

## MAURITIUS

Date of Elections: 11 June 1982

### Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the popularly-elected seats in Parliament. Previous general elections took place in December 1976, the life of Parliament having been extended until 1982.

### Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Mauritius, the Legislative Assembly, comprises 66 members: 62 members elected by universal adult suffrage and 4 "additional" members (the most successful losing candidates) appointed by an electoral commission to balance the representation of ethnic communities in Parliament. The term of the Assembly is 5 years.

### Electoral System

All British Commonwealth citizens aged 18 or more who have either resided in Mauritius for not less than two years or are domiciled and resident in the country on a prescribed date may be registered as electors in their constituency. Not entitled to be registered, however, are the insane, persons guilty of electoral offences, and persons under sentence of death or serving a sentence of imprisonment exceeding 12 months.

Electoral registers are revised annually. Proxy voting is allowed for members of the police forces and election officers on duty during election day, as well as for any duly nominated candidates.

Candidates for the Legislative Assembly must be British Commonwealth citizens of not less than 18 years of age who have resided in Mauritius for a period of at least two years before the date of their nomination (and for six months immediately before that date) and who are able to speak and read the English language with a degree of proficiency sufficient to enable them to take an active part in the proceedings of the Assembly.

Disqualified are persons owing allegiance to a State outside the Commonwealth, public officers or local government officers, undisclosed government contractors, undischarged bankrupts, persons under sentence of death or serving a sentence of imprisonment exceeding 12 months, and persons guilty of electoral offences. The Speaker or Deputy Speaker may not be a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary.

For electoral purposes, the island of Mauritius is divided into 20 three-member constituencies; the island of Rodrigues for its part returns two members. Deputies are chosen according to a party-list system by simple majority vote, the three candidates (except for Rodrigues) receiving the largest number of votes being declared elected. Each elector has three votes.

As mentioned above, the unsuccessful candidates with the highest number of votes are designated by an electoral commission as the four "additional" members of the Assembly.

By-elections are held to fill constituency seats of the Assembly which fall vacant between general elections.

### General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The general elections were the second since independence in 1968. The polling date was set on 15 February 1982.

The main contending parties for the 62 popularly-elected Assembly seats were the ruling Labour Party, led by the Prime Minister (since independence). Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, and the left-wing *Mouvement militant mauricien* (MMM), the main opposition group whose Secretary-General was Mr. Paul Berenger. The country's economic situation, particularly unemployment, figured in the centre of the campaign debate. The MMM advocated nationalization of industry; it also pledged, if successful, to turn the nation into a republic and favoured non-alignment in foreign affairs. The Labour Party contested the election in alliance with two right-wing groups, the Mauritian Social Democrat Party (PMSD) and the Progress and Liberty Party, while the MMM— which had won the most seats in the previous (1976) elections—joined forces with the *Parti socialiste mauricien* (PSM).

Polling day was marked by a high turnout of the generally youthful electorate. The left-wing MMM-PSM alliance obtained a complete victory, capturing all 60 seats on the island of Mauritius; a local party on Rodrigues island, supported by the MMM, won the two remaining popularly-elected seats. Four "additional" seats were later allotted to the Labour Party and the PMSD since they were the most successful losing groups.

On 15 June, MMM President Aneerood Jugnauth became the country's second Prime Minister. A new Council of Ministers was sworn in the same day, Mr. Berenger becoming Minister of Finance.

### Statistics

#### 1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the Legislative Assembly

Number of registered electors	540,000 (approx.)
Voters . . . . .	90% (approx.)
Political Group	Number of Seats
<i>Mouvement militant mauricien</i> (MMM) .	42
<i>Parti socialiste mauricien</i> (PSM) . . . . .	18
<i>Organisation du peuple rodriguais</i> (OPR).	2
Labour Party . . . . .	2
Mauritian Social Democrat Party (PMSD)	2
	<b>66</b>