

MAURITIUS

Date of Elections: 30 August 1987

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the popularly-elected seats in Parliament following premature dissolution of this body on 3 July 1987. General elections had previously been held in August 1983.

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 approximately 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 eight "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.

Background and Outcome of the Elections

Owing largely to a drug trafficking scandal involving several parliamentarians belonging to the ruling centre-left coalition, the Legislative Assembly was prematurely dissolved on 3 July after an initial announcement to this effect on 15 May 1987. The elections had originally been scheduled for 5 July, but then postponed.

The governing "Alliance", led by the Mauritian Socialist Movement (MSM) party of Prime Minister Anerood Jugnauth and also comprising the Mauritius Labour Party (MLP), the Mauritian Social Democratic Party (PMSD) and the Organization of the People of Rodrigues (OPR), was opposed by the Union coalition, headed by the left-wing Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM). The five-week campaign centred on personal attacks as much as issues, with the MMM characterizing the Government as fractious and corrupt. The outgoing majority countered by pointing to the period of "economic boom" (higher output, lower unemployment and inflation) while in power, asking for another mandate to carry through further development. As in the past, however, community affiliations ranked equally important with the electors. Altogether 359 candidates were in the running.

With a total of 41 seats, the Alliance retained power on polling day as the Union, led by Mr. Prem Nababsingh, a Hindu, captured the remaining 21. The eight additional "best loser" seats were subsequently allotted. On this basis, Mr. Jugnauth formed a new Government on 4 September; his Cabinet underwent slight modification.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors.	639,488
Voters.	85%

Political Group	Seats obtained		Total
	Universal suffrage	.. Adjtionar	
Alliance.	41	5	46
Mauritian Socialist Movement (MSM)	26		
Mauritius Labour Party (MLP).	9		
Mauritian Social Democratic Party (PMSD).	4		
Organization of the People of Rodrigues (OPR).	2		
Union.	21	3	24
Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM)	21	3	
Democratic Labour Movement (MTD)			
Socialist Workers' Front (FTS).			
	62	8	711

*Distribution of Deputies
according to Sex*

Men	65
Women	70