

EDITOR'S VIEW

# Bracing for rocky road ahead as we slide downhill

THERE have been several developments in the past few days that have made me realise that life in South Africa is going to get worse before it gets better.

The first was media reports that Johann Rupert was reconsidering his future in South Africa.

He won't be the first person to leave. Thousands have done so since democracy.

However, what makes this case different are the reasons that have made Rupert consider leaving.

While many quit because they did not want to live under a black government, Rupert thinks our country will be bankrupt within a year and large-scale riots will break out.

He is one of the richest men in South Africa. He counts his wealth not in millions but billions. And that's dollars. Take away the taxes he and his companies pay and our country will be poorer.

Then came news that the ratings agencies were losing their patience with us. It doesn't matter what you think about ratings agencies, those with money listen to them.

When Fitch decided to change its outlook for South Africa from stable to negative it was a matter of concern.

Put differently, Fitch does not believe South Africa is the place people should invest in. The result was that the rand is now more than R14 to the dollar.

You and I will feel the impact of that when petrol goes up in the coming days and weeks.

A weaker rand fuels inflation and that could bring an abrupt end to the Reserve Bank's plan to cut interest rates which many hoped would help boost the economy.

On Monday, there was another worrisome development when Judge Suleet Poterill ruled in favour of Minister of Public Enterprises Pravin Gordhan and against Public Protector advocate Busisiwe Mkhwebane.

It was the latest in a string of legal setbacks for the public protector.

But her supporters, including the EFF, chose to attack the judge. Their logic was race based.

Mkhwebane was being undermined because she was a black woman. The judge ruled as she did because she was white. All it did was undermine an important institution in our democracy.

What do we do?

Starting today, I have invited Kanthan Pillay to write for us. His column, Juggernaut, will aim to help us understand what's happening and provide direction. I invite you to also engage.

And I encourage you to read page eight which deals with saving money. There's going to be a lot less circulating in the months ahead and you need to have contingencies in place.

Finally, focus on the next generation. Equip them to survive in the world they are going to inherit and not the world you live in.

If you are a mum raising a male child, I suggest you read Latoya Newman's piece on page six.

# India reaches for the stars...

## We should too



JUGGERNAUT

KANTHAN PILLAY

CRICKET is an uncomplicated game from a mathematical point of view.

The bowler has a simple task, which is to hit the stumps. He does a run-up to build up overall velocity, whirls his arm around to build up more velocity while taking aim, and lets fly.

Assuming there is no batsman, a good bowler will probably hit the stump full toss 99.99% of the time. A batsman introduces mathematical uncertainty into the game. The bowler will compensate for this by spinning the ball or bouncing it. The age of the ball will affect its speed and its bounce, as will whether or not the stitch hits the ground, and so on.

Now try to picture the game differently.

Imagine that the bowler has to run up to a spinning merry-go-round, jump onto it, and bowl to hit the stumps. Then imagine that the stumps are also on a merry-go-round, also spinning around.

Finally, imagine that both merry-go-rounds are attached to Ferris Wheels.

If you can picture a bowler running up to the first Ferris Wheel, jumping onto the merry-go-round and bowling to hit the centre stump while the stumps are also spinning and rotating, you will immediately understand what is involved in landing on the moon.

Fifty years ago this month, July 1969, I was sitting in my parents' flat in Essack's Building, Sparks Road, Overport, in Durban, listening to the English Service of Radio South Africa (as SAsm was known then) carrying live audio of the Apollo 11 moon landing.

Think about our imaginary cricket game with the moon as the stumps. The moon at its closest point to earth is 356 500km away, but at its furthest is 406 700km away. The moon is moving around the earth at a speed of 3 863km/h.

Our bowler on our merry-go-round is the spacecraft on the Launchpad. He is rotating at 1 180km/h. His run-up, the launch of the rocket into orbit around earth, takes 12 minutes.

Like our bowler whirls his arm around to build speed, the spacecraft whirls around the earth with gravity acting like the bowler's arm. When he lets go of the ball by firing a final rocket, he releases the ball at 38 946km/h.

It will take our spacecraft three days to cover the 400 000km to the moon. But the moon itself is moving sideways at the same time. So our bowler has to plan to hit the stumps where he expects them to be.

Imagine if the calculation is off by 15 minutes. The moon will have moved about 1 000km away in that time. To turn around a spacecraft travelling at 38 946km/h requires a massive waste of fuel – more fuel than the spacecraft is carrying.



INDIA successfully launched its lunar mission Chandrayaan 2 last week. The writer says India's moonshot costs less than the making of 'Avengers: Endgame'. | IANS/PIB

“ There are many who argue that India, with its high levels of poverty, should not be spending money on space exploration

How then does our spacecraft slow down when it gets to the moon?

It fires a small propulsion engine to get in close enough to be “caught” by the moon's gravity. Again, if the calculation is off, the craft will either miss and zoom off into space, or crash into the moon.

That, dear reader, is the triumph of the moon landing 50 years ago.

The US spent \$25 billion in 1973 on the Apollo space programme (about \$153bn in today's money), but the true genius lies in the mathematical calculations required to send three people to the moon and to get them back safely.

This month, 50 years after Apollo 11, India launched Chandrayaan 2 – a spacecraft heading for the moon, where it will deploy a lunar lander to the moon's south pole, and send off an explorer vehicle to search for water.

The total cost of the mission is \$141 million. To put this in perspective, the budget to make *Avengers: Endgame* was more than double that amount at \$356m.

How are the Indians planning to do this without the hugely expensive Saturn V rockets the Apollo programme used?

To use another cricket metaphor, Indians have always been better as spin bowlers than fast bowlers. As you read these words, Chandrayaan 2 is whipping around the earth for 22 days to build up speed before being released to slingshot to the moon. The elliptical orbit brings the spacecraft as close as 276km and as far away as 71 792km.

It will fire its engines two more times to increase speed around earth on August 6 and August 7.

On August 14, it will fire a final burst to leave earth orbit toward the moon.

There are many who argue that India, with its high levels of poverty, should not be spending money on a luxury such as space exploration. I disagree.

Space technology has given us dozens of advancements that have benefited all of humankind. Think of CAT scans, water purification, freeze drying of food, clean energy technology... even artificial limbs from Nasa robotics tech.

India's moonshot costs less than we are spending on bailing out Eskom. They are looking to the future. We should too.

● Srikanthan is one of the names of Vishnu. Another name for Vishnu is Jagannath, “the unstoppable force”, which gives us the modern word Juggernaut. Pillay writes about understanding the unstoppable forces which shape our lives in technology, commerce, science and society.

## The Quote

Sometimes you find yourself in the middle of nowhere, and sometimes in the middle of nowhere you find yourself.

ANONYMOUS

www.awakenthegreatnesswithin.com

# Cereal stains and ‘mens’ eat first



SALMA PATEL

WOMEN of the world, unite! That's the first thing that popped into my head when I sat down to write this column to commemorate Women's Month.

Life is full of catch-phrases and patriarchy: “This is a man's world”; “Time and tide waits for no man”; “A man's man”; etc.

Seemingly women were being left out of the social narrative, right? Wrong!

Women, like you and I, have been promoting this narrative since time immemorial. Is it not about time we stand up for our own, gender, that is?

I am glad I was not part of that 1956 Women's March to the Union Buildings.

I don't think I would have managed bathing, dressing and feeding two feisty toddlers, cooking supper, tying the children's and hubby's lunch, and running off to fight for gender equity – all in one morning.

On August 9, 1956, about 20 000 women, of all races and ages, marched to the Union Buildings protesting the extension of Pass Laws.

The march was co-ordinated by the Federation of South African Women (Fedsaw), led by Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa, and Sophia Williams de Bruyn.

These courageous women would have been trending on Twitter if social media was around in those days.

I marvel at the hashtags that we could have come up with: #DownWithPassLaws, #WomenUnite, #PassLawsForWho and #Free-Movement.

But, it was more than just a march. It was the first time that women of all races had united, during the dark days of apartheid, to fight these oppressive laws.

I salute all the women who have played a brilliant role in fighting for our freedom and, ultimately, the emancipation of women and the right for women to be recognised as equals in the fight against apartheid.

A few years ago, I had the pleasure of meeting the only surviving member of that historic march, Sophia Williams de Bruyn.

Eager to find out what inspired and motiv-



A PARTICIPANT in the 1956 Women's March, Sophia Williams de Bruyn, speaks at Crawford College, Sandton, about tackling racism. | DIMPHO MAJA AFRICAN NEWS AGENCY (ANA) ARCHIVES

ated this diminutive firebrand to join forces with her fellow sisters in leading this march. I asked her: “Why did you do it?”

Sophia smiled and said: “For you and our children.”

Simple. She didn't say: “I did it for all the women of the country.”

No. She said she did it for “our children”. That touched me. Despite the threat of imprisonment, beatings and possibly even death, these brave women marched for the sake of our children: girls and boys.

We don't often pay attention to raising and educating our young men and women about how to build an equal society, and how to give each other a fair chance at growing and nurturing a new generation, that will lead the country with fairness, equity, and equality.

The spotlight always turns to how men are the demons, the oppressors, the rapists, the “dogs” as it were – a whole lot of stereotypes that once fuelled the #MenAreTrash movement.

August normally brings about an outpouring of abuse of women and children. But, are we teaching our children how to be better people or are we just promoting these stereotypes – that men are to blame for the abuse against women and children?

A number of years ago, I was assigned to a story.

My interviewee came from high-brow, rich society. Old money – I think – is the correct term. At the time, I was a mother to a feisty and adventurous four-year-old boy, who had decorated my work clothes with delightful spots of baby cereal and toddler milk formula.

With no time to waste, I had to dash off to this interview, oblivious to the new designs my son placed on my shirt.

I had to go through several security checks before I was allowed access to the home. The lounge in which I was made to wait, boasted overstuffed couches, reminding me of the soft, decadent curves of Rubens paintings.

Everything in that home screamed taste and decorum – right down to the Villeroy and Bosch tea-set, complete with gold-rimmed tea-cups, triangular-shaped cucumber sandwiches and a healthy assortment of carrot sticks, celery, and cucumber sticks, tastefully surrounding a delicious hummus dip.

This was anything but the traditional Indian-origin welcome, of buttered Marie biscuits and tea, that I was accustomed to.

Suddenly, I felt like a running fowl in uMhlanga – it just didn't go! I nervously tested and re-tested my recording equipment to make sure everything was working and I opened a new page in my notebook.

It was then that the lady of the house noisily sauntered in. She was taste personified – from her highly polished moccasins to her classic-cut Gucci trousers and her eye-catching Hermes scarf.

She was not ordinary. But, thankfully, she was friendly.

We chatted for some time, all the while my interviewee surreptitiously eyeing my R30 kurti top I bought from the India Fair.

After the interview, she asked me about my son and how I was coping with child-rearing and holding down a full-time job, to pay the bills and the bond.

I thought this was a bit odd since I don't like sharing too much information with strangers about my personal life.

At the time, #ShahRukhJaani (as my hus-

band has become popularly known on social media) and I were parents, struggling to make ends meet and yes, my day consisted of ironing clothes at 5am, cooking the evening meal, ensuring the four-year-old was dressed and packed with all essentials for crèche, and tying lunch for my hubby.

It often meant me skipping breakfast and grabbing a sugar-laden cup of java at work, before dashing off to an interview.

Then the penny dropped. My host was silently playing “connect-the-cereal-stains-on-Salma's-kurti-top” as I spoke.

Being fairly brown-skinned, I don't think I blushed, but I could feel my cheeks flush.

“Oh. I'm so sorry. I was struggling to feed my son and my shirt this morning,” I said pointing out the crusty cereal stains.

We laughed. And I was relieved. This lady has a sense of humour.

It was that day I realised that I am a woman who is raising a son and educating my partner on what a fair and just society should be. The responsibility of fairness, balance and equality highlighted on Women's Day and in Women's Month rests with me, first – cereal stains or not.

We have often heard the old aunts chiding in Indian-origin homes, whether at prayers or weddings or functions: “Let the mens eat first, ey, kanna!” And, I would marvel at the fact that we women would congregate in the kitchen dishing and serving the “mens” who would eat first, not realising this simple request further promoted the stereotype that men are far superior (and really need to eat first).

Nowadays, anybody who wants to partake gets to eat first.

That's the little adjustment my husband and I have made in our household, all in the interests of teaching our children what it means to be fair to everyone – women and men.

So, as we celebrate Women's Day and Women's Month, let's learn to teach our children that it is important for women and men to unite, and fight for fairness and equality.

I think it's the best tribute we could pay to those stalwarts, who marched to the Union Buildings 63 years ago, to be recognised as equals in fighting injustice and building a new generation.

From me to you – happy Women's Month!

● Patel is the executive producer of Newsbreak on Lotus FM and SABC news editor.

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Editor Aakash Bramdeo  
Newsdesk 031 308 2421  
Advertising 031 308 2004  
Subscriptions 0800 204 711  
Deliveries 031 308 2022

Mail: PO Box 47549, Greyville, Durban, 4023  
E-mail: post@inl.co.za  
Web: www.thepost.co.za  
Facebook: facebook.com/postnewspaper/  
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