

EDITOR'S VIEW

Creating safer streets begins in our homes

ONE OF my favourite movies is *The Siege*, a 1998 action thriller starring Denzel Washington and Bruce Willis.

Willis plays General William Devereaux, an American army general whose soldiers move into Brooklyn, a suburb in New York, to counter terrorism.

But, before he is ordered to deploy his men, Devereaux provides a memorable speech about why the army should not be deployed internally.

"The army is a broad sword, not a scalpel. Trust me, senator, you do not want the army in an American city."

In the same scene he says: "Twelve hours after the president gives the order we can be on the ground. One light infantry division of 10 700 men, elements of the Rapid Deployment Force, Special Forces, Delta, APCs, helicopters, tanks and of course, the ubiquitous M-16 A2 assault rifle. A humble-enough weapon until you see it in the hands of a man outside your local bowling alley or 7-11. It will be noisy, it will be scary and it will not be mistaken for a VFW parade."

In South Africa we are not as dramatic. While the army has been deployed in areas across Cape Town, we have only about 300 soldiers on the streets at any one time. There are no special forces, helicopters or tanks.

Thankfully, our soldiers have not been as merciless as General Devereaux's men.

But they've not had much success in stopping the killings.

The number of murders has fallen but people are still dying. This past weekend, 34 were killed and the weekend before that, 47 people were murdered.

Many of those who called for the army to be deployed, are questioning how effective the SANDF has been.

Those in the know would tell you that no amount of policing will stop the gang wars in the Western Cape, or anywhere else for that matter. This includes the newly-appointed Kwa-Zulu-Natal Police Commissioner Lieutenant-General Khombinkosi Jula whose previous posting was in the Western Cape.

He points out that gang violence goes back generations and is so deeply ingrained that it is difficult to combat through policing.

What is needed is for families to take responsibility for choosing a different life, for parents to play a greater role in raising their children to be upstanding individuals rather than delinquents.

The bad behaviour we are seeing at schools is also, to some extent, the result of poor parenting.

If we are to enjoy a better tomorrow, then we need to take greater responsibility for our lives and those of our children.

There are too many people who are creating a mess and expecting others to clean it up.

Men's underwear reveal a lot about the state of the economy

When finances get tight, one still has to replace a shirt with a hole in it, but tattered underpants...



JUGGERNAUT

KANTHAN PILLAY

HERE'S a question for men who are reading this. When last did you buy underwear? Surprisingly, the answer is considered to be a reliable indicator of the state of the economy.

It was coined in the late 1970s by Alan Greenspan, who went on to become head of the US Federal Reserve from 1987 to 2006.

Greenspan told a journalist: "If you think about all the garments in the household, the garment that is most private is the male underpants because nobody sees it except people like in the locker room and who cares. 'Your children need clothes. Your wife needs clothes."

"They have to change. The children grow. You need clothes on the outside. But the last purchase that you don't have to make is underpants."

It makes sense if one thinks about it. When finances get tight, one still has to replace a shirt with a hole in it, but tattered underwear can be worn for a longer period.

Last week, *The Economic Times* reported that second quarter sales of underwear in India dropped to the lowest levels in a decade. At the same time, the financial world drew back in shock as the US yield curve inverted.

I apologise to all of you who have drawn back saying "what the hell is he talking about". Hear me out.

The phrase "inverted yield curve" is important to each of us because it has happened seven times in the past 50 years. In every one of the instances, a global recession followed.

What is a yield curve? It's a chart showing interest rates over time.

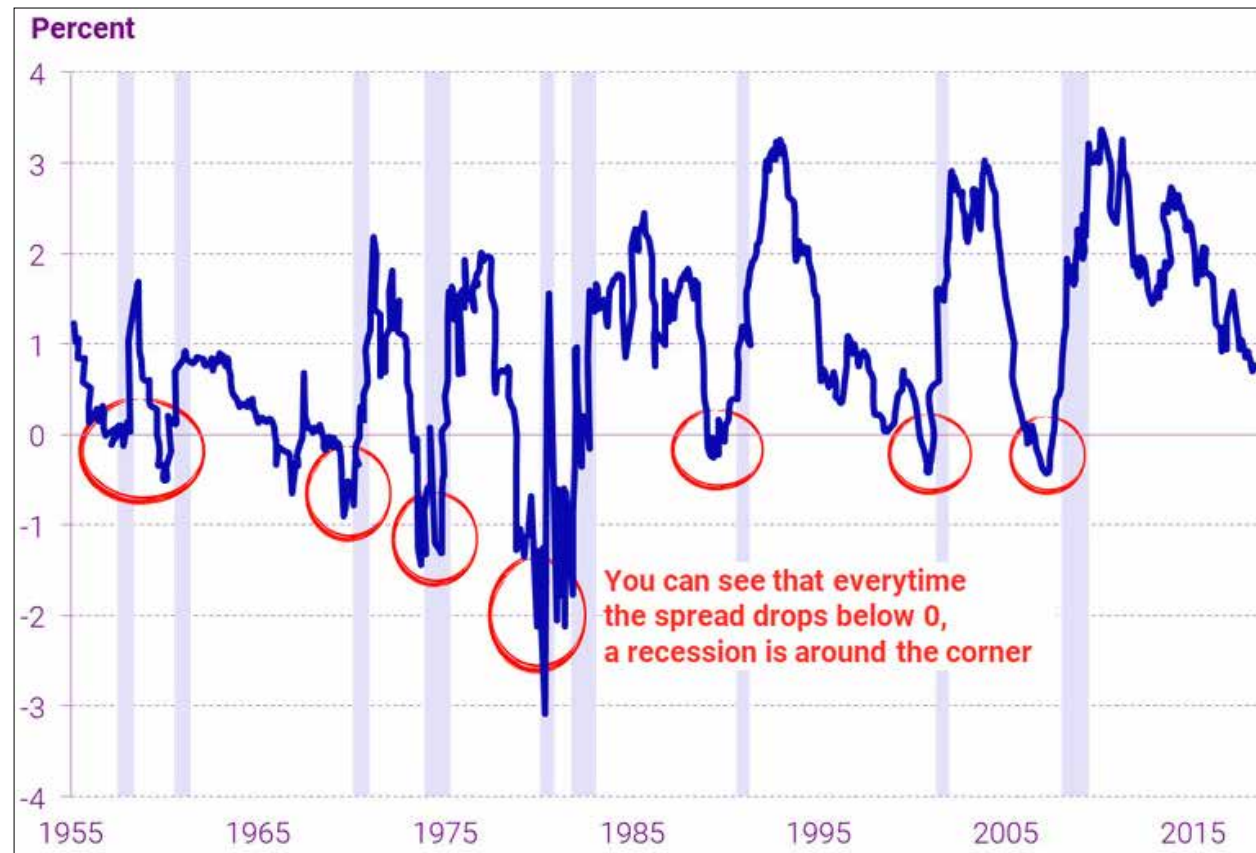
Generally, if the world is working the way it should be, the longer the period one invests money, the higher the interest rate one earns.

For example, in the South Africa bond market, a two-year bond pays 6.7% interest, while a 12-year bond pays 9.315%.

Last week, long-term interest rates in the US fell behind short-term interest rates. That is what is meant by an inverted yield curve.

Why does this happen?

Let's use our cricket team as an analogy. Six months ago, you might have been willing to bet a lot of money in



favour of the Proteas with the likes of Amla and Steyn on the team.

But if I asked you to place a bet today on South Africa's performance five years from now, you would probably be reluctant, because our star players will not be on the future team, and there doesn't seem to be replacements of that calibre waiting in the wings.

Given the history of the inverted yield curve, markets panicked. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell by 800 points. By market close on Friday, it had recovered substantially, but was 1.5% down on the previous week.

What does this mean for all of us down here in the southern tip of Africa?

Understand that the US economy has been doing fantastically well since Donald Trump became president.

Employment levels are at record highs, and earnings for workers across the board have increased relative to inflation.

With more people working and more money to be spent, everything becomes great for a period.

But eventually, this peaks. The going is good right now, but when

“With economic growth barely in positive territory, foreign direct investment in the near future is even less likely”

as many people who can be hired have jobs, new spending entering the market declines.

The result of these is that growth slows down. People become reluctant to invest in new ventures.

Companies scale back on capital expenditure. While the US might not be about to hit a full-blown recession, it's definitely going to slow down.

This in turn is going to affect China, which is tracking lower growth as a result of Trump's trade war.

Germany and the UK are contracting. For us in South Africa, with economic growth barely in positive territory, what this means is that foreign direct investment in the near future is even less likely.

Thus far in August, foreign investors have been dumping South African bonds at almost R2 billion a day.

On the plus side, global slowdowns nearly always see an increase in demand for gold. If that holds true, we could see gold hitting \$2 000 an ounce for the first time.

As individuals, we seem to have priced in the sensible stuff we need to do.

Retail sales are up year on year but we have been scaling back on major purchases. (For example: New vehicle sales are down 3.9% and used vehicles down 2.6%.)

For my part, I will not be buying new underwear in the short term.

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

The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.

ALBERT EINSTEIN
everydaypower.com

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A little religious tolerance goes a long way



YOGIN DEVAN

OVER the past 65 years, at least 500 000 copies of Zuleikha Mayat's renowned cookbook, *Indian Delights*, have been sold through the charitable Women's Cultural Group, which she co-founded in 1954. The book is in a class of its own.

At the age of 93, the elegant and still sprightly Mayat continues to be an inspiration to women. Her life has been profusely punctuated with humanitarian acts.

She grew up in Potchefstroom in the old Transvaal. Her father, Mohamed Bismilla, and mother, Amina, ran a small general-dealer store. Young Zuleikha helped in the shop whenever she could until she married a dashing young doctor, Mahomed Mayat, in 1947 and settled in Durban.

Last week, long-term interest rates in the US fell behind short-term interest rates. That is what is meant by an inverted yield curve. Why does this happen? Let's use our cricket team as an analogy. Six months ago, you might have been willing to bet a lot of money in

The Fared family were tackled by a group of non-Muslim residents when a truck carrying 11 sheep and a bull that were to be slaughtered during the Festival of Sacrifice entered a Midrand gated estate where they lived.

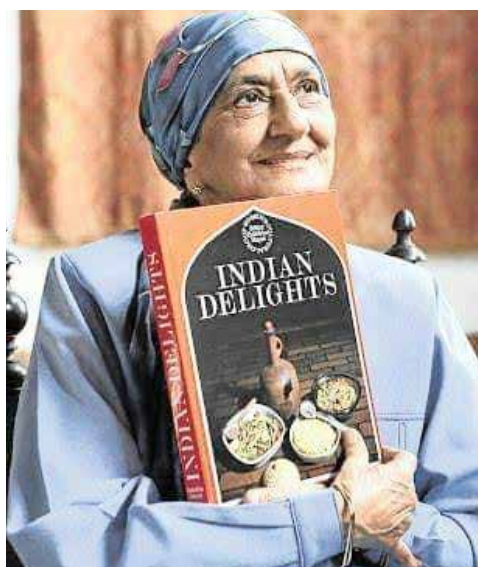
That the religious sensitivity of the Fared family was trampled upon by a group of intolerant, narrow-minded individuals is a far cry from the days when Mayat was raised in a small town where all faiths were respected.

In a book, *Gender, Modernity & Indian Delights*, which records the history of the Women's Cultural Group and the early life of Mayat, academic historians Goolam Vahed and Themba Waetjen make mention of "small-town politeness and different minority groups" contributing to cordial relations.

Mayat recounts in the book that the customers who came to her father's shop in Potchefstroom in the 1940s were "always friendly and respectful, an amalgam of race, creed and colour that was forced to share the limited space and yet contrived to live harmoniously".

The Bismillah's shop was sandwiched between the white Afrikaans-speaking centre of town and the African locations and was surrounded by Malay, Indian and Chinese families, who adhered to Christian, Islamic and Hindu faiths freely.

It must have been the tolerance for peo-



ZULEIKHA Mayat with her cookbook, *Indian Delights*.

ple of all colours and religious persuasions deeply ingrained in Mayat since the time she spent in Potchefstroom that later manifested itself through the public-spirited and altruistic work that she devoted all her time to.

Hundreds of school pupils and university students of all hues and religions have benefited from bursaries offered by the Women's Cultural Group with the proceeds of sales of the iconic *Indian Delights*. Social and welfare services are rendered to people of all races, class and religious boundaries.

While Mayat and her ilk do not consider religious differences, why do some people of different religions hate each other so much?

It is perhaps because they are simply ignorant of how much they really have in common. Those who pounced on the Fared family in Midrand were intolerant of Islamic sensitivities because of ignorance.

Those who attack Hindu families for setting off fireworks during the festival of Deepavali are ill-informed of faiths other than their own. People who do not really know anything about other religions just assume the others are very different.

If only they cared to be more broad-minded and delved into the teachings of other religions, they would realise that many religions share the same basic ideas. In any case, aren't all religions supposed to promote peace and oppose violence? Is not all human blood red?

Through the ages, religious intolerance has been responsible for wars and bloodshed. Millions of people died in such wars, and



A SCREENGRAB of the attack against the Fared family at an estate in Midrand, Johannesburg, on Eid-ul-Fitr (the Festival of Sacrifice). | Supplied

entire nations were wiped out.

Religious discrimination has no place in civilised society. Religious extremism, the most explicit form of religious violence, is used by overzealous individuals to establish dominance or express hostility and disapproval.

Like those who ambushed the God-fearing Fared family, religious extremists indulge in aggression and violent behaviour as a countermeasure to protect their own faith or oppose others.

Religion is meant to elevate human character and consciousness. Yet there are those myopic individuals who will only see their own religion as true and will indulge in violence or aggression against adherents of other faiths. There is a need for tolerance and accepting and respecting, without compulsion, the differences that exist in the world as part of God's creation and diversity.

Hinduism richly preaches tolerance towards other religions. Criticising other religions and showing them in a poor light to attract converts to its own fold has never been an approved practice in Hinduism.

Swami Vivekananda, the modern-day Hindu monk who was a key figure in the introduction of Indian philosophies of vedanta and yoga to the Western world, preached that all religions of the world have the same value and importance.

He preached that as water from different rivers will mingle in the sea, similarly every religion finds itself at the feet of God. He did not see any difference between the Bhaga-

vad Gita, Qur'an or Bible. Temple, mosque, synagogue and church were equal for him.

Hinduism is a flexible religion, free from the oppression of dogma and the pressures of an organised religion. It is lenient and forgiving towards its own followers and gives everyone great freedom to practise their faith according to their convictions and convenience.

More than religious tolerance, what is needed is religious acceptance. One must not tolerate for the sake of tolerating. This means that even if one does not agree, one will be willing to go along in the interest of some greater good.

What we require is total acceptance of other people's gods, and all the culture which goes along with it. If the management of the gated estate in Midrand had given the Fared family permission to slaughter animals, what gave the dissenting residents the right to stamp on their freedom of worship?

Religious extremists, to whichever religions they may belong, must be isolated and punished severely.

Religious leaders must work towards promoting a culture that allows everyone to follow their chosen spiritual and religious path, without hindrance, harassment, or oppression.

"Live and let live" should be everyone's motto - even in religion.

Devan is a media consultant and social commentator. Share your comments with him on: yogind@meropa.co.za