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# Mauritian Overseas Gazette

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## Election 2024 The Race is On

The excitement is great in Mauritius with the official announcement that the next general election will be held on 10 November 2024. It has been said that politics is one of the favourite pastime of the Mauritian people. Since the beginning of the year, Mauritians, mainly those involved in politics, and the media in general, have been speculating on the date of the general election. Almost every day from the beginning of the year 2024 the media have been predicting the dissolution of the National Assembly.

The speculation has been dragging on as to the date on which the election itself would be held. And the PM has been keeping them guessing until finally he himself could no longer hold on. Finally on 4 October, on his advice the President of the Republic, H.E. Prithvirajsing Roopun issued a communiqué to inform the Mauritian public that the National Assembly had been dissolved. This was confirmed the same day, in an address to the nation, by the Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth who announced that the next general election would be held on 10 November. This put an end to all speculations.



**Alliance du Peuple: From left to right: Steven Obeegadoo (Plateforme Militante), Xavier Duval (PMSD), Pravind Jugnauth(MSM), Ivan Collendavello (Muvman Liberator) and Alan Ganoo (Muvman Patriot Morisien)**

The two main contenders for the leadership of the country are outgoing PM Pravin Jugnauth and Navin Ramgoolam, a former Prime Minister, who has been in the wilderness for several years without a seat in the National Assembly. They are both seeking a third mandate to the National Assembly to serve as Prime Minister. Pravind Jugnauth is seeking a renewal of his mandate for a third consecutive term whereas Navin Ramgoolam is on a comeback mission. He served as PM on two previous occasions namely in 1995 and 2005.

Who will the electorate choose to run the country? Pravind Jugnauth is banking on his performance and achievements for the past five years whereas Navin Ramgoolam is banking on the shortcomings of the outgoing government and the promises of his future delivery.

One former Government minister once told us that no political party on its own can today win a general election in Mauritius. So alliances are being forged among parties to face one another in this election as in the previous ones. In an editorial in Mauritius News we once wrote of a political situation in the country of "Kiss and Kick", and of "Kick and Kiss" where adversaries of yesterday become friends of today and friends of yesterday become adversaries of today. The personal attack is so bitter that we can even talk of foes instead of adversaries.

There has been of late a consolidation of the four parties making up the Alliance Party at the head of the outgoing government namely the Mouvement Socialiste Militant (MSM) of

**To Page 2**

## Linion Moris



**Linion Moris leading figures: from left to right: Nina Ramdenee (Muvman Patriotique), Padma Uchanah (Raliement Mauricien pour la patriement, Rama Valayden, Namdo Bodha, Dev Sunasy, Patric Belcourt (En Avant Maurice), Sheila Bunwaree (Justice Sociale), Daniella Police-Michel (Vert Fraternel)**

Pravind Jugnauth, the Plateforme Militante of Steven Obeegadoo, the Muvman Patriot Morisien of Alan Ganoo, and the Muvman Liberator of Ivan Collendavelloo. To them, it has now been officially announced that the Parti Social DÈmocrat (PMSD) of Xavier Duval has joined forces to fight the forthcoming general election on 10 November.

The main force against the Alliance Party is the coalition of the Labour Party of Navin Ramgoolam (PTr), the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM) of Paul BÈrenger, Nouveaux Démocrates (ND) of Richard Duval, and Rezistans ek Alternativ (ReA) of Ashok Subron. (Subron is yet to confirm).

Against the two main forces there are a horde of alliances in formation or already formed on whom we may elaborate later. In the meantime, we may mention Linion Moris will comprise on its platform party leaders such as Rama Valayden, Nando Bodha, Dev Sunnasy, etc and etc.

Rama Valayden declares that he is standing not to be PM but for the good of the country. He says everyone knows that he is "un scacrifié" Yet he is contemplating shared primemistership with Nondo Bodha, if Linion Moris should win the election.



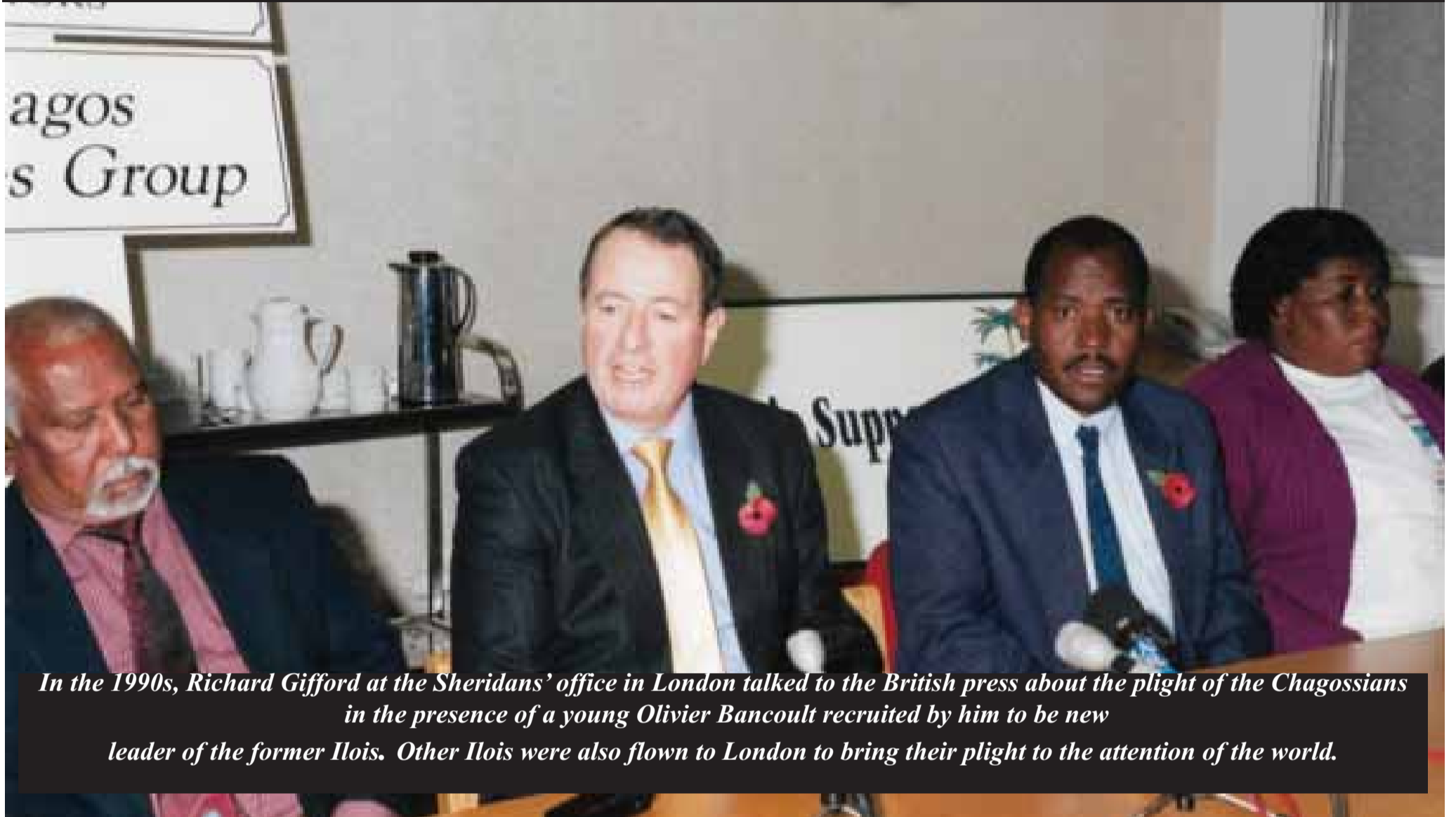
## Alliance du Changement

**From Let to Right Richard Duval, Nouveaux Démocrates (ND), Navin Ramgoolam, Parti Travailleiste (PTr) Paul BÈrenger, Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM), et Ashok Subron, Rezistans ek Alternative (ReA)**

Labour leader Navin Ramgoolam told prospective candidates of the Labour Party that they should not think of any ministerial position when they stand for election. They should think of service to the country. The irony is that he himself is standing for election to be the next Prime Minister. It would seem that all the candidates and all the parties have in mind service to the country. More in next issue

**Editor's Note:** On the next page (Page 3), we make reference to the Chagos history victory of Mauritius. We have decided to cover a specific item on this long march to victory. Some observers, with whom we discussed this topic, strongly advised us not to do so as the contents may not be totally true. We know what we write is true because we were front row witness to this development. So we print and be damned, if necessary.

# The Chagos Denouement: Historic Victory for Mauritius



*In the 1990s, Richard Gifford at the Sheridans' office in London talked to the British press about the plight of the Chagossians in the presence of a young Olivier Bancoult recruited by him to be new leader of the former Ilois. Other Ilois were also flown to London to bring their plight to the attention of the world.*

While the rejoicing is going on and everyone involved in the Chagos Archipelago struggle is being garlanded on the historic victory of Mauritius over the issue of the Archipelago's sovereignty, for the love of the almighty, without trying to cut the ground under the feet of all the players who fought for this successful outcome, please let us spare a thought for the man who revived the whole saga in the mid-nineties (1997?). By then the Chagossian dilemma, locally in Mauritius, was not on the table.

Who was talking of the Chagos issue in Mauritius in mid-nineties? Suddenly at the time, out of the blue arose a man who stirred up the Mauritian people into action. His name was Richard Gifford of the British firm of Sheridans Solicitors, (then of High Holborn, Central London), headed by Bernard Sheridan. Ac-

ording to what Richard Gifford told Peter Chellen then, Managing Editor of Mauritius News, the UK monthly publication, he was new to the firm, and while going through the papers in a filing cabinet in the office he had come across a dormant file on the Chagos debacle.

Richard Gifford will have surely seen the papers concerning the involvement of Sheridans Solicitors in an incident in Mauritius in the 1970s when Chagossians were asked to sign away their claim to the islands where they were born. Even though Richard Gifford's own motive in reviving the Chagossians' issue became ambiguous over the years according to some observers, to all intents and purposes, he set the ball rolling, once more, by the various ensuing court actions at the British High Court of Justice in

London by his firm..

## Friend of Mauritians

Richard Gifford had by then become acquainted with the UK Mauritian community while dealing with the immigration problems of several Mauritian nationals, referred to his law firm by the Mauritius High Commission in London. Bernard Sheridan was an old friend of Mauritian parliamentarians Veerasamy Ringadoo and Satcam Boolell, acquainted during their student days in London. It was not surprising that when Bernard Sheridan established his law firm "Sheridans Solicitors, some legal work was

To Page 4

**First victory at the British High Court of Justice. Picture taken in front of the court in Aldwych, Central London. Rashid Halkory, Accountant, is on the far left and solicitor Richard Gifford at the back on the right.**





thrown his way by the Labour Government who, following independence in 1968, set up the Mauritius High Commission in the UK, under the administration of former brilliant Establishment Secretary, Raymond Chasle. Raymond Chasle was the father of the Mauritius Diplomatic Service who would later set up the Mauritius Embassy in Paris, and subsequently the Mauritius Embassy in Belgium with jurisdiction to the EEC. He never received any decoration, though.

Richard Gifford befriending the UK Mauritians had joined the Anglo-Mauritian Association set up by Indian national Ravi Misra who was the very dynamic UK regional manager of Air Mauritius with the airline's office in Mayfair, the posh area of London

## Funding

One question which people may ask of the Chagos saga is "where did Richard Gifford get the money to fly Olivier Bancoult and a few of his compatriots, male and female, to London in the mid-nineties, and to get them accommodation, first at a friend's place in Norwood (south London) and then in Holborn hotel, central London, while he was being briefed by the Chagossians? There was absolutely no money then. How can Richard Gifford, whatever his stand was at the time, be totally ignored today, while the rejoicing goes on?"

Having become a friend of Mauritius, Richard Gifford WAS the man who revived the Chagos saga in the mid-nineties, which had by then become

almost as dead as the dodo, locally in Mauritius. Even young Olivier Bancoult, to a question from Monaf Fakira of Mauritius News, at a press conference chaired by Richard Gifford following the first British High Court victory as to whether he would get the Mauritian Government involved in his fight for the Chagossians' rights, exclaimed "What has the Mauritian government done for the Chagossians?". This statement was reported in Mauritius News at the time and later mentioned in an article, by Peter Chellen, that appeared in *Le Mauricien* under the title "Chagos, The Eternal Debate". Monaf Fakira, the former PMSD Secretary-

the Chagossian challenge when the situation was *au point mort* in Mauritius. When he eventually brought the case to the British High Court of Justice in the mid-nineties for a first time, it was known that the law firm had applied for and obtained legal aid from the British Government itself. It was only then that money was available to meet all expenses and to pay everyone. Richard Gifford took on board Mauritian-born Avoué Robin Mardemootoo as his counterpart in Mauritius to liaise with the Chagossians. Robin Mardemootoo will have known the extent of the contribution of Richard Gifford to the cause of the Cha-



General who had settled in London, had no reply to Olivier Bancoult's exclamation! .

It is regrettable that no mention is made of Richard Gifford who took up

gossians in whatever direction. Richard Gifford created then the Chagossians Welfare Fund with a donation from a British registered Charity whose accountant was a UK Mauritian, Rashid Halkory.

## International Day of Older Persons: Old Age Pension to go up to Rs20,000 per month

The Prime Minister, Mr Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, paid a vibrant homage to the elderly population for their remarkable contribution and enduring legacy in shaping the country's social, economic and cultural landscape and renewed his commitment to support their overall well-being, today at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre, Pailles. He was speaking at an official ceremony organised by the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity in the context of the International Day of Older Persons observed annually on 01 October.

On this occasion, the Prime Minister announced that Government, in its next mandate, will increase the Basic Retirement Pension to Rs 20,000 so as to improve the financial autonomy of the elderly. In the same vein, the free provision of medications when visiting a private doctor for treatment was also declared by Mr Jugnauth to cater for the welfare of the population.

Prime Minister Jugnauth, in his speech, underscored the importance of organising such an event which serves as a clarion call for stronger actions to ensure that the dignity and rights of the elders of the nation are maintained and protected. "The hard work, perseverance, and sacrifice of our elders have paid off", he stated, adding that the country thrives on peace, security and unity due to their strong sense of family values, mutual respect and solidarity.

Government, he stressed, recognises and values the elders as an important cohort of the society and believes in their potential to chart the progress of the country and guide future generations by transmitting their knowledge, experience and values. "Older persons are a force to be reckoned with", he said, "Government

will continue to ensure that they live in dignity and in good health". As such, he pointed out that major investment is being made in the healthcare sector with the setting up of new and modern health infrastructure and services.

He dwelt on a series of measures rolled out to improve the quality of life of the elderly including setting up of recreational facilities, visits by doctors at domicile, and vaccination campaign. Highlighting the benefits of adopting a healthy lifestyle, he exhorted the seniors to practise a regular physical activity such as walking and to indulge more in leisure and recreational activities.

Reiterating the motto 'No one should be left behind', Prime Minister Jugnauth enumerated several other prominent measures that have been put in place to respond to the needs of all groups. These include: allocation of a monthly Child Allowance of Rs 2,000 to children aged up to three years; a one-off Pregnancy Care Allowance of Rs 3,000; a Maternity Allowance of Rs 2,000; a one-off grant of Rs 20,000 to youngsters attaining 18 years old; provision of free education from pre-primary to tertiary schooling; and subsidy on SC and HSC examination fees. The subsidy on food items such as rice and flour and the decreased in the price Domestic Liquefied Petroleum Gas were also listed out.

As for the youth, he recalled that Government will come forth with a scheme for those aged between 18 to 35 years old of a zero interest rate on a loan for the purchase of a plot of land or for the construction of a house depending on certain criteria. The interest on these loans will be paid by the Government, affirmed Prime Minister Jugnauth. Key features of Government's vision also entail the modernisation of the transportation sector with the coming up of electric buses, extension of the Metro Express across other regions, and other infrastructural development.

For her part, Minister Jeewa-Daureeawoo underlined that the elders are always placed at the centre of major policy and decision making by the Government. "The elders are the strong pillars upon which our society continues to consolidate its foundation and pave the way forward for the progress of the country", she stated.

The Minister underpinned that the Government is doing its ut-



most best to provide older persons with requisite facilities and benefits, decent conditions, improved standard of living and access to quality healthcare services so that they live in dignity. Likewise, she mentioned, several initiatives have been taken to address inequalities, promote social integration and inclusiveness for the most vulnerable, women, youth and people with disabilities.

As for Ms Singh, she lauded the country's dedication in catering for this segment of the population which requires most care and particular attention. The huge investment made by the Government in ensuring social welfare and improving healthcare systems is remarkable, she indicated, while reiterating the UN's support to assist Mauritius in safeguarding the rights of the elders and fostering their development.

### International Day of Older Persons

On 14 December 1990, the United Nations General Assembly designated October 1 as the International Day of Older Persons (resolution 45/106). This was preceded by initiatives such as the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, which was adopted by the 1982 World Assembly on Ageing and endorsed later that year by the UN General Assembly.

In 1991, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Principles for Older Persons (resolution 46/91). In 2002, the Second World Assembly on Ageing adopted the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, to respond to the opportunities and challenges of population ageing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to promote the development of a society for all ages.

# News from Japan

by Mylene



## New Prime Minister of Japan Shigeru Ishiba

**Shigeru Ishiba was elected as the new leader of Japan's ruling party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) on Friday 27 September. He is set to succeed outgoing Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida, once parliament convenes in October.**

One of the nine candidates in the leadership race, Sanae Takaichi, aimed to become Japan's first female Prime Minister. The votes tallied 215 to 194, indicating a close race, but obviously not close enough.

At the age of 67, Ishiba can be described as a political veteran. Throughout his career, he has held numerous important roles, including serving as parliamentary vice minister of agriculture, defence minister and minister for overcoming population decline and vitalising local economy, among others.

The LDP has been in power almost without interruption since its establishment in 1955. It appears that many within the party are patiently biding their time for their opportunity to lead. When you compare the fact that there have been 64 Japanese Prime Ministers (excluding second or third terms) to the UK's 58 since Robert Walpole took office in 1721, the figures reflect the notion of a rotating door of Japanese leaders.

Ishiba is recognised as a defence expert and previously suggested an Asian-style NATO, he also advocated improved relations with Beijing and Japan. Currently, he is tasked with rejuvenating the economy.

"I will do my utmost to believe in the people, to speak the truth with courage and sincerity and to make this country a safe and secure place where everyone can



live with a smile on their face once again."

This marks Ishiba's fifth attempt for the leadership position, so, it's fifth time lucky for him.

### Ageing Japan

## 95,119 and counting...

On September 1st, the health minister shared some eye-opening data about the number of people aged 100 or over in Japan. It's a staggering 95,119 continuing the upward trend for the 54th year running.

To give you some context on the magnitude of that number, the combined population of the islands of Antigua and Barbuda is 93,772.

I'm going to crunch some numbers here.

Women make up 88.3 percent, totalling 83,958, leaving the male centenarians at 11,161.

The oldest man is 110 years old, while in August, Tomiko Itooka was officially recognized in the Guinness World Records book as the oldest woman in the world, at 116.

Japan's population started to decrease after reaching a peak of 123 million in 2008. As of 2024, the population stands at 122,631,432 reflecting a 0.54% decline from 2023.

The number of births was 727,277 this year, which is 43,482 fewer than the previous year. One common explanation is that women are getting married later on in life. I find it interesting that no one has considered the possibility that some women may just choose not to have children.

Let's forget about global warming, pandemics, wars and natural disasters. Maybe the world's fate will be determined as generations opt not to have children, at least, not through the conventional methods.

### A Japanese Proverb (*Picked up from the Net*):

#### Fall seven times, get up eight

This is a great proverb referencing to the importance of diligence and persistence through whatever one wants to accomplish in life. Literally: even monkeys fall from trees.

Meaning that it is natural to make mistakes sometimes.

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