

Making sense of economics

By **Shanda MOORGHEN**

At face value, economics is a subject that is reserved for the intellectual elite, given the role to think and decide for us. Truth is, we are all involved in situations needing economics on a daily basis. Eric Ng, economist, is aiming to break that glass ceiling by demystifying economic concepts in his new book *Economic Sense*.

From the very start, Ng identifies the main problem with economics, which is scarcity. The concept of scarcity in economics means that resources, whether financial or human, are limited. "Scarcity is to economics what gravity is to physics," writes Ng in his book. He explains that the purpose of economics is to help optimise the use of those scarce resources by limiting opportunity cost, which is the loss of all possible alternatives once a choice is made.

Ng illustrates his point about opportunity cost later on in the book with the example of the Metro Express. According to him, given how many resources are being invested in a project with no clear plan, Metro Express does not meet the basic requirements for an economically viable project. "Metro Express is a creature of government, not of private markets. It is a political not an economic

choice," he writes. And, Ng's tirade against the economic choices of the government does not stop there.

Beside the Metro Express, Ng also criticises political involvement in Mauritius in the working of market economics. The economist believes that the controversy at Air Mauritius with the dismissal of Megh Pillay and the dismantling of the British American Investment (BAI) at a significant cost to the taxpayer act as proof, if needed, that government intervention has only served to make things worse. According to him, the government is obsessed with creating its own legacy today without caring too much about what will happen tomorrow.

The latter part of the book can be a bit trickier for people who have little to no knowledge of economics. With a basic understanding of the subject, dealing with topics like the Repo rate, deflation and economic regulations make for essential reading. In the first part of the book, Ng claims that, "by treating economics like calculus, experts render it



inaccessible to everyday people" but numbers and figures are what bring the subject to life from the dullness of a theoretical approach.

Having identified and simplified some of the basic economic concepts, Ng ends the book by sharing extracts from his interviews with *Weekly*. The economist argues that some of the points he made in those interviews over the years are still relevant today. The extracts include him speaking about things like the Youth Employment Programme, the Repo rate and the environment. Ng remains a popular source of information for the media, being one of the leading economic experts in the island.

It might not be a revolutionary book nor does it pretend to be one. More than anything, Ng wants to make economics accessible to the thinking masses. While a basic understanding of mathematics could help with putting things into context, Ng could achieve more than what he bargained for with a book targeting everyone from students to working professionals. ■

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International Women's Day: Australian High Commission's screening of Queen of Katwe

To celebrate International Women's Day, the Australian High Commission organised a charity screening of the film *Queen of Katwe*. A fund of Rs30,000 was raised and donated to local women's shelter, *SOS Femmes*.

During the evening, the High Commissioner Susan Coles launched a booklet published by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on the occasion of International Women's Day entitled *Australia Advancing Women's Economic Empowerment Through Aid, Trade and Economic Diplomacy*.



Susan Coles, Australian High Commissioner; Fazila Jeewa Daureeawoo, minister of gender equality; Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, minister of education; Marie France Chamary, president of the Mauritian Association of Women Heads of Businesses; Usha Dwarka Canabady, secretary for foreign affairs; and Vimi Appadoo, president of Women in Networking.



Romina Panray, business development manager - Australian Trade Commission; Aruna Narain, puisne judge - Supreme Court; and Usha Dwarka Canabady, secretary for foreign affairs.

Aline Wong, Mauritian Association of Women Heads of Businesses; Marie France Chamary, Women in Networking; and Georgina Ragavan, adviser to minister of gender equality.

