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MAURITIUS TIMES

"Try not to become a man of success. Rather become a man of value." -- Albert Einstein

Interview: Megh Pillay, Former CEO - Air Mauritius

‘Burning down to ashes a national carrier built over 50 years only to start a new one is not an option’

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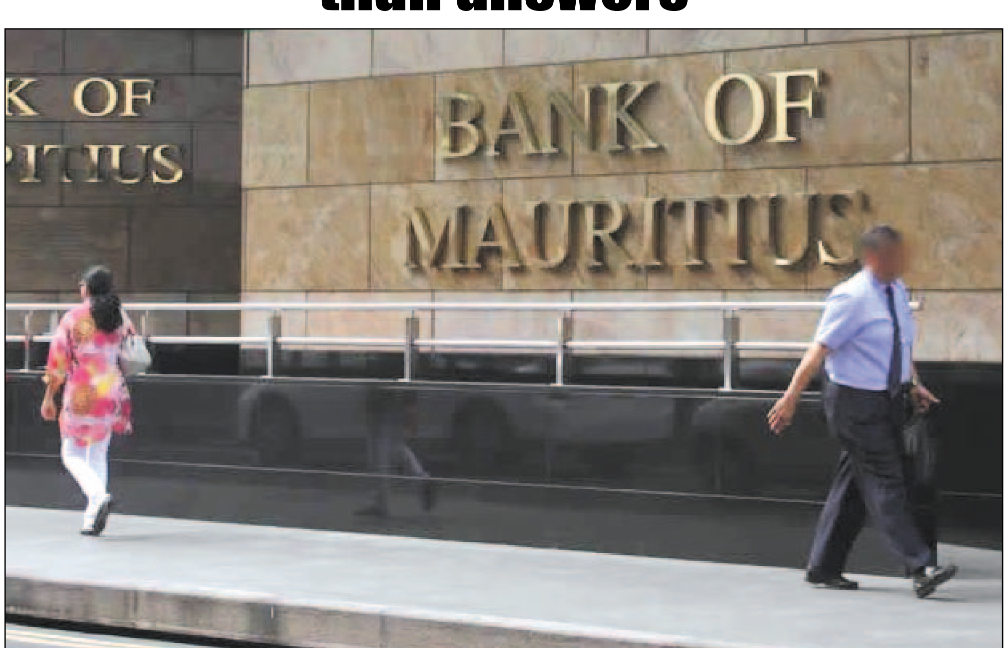
MIC: A new model of corporate finance that raises more questions than answers



In the spirit of representative democracy, government cannot afford to spend public funds from the BOM without accepting a mimimum level of parliamentary scrutiny

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Breathe a sigh of relief, but don't take a breath of death

for we are still in pandemic mode

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Grey Suits and Grey Lists

Financial operators and banks will remain guarded at the risks of further procrastination by greenhorns on the undoubted dangers lurking ahead for the economy, our jurisdiction and its reputation

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A Disaster That Was Waiting To Happen

Air Mauritius has accumulated additional debts of around Rs 800 million since it has been placed under voluntary administration on April 22, and it would require an injection of Rs 10 billion to keep it afloat. This was revealed yesterday at a press conference held by Sattar Hajee Abdoula who, together with Arvindsingh Gokhool of Grant Thornton, has been tasked with the voluntary administration exercise. The coronavirus pandemic has only made matters worse for MK, he said, adding that the situation at Air Mauritius is "very, very serious". Further, he reassured that "our role is to save the company and not to close it", adding that a "watershed meeting" is planned for early December when the company's creditors will be called to take a vote on the administrators' proposals. Their rejection would mean that the company must be handed back to management or placed in liquidation, stated Mr Abdoula, though it would seem to him that its liquidation appears to be the most likely possibility.

In the meantime, there is a sense of deep frustration and anger that is being heard from the first collateral victims of the financial crash of the company -- the hundreds of former long-serving employees, especially those having completed 33 years and 3 months of service, and whose distress can be gauged from a social media post in circulation during the last few days. "We are not responsible for the hedging saga which cost the company billions of rupees, the succession of CEOs appointed by all Governments, traffic rights granted by successive governments to Emirates, Turkish Airlines, Saudi Arabian Airlines, Kenya Airways, etc, successive governments' interference in the acquisition of aircraft, the latest one resulting in surplus capacity and in the loan of two brand new aircraft to SAA. We are paying the heavy price of these actions."

In this edition's interview, Megh Pillay who is well aware of the inside out of the company for having served two tenures as CEO until he was summarily dismissed in the wake of a power struggle, blows the lid off the goings-on over the years that have brought Air Mauritius to its present predicament: dereliction of duty on the part of past board directors, corporate governance issues - "the very root cause of MK's downfall" whereby "board and management were hijacked by Shadow Directors, persons not on the Board but actually instructing one or two who then take over Management duties by delegating all executive powers to Board Committees and not subjected to the rules of accountability".

To all these can be added the unsustainable debts and liabilities towards lenders and aircraft lessors, compounded by MK's decision to acquire two A350-900. This, notwithstanding the fact that "it was clear that MK had no plan to exploit the expensive aircraft that it had ordered, despite it being common knowledge that aircrafts must be flying to cover their costs". A long list of terrible mistakes inside an erstwhile efficient and profitable airline which has been subjected to a lot of unwarranted interferences that hampered its efficient operation. The cherry on the cake - if one can put it this way - is the appointment by the Board of Directors of MK of the Joint Administrators, who belong to "the same firm that carried out due diligence on Air Mauritius and certified its level of solvency to enable shareholders to make informed decisions on the capital restructuring less than 10 months earlier".

At one time in its history, Air Mauritius held out the promise that it would become an important cornerstone in the international destiny beckoning our island. Somewhere down the road, things suddenly took a turn for the worse. The finances of the company ceased to be brilliant despite a persistent increase in passenger and goods traffic. Successive managements however failed for different reasons but mostly on account of good governance issues and political capture of decision-making to uphold the airline as they should have.

If we take at face value the averments of the administrators at the press conference, one can infer that top political brass must bite the bullet to make good the promises of a re-engineered airline that can continue to serve the strategic interests of the country on a safe commercial basis.

Under the circumstances, the decision makers at the highest political level must re-assume their responsibility. The time has come to shed political egos and to rope in the best managerial and technical talents that this country undoubtedly possesses so as to save Air Mauritius from going into an irreversible nosedive.

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The Conversation

Whoever invents a coronavirus vaccine will control the patent – and, importantly, who gets to use it

With research laboratories around the world racing to develop a coronavirus vaccine, a unique challenge has emerged: how to balance intellectual property rights with serving the public good.

Questions of patent protection and access to those patents has prompted an international group of scientists and lawyers to establish the Open COVID Pledge.

This movement calls on organisations to freely make available their existing patents and copyrights associated with vaccine research to create an open patent pool to solve a global problem.

If one group does develop a viable vaccine, this raises other questions that will soon need to be addressed:

- who is funding the research, and who has the rights to any patents coming out of it?
- can governments compel the owners of those patents to license other manufacturers to make the vaccines or medicines?

Patent rights are a form of intellectual property rights. They provide creators of new inventions, like novel vaccines and medicines, with a limited-term monopoly over those inventions in the marketplace to help recover the costs of research and development.

In other words, patents are an incentive to invent or innovate.

Patents are granted by individual nations, but don't apply across borders. To gain global protection, an inventor needs to apply for patents in every country – something that could be critical when it comes to vaccines. The Patent Cooperation Treaty helps to streamline the process, but it is still expensive and time-consuming.

The limited-term monopoly on the market is balanced by the requirement that patent holders share information about their inventions in a register to make it available for anyone to use after the patent protection expires. The term of a standard patent is usually 20 years.

During the patent period, patent holders have exclusive rights to manufacture and sell their inventions. Or, they can choose to license the technology to others to manufacture and sell to the public.

Such licences include a specified time limit and geographical area to exploit the patent. In return, the patent holder receives royalties or licence fees, or both.

So, the race to develop a vaccine for COVID-19 is not just about saving lives during a pandemic, it's also about owning the patent rights. This gives the owner control over the manufacturing and distribution of the vaccine in the countries where the patent rights are granted.

Who is currently researching a coronavirus vaccine?

The race currently includes universities, publicly funded research institutes and pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, some working in partnership with government institutions.

The company that just announced early positive results on a vaccine is Moderna, a biotech company based in the US, which is working with the National Institutes of Health. A number of other developers are also doing human trials globally, including many in China.

When private companies and government institutions partner on developing a vaccine, it may result in joint ownership of a patent. This gives each owner the right to manufacture the vaccine, but only together they can license the manufacturing to third parties.

What about the rights of nations?

Even if patent ownership is in the hands of private companies, the state may still have the right to use them for its own purposes or in the case of emergencies. Many countries have specific laws to facilitate these arrangements.

In the US, the Bayh-Dole Act 1980 ensures the government retains sufficient rights to use patents resulting from federally supported research.

Under these rights, the government can be granted a free license to use the patent itself or the right to arrange for a third party to use the patent on its behalf.

In cases where the patent holder of a publicly funded invention refuses to licence it to third parties, the Bayh-Dole Act gives the government "march-in" rights.

Under specific guidelines, this means a forced licence can be granted to a third party on reasonable terms. This includes in cases when the "action is necessary to alleviate health or safety needs" or to ensure the patented invention is actually manufactured within a reasonable time.

In the case of COVID-19 research, this means the US government could order a corporation or university that invents a vaccine with federal funding to license the patent to others to make it.

Working together for the common good

This brings us to the Open COVID Pledge, which is designed to make the relevant intellectual property freely available under an open licence.

Such open-access licensing has been used in the publishing industry for years, for example with Creative Commons publications online, and in the technology industry through open-source licences.

If more of the public-private partnerships working on a coronavirus vaccine do sign up to the pledge, perhaps it will be one of the positives to come out of the pandemic. It could allow open-access licences for lifesaving technologies to become accepted practice.

Natalie Stoianoff, Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Technology Sydney

Breathe a sigh of relief, but don't take a breath of death

for we are still in pandemic mode

Dr R Neerunjun Gopee

Photo - Vipin Kumar/HT

> We are frail humans - as Covid-19 has so powerfully dem onstrated - and one great weakness is that we tend to relax at the slightest inkling that a threat may be going away. But Covid-19 is going to be around for quite a while yet, how long nobody really knows; a reasonable timeline is up to two years. Until the pandemic is officially declared to be over...

After a seemingly interminable period of sanitary curfew - starting on March 20 - the announcement was made before the weekend that the lockdown would finally be lifted with effect from midnight on Saturday last, May 30. Many restrictions have been removed, for example there is free movement with no need for WAPs (Work Access Permits), shopping at supermarkets will no longer be according to alphabetical order, bazaars will open, etc. On the other hand, congregations such as religious gatherings, at beaches, sports and racing events and others are still not allowed for they are potential hotspots for transmission of the virus.

However, in the excitement that is palpable about the easing and opening up of more areas of activity across several sectors -- and the foreseeable surge in volume of movement of both people and vehicles (surely a tragedy if it comes back to the previous or 'old normal' level) - hardly anybody is talking about what is perhaps the most important aspect of this release of the pressure they have been feeling for over two months now. I am referring to the conditions attached to the resumption of more activities which accompany the official communiqué, which are based on the *sanitary measures that are still mandatory* in this new phase of our national life, the so-called 'new normal'.

These *few simple precautions* are in fact our lifeline in this continuing pandemic situation, and are worth reiterating - because it is human nature to want to forget the unpleasant and get on with life. They are well-known:

1. Wear a mask in public spaces;
2. Avoid touching your face;
3. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser;
4. Keep adequate physical distance from the next person.

The cynic might well ask - what's so difficult about doing that? The answer is - nothing really. But we are frail humans - as Covid-19 has so powerfully demonstrated - and one great weakness is that we tend to relax at the slightest inkling that a threat may be going away.

But Covid-19 is going to be around for quite a while yet, how long nobody really knows; a reasonable timeline is up to two years. Until the pandemic is officially declared to be over, steps 1-4 above will continue to be relevant.

For our own safety to begin with, and for that of our fellow humans - that means, therefore, protection of ourselves and of the community and society at large, that is, the country.

Who would have thought that the simple washing of hands and wearing of a mask would someday be construed as being simultaneously a selfish act (protection of oneself) *and* a selfless or altruistic gesture (protection of others). And what a paradox: standing (or sitting) away from each other adds up to a united strength against spread of the disease, a sort of reversal of the well-known dictum: 'United we stand, divided we fall'.

As fellow humans are being infected and succumbing massively to the invisible microscopic enemy, Covid-19 has not only revealed our vulnerability, but it has also dramatically reminded us of the capital role of basic hygiene and sanitation in the effective control of infectious disease - even if there may be as yet no specific treatment available, or a vaccine to prevent it, which as everyone knows is actually the case for Covid-19.

This is a medical truism which as clinicians, that is, doctors focused on treating individual patients, we tend to be oblivious of in our daily practice, until an epidemic or a pandemic jolts us into re-acknowledging that reality. What to say of laymen whom we tend to mesmerize with highly publicized accounts of what we nowadays call high-tech interventions or operations, which are not entirely free from an element of self-promotion, an unethical conduct in medicine.

Medical history abounds with examples of infectious diseases being brought under control by sanitary measures, well before it was even known what was causing them. It was only towards the latter half of the 19th century that through the work of Louis Pasteur and later Robert Koch it was established that infections were caused by microbes, organisms that could only be seen with a microscope, and thus was born the 'germ theory' of disease.

Before that the prevalent thinking was that such diseases were caused by miasma, a noxious form of 'bad air' emanating from rotting organic matter. Miasma was considered to be a poisonous vapour or mist filled with particles from decomposed matter (miasmata) that was identifiable by its foul smell. The theory posited that diseases were the product of environmental factors such as contaminated water, foul air, and poor hygienic conditions. Such infections, according to the theory, were not passed between individuals but would affect those within a locale that gave rise to such vapours.

Nowadays we know of course that although 'environmental factors such as contaminated water, foul air, and poor hygienic conditions' may not be the *cause* of infectious disease, they definitely are significant in the transmission of the microbe and thus the spread of the disease. Further, contrary to the 'miasma theory' whereby the disease cannot pass from individual to individual, the germ theory has proved that this does happen, and hence the measures that prohibit or limit contact between individuals.

A notable historical example is the cholera epidemic of 1854 in London, which was traced to a public water pump by Dr John Snow, and removing the handle of the pump to prevent people from using it resulted in a sharp fall in the number of cases of cholera among the people who had been drawing water from it.

> Who would have thought that the simple washing of hands and wearing of a mask would someday be construed as being simultaneously a selfish act (protection of oneself) *and* a selfless or altruistic gesture (protection of others). And what a paradox: standing (or sitting) away from each other adds up to a united strength against spread of the disease, a sort of reversal of the well-known dictum: 'United we stand, divided we fall'...

Locally there is the eradication of bilharziasis - which infects the bladder and results in the passing of blood in the urine - which was endemic in Pamplemousses district in the vicinity of Riviere Citron, which harboured the snail that carried the infecting parasite. And of course our flagship success story is the elimination of malaria, decreed by WHO in 1972.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, a potent example is the almost complete elimination of a crippling condition known variously as dracunculiasis, guinea-worm disease or river blindness which is caused by the dracunculiasis worm that is hosted by a tiny snail found in the rivers of mainly West Africa, whose water was used for drinking and washing by the inhabitants thus infecting them. The implementation of sanitary measures has reduced the prevalence from nearly 3.5 million in the 1980s to less than hundred today in the affected regions.

So, lesson learnt - while we breathe a sigh of relief at the freer movement allowed, let us not take a breath of death and risk catching the virus - a potential danger if we don't mask up and keep safe distance.

MIC: A new model of corporate finance that raises more questions than answers

In the spirit of representative democracy, government cannot afford to spend public funds from the BOM without accepting a mimimum level of parliamentary scrutiny

Aditya Narayan

In the local world of corporate finance, we already had commercial banks (providing short-term and long-term loans to business entities), the State Investment Corporation Ltd (providing equity finance to enterprises) and the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd (providing project finance and working capital to entrepreneurs). Now we have the newly set up Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd (MIC), which will invest in private and public corporations in an attempt to help them out of the financial quagmire they are in due to pandemic-induced lockdown. However, the creation of the MIC raises more questions than answers.

Is the MIC duplicating the roles of the SIC and the DBM? Will it be a more efficient investment vehicle than conventional tools of raising capital (equity and debt securities) for corporations? How does it fit into existing capital markets? Will it throw a financial lifeline to businesses in traditional sectors with an export-oriented business model or will it try to incentivize them towards embracing a new development model based on import substitution, clean-energy industry and renewable sources of energy? Will the MIC leverage its investment capacity to be the strategic planner guiding business towards a greener economy and achievable self-reliance?

"In most countries, bailout packages are enshrined in bills that are passed in Parliament. If the MIC invests in lame duck enterprises, the risk of loss of investment will be real. The MIC might not have to refund its capital to the BOM as it is a separate business entity. Similarly, the BOM could just write off any provison of funds to the MIC by offsetting accounting entries. However, it is a use of public funds that should not go to waste..."

All these are relevant questions considering that the Bank of Mauritius (BOM) has, as primary mandate, to maintain price stability and to promote the orderly and balanced economic development in Mauritius (as stated in its communique of May 22, 2020).

Context

The government has chosen unconventional methods to finance its deficit and bail out corporations short of revenue. First, it was announced that the BOM would provide Government with a "one-off" contribution of Rs 60 Billion under section 6(1)(oa) of the Bank of Mauritius Act, solely for the purpose of assisting in the fiscal measures to stabilise the economy. However, last Friday, the BOM back-tracked and announced that the Rs 60 Billion would be raised by the issuance of BOM Bills (most likely Treasury Bills and bonds) on the financial markets. Secondly, the BOM has set up the MIC as a Special Purpose Vehicle (SVP) under under Section 6(1)(y) of the Act with an initial capital of US $2 Billion (Rs 80 Billion).

These are two different measures with different purposes. The intended donation of Rs 60 billion was supposed to go into the government's Consolidated Revenue Fund to finance public expenditure. Now the amount raised by the BOM through BOM Bills would be made available to Government but would be recorded as debt incurred by the BOM on its books. It is still not clear whether Government would be liable for the money received from the BOM.

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

As regards the capital of Rs 80 Billion of the MIC, it has been withdrawn from the BOM's reserves and will be used to provide support to economic operators through a range of equity and quasi-equity instruments. The MIC will buy shares (equity) in companies that need finance where it feels that a direct stake in capital is warranted. For example, it may buy shares in Air Mauritius. It will also invest in quasi-equity (convertible bonds or debentures, preferred shares) in those companies that would be suspicious of a direct participation of the BOM in their affairs.

Governance

Technical jargon may confuse people, but the SPV is an euphemism for a separate legal entity that is set up by a related party (BOM) to absorb risk for the latter. The MIC will hold separate assets and invest in third-party entities. The BOM does not have to record the SPV in its books as long as certain accounting criteria regarding consolidation of related business entities are met. The SPV is just an arrangement that allows the BOM to shift unrelated activities and risk away from its financial statements. That's typically a case of off-balance sheet financing where the BOM provides capital to the MIC for investment purposes without consolidating MIC's financial results with its own in the books. A similar SPV (SBM Infrastructure Ltd) was created to channel finance from an Indian loan to Metro Express tramway project. SBM's SPV does not show up on SBM Holding Ltd's financial statements.

In terms of governance, the relationship between the BOM and the MIC is similar to that between a holding company (parent) and a wholly-owned subsidiary (child). BOM will exercise *de jure* control over MIC by virtue of providing it with its capital and appointing its board of directors. This non-arm's length relationship is extended to the State, which will exercise indirect control over MIC through its *de facto* control of the BOM's board of directors.

Transparency

Why did the government resort to unconventional methods is also a matter of transparency. If Government were to borrow directly on the local market by way of Teasury Bills or long-term bonds to mop up excess liquidity in the banking system and provide stimulus finance to economic operators, it would have increased the public debt. Having the BOM raise the Rs 60 Billion and then provide the money to Government is a kind of off-balance sheet debt financing. By the same token, having the BOM create a SPV to channel funds to companies from the central bank's reserves obviates the need for government to account for the ouflow of bailout money from its Consolidated Fund.

However, we should not be deluded by the official narrative. 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. Calling a rose by any other name does not negate the fact that it is a rose.

The BOM's announcement that Lord Desai, a British-Indian economist, will chair the board of the MIC is intended to give an aura of independence to the MIC. However, Lord Desai, although a competent economist, does not have first-hand knowledge of the local economy and would rely on advice from local experts. Besides, will he have the latitude to set the strategic direction of the MIC?

Accountability

It is said that "there is no taxation without representation," meaning that government cannot raise taxes without parliamentary approval. Similarly, in the spirit of representative democracy, when a huge stimulus package (by any other name) is being provided to economic operators, there needs to be some parliamentary scrutiny. There should be no major "bailouts without representation" in the sense that government cannot afford to spend public funds from the BOM without accepting a mimimum level of parliamentary scrutiny.

In most countries, bailout packages are enshrined in bills that are passed in Parliament. If the MIC invests in lame duck enterprises, the risk of loss of investment will be real. The MIC might not have to refund its capital to the BOM as it is a separate business entity. Similarly, the BOM could just write off any provison of funds to the MIC by offsetting accounting entries. However, it is a use of public funds that should not go to waste.

It is very important that the MIC sets up a proper risk assessment framework to assess the business risk, credit risk, default risk and operating risk associated with a particular business when deciding who to bail out, when and how. Just throwing money at existing enterprises to keep them afloat and preserve jobs would be a short-sighted vision. It is necessary to look at their business model and determine whether it is sustainable in the long-term. That's where the MIC should be a kind of strategic planner who pushes economic operators towards a more inclusive and sustainable path of growth, taking into account the need for a greener economy that is geared towards import substitution, food self-sufficiency and energy security.

S. Callikan

Grey Suits and Grey Lists

Financial operators and banks will remain guarded at the risks of further procrastination by greenhorns on the undoubted dangers lurking ahead for the economy, our jurisdiction and its reputation

"Since the stated aim is to inject capital in cash and debt-strapped large conglomerates, is the population bailing out the corporate sector? Will the latter be called upon to at least matching capital injection from past profits or dividends? What returns and conditions will be attached to people's generosity in these hard times? Has the BOM been granted unchecked license to operate as an unregulated mega investment bank? Has the BOM become Government's ATM?"

The Bank of Mauritius, the FSC and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development seems to constitute the favourite breeding ground for the selection of government's high-flying financial regulators and administrators of our public funds. If you are dizzy at the musical chairs keeping all financial and regulatory levers and decisions to a tight circle of Men in Grey Suits (MIGS), so are we. Although government may have its reasons for such restrictive inbreeding, international agencies may remain unimpressed.

At a time when the Minister of Financial Services is himself a "new kid on the block" and seems out of that musical-chair decision loop, our jurisdiction is facing stiff uphill battles to restore credibility on all fronts. To wit, EU's announced inclusion of Mauritius in its upcoming money-laundering blacklist, India's SEBI and Reserve Bank cross-bow shots, FATF/ESAAMLG's watch-list for delayed compliance with some key action plan deficiencies and, lately, Senegal's worrying dismissal of our mutual DTAA.

It will be recalled that around February 2020, FATF determined that Mauritius has not made sufficient positive and tangible progress on several effectiveness and compliance issues: lack of effective risk based supervision, lack of access to beneficial ownership information, lack of capability to conduct money laundering investigations, lack of control and oversight over non-profit organizations on terrorism financing, and lack of implementation of a targeted financial sanction regime. These FATF deficiencies have been repeatedly brought up and corrective action urged by the EU and the IMF since 2018. They should not have been intractable hurdles with a purposeful and savvy government fully aware of the risks and dangers of any *nonchalance.*

The EU/OECD sanction was expected to follow and so it did in May 2020. We had up to now avoided being on the EU tax-haven grey or blacklist, but this announcement about placing Mauritius in October on the more recent EU money-laundering blacklist is already taking its toll. It comes as the European Commission is known to be working to establish its own, centralized, anti-money laundering task force, akin to the FATF. As for African Union states, there have been repeated grumblings and a few, like Senegal, have been painting their respective DTAAs with Mauritius as one-sided rip-offs of taxation proceeds due to them for inward investment. Here again we may have been insufficiently proactive in our counter-narrative and correcting any imbalance. Such broad-based *nonchalance* is hurting.

Government and its Men in Grey Suits are clearly in the docks over the financial services sector of our economy. The required adjustments are possibly intricate involving multiple agencies. They may have burned the midnight oil on them but the outcome after three years is hardly a proud testimony. Constant ministerial and MIGS personnel changes, lack of a credible champion in Cabinet and the election campaigning in 2019 are perhaps partly to blame. But they must intensify efforts to correct those deficiencies at the earliest without trying to shift the blame or look for scapegoats: the current Minister has been a senior Cabinet member for six years now.

No need to play down the truth about the catastrophic negative consequences of current FATF grey-listing and potential down-the-road EU blacklisting. While we wish that invigorated efforts of our MIGS limit the damage, financial operators and banks will remain guarded at the risks of further procrastination by greenhorns on the undoubted dangers lurking ahead for the economy, our jurisdiction and its reputation.

* * *

Has the BOM become Government's ATM?

The unprecedented post-Covid situation was certainly going to require massive mobilization of funds. Last week I estimated the elbow room at the disposal of the Minister of Finance and Economic Development at a colossal Rs 100-150 bn, but was definitely on the short side. The MIGS have turned the taps already above Rs 150 bn, excluding foreign assistance or injection by international agencies which could add a further Rs 50 bn to the kitty.

With the Rs 18 bn of its Special Reserves transferred early this year, the Rs 60 bn "one-off" grant from Bank of Mauritius (BOM) to government recurrent fund, whether raised through Bonds or other BOM instruments, have to be paid out from the BOM coffers, albeit on a staggered time-frame. Injection and usage of such twin massive grants from our collective reserves to government recurrent funds are naturally subject to budget and Parliament oversight. But we know what Audit Reports repeatedly bring to light after the damages are done: some Rs 14 bn wasted or improperly dished out in 2019 is not what we should expect as normal. With the exceptional post-pandemic times and hardships, the MIGS would do well to address the issue of exemplary management head-on, even with the advice and experienced input of past Finance Ministers.

The separate creation of a BOM-subsidiary, an investment structure (Mauritius Investment Corporation Ltd, MIC), with an additional Rs 80 bn allocated from the public reserves at BOM, has created far more anxiety and raised several justified questions.

For instance, after the beeline to the Rs 18 bn, have the MIGS found the honey-pot of our national reserves, estimated at Rs 270 bn, tempting? Are proposals to deplete them to the tune of Rs 158 bn in one fell swoop pregnant with unprecedented risks? Since the stated aim is to inject capital in cash and debt-strapped large conglomerates, is the population bailing out the corporate sector? Will the latter be called upon to at least matching capital injection from past profits or dividends? What returns and conditions will be attached to people's generosity in these hard times? Has the BOM been granted unchecked license to operate as an unregulated mega investment bank? Has the BOM become Government's AT? Despite the nominal chair of Lord Desai, a highly respected economist, how can it be that the MIC would only report to its parent BOM, which only reports to an anonymous MIGS Board, peopled by political appointees?

The questions underline the utmost prudence, fairness, exemplary management and total transparency about the functioning of the MIC at far more regular intervals than an annual audited account published months after the facts. As for reassurances offered by the BOM Governor, he has only to consider Audit Reports or those top-notch professionals who were dispatched by the MIGS to State Bank, SBM Holding, Air Mauritius, FSC, FIU to name a few and their performances.

As an aside, if conglomerate and business-sector support has been largely off-loaded to the MIC, government should have more than ample room in the upcoming budget to focus on SMEs, technology startups, agriculture and food security, green issues and the many ordinary businesses and countrymen losing jobs or toiling hard to make ends meet.

European Union unveils the biggest "green" stimulus package in history

World leaders know their countries face one of the most severe recessions in history thanks to the coronavirus restrictions. That presents a unique challenge, but also a massive opportunity.

Politicians know they are going to need to spend huge amounts of money to kick-start economic activity as the threat of coronavirus finally recedes. It is a one-off, never-to-be-repeated chance to transform their economies. So the question is, what will they spend it on?

The big attraction for politicians at this time of crisis is jobs. Photo bbc.com

'Europe's moment'

This week the European Union put its cards on the table. On Wednesday it unveiled what it is billing as the biggest "green" stimulus package in history, reports Justin Rowlatt of BBC.

"This is about all of us and it is way bigger than any one of us," announced Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, when she told European Parliament members what was planned. "This is Europe's moment," she said.

As well as being a big step towards federalism, the recovery package puts fighting climate change at the heart of the bloc's recovery from the pandemic.

The scale of what is being proposed is mind-boggling. The headline figure is 750bn, but add in spending from future budgets and the total financial firepower the European Commission says it will be wielding is almost 2tn ($2.2tn).

There will be tens of billions of euros to make homes more energy efficient, to decarbonise electricity and phase out petrol and diesel vehicles.

The idea is to turbo-charge the European effort to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2050. "If we do not do it we will be taking much more risk," says Teresa Ribera, the deputy Prime Minister of Spain. "The recovery should be green or it will not be a recovery, it will just be a short-cut into the kind of problems we are facing right now."

Why now?

This is not just about rallying voters. There are sound economic reasons why politicians see green technology as a prudent investment.

First off, renewables are now often cheaper than fossil fuels in large parts of the world. The technologies are proven and can be built at scale today. And most importantly, their cost follows the logic of all manufacturing - the more you produce, the cheaper it gets.

The same logic applies to hydrogen and to electric vehicles. But it does not apply to fossil fuels, whose cost ultimately relies on mining ever more difficult and dwindling resources. And that contains the seductive promise that a huge government push to scale up solar and wind will make them even more affordable compared with coal, oil and gas - not just in the US, but globally.

So the argument goes that renewables provide a pathway for clean growth in the future. Develop innovative new electric vehicles, wind turbines, ways of making homes energy-efficient, energy storage technologies or even new ways of configuring electricity grids and you are likely to find ready markets around the world in coming years.

Equally importantly, renewable technologies offer something else that will be needed in the years to come: the potential to create huge numbers of new jobs. The Covid-19 crisis has driven joblessness to near Great Depression levels around the world - worse even than in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.

Around 40 million Americans are unemployed. Worldwide, 1.6 billion people are reckoned to be in immediate danger of losing their livelihoods, according to the International Labour Organisation. That means governments need to find ways to employ lots and lots of people.

Renewable technologies offer precisely the kind of "shovel-ready", large-scale and labour-intensive infrastructure projects politicians are looking for.

There is the obvious stuff - building wind turbines, solar farms and the foundations of a hydrogen economy - but think also about installing networks of charging points for electric vehicles, the need to insulate homes or revamp urban transport systems.

Just like the road and dam building of the American New Deal, projects like these could employ tens of thousands of people in high-skilled and - crucially - local jobs.

Coronavirus: India to loosen lockdown

International travel, metro services, cinemas, sporting events and gyms will be allowed to restart in an undated third phase. Photo - images.indianexpress.com

India has announced plans to further ease a strict national lockdown even as the country reported a record daily rise in new coronavirus cases.

The plan comes after India registered a new record single-day rise in confirmed infections, with nearly 8,000 cases reported on Saturday. In total India has recorded some 174,500 cases and nearly 5000 deaths. The nation of 1.3 billion has been hit less hard by the coronavirus than many other countries.

It went into a strict lockdown more than two months ago when the confirmed caseload was in the hundreds. Official data suggests the decision prevented the loss of between 37,000 and 78,000 lives.

Health officials say that they are able to further lift the lockdown in many places because most cases have been restricted to urban areas in a handful of states.

More than 80% of the active cases are in five states - Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh - and more than 60% of the cases are in five cities, including Mumbai, Delhi and Ahmedabad, according to official data.

As part of the three-phase plan:

- Shopping centres, places of worship, hotels, restaurants and other hospitality services will open from 8 June (guidelines will be released to ensure social distancing)
- School and colleges may open later - possibly in July - after consultations with states
- International travel, metro services, cinemas, sporting events and gyms will be allowed to restart in an undated third phase but this will depend on "the situation"
- A night curfew will remain in place but shorten by two hours - from 21:00-05:00 instead of 19:00-07:00

These measures will not apply to designated "containment zones" where the virus is believed to be transmitting at a higher rate. Such zones are at the district or neighbourhood level.

The city of Mumbai, India's financial capital in Maharashtra state, has one of the highest numbers of containment zones, reports suggest. Hospitals there are struggling to cope with an influx of virus patients.

The reported infection rate - the number of infections for every 100 tests - in Maharashtra is three times the national average.

People will be restricted from moving between containment zones and non-containment zones but there will be no restriction on general inter-state travel, the government says.

British government 'lifting too many restrictions, too quickly', warn public health directors

In the UK, senior public health officials have accused the government of lifting coro-navirus restrictions too quickly. The Association of Directors of Public Health said ministers were "misjudging" the decision on easing the lockdown at a "critical moment". The organisation also questioned whether the relaxation of the rules and guidance was supported by the science, reports The Independent.

The children's commissioner has called for summer schools to be set up to help pupils catch up on the work they have missed. Anne Longfield said the most vulnerable children were at risk of falling behind as a result of spending up to six months at home.

The government is facing a backlash from Tory MPs over its quarantine plans as trade leaders warned it would "kill" the travel industry. Several former ministers are backing calls for a rethink of the 14-day isolation period for people entering the UK.

Compiled by Doojesh Ramlallah

Mauritius identifies and lists two high-risk jurisdictions

Ashvin Ramgoolam

Following the publication of the list of high-risk jurisdictions by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the European Commission, Mauritius has, in turn, come with a more or less similar list and it was made possible in accordance with Section 17H(1) of the Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2002 (FIAMLA).

The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance (Minister) has, on the recommendation of the National Committee for AML/CFT (Committee), published in the Government Gazette (General Notice 587) on 14th May 2020 the first-ever list of jurisdictions (List) which have been identified by the FATF as having deficiencies in their Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) regime.

However, the said List was neither communicated 'immediately' by the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) as mandated and prescribed under Section 17H(5) of the FIAMLA, nor by the members of the Committee which includes the Financial Services Commission (FSC), amongst others. Only the Bank of Mauritius (BoM) has published the information in the subsection AML/CFT on its website.

High-Risk and Sanctioned Jurisdictions

Mauritius has identified Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, commonly known as North Korea. Prior to the amendments in the FIAMLA, the said identification process of high-risk jurisdictions was conducted by the regulators, namely the BoM and the FSC. Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting that despite Iran and North Korea being rated as high-risk by the FATF, yet they are also sanctioned countries. For instance, the US Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC), the UK HM Treasury, the European Union (EU), amongst others, have included these two jurisdictions in their lists of sanctioned countries. Domestically, the exclusion of Barbados, Myanmar, Pakistan, Syria, Uganda, Yemen, Zimbabwe, just to mention a few, shall inevitably leave many questions to be answered from the stakeholders.

Way Forward

1. Amend the List

To dispel all the confusion and legitimate questions from arising, it is recommended that the Committee reviews the methodology for the identification exercise and it should not restrict itself to the FATF list of high-risk jurisdictions, but should as well consider the FATF list of jurisdictions under increased monitoring and the Basel AML Index issued by the Basel Institute of Governance. The domestic list is worth its weight in gold and it is an important tool especially when it comes to the Risk-Based Approach (RBA). As such, the List is required to be revisited. Substantial changes are then brought so as to avoid confusion between high-risk and sanctioned jurisdictions, because either rating will impact heavily on the risk assessment of financial institutions (banking and non-banking) at various stages, from the initial onboarding stage till the approval of a facility or the ongoing periodic review.

2. Introduce List of Sanctioned Countries

For the benefit of the Financial Services sector, the Committee is also recommended to put in place a dedicated list of sanctioned/prohibited countries. The list of sanctioned countries would comprise jurisdictions that are subject to sanctions imposed by instances like the OFAC, the United Nations, and the EU.

As such, it is advised that the United Nations (Financial Prohibitions, Arms Embargo, and Travel Ban) Sanctions Act 2019 be amended to empower the National

Sanctions Secretariat (NSS) to devise and maintain a list of sanctioned countries. The proposed lists were prepared by taking into account of the FATF lists, the internationally recognised Basel AML Index and by assessing the publicly available consolidated table of assessment ratings issued by the FATF which gives a bird's eye view of the current ratings of the 40 Recommendations and the 11 Immediate Outcomes and also from various sanctions lists.

List of High-Risk Jurisdictions		List of Sanctioned Countries	
1	Albania	1	Afghanistan
2	Angola	2	Belarus
3	Barbados	3	Burundi
4	Benin	4	Central African Republic
5	Botswana	5	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
6	Cambodia	6	Democratic Republic of the Congo
7	Ghana	7	Eritrea
8	Haiti	8	Guinea-Bissau
9	Iceland	9	Iran
10	Jamaica	10	Iraq
11	Kenya	11	Lebanon
12	Laos	12	Liberia
13	Mongolia	13	Libya
14	Mozambique	14	Mali
15	Nicaragua	15	Myanmar
16	Pakistan	16	Rwanda
17	Panama	17	Sierra Leone
18	The Bahamas	18	Somalia
19	Uganda	19	South Sudan
20	Vietnam	20	Sudan
21	Yemen	21	Syria
22	Zimbabwe	22	Venezuela

3. Communicate effectively and efficiently

Communication is an important element when it comes to the dissemination of the List to all the stakeholders. The said List is not a mere list, but it literally 'dictates' the RBA. Section 17H(5) stipulates that the FIU must immediately communicate the identified high-risk countries to financial institutions, both banking and non-banking, and also to Designated Non-Financial Businesses and Professions, altogether defined as Reporting Persons. Moreover, it is also the duty for all the members of the Committee to promptly communicate this critical information to all the relevant stakeholders, just as is the case for the communication of the list of designated listed persons in the United Nations Sanctions List by the NSS.

Missed Opportunity

While Mauritius is listing high-risk jurisdictions, ironically the delisting in the FATF and EU lists is of primary concern for all the stakeholders. Mauritius has missed the golden opportunity to be delisted from the FATF list of jurisdictions under increased monitoring. If the Covid-19 pandemic did not crop up and disrupt the ordinary course of life and business, Mauritius would have been subject to FATF post Plenary assessment which is due for June 2020. However, on 28th April 2020, the FATF released a statement to announce that it has temporarily postponed all mutual evaluations and follow-up deadlines, and an additional four-month extension was given to the concerned jurisdictions.

Moreover, two countries, namely Mongolia and Iceland, maintained their deadlines of June 2020. The FATF would issue an updated statement on them in June 2020 after taking cognisance of the progress they have made. In this connection, had Mauritius expressed its intention to stick to the initial deadline, the FATF would have assessed its progress and ultimately issued a statement in June 2020, prior to the European Parliament approving the list of high-risk third countries. As such, Mauritius would have stood a chance to be withdrawn from the FATF list and subsequently from the EU list of high-risk third countries.

Conclusion

It is imperative that the authorities get the various implementations pertaining to the AML/CFT framework right at the very outset, and thus enhancing their effectiveness, especially when the same was criticised by the FATF through the 11 Immediate Outcomes. That said, players evolving in the highly dynamic financial services sector expect to be directed accordingly, particularly when it comes to safeguarding the repute of the jurisdiction.

Moreover, when it comes to delisting Mauritius from the FATF and the European Commission lists, the authorities must not believe that the EU list shall be rejected by the European Parliament. The authorities must avoid the 'wait-and-see' or defensive mode; they must be on the 'work-and-win' or offensive mode by appropriately channelling resources to keep on working on the implementation of the relevant action plan, and ensure that all the issues have been duly attended.

Ashvin Ramgoolam is a Compliance professional with extensive experience in the financial services sector. He is the co-author of the first-ever Financial Crime Threat Assessment for Mauritius and he is specialised in financial crime compliance, data protection (GDPR), governance, FATCA and CRS.

Megh Pillay, Former CEO - Air Mauritius

'Burning down to ashes a national carrier built over 50 years only to start a new one is not an option'

Having served two full terms as CEO of Air Mauritius, during which the company showed comfortable profits, Megh Pillay is confident that despite the uncertainties associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, it is possible by addressing governance issues and a judicious restructuring to turn it around, although this may take some time. He exposes the damaging role played by Shadow Directors who hijacked both Board and Management and led to the debacle. He brings up the role of institutional memory in the attempt to salvage the airline, and stresses that although selling the airline with the right guarantees for the country may be an option, this is not inevitable, because having one's own national airline is not merely a matter of pride but is of vital, strategic importance when negotiating rights with other airlines on networks.

Mauritius Times: It is known that Air Mauritius had ongoing financial difficulties and was already on the brink before the coronavirus pandemic outbreak served as the final nail in its coffin. What this could mean was that it was running out of cash to maintain its operations any longer, but was it necessary for the board of the company to go for voluntary administration in the first place?

Megh Pillay: Air Mauritius was indeed severely vulnerable to the pandemic. Apart from a few positive Key Performance Indicators, quite smartly packaged for the media, MK's successive Quarterly Reports since 2018 reveal it was on an accelerated dive into a state of financial distress, heading into bankruptcy.

In just one year, MK's gearing ratio (debt to equity) jumped from 0.4 on to 1.4 in March 2019. A gearing ratio above 0.5 is considered risky because a drop in profits or an increase in charges would render it susceptible to loan default and bankruptcy. The figures posted in its last Quarterly Report published on 13 February 2020 confirm it was already in that situation.

By placing the airline under Voluntary Administration, the Board simply availed of protection under the law to salvage MK's business and ensure it could continue to trade as a going concern. Normally, Directors cannot turn a blind eye and allow a company to continue transacting business when they become aware of its inability to honour its debts. Given the earlier writings on the wall, one may wonder what took them so long.

It was also announced that MK was taking delivery of four wide-bodied new aircrafts in the same year, two of which it decided to sub-lease to a South African Airways then surviving only with their government's financial support. These were major transactions of which Directors ought to have been fully aware of.

*** Couldn't the Board of Directors ask or wait for government's intervention to avoid its collapse?**

It might have for all we know. With no less than its Financial Secretary as Chairman of the Board, it is unlikely that Government was not aware. The more so as the alarming gearing ratio in March 2019 did not actually reflect the full magnitude of the situation as MK had not yet adopted the mandatory IFRS 16 accounting standard,

> "With the rosy picture painted of the company's performance with each Quarterly Report and skillfully relayed by the media, most employees were not the least aware of the gravity of MK's deteriorating financial health. Their frustration and anger are therefore understandable. They reflect what has been just said about the Governance structure whereby Board and management were hijacked by Shadow Directors..."

requiring that aircraft operational lease charges be recognized as current liabilities.

With new aircrafts coming in 2019, the real gearing was likely to rise well above 2.0. Some signs were evident when at an Extraordinary General Meeting on 10 June 2019, MK sold Pointe Cotton Resort Hotel, and 27 million fully subscribed shares and 50 million of newly created Preference shares to AML, thereby diluting existing shareholders equity, including that of Government by 21%. Possibly the Board took time to seek advice on how to proceed or to seek Government bail-out assistance as South African Airways before it went under business rescue.

*** Were the early signs of the company's imminent collapse already visible when you served as CEO the last time round?**

There was certainly no sign of an imminent collapse when I left as CEO on 28 October 2016 and anyway the actual collapse occurred in April 2020.

For my first two Quarters in 2016/17, MK posted a profit of Rs 632 million against a loss of Rs 155 million for the same period in 2015, a rare performance for a seasonal period of lower demand. On that basis we forecasted a net profit in excess of Rs 1.2 billion over the 3rd Quarter which is the December peak. We came close to it with Euro 27 million.

If MK had not been locked-in by another unfortunate hedging, MK would have easily achieved an EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization) of more than Rs 1.5 billion. All KPIs were excellent: revenue grew, expenditure was down 6%, shareholders fund grew to Rs 4.1 billion and net asset per share grew 26% to Rs 40.83. Gearing ratio was only 0.3.

However, management is about forecasting and planning. Looking ahead to five years down the road, we foresaw the clouds on the horizon. We therefore proposed to scrap the over-ambitious aircraft acquisition program while we still could, forecasting then that MK would find itself under growing financial stress as from 2019 unless something was done to better manage capital expenditure.

*** Did you then ring the alarm bell?**

Of course, I did.

But when the business is so good, bad news is never well received and it is the messenger that often gets shot. We all know that thereafter MK decided to acquire yet 2 more aircrafts, the A330-neo received in 2019, the same year that it was borrowing USD 320 million to pay for two A350-900 that were directly delivered to South African Airways in the latter's own livery.

It was clear that MK had no plan to exploit the expensive aircraft that it had ordered, despite it being common knowledge that aircrafts must be flying to cover their costs.

*** Aviation consultancies have been saying lately that even with government assistance to save the airline industry, many airlines across the world will nevertheless be bankrupt in the months to come. Do you consider that Air Mauritius would have fallen within this category despite any forthcoming government's assistance through the Mauritius Investment Corporation?**

Out of the 290 airlines from 117 countries forming part of IATA, it is extremely hard to say how many will go bankrupt even with Government assistance. Even without the pandemic problem, there are always some already on that course every year for other reasons.

> "Although a 100% government-owned company, Ethiopian is recognized as a huge commercial success, among the largest international airlines in the world and a model to emulate. Created 22 years before Air Mauritius, it has always been run by professionals shielded from politics and external interference by successive governments..."

With the closing of airspace and borders, and restrictions on domestic air travel, all airlines are facing cash flow problems of unprecedented magnitude. Air transport is a capital-intensive business with high fixed cost and low returns on investment. With no passengers to carry, they all are facing dried up revenue streams while having to keep paying high fixed costs. Staff costs which make less than 18% of costs can be addressed by voluntary leave and pay-cuts, early departures or massive lay-offs. All airlines are today busy restructuring their business, some under voluntary bankruptcy protection from creditors to adapt to the new situation.

☞ Cont. on page 9

'This disaster is not of their making. Yet, employees are the very first to fall victim to a situation beyond their control'

☞ Cont. from page 8

Air transport being an essential component of modern economies, airlines are deemed to be strategic assets that governments make their duty to support in the current context of survival. Air Mauritius deserves the same treatment. Burning down to ashes a national carrier built over 50 years only to start a new one is not an option.

*** But if it was a matter of national pride some 50 years ago for Mauritius to have its own national airline, which also served the strategic objective of connecting the country to the rest of the world for its trade and economic development, would you say that the connection objective could still be met today without Air Mauritius – and that at a lesser cost?**

That decision to invest massively to set up a national airline goes way beyond national pride – it is a key component of long-term economic strategy. At its prime, MK held a historical strategic role and was mandated to overcome our insularity handicap for trade and economic development. MK is the main pillar of a sustainable tourism industry that capitalises essentially on natural resources of sea, sun and sand and on human resources with a unique cultural heritage rich in diversity and for whom hospitality is second nature.

Several international airlines especially those exploiting Sixth Freedom traffic rights by transiting passengers through their home-base exploit the tourist market Mauritius has built for itself over four decades. They operate in competition with MK and other legacy carriers of Europe offering direct connectivity. Their main business routes are elsewhere, and their fixed costs are already covered. They offer cut-rate pricing on MK destinations but never elsewhere. Experience has shown that the day MK withdraws from any route, they double their fares on that route. That is how the bulk of Italian tourists was lost when MK withdrew from Rome and Milan.

> "The pandemic has provided a salutary opportunity to clean the household. A lean and nimble-footed Air Mauritius can emerge from administration. However, it will fail miserably unless Corporate Governance issues, the very root cause of MK's downfall are recognized as such and forcefully addressed by those responsible for it..."

Without MK, there is no leverage left in the exploitation of air traffic rights and the economy dependent on air travel falls a prey into the hands of foreign carriers. It will then be a matter of time that the like of Dubai or Istanbul become the gateways into and out of Mauritius. Ironically, the critical importance of MK has never been so evident as during this period when it is the only lifeline capable of opening closed airspace and borders to operate vital mission flights.

*** In fact, much has been said about the Open Sky policy. Has the emergence of "big players" in our skies contributed to the downfall of Air Mauritius?**

There is a gross misconception prevailing in Mauritius that MK operates in monopoly. This is completely wrong.

Air traffic rights between sovereign states are framed by the Chicago Convention of 1944, which advocates reciprocity in bilateral agreements, based on expected air traffic volume between these countries and the number of flights deemed reasonable with respect to that traffic. I am unaware of any country for which these rights have been denied by the Mauritian government. As long as there is reciprocity, Open Sky is a given. The rights that have been granted are not all exploited and some are only used for a short period. Singapore Airlines and Air India have such rights yet decide against landing in Mauritius. Their strategic decision is merely dictated by market realities.

Big players such as British Airways, Air France, Qantas, Lufthansa and Alitalia have always operated transparently within the scope of bilateral agreements. However, Emirates and Turkish Airlines do not. They source their traffic primarily from countries other than their own. Nevertheless, they have not hurt MK as bad as they have some other *big players* by poaching in their home markets for traffic to Mauritius.

It is up to the Government to ensure that the negotiations with these airlines are carried out by professionals in the interest of the country and of MK. Their lobbying capacity being second to none, we risk ending up with the short end of the stick. In 2016, we helped to avert that risk and MK emerged relatively unscathed against Emirates. MK is a critical lever in any bilateral negotiations.

*** With a two-time tenure as CEO, we presume you would know what it will take to turn the company around, and what mistakes of the past should be avoided at all costs. Can you tell us more about that?**

All airlines are confronting the Covid-19 induced problem of having to service fixed cost obligations against the backdrop of totally dried up revenue streams over the period starting mid-March through July.

Across the world government bailouts lend bridging support until air travel bounces back. Even before considering the pandemic factor, MK was already crippled by unsustainable debts and liabilities towards lenders and aircraft lessors. This is a separate issue that must be resolved forthwith by the Joint-Administrators and Government. From there on, airline business is not rocket science. MK must readjust itself to the new order. Its route network must focus on high potential routes. It must operate a fit-for-purpose fleet to carry out missions projected in a 5-Year Business Plan taking full advantage of post-Covid highly favourable market conditions.

In the period of business consolidation that is bound to follow, MK ought to lead a regional airline initiative to face the common threat and safeguard the common interests of sister airlines. For an early start, it is necessary to retain key experienced personnel with crucial institutional memory. Re-inventing the wheel is not a good idea. Legacy costs being far too high, all maintenance, operational, marketing and administrative resources can be refreshed at market rate or simply outsourced.

Commercial agreements with big partner airlines and others must be reviewed to ensure that a streamlined network can operate profitably while still catering for the widest world market span and inter-island traffic. As a culture of laissez-faire laisser-aller had of late become rampant in MK, most operational inefficiencies can be addressed in the process.

The pandemic has provided a salutary opportunity to clean the household. A lean and nimble-footed Air Mauritius can emerge from administration. However, it will fail miserably unless Corporate Governance issues, the very root cause of MK's downfall are recognized as such and forcefully addressed by those responsible for it.

*** That begs the question of whether a national airline can be efficiently operated free of political interference?**

Although a 100% government-owned company,

> "When the business is so good, bad news is never well received and it is the messenger that often gets shot. We all know that thereafter MK decided to acquire yet 2 more aircrafts, the A330-neo received in 2019, the same year that it was borrowing USD 320 million to pay for two A350-900 that were directly delivered to South African Airways in the latter's own livery. It was clear that MK had no plan to exploit the expensive aircraft that it had ordered..."

Ethiopian is recognized as a huge commercial success, among the largest international airlines in the world and a model to emulate. Created 22 years before Air Mauritius, it has always been run by professionals shielded from politics and external interference by successive governments and we know how many changes of government they went through.

No airline can survive for long if run by Shadow Directors, persons not on the Board but actually instructing one or two who then take over Management duties by delegating all executive powers to Board Committees that they control along with the 10 subsidiaries comprising the Air Mauritius Group. They control both Board and Management and are not subjected to the rules of accountability. This is the biggest mistake to not repeat should there be a genuine willingness to see MK flying high once again.

*** The Joint Administrators appointed by Air Mauritius' Board of Directors have been saying lately that that have been assessing MK's financial situation and "looking at all feasible options that will keep the Company afloat". Do you expect them to succeed and what conditions would be required for them to do what past management has failed?**

Surely all Mauritians must earnestly hope they succeed. From the document circulated at the Extraordinary General Meeting of June 2019, we know the Joint Administrators are of the same firm that carried out due diligence on Air Mauritius and certified its level of solvency to enable shareholders to make informed decisions on the capital restructuring less than 10 months earlier. This must certainly give them a head start on their current mission.

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MAURITIUS REVENUE AUTHORITY

COMMUNIQUE

SUBMISSION OF RETURNS & PAYMENT OF TAXES
MARCH TO JUNE 2020

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) informs taxpayers that, as a result of the lockdown which prevailed from the 20th of March to the 30th of May, 2020, the filing of returns and payment of taxes have been rescheduled as follows:

a. **Returns that were due during the lockdown period**, should be filed **no later than the 25th of June, 2020**, and

b. **Returns that are due for the month of June, 2020**, should be filed **no later than the 26th of June, 2020**.

If the respective payments are made on or before the 25th or 26th of June, 2020, as applicable, no penalty or interest will apply. However, if the payment is made after these prescribed dates, penalty and interest will be charged accordingly.

The MRA advises taxpayers who still call at the Cash Office at Ehram Court, Port Louis, to avail themselves of the Direct Debit payment facility. To this end, taxpayers should fill-in a "PLACH Direct Debit Mandate Form" which can be downloaded from MRA website: www.mra.mu

The **PLACH Direct Debit Mandate Form** should be duly filled-in and submitted **to the MRA by the 10th of June, 2020, at latest**, to allow for completion of the necessary registration and validation processes, so that payments can be made through the Direct Debit option by the due dates mentioned at (a) and (b) above.

Taxpayers are reminded that the payment of **Company Tax/ VAT/ PAYE/ TDS/ CPS and NPF & NSF Contributions** should mandatorily be made **electronically**.

Moreover, **taxpayers having any arrears of tax under an assessment or a claim can avail themselves of the new electronic payment facilities put in place on MRA website**.

For any additional information, please visit the **MRA e-SERVICES** page on **www.mra.mu**

Taxpayers seeking assistance may also phone the MRA Helpdesk on **207 6000**, or send an email to **headoffice@mra.mu**.

MAURITIUS REVENUE AUTHORITY **01 June 2020**

Ehram Court, Cnr Mgr. Gonin & Sir Virgil Naz Streets, Port Louis, Mauritius
T: +230 207 6000 | **F:** +230 211 8099 | **E:** headoffice@mra.mu | **W:** www.mra.mu

Dating over Zoom? Don't be surprised if those online sparks fizzle in person

It doesn't matter how smooth your conversations have been. Absent the touch, taste and smell of a potential partner, you're essentially flying blind

For those dipping their toes into the dating pool during stay-at-home orders, it's been like swimming in a version of Netflix's reality series "Love is Blind."

In the show, contestants must get engaged before ever actually meeting one another in person. And while a lockdown engagement might be a bit extreme, it's entirely possible that two people have grown to really like one another over the previous weeks and months. Maybe it started with a match on a dating app, followed by flirting over text. Then came regularly scheduled Zoom dates. Perhaps they've even started envisioning a future together.

Now, as states start to ease restrictions, some may have broached taking the next step: an in-person rendezvous.

What are the chances that their online connection will lead to true love?

In my book, "The Science of Kissing," I describe how compatibility requires engaging all of our senses. And absent the touch, taste and smell of a potential partner, people dating online during quarantine have essentially been flying blind.

Muzzled neurotransmitters

Human attraction involves the influence of cues that evolved over millions of years.

On a traditional date in a restaurant or move theater, we actively gather details about someone by walking side by side, holding hands, hugging and - if things get far enough - kissing. These experiences send neural impulses between the brain and body, stimulating tiny chemical messengers that affect how we feel. When two people are a good match, hormones and neurotransmitters bring about the sensations we might describe as being on a natural high or experiencing the exhilaration of butterflies. Finding love isn't rocket science - it's anatomy, endocrinology and real chemistry.

One of the most important neurotransmitters involved in influencing our emotions is dopamine, responsible for craving and desire. This natural drug can be promoted through physical intimacy and leads to the addictive nature of a new relationship. Of course, dopamine is just one player in a chemical symphony that motivates behavior. Intimate encounters also promote the release of oxytocin, which creates a sense of attachment and affection, and epine-phrine, which boosts our heart rate and reduces stress. There's also a decrease in serotonin, which can lead to obsessive thoughts and feelings about the other person.

In fact, one study showed that people who report that they've just "fallen in love" have levels of serotonin similar to patients suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder. This chemical cocktail can even lead to trouble sleeping or a loss of appetite - symptoms people often attribute to meeting "the one."

Our noses also play a powerful role in who we fall for. The famous "sweaty t-shirt experiment" reported that a man's natural scent may influence how women choose a partner. The women in the study nearly always expressed a preference for the odor of men who differed genetically from them in immune response to disease. Scientists theorize that selecting someone with genetic diversity in this region, called the major histocompatibility complex, could be important for producing children with flexible and versatile immune systems.

A kiss can make or break it

While a man's natural scent may not be something women consciously notice early on in a heterosexual relationship, getting up close and personal can serve as a kind of litmus test for a couple. A kiss puts two people nose to cheek, offering a reliable sample of smell and taste unrivaled by most other courtship rituals. Perhaps that's one reason a 2007 University of Albany study reported that 59% of men and 66% of women have broken off a budding romance because of a bad first kiss.

Complicating matters, factors that typically grab our attention in person are less obvious to recognize in a witty profile or photo. Studies of online dating behavior reveal superficial features are correlated with the level of interest an individual receives. For example, short-haired women do not tend to get as much attention from men as those with long, straight hair, while men who report a height of six-foot-three or six-foot-four fare better than their peers at interacting with women. The initial focus on appearance promotes pairing based on characteristics that aren't significant in lasting relationships, compared with more important factors for long-term compatibility, like intimacy and shared experiences.

Still, at a time when many of us are feeling more isolated than ever, online dating does offer some benefits. Quarantine has encouraged men and women to take additional time to learn about each other prior to meeting, sparing the anxiety of rushed physical intimacy.

For some couples, a real-world date will kindle the spark that began online. Many others will realize they're better suited as friends.

Sheril Kirshenbaum,
Associate Research Scientist,
Michigan State University

Life's Lessons

Who is your life partner?

Mom, dad, wife, son, husband, daughter, friends…?

Not at all. Your real life partner is your body. Once your body stops responding no one is with you.

You and your body stay together from birth till death. What you do to your body is your responsibility and that will come back to you. The more you care for your body, the more your body will care for you.

What you eat, what you do for being fit, how you deal with stress, how much rest you give to it will decide how your body will respond.

Remember your body is the only permanent address where you live.

Your body is your asset/liability, which no one else can share.

Your body is your responsibility because you are the real life partner.

Be fit forever.

Take care of yourself.

Money comes and goes.

Relatives and Friends are not permanent.

No one can help your body other than you.

Pranayama - for lungs.

Meditation - for mind.

Yoga-asanas - for body.

Walking - for heart.

Good food - for intestines.

* * *

For Senior Citizens

A study in the United States shows that over 51% of old people fall down while climbing stairs. Every year, many Americans are killed by falling while climbing stairs.

After 60 years, these 10 actions should be avoided:

1. Do not climb staircase. If you must climb, hold on firmly to staircase railings.
2. Do not rapidly twist your head. Warm up your whole body first.
3. Do not bend your body to touch your toe. Warm up your whole body first.
4. Do not stand to wear your pants. Wear your pants while sitting down.
5. Do not sit up when lying face up. Sit up from one side (left hand side, or right hand side) of your body.
6. Do not twist your body before exercise. Warm up first.
7. Do not walk backwards. Falling backwards can result in serious injury.
8. Do not bend waist to lift heavy weight. Bend your knees and lift up heavy object while half squatting.
9. Do not get up fast from bed. Wait a few minutes before getting up.

One more important thing: you must be active always and think positive. After all these years of hard work, now it's time to enjoy life.

In A Light Vein

Everyone thinks seniors are senile

An elderly couple was celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary. The couple had married as childhood sweethearts and had moved back to their old neighbourhood after they retired. Holding hands, they walked back to their old school. It was not locked, so they entered. They found the old desk they'd shared, where Jerry had carved "I love you, Sally".

On their way back home, a bag of money fell out of an armoured car, practically landing at their feet. Sally quickly picked it up and, not sure what to do with it, they took it home. There, she counted the money - fifty thousand dollars!

Jerry said: "We've got to give it back."

Sally said: "Finders keepers."

She put the money back in the bag and hid it in their attic.

The next day, two police officers, who were canvassing the neighbourhood looking for the money, knocked on their door. "Pardon me, did either of you find a bag that fell out of an armoured car yesterday?"

Sally said: "No."

Jerry said: "She's lying. She hid it up in the attic."

Sally said: "Don't believe him, he's getting senile."

The agents turned to Jerry and began to question him.

One said: "Tell us the story from the beginning."

Jerry said: "Well, when Sally and I were walking home from school yesterday…"

The first police officer turned to his partner and said: "Let's get out of here."

* * *

Once a businessman went to see a corrupt minister to thank and pay for an illegal job facilitated by the latter.

He said to the minister, "Sir, we want to present you a brand new car to thank you for the approval granted to our application."

Minister: No, no, no.... I don't want to get it free. I want to give some money for this car.

Businessman: Okay, Sir! Please give one rupee.

The minister did not have a one-rupee coin, but a two-rupee coin in his pocket. So, he gave him the two-rupee coin.

Businessman: Sorry, Sir. I also don't have a one-rupee coin to return...

Minister: No problem. You give me another car of the same model for my wife.

The businessman fainted.

Life's Talk

An Ode to Coronavirus

Anyone remember the poetess Pam Ayres? Well, she's 73 and still going strong. This is her latest ode to coronavirus...

I'm normally a social girl
I love to meet my mates
But lately with the virus here
We can't go out the gates.

You see, we are the 'oldies' now
We need to stay inside
If they haven't seen us for a while
They'll think we've upped and died.

They'll never know the things we did
Before we got this old
There wasn't any Facebook
So not everything was told.

We may seem sweet old ladies
Who would never be uncouth
But we grew up in the 60s -
If you only knew the truth!

There was sex and drugs and rock 'n roll
The pill and miniskirts
We smoked, we drank, we partied
And were quite outrageous flirts.

Then we settled down, got married
And turned into someone's mum,
Somebody's wife, then nana,
Who on earth did we become?

We didn't mind the change of pace
Because our lives were full
But to bury us before we're dead
Is like a red rag to a bull!

So here you find me stuck inside
For four weeks, maybe more
I finally found myself again
Then I had to close the door!

It didn't really bother me
I'd while away the hour
I'd bake for all the family
But I've got no flaming flour!

Now Netflix is just wonderful
I like a gutsy thriller
I'm swooning over Idris
Or some random sexy killer.

At least I've got a stash of booze
For when I'm being idle
There's wine and whiskey, even gin
If I'm feeling suicidal!

So let's all drink to lockdown
To recovery and health
And hope this awful virus
Doesn't decimate our wealth.

We'll all get through the crisis
And be back to join our mates
Just hoping I'm not far too wide
To fit through the flaming gates!

The Irony of life!

So suddenly:
New York 'the city that never sleeps' is now asleep, all quiet.
Paris the 'centre of romance' lives in echos.
Rome 'the eternal city' is deserted.
Disney is out of magic.
London is caged in silence, the Queen speaks to her people from a hidden room.
The Chinese wall is no longer a fortress.
The G8 nations are speechless.
The developed world suddenly on its knees.
Churches, mosques, great parks, monuments, stadiums are filled with unfilled spaces.

Our Miracle

Pastors suddenly become so silent that they dare not visit hospitals for healing.

The anointing oils are no longer effective. Holy water becomes ordinary water.

Our pastors that depended on body guards now depend on god almighty alone.

The busiest places at present were hitherto the most dreaded: hospitals and cemeteries.

The famous football leagues, the fashion shows, exotic weddings, festivals all lost to memory.

Celebrities have run out of celebrations. Our titles, status and privileged positions are stale.

With all our boastful 'citizenships' we cannot step out of our houses.

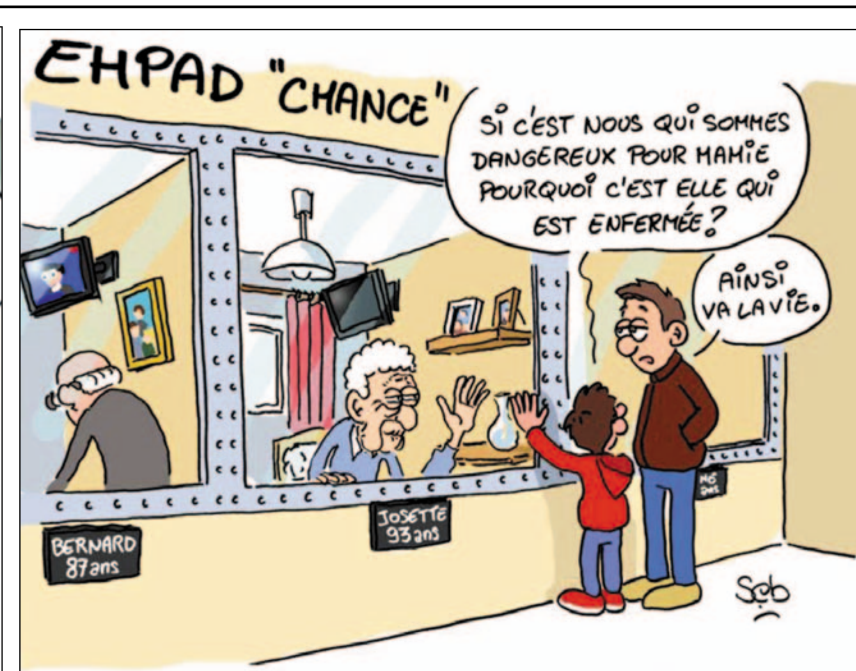
With all our savings in gold and cash, we can only buy food to eat and toilet papers to take care of the waste.

We usually went to watch animals in cages, now animals roam our empty streets, watching us in our 'cages'.

With our expensive clothes and shoes, our house clothes and pyjamas are the latest fashion.

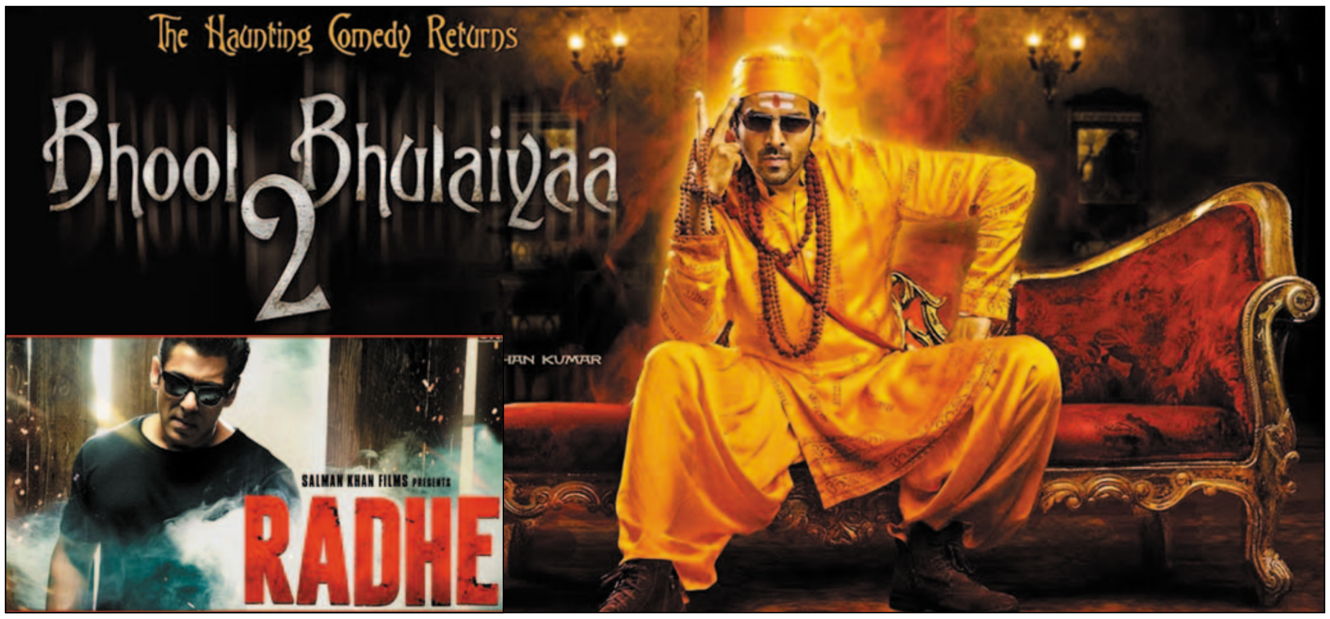
And despite all these 'oddities'...the world still goes on; the sun still shines; the birds still sing.

When this long night finally gets over and a new day sets in, let us not forget the lesson of the long night- that the only essential is LIFE, the rest are but dispensable prefixes and suffixes - busy emptiness.



Covid-19 effect: Bollywood's foreign shoots in limbo

The trend of shooting films overseas could change in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, not just due to logistical reasons, but also as India gets 'vocal for local'.



The romanticism of Switzerland, the rough desert terrain of Abu Dhabi, exotic locales of France and spectacular islands across the world — Bollywood has, for long, captured the beauty of these and more in its films. But this could temporarily change in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, not just due to logistical reasons, but also as India gets 'vocal for local'.

Karan Johar's team had done extensive recce to lock locations across Italy and Spain for his ambitious project Takht. In a recent video interview, he said, "We had a palace in Florence that we were shooting in... And then we were shooting in Italy at Bari... and at Seville."

He's not the only one in a quandary over locations. According to trade sources, a spate of movies — some yet to be announced — from the Yash Raj Films (YRF) banner, including directorial projects by Aditya Chopra, Maneesh Sharma and Sidharth Anand, were slated to be shot across several locations abroad; an OTT show was due to be shot in Bangkok, Salman Khan's Radhe had a schedule in Dubai, *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2* had a scene or two to be shot abroad, and *Tiger 3* was also slated to have a foreign schedule.

Filmmaker duo Raj & DK say 50% of one of their big projects was set in foreign locations, and they were planning to shoot soon. Now they're reassessing plans.

Raj Nidimoru, who believes it may be "irresponsible and impractical" to think that once the lockdown is lifted, people can do as they want, says, "It's a question of what precautions you're going to take for the crew. If Covid-19 is still around, one has to reassess things, and of course when restrictions are lifted, you can try shooting on a smaller sample set rather than take an international travel and a big crew."

So, while the "let's wait and watch" mantra continues amid the lockdown, industry experts feel some filmmakers may tweak scripts or turn scenes to Indian settings.

Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2 producer Bhushan Kumar tells us, "If you haven't started shooting yet, you can always change the script a bit to accommodate an Indian location. Our film had a foreign situation, and we're thinking of changing the setting for the scene to Goa now. People won't take the risk of foreign shoots, and even getting permissions won't be easy in the times to come."

Considering that the effect of this unprecedented crisis will last for another six to eight months, filmmakers will have to consider minimal outdoor shoots in order to curb the effect, points out Ajit Andhare, COO, Viacom18 Studios.

He explains, "We've to redraw shoot plans, not just tweak them. However, to redraw you need to first define and determine conditions that are unknown as yet. It's early to call what changes will be made, but locations will be a key point to re-examine."

One can safely say that the establishment of incentives such as tax credits, cash rebates, refunds, fee-free location scouting et al, have attracted Indian filmmakers to shoot in myriad locations abroad in recent years.

But Red Chillies Entertainment COO Gaurav Verma says at least 90% of our films and series are shot within India. Having said that, he raises the several questions that will come with planning an outdoor shoot.

"Some countries will exercise caution. So, one has to see how much travel will be allowed. Will the concerned country allow people to come from India? What are the shooting permissions? Can we take a crew there? And that is apart from the fact whether we want to travel or not," Verma says, adding that it "will take time to build confidence" before people start travelling even within India, let alone to foreign countries.

Sara Khan makes a plea to landlords of aspiring actors, says, 'Please be considerate, no one is running away'

Sara Khan who is coming out with a new song, Shukran, spoke to BollywoodLife about being creative during this lockdown phase. She also urged people to be as supportive of one another.

Sara Khan who became a sensation with her debut show, Bidaai, is now focusing on her career as a singer. She has displayed her acting skills on many shows but it is music, which is her centre of attention. BollywoodLife caught up with her for a chat. She revealed that her Eid celebrations were a lot different this year. She told BollywoodLife, "I celebrated with my family. Every year, we have lots of family members and friends coming over. You cook up a feast and get Eidi from elders. This year, the festivities happened over a video call." She says it was always a moment of realization. "You do not need too many people around you to be happy. We are blessed to have a family. They are more important than everything else," she said.

Music is taking up a lot of her time. "I am doing my riyaz. I have written six to seven songs and there are three more in the pipeline. There is a song Shukran which is produced by me. I have produced and written a short film which has been shot in Manali. It is a love story. Once the lockdown ends, we can finish the post-production work and release it," she said.

The lady also gave valuable advice on how this lockdown has made people more creative. "I have my camera and lights at home. I know editing. I can create content myself. You need to know how to keep yourself happy. That is the only true way to live. The only thing I miss is my practice sessions for my live concert. I was singing and dancing for four hours on a daily basis. I miss that time," Sara Khan said.

She also advises people to be calm. "All we can do is sit back and wait for the next step of the government. Every citizen is going through this crisis. It is harder for daily wage labourers and junior artistes. We just have to live through these moments like a test from God and stay calm," she says. Sara also said that she would urge landlords to be kinder to actors who live on rent. "You need to stand for each other without doing show off on social media. I think by being supportive one can do one's bit. Nobody is running away, please be little considerate," she opines. She also said that Hrithik Roshan would be her fave quarantine partner from Bollywood celebs and she is binge watching The Vampire Diaries.

Ram Kapoor: 'I don't think I achieved everything on talent alone. Luck does play a huge role'

Today, he's counted among the trusted character actors in films who make an impact, even in a limited screen time. A decade ago, he was TV's go-to star, who played an unlikely hero in a mature love story, conceptualised by Ekta Kapoor. No one had imagined its popularity would escalate the way it did, overnight. Here's Ram Kapoor, talking to Rachana Dubey of Times of India about his kal with *Bade Acche Lagte Hain*, his aaj with the movies and his kal, which could see him don several new hats:

*** *Bade Acche Lagte Hain* had a different feel to it. It was urban, had its own complex relationship dynamics and steered away from the usual tropes of that time. Do you recall your early days with the show?**

You know, the initial days were different from anything else that I had experienced with a show until then. Things work and they don't, and sometimes even when they work well in general, they don't do much for you. With TV shows, we were fairly used to waiting a few weeks or months for it to find its audience. That didn't happen here; people were hooked on to it from the word go. We felt proud of what we were doing and what we had achieved in a short span with such a unique take on a love story. That instant success for the show was new for all of us.

*** The show was meant to have a limited-episode run, but it continued to get extensions because it had worked, which made it difficult for you...right?**

Ekta wrote it with a specific start, mid and end, spread over 150 episodes. We had committed ourselves to that but when it became popular, it also started getting extended. That is where the dates went for a toss. I lost a few of my film offers while some waited for me to wrap up this show. I had to take care of a lot of different commitments but that is a wonderful challenge for any actor. So, I don't regret that.

*** Do you think *Bade Acche Lagte Hain* changed the course of your career and also how the industry and the audience perceived your abilities in front of the camera?**

Yeah, I do agree with that. I also think that when you work, and your success is not by fluke, you find a different kind of success and respect coming your way. Ronit Roy and Sakshi Tanwar are actors whose shows have repeatedly worked. I had seen some of that, too. *Bade Acche...* was presented in a respectful manner. So, I don't know whether it was my previous works or the way this show panned out or both, that I did feel a lot more loved and respected in this business.

*** Eventually, when the show wrapped up, you also lost a lot of weight that you had to maintain till the show was on. Was that a relief?**

I wanted to lose weight and reinvent the way I looked and felt for myself and my family. Yes, I did get a lot of comments from people like, 'Oh, we liked our Ram the way he was on the show.' But it had to stop somewhere. The transformation was necessary and I had waited for it.

*** Things today are a lot different for you. If one visits your social media page, one would know that you've begun to chase quality over quantity, and crazy hours over balancing the picture. What led to this?**

There was a period of time in life when I spent a decade working incessantly, throughout the year, every year. I did nothing but work. Gautami had taken complete charge of everything else and thanks to that, I had that space to myself. It started soon after my daughter Siya was born. I gave it my all. My kids would only see me at breakfast on most days.

In that period, I created a safety net for my family. I had TV offers soon after *Bade Acche Lagte Hain* ended. I was at a crossroad and I decided to change gears, go easy and concentrate on my life. We began to take more holidays together, spend more time with one another. If I didn't do that, my kids would have grown up without knowing me. I started taking on fewer roles, unique ones, and with people who were respected in the business for their craft. Eventually, now I work for about six or seven months a year and the rest of the time I have to myself. I have entered a different stage of my life where life is fun at work and at home.

*** The lockdown stands extended, with riders on. How have the last eight-ten weeks been for your family and you?**

The lockdown has been frustrating and humbling at the same time. It was necessary and had to be done. Being stuck at home is not easy. I've read about an actor committing suicide in recent times. I understand this place is uncertain and the profession is such that you don't know where and when the next piece of work will come your way. Financial security is a concern. I consider myself to be in a lucky space. I've seen people, far more talented than me, in a mess. I don't think I achieved everything on talent alone. Luck does play a huge role.

Ragini Khanna gets Nostalgic about her show, *Sasural Genda Phool*

In an exclusive interview with BollywoodLife, Ragini Khanna has shared some bittersweet memories from her show, Sasural Genda Phoolhe, where she revealed that her body had lost all sense of temperature as she was confined to an AC studio for 2 years.

Ragini Khanna was recently seen in the web movies like *Ghoomketu* and *Posham Pa*, and has always, has been appreciated for her performances in them. The actress had begun her career with the television show, *Radhaa Ki Betiyaan Kuch Kar Dikhayengi*, and later rose to fame with *Bhaskar Bharti*. Her performance in *Bhaskar Bharti* has been a favourite of many, fondly remembered to this day. She later went on to do *Sasural Genda Phool,* which had a successful run for two years. The show was about Suhana Kashyap, an arrogant but kindhearted woman, who marries a man from a middle-class, joint family. She was seen opposite Jay Soni in the show, and their chemistry was loved by all. Now, in an exclusive interview with *BollywoodLife,* Ragini Khanna has shared some bittersweet memories from her show, Sasural Genda Phool.

Taking a trip down memory lane with *Sasural Genda Phool,* Ragini Khanna said, "The *Sasural Genda Phool* cast is still in touch with each other. The issue is that I was so deeply involved in my job that I had no sense of time, no sense of dates, months, years. I had no sense of climate and my body had lost temperature because I was confined to an AC studio. So, my body never reacted to extreme summers, it never reacted to extreme winters. I was just in an AC studio for two years so my body lost its sense of temperature. So, if I had to remember what I was doing on one particular date and one particular phase in my life, I will have to remove an episode and see that this is what I was involved in. It's a very scary experience and I remember post Sasural, I was not able to recognise myself without the wig. Because I have curly hair and I cannot straighten it every time, I had to wear a wig and saree."

CINE 12

Mardi 2 juin - 21.15

Grave Halloween

Avec: Kaitlyn Leeb, Cassi Thomson, Graham Wardle

CINE 12

Mercredi 3 juin - 21.15

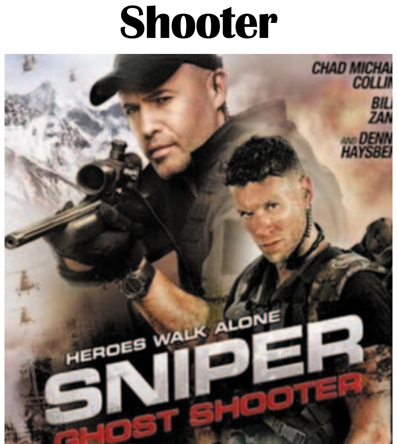
Geronimo

Avec: Jason Patric, Gene Hackman, Robert Duvall

CINE 12

Jeudi 4 juin - 21.15

Sniper 6: Ghost Shooter



mardi 2 juin

MBC 1

06.00 Local: Rodrig Prog
07.11 Dessin Anime
10.30 Mag: Origami
10.40 Mag: Zoboomafoo
12.00 Le Journal
12.25 Doc: Autour Des Valeurs
12.35 Doc: Comme Un Poisson...
13.30 Local: Passerelles
14.30 D.Anime: Bob Le Bricoleur
14.41 D.Anime: Le Quiz De Zack
14.44 D.Anime: Astrolology
15.07 D.Anime: Kuu Kuu Harajuku
16.28 D.Anime: Johnny Test
17.00 Live Press Conference
18.00 Live: Samachar
18.30 Serial: Jamai Raja
19.30 Journal & La Meteo
20.00 Local: Press Conference
20.35 Local Production
22.15 Serial: Chicago Police...
23.00 Le Journal

MBC 2

04.30 Aastha TV
07.00 DDI Live
10.00 Serial: Tumhaari Natasha
11.19 Serial: MOL
12.04 Film:
15.00 Live: Samachar
15.20 Honaar Soon Mee Hya...
15.43 Mooga Manasulu
16.03 Apoorva Raagangal
16.30 Serial: Ki Jaana Mein Kaun
16.53 Serial: Gangaa
18.00 Serial: Dr. Quin
18.30 Tele: Mariana Et Scarlett
19.00 Zournal Kreol
19.30 DDI Magazine
19.50 Local: Yaadein
20.20 Serial: Mah-E-Tamaam
21.25 Local: Anjuman
21.26 Local: Urdu Programme
22.37 DDI Live

MBC 3

06.00 Mag: Eco India
06.44 Mag: World Stories
07.00 Mag: Voa Connect
07.22 Doc: A Question Of Science
07.31 Mag: In Good Shape
08.41 Mag: Shift
09.00 Live Educational Program...
16.56 Mag: Global 3000
17.19 Mag: Made In Germany
17.58 Mag: Rev: The Global Auto...
18.24 Mag: Urban Gardens
19.00 Zournal Kreol
19.29 Doc: A Question Of Science
19.58 Local: Tamil Programme
20.32 Film: Seeban
22.43 Doc: Monuments Men Of...
23.25 Mag: Rev: The Global Auto...
23.51 Mag: Urban Gardens
23.56 Doc: Les Artisans Du Rebut
00.21 Mag: Check In
00.47 Doc: A Question Of Science

Cine 12

01.34 Tele: Esmeraldas
02.22 Serial: The L.A. Complex
03.40 Film: Twister
05.31 Tele: Amanda
07.08 Film: Love's Complicated
09.00 Serial: Line Of Duty
09.59 Tele: Au Nom De L'Amour
10.23 Tele: Mariana Et Scarlett
10.48 Serial: S.W.A.T
11.29 Tele: Dulce Amor
11.58 Film: Twister
13.46 Tele: Amanda
14.45 Film: Love's Complicated
16.33 Serial: Line Of Duty
17.32 Serial: Dynasty
18.21 Tele: Au Nom De L'amour
18.45 Tele: Mariana Et Scarlett
19.10 Tele: Dulce Amor
20.05 Tele: Totalment Diva
20.30 Serial: Dynasty
21.15 Film: Grave Halloween

Bollywood TV

09.14 Film: Baharon Ki Manzil
12.04 / 19.54 - Kahan Hum Kahan Tuam
12.26 / 20.11 - Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala
12.46 / 20.32 Radha Krishna
13.08 / 21.09 - Bin Kuch Kahe
13.30 / 21.24 - Zindagi Ki Mehek
13.52 / 21.46 - Bade Acche Lagte Hai
14.14 / 21.59 - Chhanchhan
14.35 / 22.25 - Ishqbaaz
15.10 Film: Dishoom
Stars: John Abraham, Varun Dhawan, Nargis Fakhri
18.00 Live: Samacher
18.30 Kumkum Bhagya
18.51 Piya Albela
19.13 Mere Angne Mein
19.24 Yeh Un Dinon Ki Baat Hai
20.05 Kahan Hum Kahan Tum

mercredi 3 juin

MBC 1

07.00 Dessin Anime
10.28 Mag: Origami
10.45 Mag: Zoboomafoo
11.15 Local: Itinerer Moris
11.30 Local: Rodrigues
12.00 Le Journal
12.25 Local: People - No 54
13.30 Local: Saver Kil Tirel
14.00 Local: Coin Jardin
14.30 D.Anime: Bob Le Bricoleur
14.41 D.Anime: Le Quiz De Zack
16.03 D.Anime: Mademoiselle Zazie
16.10 D.Anime: The Deep
16.30 D.Anime: Johnny Test
17.00 Live Press Conference
18.00 Live: Samachar
18.30 Serial: Jamai Raja
19.30 Journal & La Meteo
20.00 Local: Press Conference
21.30 Serial: The Enemy Within
22.15 Serial: Chicago Police Depart
23.00 Local: Le Journal

MBC 2

04.30 Aastha TV
07.00 Film:
11.40 Good Morning Shanghai
12.00 Nanda Saukhya Bhare
12.30 Serial: Mooga Manasulu
12.48 Serial: Brundavanam
13.10 Serial: Annakodiyum Ainthu
13.35 Serial: Anu Pallavi
14.05 Entertainment: Dil Hai Hindu
15.00 Live: Samachar
15.20 Film: Imtihaan
18.00 Mag: Check In
18.30 Mag: Eco@Africa
19.00 Zournal Kreol
19.30 DDI Magazine
20.05 Serial: Vikram Betaal Ki Rahasya Gatha
20.21 Serial: Bitti Business Wali
21.00 Film:
23.15 DDI Live

MBC 3

06.00 Mag: Rev: The Global Auto
06.26 Mag: Urban Gardens
07.24 Doc: A Question Of Science
08.03 Doc: Horizons S
08.49 Doc: World Stamps
08.55 Mag: Japan Video Topics
09.00 Live Educational Prog...
16.03 Doc: The End Of Memory
16.45 Doc: Can Electric Cars...
17.28 Charlie And The Humans
18.04 Mag: Motorweek
18.24 Mag: Urban Gardens
18.30 Live: News
18.40 Mag: Healthy Living
19.00 Live: Zournal Kreol
19.30 Doc: Garden Party
20.02 Programme In Marathi
22.27 Doc: ID Theft
23.10 Mag: Motorweek
23.34 Mag: Urban Gardens
23.39 Doc: Olivia's Garden
00.05 Mag: Arts.21

Cine 12

01.34 Film: Grave Halloween
03.00 Serial: S.W.A.T
03.41 Film: Hailey Dean Mysteries
05.09 Tele: Amanda
05.51 Serial: Dynasty
06.40 Film: Autumn In The Vineyard
08.30 Mag: Hollywood No Set
09.00 Serial: Line Of Duty
09.59 Tele: Au Nom De L'amour
10.46 Serial: S.W.A.T
11.26 Tele: Dulce Amor
12.00 Film: Hailey Dean Mysteries
13.30 Tele: Amanda
14.16 Mag: Hollywood New Feed
14.45 Film: Autumn In The Vineyard
16.40 Serial: Mission Impossible
17.22 Serial: Dynasty
19.00 Tele: Dulce Amor
20.05 Tele: Totalment Diva
20.30 Series: When Calls The Heart
21.15 Film: Geronimo
23.06 Tele: Amanda

Bollywood TV

09.28 Film: Jaanwar Aur Insaan
12.04 / 19.54 - Kahan Hum Kahan Tuam
12.26 / 20.11 - Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala
12.46 / 20.32 Radha Krishna
13.08 / 21.09 - Bin Kuch Kahe
13.30 / 21.24 - Zindagi Ki Mehek
13.52 / 21.46 - Bade Acche Lagte Hai
14.14 / 21.59 - Chhanchhan
14.35 / 22.25 - Ishqbaaz
15.10 Film: Fitoor
Stars: Aditya Roy Kapoor, Katrina Kaif, Tabu
18.00 Live: Samacher
18.30 Kumkum Bhagya
18.51 Piya Albela
19.13 Mere Angne Mein
19.24 Yeh Un Dinon Ki Baat Hai
20.05 Kahan Hum Kahan Tum

jeudi 4 juin

MBC 1

07.00 Dessin Anime
09.45 Serial: Grandpa In My Pocket
10.25 Mag: Origami
11.00 Local: Itinerer Rodrig
12.00 Le Journal
12.25 Local: Autour Des Valeurs
14.25 D.Anime: Bob Le Bricoleur
14.36 D. Anime: Le Quiz De Zack
14.50 D.Anime: Zou
15.25 D.Anime: Astrolology
15.55 D.Anime: Mademoiselle...
16.26 D.Anime: Johnny Test
16.50 Special Budget
19.15 Live: Samachar
20.00 Le Journal Televise
21.35 Film: Agneepath
Star: Hritik Roshan, Priyanka Chopra, Sanjay Dutt, Rishi Kapoor
23.30 Le Journal

MBC 2

04.30 Aastha TV
07.00 Film: Paapi
10.00 Local: Shree Durga...
11.00 Serial: Oru Kai Osai
12.00 Film:
15.00 Samachar
15.20 Serial: Mooga Manasulu
15.40 Serial: Eka Lagnachi Teesri
16.06 Apoorva Raagangal
16.28 Local: Yaadein
16.54 Serial: Mahakali
18.00 Lettre Pastorale Careme
18.30 Local: Tipa Tipa Nu Avance
19.00 Zournal Kreol
19.30 DDI Magazine
20.00 Serial: Maharakshak
20.42 Serial: Naagin
21.28 Serial: CID
22.15 Serial: Piya Rangrezz

MBC 3

06.00 Mag: Motorweek
06.26 Mag: Urban Gardens
07.24 Doc: A Question Of Science
07.54 Doc: Laos - The Village
08.36 Doc: World Stamps
08.42 Mag: Shift
09.00 Live Educational Prog...
16.03 Doc: Visite Guidee
16.45 Mag: Initiative Africa
17.58 Mag: Eco India
18.24 Mag: Urban Gardens
18.30 Live: News
18.40 Mag: Shift
19.00 Live: Zournal Kreol
19.24 Doc: A Question Of Science
20.02 Film: American Force
21.32 Mag: Strictly Street
21.56 Doc: Germany - Problem With Plastic
22.38 Doc: On Route 7 Into The Heart Of Patagonia

Cine 12

00.47 Serial: When Calls The Heart
01.44 Film: Geronimo
03.34 Serial: S.W.A.T
04.14 Film: My Mother's Murder
05.37 Telenovela: Amanda
06.19 Serial: When Calls The Heart
07.01 Film: L'Etoile Brisee
09.00 Serial: Line Of Duty
09.59 Tele: Au Nom De L'amour
10.49 Serial: S.W.A.T
12.00 Film: My Mother's Murder
13.28 Tele: Amanda
14.45 Film: L'etoile Brisee
16.26 Serial: Line Of Duty
17.25 Serial: When Calls The Heart
18.30 Tele: Mariana Et Scarlett
19.00 Tele: Dulce Amor
20.05 Tele: Totalment Diva
20.30 Serial: When Calls The Heart
21.15 Film: Sniper 6: Ghost Shooter

Bollywood TV

09.19 Film: Do Anjaane
12.04 / 19.54 - Kahan Hum Kahan Tuam
12.26 / 20.11 - Kullfi Kumarr Bajewala
12.46 / 20.32 Radha Krishna
13.08 / 21.09 - Bin Kuch Kahe
13.30 / 21.24 - Zindagi Ki Mehek
13.52 / 21.46 - Bade Acche Lagte Hai
14.14 / 21.59 - Chhanchhan
14.35 / 22.25 - Ishqbaaz
15.14 Film: Golmaal Returns
Stars: Ajay Devgan , Kareena Kapoor , Arshad Warsi , Amrita Arora , Celina Jaitley
18.00 Live: Samacher
18.30 Kumkum Bhagya
18.51 Piya Albela
19.13 Mere Angne Mein
19.24 Yeh Un Dinon Ki Baat Hai
20.05 Kahan Hum Kahan Tum

mbc 1 — Jeudi 4 juin - 21.35 — Stars: Hritik Roshan, Priyanka Chopra, Sanjay Dutt, Rishi Kapoor

B TV — Jeudi 4 juin - 15.14 — Stars: Ajay Devgan, Kareena Kapoor, Arshad Warsi, Amrita Arora, Celina Jaitley

How England became the 'sweetshop of Europe'

Sugarcane cultivation in Cuba in the 19th century. Photo - latinamericanstudies.org

In September 1591, Queen Elizabeth I stopped during her annual progress around her kingdom at the home of the Earl of Hertford, Elvetham Hall near Basingstoke in south-east England. The second night's entertainment was reported to be quite the culinary spectacle: a banquet, served in the garden, with more than 1,000 dishes to weigh down the table.

The most impressive and curious of them all were statues made from sugar. Guests marvelled at a virtual menagerie: "Lions, Vnicorns, Beares, Horses, Camels, Buls, Rams, Dogges, Tygers, Elephants, Antelops, Dromedaries, Apes, and all other beasts" had been rendered in the powdery sweet stuff. Of the multitude dishes at the table, it was the ones made from sugar that were most worthy of note.

By 1800, rather than only gracing the tables of monarchs and aristocrats, sugar was on almost every table in England and would have been stirred into pretty much every servant's cup of tea. Social historian, John Burnett – whose work focused on the working classes – put annual consumption in 1801 at 30.6lb (13.87kg) per person.

Understanding sugar's rise to ubiquity helps to tell the story of some of the most important phenomena in economic history. The history of sugar is also the history of capitalism, of exploitation, of globalisation and of industrialisation.

Moorish – and moreish

Sugar first came to England in the 11th century, brought back by soldiers returning from the Crusades in what is now the Middle East. Over the next 500 years it remained a rarefied luxury, until Portuguese colonists began producing it at a more industrial level in Brazil during the 1500s. Financed by Dutch merchants, they began to traffic enslaved Africans to farm the sugar. The planters were able to ship commercial quantities to Europe.

In the mid-17th century, British colonists adopted the same business model, using slaves to plant cash crops in Barbados, Jamaica and other smaller islands. And it is from this point that the British relationship with sweetness really accelerates.

Just as the industry was evolving in the Caribbean, so too was the trade back to Europe. Sugar spread throughout the British Isles. The Atlantic trading nexus, known as the "triangular trade", between Europe, Africa and the Caribbean, wove a sticky web which traversed oceans and continents, reaching even the rural north-east of England, where, for example, sugar was available from a local grocer in Lancaster.

Sugar came in a number of varieties at a number of different price points and wasn't confined to the tables of the elite. Triple-refined white sugar remained the most expensive, but a poorer consumer could also buy ordinary brown sugar or dark viscous molasses, known as treacle. Recipe books from the period are filled with ideas for how to use the ingredient, from sprinkling on salad to a fine plum cake. Sugar was particularly useful as it kept fresh goods for longer, turning low-calorie perishable fruit into high-calorie preserves and jams.

Economic fuel

Understanding the timeline of our sweet tooth also tells us more about the development of the global economy – and Britain's role within it. One of the most important facilitators for the increase in home consumption was the rise of the domestic sugar refinery. Where once sugar was processed in the Caribbean and shipped back to Europe, sugar merchants began to import back semi-processed sugar and finish the refining process at home.

By 1700, refineries, or "sugar bakers" as they were known, had popped up across the length and breadth of the country, from Plymouth to Glasgow, and from Liverpool to Ipswich. Sugar baking was one of the first industrial activities to appear in England. It was comparable to the factories of the industrial revolution, mostly because it used vast amounts of coal to heat the copper pans which boiled the sugar.

The finished product was then shipped around the country, helping to forge transport networks, both internationally and domestically. It feels important to mention, writing this article in lockdown, that the Great Plague of 1665 did a lot to support the expansion of the industry around the country. Refiners left London to set up shop elsewhere and West Indian ships carrying sugar had to dock in other ports to avoid catching the disease. Both phenomena expedited sugar's geographic expansion.

The English crown supported this burgeoning industrial activity. Protectionist taxation policies effectively subsidised imports of semi-processed sugar, which encouraged the domestic industry. Refining was so successful that British merchants began to export their surplus out to countries in Europe, as well as re-exporting large amounts of brown sugar around the world. This helped to solidify the nation's balance of trade. Where once the Dutch and Portuguese had dominated the European market, England was fast becoming the sweetshop of Europe.

The multi-faceted story of sugar's ascent and the growth of the nation's sweet tooth tells us more about early industrial and capitalist activity in England. While eventually the French overtook Britain as chief European suppliers of sugar in the 18th century, the early sugar trade provided British merchants with a model which was then adopted and adapted for later goods including cotton, and which catalysed the industrial revolution in the following centuries.

Above all the story of sugar is a reminder of the reliance of Britain's metropolitan economy on the colonies. Integral to – and inextricable from – this story of economic growth is the backbreaking toil of workers and labourers who produced the cane and enabled our taste for sweetness.

Mimi Goodall
University of Oxford

'The Joint Administrators are of the same firm that carried out due diligence on Air Mauritius and certified its level of solvency less than 10 months earlier'

● Cont. from page 9

We cannot compare them with Management in any respect, especially a Management *de facto* deprived of executive powers. While the Joint Administrators have more powers of decision than even the Board after taking control of the company, they are there to try redress the business to convince creditors there is a better deal for them than a liquidation, which is the last resort.

Nevertheless, how can MK expect to generate a positive cash flow when there is so much uncertainty about the timing of a recovery of the air travel market? Time is therefore of the essence. It appears the Joint Administrators have sought and obtained a Court Order for more time but will it be sufficient?

*** Let's say there is a willing seller for Air Mauritius in the event that the two external administrators fail to turn around our national airline. Do you think a willing buyer will be forthcoming?**

It does not take much to restructure MK and put it back on the rails as I explained earlier. But turning around the business will be dependent on how the market recovers and when.

Selling Air Mauritius is certainly an option. Mauritius is an established tourist destination of high standing attracting big players. No doubt a number of investors might already be lining up to seize the opportunity. A judiciously conceived Shareholders Agreement can take on board all legitimate concerns and whatever is required to preserve and safeguard the elements of sovereignty and strategic needs that any government may reasonably need from a national carrier.

The offer of direct flight to and from Mauritius by a home-based carrier cannot be matched by competition. It also explains why with all its weaknesses, Air Mauritius continued to carry more that 50% of our international air traffic. There is a strong business case for Air Mauritius.

*** Word is going around that dozens if not more long serving employees of MK, especially those having completed 33 years and 3 months of service irrespective of their age, are presently being given their marching orders. There are feelings of deep frustration and anger amongst those who are saying "they are not responsible for the hedging saga, the succession of CEOs appointed by all governments, the traffic rights granted to Emirates, Turkish Airlines, Saudi Arabian Airlines, Kenya Airways…, successive government interference in the acquisition of aircraft, the latest one resulting in surplus capacity and in the loan of 2 brand new aircraft to SAA…" What's your take on that?**

This disaster is not of their making. Yet, employees are the very first to fall victim to a situation beyond their control. Those who tried to raise their head in protest over any of these legitimate concerns paid a high price in reprisal.

With the rosy picture painted of the company's performance with each Quarterly Report and skillfully relayed by the media, most employees were not the least aware of the gravity of MK's deteriorating financial health. Their frustration and anger are therefore understandable. They reflect what has been just said about the Governance structure whereby Board and management were hijacked by Shadow Directors with little if any experience in Management and even less in airline business. Those employees built Air Mauritius over much of its 53 years of active operations.

Emirates started retrenching a couple of days back but on the basis of 'last-in first-out' and doing it with much compassion. It is to be hoped that common sense prevails here too and that the sum of expertise and institutional memory of retrenched staff is valued and tapped by a healthier Air Mauritius emerging from Administration.

When South African Airways went into a similar Administration, termed 'business rescue' in December last, economists estimated that each job created in aviation had a multiplier effect generating 34 jobs in the economy. In Mauritius, the tourism sector is proportionately higher.

On that basis, it may be inferred that every job lost in MK may result in 35 to 40 jobs destroyed in the economy. The impact of layoffs at Air Mauritius and its cascading effect of massive job destruction may be devastating by year end.

> "By placing the airline under Voluntary Administration, the Board simply availed of protection under the law to salvage MK's business and ensure it could continue to trade as a going concern. Normally, Directors cannot turn a blind eye and allow a company to continue transacting business when they become aware of its inability to honour its debts. Given the earlier writings on the wall, one may wonder what took them so long..."