

Interview David Snoxell - Coordinator of the Chagos Islands All-Party Parliamentary Group, UK

David Snoxell, former British High Commissioner to Mauritius (2000-04), is Coordinator of the Chagos Islands All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG). He has been an ardent advocate of the Chagossians's right to return to Diego Garcia. He made considerable efforts while he was British High Commissioner to Mauritius at the turn of the new century to make smooth an acceptable return to Mauritian sovereignty of the Chagos. He has worked, after becoming Coordinator of the APPG, to find common ground to reconcile Britain's and Mauritius' interests in the Chagos. The issue has remained unresolved the last 48 years. He says in this interview that the amount of diplomatic effort that should have been made to reach a mutually satisfying solution to the matter has been absent. At a time the government of Mauritius seems to be setting a deadline for settling this long outstanding issue, with Mauritius proposing to go to the UN General Assembly for a majority vote and to the International Court of Justice against the UK, the question is whether it would not, in the light of the favourable decision delivered by the UN Arbitral Court recently, have paid off for Mauritius to obtain the support of the 47-member APPG, some of whom may be sympathetic to the cause of Mauritius and could have helped reach a honourable settlement for both sides.

*** How would you expect the British government to respond to the request of the current Mauritian government, as announced by Sir Anerood Jugnauth in Parliament here, last week, as regards the return of the "Chagos Archipelago by the UK to the effective control of Mauritius by a precise date" as well as to his proposals for the "joint management of the Archipelago pending its return to Mauritius"? In the absence of any response, he added, "Mauritius would take appropriate actions at the international level", including the UN and the International Court of Justice...**

Unfortunately I think the British Government will ignore this demand and fight it out if Mauritius takes the issue to the UN General Assembly in September. Mauritius will need a two thirds majority vote for a resolution referring the dispute to the ICJ for an advisory opinion. I would expect the international community largely to support Mauritius but it will place a heavy burden on Mauritian diplomatic missions to lobby 193 member states and secure the required majority.

No doubt the resolution would refer to the Award to Mauritius by the UNCLOS Tribunal, which upheld the legally binding rights of Mauritius to eventual sovereignty of the Chagos Islands, and the ICJ would take this into account in rendering their advisory opinion. It should be remembered that an advisory opinion is not legally binding but would be a powerful endorsement of the Mauritian position at the highest legal level of the UN, assuming the ICJ supported Mauritius. Joint management of at least the Outer Islands would be a positive confidence building measure towards transfer of sovereignty.

*** The statement and the tone of Sir Anerood Jugnauth in Parliament translate a feeling of exasperation vis-a-vis the UK's attitude towards**

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Mauritius' sovereignty claim on the Chagos Archipelago. But, as Coordinator of the Chagos Islands All-party Parliamentary Group (APPG), which has been pressing for many years now for a settlement of this "Cold War legacy", would you say that the approach adopted by Jugnauth's government is the right one?

After being strung along for nearly 16 years by the Foreign Office, SAJ had little alternative if he wants to see the issue settled in his lifetime. Perhaps the tone might have been more diplomatic and the deadline longer! Perhaps also the British Government should first have been asked if they could see an alternative to taking the matter to the UN and the ICJ. Threatening language tends to be rather unhelpful in seeking solutions.

*** We have earlier, in previous interviews, spoken about the drawback involved in seeking an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the excision of the Chagos Archipelago by Britain in 1965, namely the requirement of a UN General Assembly (GA) resolution with a two-thirds majority for the issue to be referred to the ICJ. A favourable opinion of the ICJ as well as another UN resolution would be significant but neither would be enforceable, so what can Mauritius do about all this?**

This time Mauritius' claim to sovereignty has been much strengthened by the Tribunal Award. I think that the British Government would take serious note of a GA resolution with a two thirds majority which supported Mauritius. At that stage they might be willing to negotiate even before the ICJ considered it. If not, and the ICJ also supported Mauritius, I don't believe that the British Government would hold out any longer. They would negotiate a settlement.

*** Except for the ruling of the Arbitral Tribunal in favour of Mauritius, diplomacy hasn't worked either: there have not been any negotiations with Mauritius on sovereignty over the past 40 years, the UK has consistently avoided requests to discuss sovereignty. It does not seem the UK would be willing to let go of the Chagos Archipelago any time soon?**

Yes diplomacy has been in short supply. For me, as a former diplomat, it is hard to understand why FCO officials continue to oppose even discussing the

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issues let alone resolving them. That surely is the purpose of diplomacy. My feeling is that the UK will discharge its commitment to return the Islands to Mauritius, I venture to suggest sooner rather than later.

*** What about winning British parliamentary support for Mauritian sovereignty on the Chagos Archipelago?**

Little effort has been made by Mauritius to win British parliamentary support since the APPG was established in December 2008 although Dr Ramgoolam had said he wished to address the Group. The APPG has 47 members with representatives from all ten political parties in Parliament. Jeremy Corbyn, now the Leader of the Labour Party, is its honorary president. There are members who support Mauritius but the current focus has to be on resettlement since the Government aims to give its decision before the summer recess at the end of July. We shall also have a judgment from the Supreme Court by then.

*** You had mentioned in a previous interview that "it would not be surprising if the US preferred British to Mauritian sovereignty, given the enormous importance of the American base". The importance of the base has grown over the years given the new circumstances in this part of the world, so any change over the sovereignty of Diego in the foreseeable future might not be envisaged. It also does not seem there has been any progress made as regards the transfer back of the 55 Outer Islands to Mauritius. Would this deadlocked situation suggest that Mauritius is not following the correct strategy to get back its own?**

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*** At a time, the UK has put on the table a proposal to disengage from its next-door EU, what considerations would it be having, on the other hand, to hold on to a remote territory in the Indian Ocean which it excised from Mauritius in the pre-independence period?**

The British Government has not made such a proposal. David Cameron and his government are strongly behind remaining in the EU. The issue will be decided in a referendum of the British people on 23 June. Of course the Government is almost entirely focused on the referendum campaign, so I doubt there will be any movement on either resettlement or sovereignty until after then. Hence it would be sensible if SAJ's deadline were extended to the end of July.

*** How, do you feel, this whole matter will resolve itself for the UK? What will it gain by continuing to pitch the former residents of Chagos to overturn the legitimate claim Mauritius has to its unfairly excised territory?**

The long term resolution is that the Chagossians are allowed to return to their homeland and that the UK engages with Mauritius in agreeing to a staged process for a resumption of sovereignty by Mauritius over the Chagos Islands. I expected both to have happened while I was British High Commissioner to Mauritius (2000-04).

Of course Chagos Islanders, who are also Mauritian, especially those who decide to resettle, should be consulted in that process but the final decision is for the two Governments. Had the UK not excised Chagos from Mauritius in 1965 the islands would have remained part of Mauritius and the people would have continued to live there after Independence as Mauritian citizens. Their prolonged exile remains, as Olivier Bancoult said in a recent letter to PM Cameron, "a source of worldwide shame on the UK and a blot on the UK's claim to respect human rights".

Only when resettlement and sovereignty are resolved will Anglo-Mauritian relations be on a footing of mutual respect and equality.

Forum

Nothing better than Mom's food

Mohun Aujayeb

It is a common to come across an article about food, eating habits, the need to eat better, etc., on media every week. The authors attempt in general to warn people of bad eating as more and more people are getting weighed down by obesity and non-communicable diseases like diabetes, heart ailments, strokes, etc., linked to the imbalance in intake of foods rich in sugars, fats and salt (sodium). Our interest is therefore to learn about what is good and bad food. Or is it that all foods are good, it's just that we have to be more savvy about what goes into the mouth and adopt good eating habits, as practised at home by our moms.

I scanned published literatures which, in sum, tell us that good eating is consuming foods with nutrients - protein, carbohydrates, fat, water, vitamins, and minerals - to maintain health, feel good, and have energy. Nutritionists chant the litany of the four food types - vegetables, grains, dairy products, meats to be taken in appropriate amounts as a healthy meal. Our mothers tell us the same story.

The Mauritian melting-pot literally governs our preferences. We go to considerable lengths to obtain foods for which we have developed a taste or been induced to. As a result we regularly consume trendy tasty foods like noodles and other fries, *briyani*, *puri* and *sept carri* (seven curries), *paneer* curry fried in pure ghee, fish curry, *carri endans/carri disan* (offals

curry), oil soaked *dholl puri*, *farata*, *gato piment* (fries made from ground pulses), grilled/barbecued fish, meat lathered with mayonnaise, sweet and sour sauces, deep fried chicken, burgers, chips, oil laden pastries, buttered popcorns, drinks (soft, alcoholic) etc. And we binge on these extremely rich food round the clock and bear the consequence of suffering from the non-communicable diseases: obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, allergies...The prevalence of these maladies was lesser when we depended on the home chef - our mother. We changed for our taste and we now have to change for our wellbeing..

If the food that we are currently consuming is the cause of our (health) worries, then the easiest thing to do is to revert back to eating what was not that harmful. I consider the best and the healthiest food is homemade. Because the object of home cooking is to feed well not to attract any clientele.

Further, food is the expression of altruism, whether from parents to children, children to in-laws, or anyone to visitors and strangers. Food is one of the most important things a mother gives a child; it is the substance of her own body, and in most parts of the world mother's milk is still considered the only safe food for infants and by extension food prepared by mothers is the healthiest with the right amount of oil, salt and sugar compared to stuff from the market.

Mom's food is not just a symbol of but the reality of love and security. Don't miss it if you still have the opportunity, and stay healthy.



Tertiary Education Commission

Vacancy Notice

The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) is inviting applications from suitably qualified candidates for appointment on the permanent and pensionable establishment of the TEC to the post of:

Financial Controller, Head Finance Division

Salaries, Duties and Qualifications: Details on the above mentioned post is available on the TEC website, www.tec.mu/vacancies. These are also available at the Reception of the TEC.

Age Limit: Applicants should not be over 40 years of age at the closing date, unless already employed by the Tertiary Education Commission or the Public Sector.

Mode of Application: Applications should be submitted on the prescribed form which can be downloaded from TEC's website at www.tec.mu/vacancies or which is available at the Reception of the TEC. All applications should be submitted with full particulars of qualifications and evidence of experience claimed together with photocopies of all educational certificates and addressed to the **Secretary & Head Administration Division, Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), 4th Floor, TEC Building, Réduit 80835.**

Candidates who possess an equivalent qualification are requested to submit an Equivalence Certificate from relevant authorities, failing which their application will not be considered. The envelope should clearly indicate the post of **Financial Controller, Head Finance Division** on the **top left-hand corner.**

Closing Date: The applications should reach the Commission before **1500 hrs on Monday 30 May 2016** at latest.

Applications received after the due date and time shall not be considered. Inaccurate or incomplete filling of application form and non-submission of evidence of qualifications and experience by the closing date shall entail disqualification of candidates. Only the best qualified candidates may be called for interview. The Commission reserves the right neither to make any recruitment as a result of this advertisement nor to provide any explanation thereon.

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