

## MAURITIUS

**Date of Elections:** 21 August 1983

### **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held for all the popularly-elected seats in Parliament following premature dissolution of this body on 17 June 1983. General elections had previously been held one year earlier, in June 1982.

### **Characteristics of Parliament**

The unicameral Parliament of Mauritius, the Legislative Assembly, comprises 70 members: 62 members elected by universal adult suffrage and 8 "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. Voting is not compulsory.

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.

Candidates must be nominated by at least six electors of their constituency and deposit a sum equivalent to US\$25, which is refunded if the candidate polls at least 10% of the votes cast.

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.

In case of vacancy of an elective seat, a by-election is held. In the case of a nominated member, the vacant seat is allocated to the next unsuccessful candidate with the highest percentage of votes and belonging to the same community.

### **Genera) Considerations and Conduct of the Elections**

On 22 March 1983, the unity of the *Mouvement militant mauricien* (MMM)/*Parti socialiste mauricien* (PSM) coalition Government fell apart as a result of successive major political crises in the Cabinet. Having no majority in Parliament, Mr. Aneerood Jugnauth, the Prime Minister, chose to dissolve Parliament prematurely on 17 June 1983.

The main contending parties for the 62 Assembly seats were the *Mouvement socialiste militant* (MSM), formed by Mr. Jugnauth, in alliance with the Labour Party headed by Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. By tacit electoral agreement, these two parties joined forces with the *Parti mauricien social-démocrate* (PMSD), led by Sir Gaetan Duval. Opposing this alliance was the left-wing MMM, the main opposition group, led by Mr. Paul Berenger.

During the two-month campaign, both sides focused on the country's precarious economic situation linked with a serious unemployment problem, and the need to alleviate it by intensive productive policies, agricultural diversification and encouragement of foreign investment for industrial development. Both parties moreover advocated the status of republic for Mauritius.

Election results gave the MSM/Labour/PMSD alliance 41 seats and the MMM 19 seats. In Rodrigues island, the **OPR** (*Organisation du peuple rodriguais*) again won the two seats. Eight "additional" seats were later allotted to the alliance and the MMM since they had fielded the most successful losing candidates. The MSM/Labour/PMSD alliance thus became the leading group in Parliament. On 27 August 1983, Prime Minister Jugnauth formed his new Government.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors . . . . .	551,708	
Voters . . . . .	470,008	(85.19%)
Blank or void ballot papers . . . . .	5,543	
Valid votes . . . . .	464,465	

Political Group		of Seats
MSM/Labour/PMSD alliance . . . . .	46	
<b>MMM</b> . . . . .	22	
<b>OPR</b> . . . . .	2	
	<u>70</u>	

2. Distribution of Deputies according to Professional Category

Employees in commerce and industry . . . . .	27
Liberal professions . . . . .	21
Farmers . . . . .	3
Officials of political or social organizations . . . . .	3
Others . . . . .	<u>16</u>
	<b>70</b>

3. Distribution of Deputies according to Sex

Men . . . . .	66
Women . . . . .	<u>4</u>
	<b>70</b>

4. Average Age of Deputies: 30 years