in the Maddock Supernatural Universe, a franchise known for blending comedy and horror with a unique cultural touch. The film's success not only reaffirms the appeal of this genre but also highlights the audience's hunger for innovative storytelling.

Other Top Searched Films of 2024

After *Stree 2*, the second-most searched film on Google this year is *Kalki 2898 AD*, an epic featuring Prabhas, Deepika Padukone, Amitabh Bachchan, and Kamal Haasan. The third spot is held by *12th Fail*, a critically acclaimed drama headlined by Vikrant Massey.

The unprecedented success of *Stree 2* offers a glimmer of hope for Bollywood, signalling that audiences are still willing to flock to theatres for the right film. As the industry grapples with changing viewer preferences and the rise of streaming platforms, the triumph of this modestly budgeted blockbuster serves as a testament to the enduring power of quality cinema.

Priyanka Chopra Jonas Confirms Bollywood Comeback: 'I Really Miss the Dancing'



Priyanka Chopra Jonas is all set to make her long-awaited return to Bollywood. The global icon, who has been a prominent figure in Hollywood in recent years, confirmed at the Red Sea Film Festival 2024 in Jeddah that she is in talks to sign a new Hindi film, aiming for a 2025 release.

In a candid conversation during the festival, Priyanka expressed her deep connection to her Indian roots and the unique charm of Bollywood. "I take my roots wherever I go. It's a part of my family, it's a part of my upbringing. India has always been in my heart, and Indian films will always be a part of my heart," she said. Her statement has ignited excitement among fans who have eagerly

awaited her comeback to the Indian film industry since her last Hindi film, *The White Tiger* (2021), where she starred alongside Adarsh Gourav and Rajkummar Rao.

The actress shared her longing for the distinct elements of Bollywood. "I really miss the dancing more than anything," Priyanka admitted, referencing the vibrant song-and-dance routines that define the industry. She added, "I am very close to deciding on doing one next year, so keep your fingers crossed. Send good vibes that it works out."

The announcement comes as a refreshing piece of news for her fans, who have followed her transformative journey from Bollywood's leading lady to a global superstar. Known for her impeccable performances in films like *Barfi!*, *Mary Kom*, and *Bajirao Mastani*, Priyanka has always balanced diverse roles in Bollywood with international projects. Her Hollywood credits include the hit TV series *Quantico* and movies like *Baywatch* and *The Matrix Resurrections*.

As Priyanka Chopra Jonas sets her sights on a Bollywood comeback, the film industry and her fans eagerly await the announcement of her next project. Whether it's her passion for dancing or her dedication to telling authentic stories, Priyanka's return promises to be a landmark moment in her illustrious career.

Harnaaz Sandhu Makes Bollywood Debut with Baaghi 4

The much-anticipated *Baaghi 4* has captured headlines with the announcement that Harnaaz Sandhu, Miss Universe 2021, will make her Bollywood debut in the action-packed franchise. Directed by A Harsha and produced by Sajid Nadiadwala, the film is set for a grand theatrical release on September 5, 2025, reports The Statesman.

Harnaaz Sandhu, the first Indian woman in 21 years to win the Miss Universe crown, has already mesmerized global audiences with her elegance and confidence. Now, she is ready to bring her charm to Indian cinema, adding fresh excitement to the *Baaghi* universe. "Joining the *Baaghi 4* team is a dream come true," Harnaaz shared on social media, expressing gratitude to producer Sajid Nadiadwala and Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment for believing in her Bollywood aspirations. December 12 holds special significance for her, as it marks both her historic pageant victory and her official entry into films.

The film features Harnaaz alongside Tiger Shroff, the enduring face of the *Baaghi* franchise, and actress Sonam Bajwa. Tiger, known for his exceptional action sequences and on-screen charisma, welcomed his new co-star warmly via Instagram, heightening the anticipation. Veteran actor Sanjay Dutt adds further



star power, taking on the role of the film's menacing antagonist. A recently released first-look poster featuring Dutt seated on a gothic throne with a haunting expression has already created a buzz online. The tagline "Every Aashiq is a Villain" teases a gripping narrative with layered characters.

Harnaaz's transition from the pageant world to Bollywood is poised to be a defining moment, not just for her but also for the *Baaghi* series. Fans eagerly await September 5, 2025, when she takes her first steps into Indian cinema's spotlight in one of its most beloved action franchises.



Vendredi 12 decembre - 21.05



Samedi 13 decembre - 20.30



Dimanche 14 decembre - 15.20



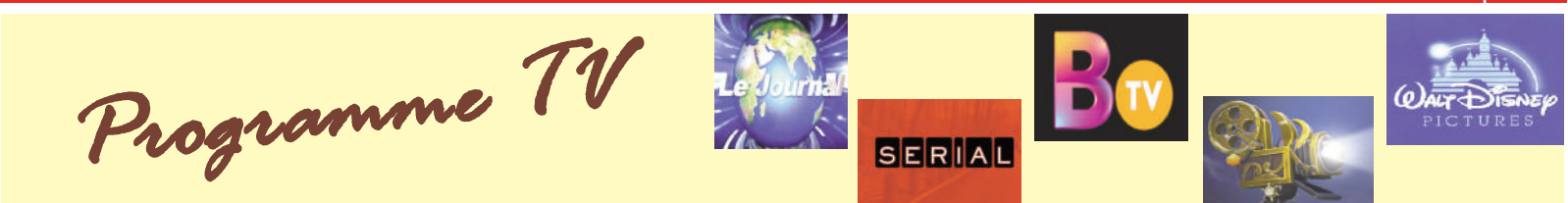
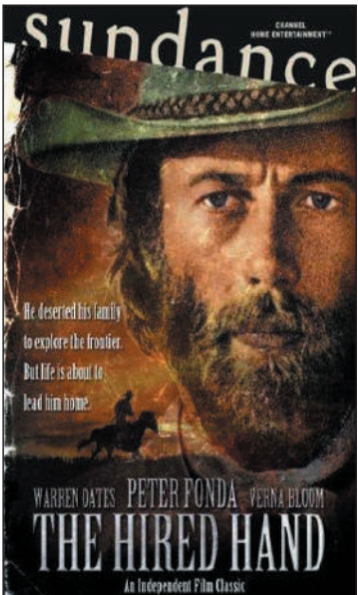
Programme TV



SERIAL



	MBC 1	MBC 2	MBC 3	Cine 12	Bollywood TV
vendredi 12 decembre	07.41 Serial: Under Pressure 08.48 Les Riches Pleurent Aussi 09.40 Film: Borrowed 11.30 Your Love Is My Fortune 12.00 Le Journal 12.35 Tele: Terre Nostra 13.30 Tele: Le Chemin Du Destin 14.00 Tele: Pasion Y Poder 15.00 Live: Samachar 15.21 Film: Au Mepris Des Lois 16.46 Mag: Hollywood's Best Film 17.30 Your Love Is My Fortune 18.30 Serial: Shiv Shakti 19.00 Serial: Doree 19.20 Sayings Radha Krishna 19.30 Le Journal 20.30 Film: Monolith 22.40 Tele: Terra Nostra 23.33 Le Journal 00.16 The Bionic Woman 01.30 Serial: Le Chemin Du Destin	06.15 Les Grandes Lignes 06.45 Local: En Forme 07.50 Rodrig: Sa Lavi-La 10.40 Rodrig: J'ai Faim 12.00 Rodrig: Decouvertes 13.25 Rodrig: Sa Lavi La 14.34 Local: J'ai Faim 15.50 Rodrig Prog: Klip Seleksion 16.40 La Journee Sous Le Regard 17.03 Local: La Sosiete 18.00 Seiral: Passion And Power 18.30 Les Riches Pleurent 19.20 Le Magazine De L'emploi... 19.45 Enn Semenn Dan Lafrik 20.05 Local: Animalia Nos Amis... 20.30 Local: Lir - Ekrir Kreol 22.30 Local: La Sosiete 23.20 Local: Meshiagare... 23.33 Rodrig Otantik 23.59 Local: Itinerer Moris 00.12 Rodrig Prog: Zenn Aktif	07.00 Mag: Tenali Rama 07.13 Gadget Guru Ganesha 08.09 Local: Amrit Vani 10.00 Serial: Agniphera 11.30 Serial: Radha Krishna 12.00 Film: Yaaron Ka Yaar Starring: Shatrughan Sinha, Leena Chandravakar 15.00 Live: Samachar 15.30 Serial: Jai Jai Shiv Shankar 16.00 Serial: Ishaaron Ishaaron 16.40 Serial: Bhakharwadi 17.30 Serial: Radha Krishna 18.30 Loca: Mati Ke Mol 20.00 Local: Khel Khiladi 20.30 Serial: Vidrohi 21.00 Film: Yeh Kahani Hai Laila Manju Ki Starring: Pradeep Pandey Chintu, Akshara Singh, Manoj Tiger... 23.10 Serial: Mere Sai	08.10 Brewster The Rooster 08.32 Idefix Et Les Irreductibles 10.04 Film: La Vallee Des Lanternes 11.45 Mag: Eco India 12.26 Mag: Border Crossing 12.58 Film: Nils Holgerssons 14.31 Mag: Animal DNA 14.49 D.Anime: Hiccup And Sneezee 15.31 D.Anime: Robin Des Bois 15.40 D.Anime: Rockabye Island 15.52 D.Anime: Les Schtroumpfs 16.05 D.Anime: Dragonero 16.39 D.Anime: Miraculous... 16.51 Serial: Sept Nains Et Moi 17.15 Doc: Southern 18.00 Doc: Heat Waves 18.42 Mag: Business Beyond 19.28 Mag: Vous Et Vous 20.01 Tele: Le Temps D'aimer 21.05 Film: The Other Side Of The Door	14.25 Serial: Radha Mohan 14.55 Serial: Doree 15.30 Film: Aladin Cast: Amitabh Bachchan, Sanjay Dutt, Riteish Deshmukh 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.31 Kundali Bhagya 19.01 Udaariyaan 19.32 Dharam Patni 20.01 Mithai 20.31 Serial: Yashomati Maiyya Ke Nandlala 21.01 Anupamaa 21.31 Mere Sai 22.01 Kismat Ki Lakiron Se 22.30 Mere Dad Ki Dulhan 22.59 Serial: Rajaa Betaa 23.30 Film: Aladin Cast: Amitabh Bachchan, Sanjay Dutt, Riteish...
samedi 13 decembre	03.10 Serial: NCIS: New Orleans 04.43 Serial: Treadstone 06.30 Tele: Le Temps D'aimer 07.00 Serial: Heartland 08.30 Serial: Blue Lights 09.15 Serial: Under Pressure 10.00 Serial: Treadstone 10.49 Serial: NCIS: New Orleans 11.30 Tele: Le Temps D'Aimer 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Serial: Seal Team 13.18 Tele: Barbarita... 15.00 Live: Samachar 15.25 Film: Monolith 16.49 Tele: L'Empire Du Mensonge 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.31 Enter: Sa Re Ga Ma Pa... 19.30 Le Journal 20.30 Film: Jurassic World 22.30 Serial: Treadstone 23.11 Mag: Red Carpet 23.28 Le Journal	06.00 Local: 13 Minit Natir Rodrig 06.15 Enn Semenn Dan Lafrik 07.05 Local: Itinerer Moris 07.40 Local: Lir - Ekrir Kreol 09.33 Local: La Sosiete 10.25 Local: Dance Fever 12.00 Rodrig: 13 Minit Natir 13.00 La Journee Sous Le Regard... 13.25 Local: Couleur Marine 14.55 Local: La Sosiete 15.53 Local: Retrovizer 16.40 La Journee Sous Le Regard 18.05 Serial: Heartland 19.00 Journal Kreol 19.20 Mag De L'emploi Et Des Metiers 20.06 Local: Prets Pour Les Fetes 20.38 Local Production MBC 2 21.44 Local: Glwar Dantan 22.10 Rodrig Prog: Klip Seleksion 23.00 Journal Rediffusion 23.20 Local: Lavi Zoli An XXL	05.00 Mag: Aastha TV 06.59 Mag: 76th British Academy 07.36 Serial: Popular Hindi Songs 08.00 Local: Hamar Fitness 08.30 Local: Abhyas Yog 10.27 Bade Acche Lagte Hai 2 12.00 Serial: Dikri Vahalno Dariyo 12.30 Local: Mati Ke Mol 14.00 Serial: Mere Dad Ki Dulhan 14.30 Mag: Talaash 15.00 Samachar 15.30 Film: Aashiqui.In 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Saying Radha Krishna 19.15 Local: Virasat International 21.00 Film: Uthaaan Cast: Priyanshu Chatterjee, Neha Dhupia 23.19 Mag: 76th British Academy 23.45 Local: Puranya Pakwan 00.11 Local: Gyan Vigyan 00.26 Local: Virasat International	06.00 D.Anime: Miraculous... 06.26 Les Nouvelles Aventures De... 09.25 D.Anime: Sam Le Pompier 09.48 D.Anime: Superstore 10.35 Mag: D.I.Y. Discover Your... 10.46 Film: A.R.I 13.00 Film: L'Odyssée D'Albert 14.43 Serial: Hiccup And Sneezee 15.11 D.Anime: Meteo Heroes 15.49 D.Anime: Les Schtroumpfs 16.02 D.Anime: Dragonero 16.45 Serial: Sept Nains Et Moi 17.15 Doc: By Train Along The... 18.05 Mag: In Good Shape 18.30 Doc: Top Div Sites 20.01 Tele: Le Temps D'Aimer 20.50 Doc: Bhutan 21.40 Film: Zombieland: Double... 23.22 Doc: It's In The Air 00.47 Doc: Rodeo Girls 01.30 Doc: Japan Video 01.34 Doc: The Expanding Desert	08.00 Dharam Patni 09.49 Gadget Guru Ganesha 10.02 Mithai 12.00 Udaariyaan 14.10 Anupamaa 16.11 Shaurya Aur Anokhi Ki Kahani 17.36 Vidrohi 18.30 Film: Dosti-Friends Forever With: Akshay Kumar, Bobby Deol 20.40 Gadget Guru Ganesha 21.00 Keh Doon Tumhein
samedi 14 decembre	03.07 Film: Zombieland 05.30 Serial: Gout De L'amour 06.18 Tele: Le Temps D'aimer 06.44 Film: Jurassic World 08.43 Serial: Pearson 09.26 Film: Monolith 10.48 Serial: NCIS: New Orleans 11.30 Tele: Le Temps D'Aimer 12.00 Le Journal 12.35 Film: Breaking In 14.10 Serial: Zoo 15.00 Samachar 15.20 Film: Mes Autres Vies De Chien 17.31 Tele: L'empire Du Mensonge 19.30 Le Journal Televisé 20.30 Film: Marie Antoinette 22.27 Serial: Pearson 23.10 Mag: Red Carpet 23.30 Le Journal 00.15 Tele: Sublime Mensonge	06.00 Rodrig Prog: Coin Zen 07.40 Local: Glwar Dantan 09.05 Local: Prets Pur Les Fetes 09.45 Rodrig Prog: Promnad 10.10 Rodrig Prog: Klip Seleksion 11.00 Local: Nu Rasinn 12.26 Local: Prets Pour Les Fetes 13.03 La Journee Sous Le Regard 14.30 End Of Year Celebrations 16.40 Local: Saver Kiltirel 17.05 Local: Tous Egaux 17.35 Local: Glwar Dantan 18.03 Serial: Heartland 19.00 Journal Kreol 19.24 Local: Info En Langue... 20.05 Local: Les Klips 22.21 Rodrig: Sa Lavi-La 23.00 Journal Rediffusion 23.34 Arsv MBC - Fer Rouille 00.00 Local: Mangeons Veg 00.27 Rodrig Prog: Komanter	06.59 Musical Prog Independence 10.20 Popular Hindi Songs 08.00 Local: Hamar Fitness 08.26 Local: Puranya Pakwan 10.30 Serial: Mahabharat 12.00 Film: Takkar 15.00 Samachar 15.21 Serial: Radha Krishna 16.00 Local: MBC Production 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Live From Ramtirth Mandir... 20.31 Serial: Porus 21.00 Keh Doon Tumhein 21.30 Naagin 22.12 Serial: Bahubali 22.56 Dulhin Uhe Jo Nanad Man... 00.04 Local: Bappi Lahiri... 01.06 Local: Yeh Shaam Mastani 02.00 Film: Takkar Cast: Naseeruddin Shah, Suniel Shetty, Sonali Bendre	08.22 Film: Miraculous World 09.16 D.Anime: Caillou 09.24 D.Anime: Tut! Tut! Cory... 09.40 D.Anime: Superstore 10.21 D.Anime: D.I.Y. Discover Your 10.28 Film: Anastasia 12.10 Doc: Bhutan 13.00 Film: M. Popper Et Ses Pingouins 14.31 Mag: Animal DNA 14.50 Serial: Hiccup And Sneezee 15.32 D.Anime: Robin Des Bois 16.00 D.Anime: Les Schtroumpfs 16.56 Serial: Sept Nains Et Moi 17.15 Doc: It's In The Air 18.00 Doc: Ageless Gardens 18.30 Doc: Brilliant Corners 19.30 Mag: Arts Unveiled 20.00 Tele: Le Temps D'Aimer 20.30 Live: News 21.40 Film: Burn	00.00 Mithai 01.45 Udaariyaan 03.45 Anupamaa 05.49 Shaurya Aur Anokhi Ki Kahani 07.24 Vidrohi 07.48 Tenali Rama 08.00 Kabhi Kabhie Ittefaq Sey 10.00 Kundali Bhagya 12.00 Rajaa Betaa 14.00 Kismat Ki Lakiron Se 16.00 Wagle Ki Duniya 18.38 Film: Happy Phirr Bhag Jayegi 20.39 Tenali Rama 21.00 Mahabharat 21.47 Dance India Dance Super Moms 22.35 Rajaa Betaa 00.21 Kabhi Kabhie Ittefaq Sey
dimanche 15 decembre	03.15 Tele: Terra Nostra 04.06 Tele: Les Riches Pleurent 05.18 Tele: Gout De L'Amour 06.06 Serial: The Queen Of Flow 06.59 Serial: Supercopier 08.45 Tele: Les Riches Pleurent 09.35 Film: The Quake 11.30 Tele: Your Love Is My Fortune 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Tele: Terra Nostra 13.20 Tele: Le Chemin Du Destin 14.10 Serial: Supercopier 15.00 Samachar 15.25 Film: Love Under The Stars 16.45 Mag: Hollywood's Best Film 17.30 Tele: Your Love Is My Fortune 18.46 Serial: Shiv Shakti 19.07 Serial: Doree 20.30 Serial: Belgravia 21.15 Serial: Blue Lights 22.13 Tele: Heartland	08.27 Rodrig: Sa Lavi-La 09.14 Local: Fer Roule 10.18 Local: Mangeons Veg 12.05 Local: Nu Rasinn 12.57 La Journee Sous Le Regard 13.02 Rodrig: Sa Lavi-La 13.35 Local: En Toute Intimite 14.27 Rodrig Prog: Komanter 16.06 Local: Les Klips 17.07 Morisien Konn Ou La Sante 18.00 Tele: Pasion Y Poder 18.30 Tele: Les Riches Pleurent... 19.30 Le Magazine De L'emploi 19.45 Local: Evasion 20.00 Local: Metie 20.20 Eclairage Economique 20.35 Local: Tous Egaux 21.06 Morisien Konn Ou La Sante 21.32 Les Grandes Lignes 22.00 Noel Avec Les Enfants A... 22.50 La Journee Sous Le Regard	07.00 Tenali Rama 07.12 Gadget Guru Ganesha 08.00 Local: Bappi Lahiri... 08.53 Local: Yeh Shaam Mastani 09.40 Bahubali 10.20 Dulhin Uhe Jo Nanad Man... 11.30 Radha Krishna 12.00 Film: Pyar Ki Jeet 15.21 Serial: Kisma 15.30 Jai Jai Shiv Shankar 15.56 Kundali Bhagya 17.30 Serial: Radha Krishna 18.30 Radha Krishna 18.57 Local: Ayush 19.30 Excerpts From Shiv Abhishek - Clemencia 20.30 Serial: Ramayan 20.55 Film: Khalifa With: Randhir Kapoor, Rekha, Pran, I. S. Johar, Madan Puri, Lalita Pawar 23.22 Serial: Mere Sai	06.25 Doc: A Mediterranean... 07.22 Les Nouvelles Aventures... 07.32 D.Anime: Sonic Boom 08.39 D.Anime: Idefix Et Les Irreductibles 10.05 Film: Paroles De Champion 11.26 D.Anime: D.I.Y. Discover 11.37 Doc: Ageless Gardens 12.00 Doc: Brilliant Corners 13.30 Film: MBC CINEMA 15.00 Mag: Animal DNA 15.19 Serial: Hiccup And Sneezee 15.47 D.Anime: Meteo Heroes 16.02 D.Anime: Robin Des Boix 16.14 D.Anime: Rockabye Island 16.25 D.Anime: Les Schtroumpfs 16.59 D.Anime: Miraculous... 17.20 Serial: Sept Nains Et Moi 18.30 Mag: The 77 Percent 19.30 Mag: In Good Shape 20.01 Tele: Le Temps D'Aimer 21.05 Film: Madtown	14.25 Radha Mohan 14.51 Doree 15.25 Film: Banjo Starring: Riteish Deshmukh, Nargis Fakhri 18.00 Samachar 18.31 Kundali Bhagya 19.00 Udaariyaan 19.30 Dharam Patni 20.05 Mithai 20.33 Yashomati Maiyya Ke 21.09 Anupamaa 21.32 Mere Sai



	MBC 1	MBC 2	MBC 3	MBC 5	Bollywood TV
mardi 17 decembre	05.11 Tele: Gout De L'Amour 06.01 Serial: The Queen Of Flow 08.10 Tele: Le Temps D'Aimer 09.30 Film: Tom Sawyer Et Huckleberry Finn 11.31 Tele: Your Love Is My Fortune 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Tele: Terra Nostra 13.20 Tele: Le Chemin Du Destin 15.21 Film: Christina Noble 17.00 Mag: Hollywood's Best Film 17.30 Tele: Your Love Is My Fortune 18.00 Samachar 18.31 Serial: Shiv Shakti 18.58 Serial: Doree 19.30 Le Journal 20.30 Film: Don't Let Go 22.00 Tele: Terra Nostra 22.58 Tele: Your Love Is My Fortune 00.15 Serial: Wanted 00.59 Tele: Le Chemin Du Destin	07.45 Local: Tous Egaux 10.37 Rodrig Prog: Rodrig Mo Pei 11.54 Rodrig Prog: Feminin Pluriel 12.41 Eclairage Economique 13.00 La Journee Sous Le Regard 13.18 Local: A L'approche De Noel 15.45 Rodrig Mo Pei 16.48 Local: Aktiv 17.03 Local: Le Mag 18.00 Tele: Pasion Y Poder 18.30 Tele: Les Riches Pleurent... 19.20 Le Magazine De L'Emploi 20.35 Local: Priorite Sante 21.00 Local: Paroles Agricole 21.30 Local: Le Mag 22.24 Local: Elle 22.54 La Journee Sous Le Regard 23.00 Journal Rediffusion 23.20 Local: Music Tour 00.18 Local: Profil	07.23 Serial: Lambu G Tingu G 08.00 Ved Ki Shikshahein 10.07 Kundali Bhagya 11.30 Serial: Radha Krishna 12.01 Film: Hatyara 15.21 Other Serial: Radha Krishna 15.30 Serial: Sajanwa Aur Anokhi Ki Kahani 17.30 Serial: Radha Krishna 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.31 Local: Tark Vitark 20.30 Serial: Ramayan 21.00 Film: Kahin Din Kahin Raat Cast: Biswajeet, Sapna 23.18 Serial: Mere Sai 00.14 Serial: Wagle Ki Duniya 00.37 Local: Tark Vitark 01.03 Local: Samarpan 01.15 Local: Gyan Vigyan Theme 01.30 Local: Bhojpuri Dhamaka 02.09 Chikitsa Aur Swasthey	07.00 D.Anime: Miraculous... 07.31 D.Anime: Sonic Boom 07.43 D.Anime: Kika et Bob 08.11 BrewsterThe Rooster 10.06 Film: Robo-Dog 12.01 Mag: The 77 Percent 13.00 Film: Santa Who? 14.29 D.Anime: Animal DNA 14.48 Serial: Hiccup And Sneezee 15.30 D.Anime: Robin Des Bois 15.53 D.Anime: Les Schtroumpfs 16.05 D.Anime: Dragonero 16.27 D.Anime: Miraculous... 16.49 Serial: Sept Nains Et Moi 18.00 Mag: REV 18.30 Mag: Healthy Living 18.45 Mag: Red Carpet 19.00 Mag: Made In Germany 20.01 Tele: Le Temps D'Aimer 21.05 Tele: Seref Meselesi 22.18 Mag: Initiative Africa	14.25 Radha Mohan 14.55 Doree 15.30 Film: Jamun 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Kundali Bhagya 19.03 Udaariyaan 19.33 Dharam Patni 20.06 Mithai 20.29 Yashomati Maiyya Ke Nandlala 21.07 Anupama 21.29 Mere Sai 22.04 Kismat Ki Lakiron Se 22.34 Serial: Mere Dad Ki Dulhan 23.04 Serial: Rajaa Betaa 23.30 Film: Jamun 02.00 Kundali Bhagya 02.30 Udaariyaan 03.00 Dharam Patni 03.30 Mithai
mercredi 18 decembre	06.11 Serial: The Queen Of Flow 07.39 Serial: Airwolf 08.49 Les Riches Pleurent Aussi 09.35 Film: Don't Let Go 11.33 Tele: Your Love Is My Fortune 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Tele: Terra Nostra 13.20 Tele: Le Chemin Du Destin 13.46 Tele: Pasion Y Poder 14.15 Serial: Airwolf 15.00 Live: Samachar 15.25 Tele: Seref Meselesi 17.30 Tele: Your Love Is My Fortune 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.31 Serial: Shiv Shakti 18.55 Serial: Doree 19.20 Sayings Radha Krishna 19.30 Journal & La Meteo 20.30 Film: Viceroy's House Cast: Hugh Bonneville, Gillian Anderson, Manish Dayal 22.16 Tele: Terra Nostra	07.20 Local: Priorite Sante 08.38 Local: Profil 09.00 Rodrig: Rod'Art 10.41 Local: Music Tour 12.00 Rodrig: Plat Du Chef 12.11 Local: Son Ladan Mem 13.05 Local: Priorite Sante 13.30 Local: Paroles Agricole 14.55 Local: Nu Rasinn 16.40 La Journee Sous Le Regard 16.45 Local: En Forme 18.07 Tele: Passion And Power 18.30 Tele: Les Riches Pleurent... 19.20 Le Mag De L'emploi... 19.45 Emotion En Avant Plan 20.00 Local: Prets Pour Les Fetes 20.35 Local: Toc Toc Doc 21.00 Local: Agir Ensemble 21.30 Local: Les Klips 22.30 Local: Proze Dime 23.00 Journal Rediffusion 23.18 Local: Dance Fever	07.00 Tenali Rama 07.13 Gadget Guru Ganesha 07.33 Lambu G Tingu G 08.00 Tark Vitark 10.00 Shaurya Aur Anokhi Ki Kahani 11.30 Serial: Radha Krishna 12.00 Film: Chingari Cast: Leena Chandavarkar, Sanjay Khan, Pran 15.00 Samachar 15.20 Serial: Kisna 15.33 Jai Jai Shiv Shankar 15.53 Radha Mohan 17.30 Radha Krishna 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Local: Yatra 19.00 Local: Darshan 20.00 Local: Virasat 21.00 Film: Jamai Raja 23.30 Serial: Mere Sai 00.27 Serial: Wagle Ki Duniya	07.00 D.Anime: Miraculous.... 09.30 D.Anime: Riley Rocket 10.02 Film: Les Ours Boonie 11.30 D.Anime: D.I.Y. Discover... 12.06 Mag: Healthy Living 13.00 Film: MBC CINEMA 14.30 Mag: Animal DNA 14.48 Serial: Hiccup And Sneezee 15.17 D.Anime: Meteo Heroes 15.30 D.Anime: Robin Des Bois 15.43 D.Anime: Rockabye Island 15.54 D.Anime: Les Schtroumpfs 16.01 D.Anime: Dragonero 16.52 Serial: Sept Nains Et Moi 17.15 Doc: Iran From Above... 18.00 Mag: Afrimaxx 18.30 Transforming Business 18.45 Mag: Planet A 19.00 Arts Unveiled 20.01 Tele: Le Temps D'Aimer 21.05 Film: The Dead Don't Die	14.25 Radha Mohan 14.50 Doree 15.30 Film: Chatur Singh Two Star 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.31 Kundali Bhagya 19.02 Udaariyaan 19.33 Dharam Patni 20.00 Mithai 20.31 Yashomati Maiyya Ke Nandlala 21.00 Anupamaa 21.28 Mere Sai 22.05 Kismat Ki Lakiron Se 22.20 Mere Dad Ki Dulhan 22.51 Serial: Rajaa Betaa 23.30 Film: Chatur Singh Two Star 02.00 Kundali Bhagya 02.30 Udaariyaan
jeudi 19 decembre	06.03 Tele: The Queen Of Flow 08.11 Serial: Le Temps D'Aimer 08.37 Tele: Les Riches Pleurent 09.30 Film: Viceroy's House 11.33 Tele: Your Love Is My Fortune 12.00 Le Journal 12.25 Tele: Terra Nostra 13.20 Tele: Le Chemin Du Destin 13.45 Tele: Pasion Y Poder 14.15 Serial: Heartland 15.25 Film: Les Affameurs 17.15 Tele: Your Love Is My Fortune 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.31 Serial: Shiv Shakti 18.56 Serial: Doree 19.30 Le Journal 20.21 Film: Mrs. Chatterjee Vs Norway Stars: Rani Mukerji, Jim Sarbh, Bodhisattwa Majumdar 22.18 Tele: Terra Nostra 23.11 Your Love Is My Fortune	07.15 Local: Toc Toc Doc 07.30 Local: Agir Ensemble 11.55 Rodrig Spor 12.32 Local: Prets Pour Les Fetes 12.55 La Journee Sous Le Regard 13.35 Local: Agir Ensemble 13.56 Rodrig Prog: Klip Seleksion 14.41 Local: Proze Dime 15.10 Local: Dance Fever 16.40 La Journee Sous Le Regard 16.45 Local: Aktiv 18.00 Tele: Pasion Y Poder 18.31 Tele: Les Riches Pleurent... 19.00 Journal Kreol 19.15 Le Magazine De L'Emploi 20.00 Local: Les Grandes Lignes 20.30 Local: Ti Zistwar Zanan 21.15 Local: Le Mag 22.02 Chants De Noel Avec Hans... 22.59 Journal Rediffusion 23.19 Rodrig Prog: Klip Seleksion	07.00 Tenali Rama 08.00 Local: Yatra 10.00 Serial: Radha Mohan 12.00 Film: Oh Bewafa Cast: Rajendra Kumar, Yogeeta Bali 15.00 Samachar 15.30 Sajanwa Bairi Ho Gaile... 15.56 Agniphera 17.30 Radha Krishna 18.00 Samachar 18.30 Sayings Radha Krishna 18.46 Local: Bhajan Sandhya 20.30 Serial: Ramayan 21.01 Serial: Shiv Shakti 21.30 Yashomati Maiyya Ke Nandlala 21.57 Mag: Dharam Yatra 22.20 Mere Sai 23.28 Wagle Ki Duniya 00.36 Local: Amrit Vani	07.00 D.Anime: Miraculous... 07.43 D.Anime: Kika Et Bob 08.39 Idefix Et Les Irreductibles 10.00 Film: Le Roi Des Elephants 11.12 D.Anime: D.I.Y. Discover... 12.25 Mag: Arts Unveiled 13.00 Film: Boonie Bears 6 14.30 D.Anime: Kids Songs 14.49 D.Anime: Hiccup And Sneezee 15.18 D.Anime: Meteo Heroes 15.30 D.Anime: Robin Des Bois 15.44 D.Anime: Rockabye Island 15.55 D.Anime: Les Schtroumpfs 16.29 D.Anime: Miraculous... 17.04 Serial: Sept Nains Et Moi 18.00 Mag: Eco India 18.42 Mag: Carnet De Sante 19.00 Mag: Border Crossing 20.01 Tele: Le Temps D'Aimer 21.00 Film: The Hired Hand 22.39 Doc: Blood, Sweat and...	14.25 Radha Mohan 15.00 Doree 15.25 Film: Meri Nimmo Stars: Anjali Patil, Karan Dave 18.00 Live: Samachar 18.30 Kundali Bhagya 19.00 Udaariyaan 19.30 Dharam Patni 20.00 Mithai 20.24 Yashomati Maiyya Ke Nandlala 21.02 Anupamaa 21.34 Mere Sai 22.01 Kismat Ki Lakiron Se 22.29 Mere Dad Ki Dulhan 23.05 Rajaa Betaa 23.31 Film: Meri Nimmo Stars: Anjali Patil, Karan Dave





Nita Chicooree-Mercier

Le Regard des Autres

Les gens s'arrêtent devant les échoppes, inspectent les fruits et légumes et continuent leur chemin. Les plus pressés sortent les pièces, paient et repartent. Mais c'est avant tout un lieu en plein air, un marché où il fait bon de prendre son temps et d'entamer un brin de causette avec vendeuses ou gens du quartier. Installée depuis des années dans l'île, Mala, et, plus loin, Josiane, sont deux Mauriciennes qui confectionnent des sachets de diverses épices qu'elles proposent sur un étal bien garni, avec aussi de fruits de leur cour. Avec Mala, l'échange commence toujours par une salutation.

- Namasté. Quelles sont les nouvelles? Que se passe-t-il là-bas (Maurice)?

Ce sont les phrases habituelles qu'elle lance dans ces conversations de circonstance. Mais cette fois-ci, elle est très remontée.

- Tu as vu ça? Même ici, les gens ne comprennent pas ce qui s'est passé là-bas. En échange d'une banane qu'elle m'offre en plus de mes achats chez elle, je lui donne quelques fraises juteuses.

Bien entendu, il s'agit des élections. On évoque les stratégies qui ont abouti à ces résultats... Son mari tamoul ajoute son grain de sel à la conversation et renchérit: beaucoup de palabres et du cinéma, tout ça... Lorsqu'elle s'énerve, ou pour que les autres ne comprennent pas, Mala passe au bhojpuri. C'est tout le peuple de Maurice qu'elle maudit cette fois, et le vocabulaire ne fait pas dans la dentelle.

- Moi, j'ai dit à mes neveux et nièces sous le choc à Terre Rouge: faites votre travail, vivez votre vie. Plus tard, on verra.

Les ananas cultivés sans hormones en cette saison dégagent un parfum d'été. Comme d'autres commerçants, Mala se plaint de la concurrence mauricienne qui a eu le toupet de copier sur la marque réunionnaise Victoria pour que ce fruit soit vendu moins cher en Europe. Ils sont sans scrupules là-bas. Ce n'est pas honnête, déplore le mari.

- Il est vrai que la filouterie est érigée en art à Maurice. Quant à l'honnêteté, il faudra repasser...
- Nous aussi, nous avons une tradition agricole à transmettre à nos enfants, rajoute Mala.

Elle s'assoit sur le tabouret derrière son étal, arborant cet air dégoûté à chaque fois qu'elle évoque la situation ici, là-bas et ailleurs dans le monde.

Patricia, une Mauricienne du quartier, arrive vers nous.

- Tu as un beau chapeau, me lance-t-elle.
- Et toi, tu portes des robes longues maintenant?
- Un problème de peau, ma chère, explique-t-elle. Vaut mieux ne pas montrer les jambes.

Nous faisons quelques pas ensemble le long des passages. Elle a passé un week-end à Maurice juste pour un événement familial. Sinon, le pays natal a perdu tout attrait pour elle depuis belle lurette. Trop de préjugés, son



P. Eco-Sud

«La presse, une grosse blague. Les associations telles que celles de même que certains partisans de la défense de l'environnement sont bonnes qu'à taper sur les autorités et crier victoire en pavoisant à la MBC. Quant au public, la dernière fois où les pêcheurs firent une pétition pour réclamer que soit débloqué un portillon menant à la plage, ils ont dû attendre huit ans. C'est dire le rapport de force, et le courage des autorités à faire respecter la loi...»

milieu de fréquentation englué dans le passé... Maurice n'est plus sa tasse de thé.

- Ici, je fréquente tout le monde et je n'ai de compte à rendre à personne, a-t-elle souvent répété.

Avec un nom à rallonge, Patricia de X a franchi les barrières sociales avant même ses vingt ans à Maurice, à l'époque où je l'ai connue. La liberté se prend, elle ne nous est pas donnée, car elle est inhérente à notre nature. Le café commence à se remplir de monde. Les uns s'arrêtent avec poussette et bébé, tandis que d'autres posent leur sac par terre et s'attablent pour un verre. À bâtons rompus, nous évoquons la famille, les enfants, la politique et le temps qui passe.

- Tu sais, la politique à Maurice, pour moi, c'est entre la peste et le choléra..., pff! fit-elle en haussant les épaules.
- Ben voyons! Maurice s'en tire pas mal comparé à d'autres pays malgré la Covid et la guerre, j'insiste. La France croule sous les dettes, pire que les autres pays européens. La pauvreté progresse à grands pas en Grande-Bretagne.

Issue d'un milieu très riche, Patricia n'a pas eu grand mal à présenter sa fille aînée dans le milieu des affaires à Maurice où elle a décroché des contrats et a eu une expérience professionnelle pendant quelques années, assez longtemps pour qu'elle en soit dégoûtée pour de bon. Un cas classique de ceux qui sont éduqués ailleurs que dans une société clivée où les couloirs invisibles orientent chacun à sa place. La jeune femme plia bagages et partit s'installer à Paris. L'époux français développa une allergie épidermique à l'île natale de sa femme, tandis que la fille cadette déteste l'île depuis son adolescence. Hmm!

- Et tous ces étrangers installés à Maurice

et qui tiennent? Oui, mais ceux-là se fréquentent en cercle fermé, ne connaissent pas les contours et travers de l'île, et n'aspirent pas à en faire plus ample connaissance non plus.

Il y a deux semaines, je fis part à Patricia de mon souhait que le morceau de terrain de Crown Land à la Pointe aux Canonnières, barricadé par les propriétaires de bungalows, soit accessible au public. Sa famille aussi possède un bungalow au bord de la mer dans ce quartier.

- Eh bien, pourquoi les gens ne font pas la demande? me rétorqua-t-elle. Ou alors les associations. Sinon, signaler le problème à la presse...

Son air dubitatif en proposant la troisième option confirme qu'elle connaît bien les enjeux et les intérêts à Maurice. La presse, une grosse blague. Les associations de même que certains partisans de la défense de l'environnement passent leur temps à taper sur les autorités et à crier victoire en pavoisant à la MBC. Quant au public, la dernière fois où les pêcheurs firent une pétition pour réclamer que soit débloqué un portillon menant à la plage, ils ont dû attendre huit ans. C'est dire le rapport de force, et le courage des autorités à faire respecter la loi... Passons. Cette fois-ci, on n'a pas l'intention d'attendre des années.

- Bah! Ici, à la Réunion, les manifestations genre Aret Kokin Nou Laplaz se font plutôt sur un fond de xénophobie anti-française contre les propriétaires et gérants de restaurants tenus par des Français. Ils ont réussi à faire fermer deux restaurants pourtant bâtis sur pilotis et mettre du personnel au chômage. C'est un coin de rendez-vous des touristes en moins. Cette fois-ci, ils déversent leur hargne sur un autre restaurant qui marche très bien et fait vivre d'autres commerces par son animation. Un collectif de ces mécontents, composé souvent de partisans de la défense de l'environnement, écologistes gauchistes, mais aussi de petits bourgeois locaux qui en veulent à ces Blancs venus de France. Rien n'est simple.

Un Réunionnais originaire de Hong Kong est sidéré par les règlements du travail qui interdisent à la famille d'aider dans un commerce tenu par les proches. Il faut se méfier des clients qui dénoncent. L'Asie est loin. Même son de cloche chez une amie d'origine gujarati dans la capitale. Sa fille a tourné le dos au métier d'enseignant pour ouvrir une boulangerie avec son époux venu du Gujarat en Inde. Les gens du quartier de Saint-Denis rapportent aux autorités toute initiative des proches de donner un coup de main pendant le week-end.

- On se croirait en pays communiste, me confie-t-elle.

À force d'encadrer les gens dans un système où les besoins de chacun sont assurés d'une manière ou d'une autre, la France est, à certains égards, un pays communiste. C'est ce qui fait rêver certains à Maurice, qui aimeraient que l'État les maternelle.

Empêcher les gens de travailler! La délation, un bien vilain défaut, est monnaie courante. Son gendre indien n'en revient pas. C'est le monde à l'envers. On marche sur la tête ou plutôt sur une autre planète.

Tree of Knowledge

Evaluating

Our

Relationships

Without realizing it, we may be spending energy engaging in friendships that let us down, rather than cultivating ones that nourish us.

There comes a time in all our lives when we may need to evaluate our relationships, making sure that they are having a positive effect on us, rather than dragging us down. Without realizing it, we may be spending precious time and energy engaging in friendships that let us down, rather than cultivating ones that support and nourish us along our path. Life, with its many twists, turns, and challenges, is difficult enough without us entertaining people in our inner circle who drain our energy. We can do so much more in this world when we are surrounded by people who understand what we're trying to do and who positively support our efforts to walk our path.

We can begin this evaluation process by simply noticing how we feel in the context of each one of our close relationships. We may begin to see that an old friend is still carrying negative attitudes or ideas that we ourselves need to let go of in order to move forward. Or we may find that we have a long-term relationship with someone who has a habit of letting us down or not showing up for us when we need support. There are many ways to go about changing the status quo in situations like this — having a heart-to-heart talk with our friend and showing through example. This process isn't so much about abandoning old friends as it is about shifting our relationships so that they support us on our journey rather than hold us back.

An important part of this process is looking at ourselves and noticing what kind of friend we are to the people in our lives. We might find that as we adjust our own approach to a relationship, challenging ourselves to be more supportive and positive, our friends make adjustments as well and the whole world benefits.