

EDITOR'S VIEW

Six stages of how power taken from the people

THE good news is that by this weekend load shedding will, most likely, be over – for now.

Industries will shut down for the holidays, meaning there will be less demand for electricity.

However, the damage to the economy has already been done. This latest round of load shedding, which rose to Stage 6 this week, probably did enough to push our economy into a recession and seal our fate as a country destined for junk status.

But we should not be surprised that the situation is getting worse rather than better. In fact, it is more than likely that our electricity problems will get worse in the months and years.

Our current lack of electricity has its origins in the years after democracy. Back then Eskom undertook a massive electrification programme, and rightly so.

However, we didn't build more power stations to generate enough electricity to meet the demand from a growing number of consumers.

As a result, in November 2007, we experienced our first round of load shedding. That is now 12 years ago.

During this time, Eskom's existing power stations became older. And, they became more prone to breaking down.

We did try to increase supply by building Medupi (which means "rain that soaks parched lands") and Kusile (which means "the dawn has come"). However, both have failed to live up to the meaning of their names.

Design flaws, mismanagement and corruption have resulted in Medupi and Kusile being regarded as the worst performing power stations in the country. This despite their hefty price tag – R234 billion for Medupi and R118bn for Kusile.

And so, load shedding has become the new normal. It started as Stage 2. It moved to Stage 4. And, this week, we experienced Stage 6, although for a short period of time. It meant that almost half of Eskom's generating capacity was down.

The power utility has already started to plan for stages seven and eight. It means they now see this as a real possibility. For you and me, it means, in simple terms, no electricity for longer periods of time.

As consumers of electricity we do have options. Those with money can get off the grid or find alternative power sources for when load shedding is implemented.

What everyone has to accept though, is that longer periods without electricity is the new normal for the next five to 10 years.

Our president has already accepted this new normal. He has left for an official visit to Egypt despite the many challenges our country currently faces.

What Britain's departure from EU will mean for South Africa

World on tenterhooks as UK goes to the polls this week, with Boris Johnson's Brexit a likely winner

JUGGERNAUT



KANTHAN PILLAY

UP UNTIL early 2009, South Africans could travel to the UK without needing a visa.

Today, a 10-year visa to visit the UK sets us back R20 437. Yet every single day, there are five long-haul flights departing OR Tambo International for London Heathrow. And that does not take into account those who fly to the UK via Europe or the Middle East.

We, in South Africa, like India, have a deep and enduring relationship with our former colonial masters – a relationship which extends beyond the English language, tea, or cricket.

And perhaps that's why we pay far more attention to goings-on in the former empire than we do to their fellow Europeans.

The UK goes to the polls this week, capping a three-year period of turmoil since the populace voted by a narrow majority to leave the EU.

It's an election that should have taken place months ago, but had been consistently delayed by opposition parties.

Why the delay? Astonishingly, the opposition feared an election would have given a majority to Boris Johnson's Conservative Party. This in turn would allow Johnson to swiftly exit the EU.

Now, if the polls are correct, Johnson is on track for victory. His election rallying call "Get Brexit Done" appears to have found resonance with voters.

The markets appear to believe it too. The British pound has risen to a 31-month high against the Euro.

But there's a bigger philosophical element to be considered. The UK election is a litmus test for the future of sovereign states after decades of globalisation.

Sovereignty is the ability of a state to govern itself and make its own laws and policies. That ability gets constrained to some extent by international agreements such as the rules of the World Trade Organisation, but by and large, governments are able to do as they wish within their own borders.

Globalisation goes against that grain. It



BRITAIN'S Prime Minister Boris Johnson uses a sewing machine as he visits John Smedley Mill in Matlock, Derbyshire, Britain, last week. | HANNAH MCKAY Reuters

works on the assumption that goods, services, technology, and money should move freely across borders.

Services, in turn, depend on people. And so the ability of people to move freely across borders – migration – is crucial to the entrenchment of globalisation.

The EU effectively curtailed the sovereignty of the UK. Membership of the EU meant the ability of the UK's parliament to pass laws had to play second fiddle to rules of the European parliament.

But what was irksome for many was that the UK had to pay a price for its acquiescence to EU rules. Last year, the UK paid about £13.2 billion to the EU in exchange for around £4.3bn of funding for agricultural, social, economic development and competitiveness programmes.

Effectively, the UK contributed £8.9bn to the EU last year.

If Boris Johnson wins a majority in the House of Commons this week, he will be free to take the UK back along a sovereign path.

But what sort of things are likely to change?

Let's start with immigration. The EU had freedom of movement across borders as a core principle which allowed all citizens to move freely between member states and live and work anywhere as if they were nationals of that country.

This has been great for unemployed Poles who found employment as domestic workers in the UK.

It was not so good for unskilled UK nationals losing jobs to migrants.

If Johnson wins, he promises to enforce

a skills-based system that will only allow high-earning professionals with scarce skills into the country.

Let's now talk about the other British staple: fish and chips.

Currently, the EU has a Common Fisheries Policy setting quotas for member states as to which fish they are allowed to catch.

Think about it: the former colonial ruler of most of the planet currently requires permission from Europe to decide how much fish could be taken from its own territorial waters...

With Brexit, British fishermen will have sole access to UK fishing waters; potentially doubling their catch sizes.

Similar to this is the Common Agricultural Policy.

This provides subsidies to farmers across the EU, but there has been some evidence that food prices have been artificially high for British taxpayers as a result.

Exit the EU and food prices will possibly decline.

The EU has a web of regulations around labour matters; particularly around working hours. The UK has applied for exemptions from this in the past, claiming that these impede economic growth.

Leaving the EU means these rules will no longer apply, resulting in less red tape.

But what opportunities does a UK exit from Europe present for us, as South Africans?

Migration for skilled professionals is the obvious one. South Africans have been moving to the UK in numbers for years now.

This will probably accelerate under a Johnson government.

Up until the EU came along, the UK offered a Commonwealth Working Holiday visa programme. This meant that South Africans between the ages of 18-30 could apply to work in the UK for up to two years.

It was an amazing opportunity for generations of young South Africans but fell away under EU rules.

If our political leaders are astute, they will seize the moment to ask the UK to reinstate the programme.

What if Johnson loses?
If that does happen, brace for economic fallout.

Srikanth 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

Realise that if a door closed, it's because what was behind it wasn't meant for you.

MANDY HALE

www.purposefairy.com

Gandhi Library was steeped in history



YOGIN DEVAN

GROWING up, there was little need to visit the library – our house was full of books.

My father was a voracious reader. He read on matters pertaining to education when he was studying for his university degrees.

He would borrow books from the then Natal University's academic libraries – initially from the non-European library based at Sastri College in Durban, and later from the libraries in Warwick Avenue and at Howard College. Many of the books were so fat and heavy, they could be used as door stoppers.

Later in life, my father would buy books on religion, philosophy and health matters. He also loved to read autobiographies of world leaders.

He firmly believed that one of the chief ways of acquiring knowledge was by reading, and hence, books played a big part in his life.

He would spend hours on a Saturday morning at second-hand bookshops poring over books on right living, gardening and any other topic that caught his fancy at the time.

When Google was not even imagined, we had an old set of Encyclopedia Britannica, which helped with school projects.

Eight years after his demise, there are 60 boxes of books at the family home which he accumulated over the years. These will take me weeks to sort out, a chore I have been long avoiding.

I am not an avid reader. The last time I read a novel must have been the English textbook in matric more than 45 years ago.

I never borrowed books from a library for my personal reading. When I was a journalist, I did enough reading of local and overseas newspapers and wire copy from South African and foreign news agencies. As a media consultant, I keep abreast of current affairs 24/7. Hence, leisure reading is the last thing I want to do in my spare time.

However, if there is one library that fascinated me from a young age, it was the MK Gandhi Library that was situated in Queen Street (now Denis Hurley Street) in Durban.

I would accompany my father to this library which he used as a waiting room to while away the hours in between meetings



THE building that housed the Gandhi Library in Queen Street, Durban. | Supplied

he had to attend in the city.

But not before we each had a currant square (which I disliked but was forced to eat) and a cup of tea in the dimly-lit rear dining area at GC Kapitan Vegetarian Restaurant in Grey Street (Dr Yusuf Dadoo Street).

I am happy that the site of the Gandhi Library is to be part of the liberation heritage route being developed by eThekweni Municipality to honour people and places in the city that paved the way for democracy.

Other sites steeped in the history of Indians which would be among the 30 sites around Durban to be celebrated include the Curries Fountain Stadium, Kapitan's Balcony Hotel, the Juma Masjid, the St Aidan's Mission Hospital, Sastri College, Himalaya House, the Early Morning Market, Victoria Street Market, Surat Hindu Association, Dr Mohambry "Monty" Naicker's medical practice and Lakhani Chambers.

Named after Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the MK Gandhi Library was officially opened on September 10, 1921, when the provision of public library services to Indians was sorely neglected.

The library was the brainchild of Parsee Rustomjee, a merchant from India who settled in South Africa.

He set up the Bai Jerbai Rustomjee Trust in memory of his wife, and the trust was in charge of managing the library and the adjacent Parsee Rustomjee Hall.

The motivation for the Gandhi Library was to enhance social, moral, intellectual and political upliftment. The library did not lend out books.

There were books on history (including of India), politics, religion, language, tradition and culture, and these could only be read in the library.

There was also a large collection of

vernacular newspapers from India and one or two titles in English which would catch my attention.

To encourage women to use the library – especially from the conservative Muslim and Gujarati communities settled in the city – it was decided in 1931 that between 3pm and 5pm on Fridays, the library would be reserved for the exclusive use by the fairer sex. The gender reservation programme was apparently not very successful.

Among the prominent visitors to the library were Sir Srinivasa Sastri, Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and George Bernard Shaw.

Some notable trustees of the Gandhi Library over the years were Amod Jhaveri, Parsee Rustomjee, Sorabjee Rustomjee, Hermann Kallenbach (one of the foremost friends and associates of Mahatma Gandhi), RK Khan, AH West and Manilal Gandhi (son of Gandhiji and father of peace activist Ela Gandhi).

The Parsee Rustomjee Hall attracted various people, institutions and organisations for public lectures and social functions.

The hall was often used by trade unions, the Indian Teachers Association, debating societies, the Indian War Memorial Committee and the Hindu Tamil Institute.

Political groupings such as the Natal Indian Congress, the Communist Party and the South African Indian Congress also used the hall.

Today, the Gandhi Library is no more. The books, most of which are of an invaluable archival nature, are housed at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Documentation Centre.

However, to preserve the memory of the library, moves are afoot by the eThekweni Municipality to link the building where it was situated with the Emmanuel Cathedral and the Juma Masjid Mosque to form a spiritual precinct with Unesco heritage site status.

While the Gandhi Library was not a temple or ashram, it certainly was a sanctuary for those who wanted some quiet time away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

Many of our leaders would have undoubtedly acquired valuable lifelong knowledge during the many hours spent studying between the towering shelves filled with priceless books.

The Gandhi Library must surely have been a spiritual retreat for bookworms. Its memory must not be allowed to fade away.

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