Coronavirus: The Great Disruption

Could it be time to swap fast car for slower, sturdier one?

More so than past financial crises, the pandemic is a spur to look at the really big trade-offs in life

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For The Straits Times

During the Great Plague of London (1665), as social distancing measures, Cambridge University suspended classes. One of the students, Isaac Newton, instead devoted himself to work from home. During this lockdown, sitting in his family’s Linolnshire house, the 17-year-old student polished and rediscovered calculus, and concluded his famous universal law of gravity. These days, social distancing measures are not as drastic, but they are just as profound.

While there was no pandemic anywhere in the world in the 1660s, there was something similar in the behaviour of the scientific community.

Newton was not the only one who had anything to do with the behaviour of engineers and scientists in the pandemic. Other scholars, too, were putting their research in the public interest. In the early 20th century, the Harvard mathematician Norbert Wiener developed cybernetics, which would later become the ground for artificial intelligence. In the 1950s, the renowned British epidemiologist John Snow mapped data in an area of London that was experiencing a cholera outbreak. In the 1990s, geneticist Francis Crick discovered DNA, leading to the development of genetic engineering and biotechnology.

More so than past financial crises, the pandemic is a spur to look at the really big trade-offs in life. In the current situation, the only policy that is really relevant is the one that involves a trade-off between personal safety and economic growth. It is a trade-off of the most profound kind.

The pandemic pandemonium has led to disruptions in arbeographs, with businesses and people seeking refuge from the many changes. Coming out of Covid-19, firms such as social safety and personal relationships will no longer be just individual or in public places, but will be things that ordinary people can see and feel today, says the writer.

The State and Market

Job cuts: Covid-19 has made clear that our systems are undergoing profound change. The way we work, and the role of governments and businesses, will be different.

Two years into this, it is clear that the global economy is not the same as before. The pandemic has accelerated many changes that were already happening, but it has also created new challenges.

Second, profit-sharing models of companies hardly ever transfer wealth to workers to engage in successful cost-cutting. The pandemic has highlighted the need for businesses to be more proactive in how they engage with their employees, and to ensure that workers are given the proper tools and support to work effectively.

In the light of these challenges, it is clear that the pandemic is a spur to look at the really big trade-offs in life. It is a time to re-examine the way we think about work and the economy, and to consider how we can build a more resilient and sustainable future.

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