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Mauritian Overseas Gazette

Email : mauritianoverseasgazette@outlook.com
Website : <http://www.mauritianoverseasgazette.com>



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Editor: Peter Chellen (Former Editor of Mauritius News 1983 - 2015)

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Politics at home

The Man of the Moment

The whole of Mauritius is talking about one man, MMM's Leader Paul Bérenger (the Mouvement Militant Mauricien), in the same way that the whole world is talking of one man, Donald Trump - with the difference that very little sympathy, if any at all, is being expressed for Donald Trump from among the American people and from around the world. A lot of sympathy is being expressed in favour Paul Bérenger by his loving fans.

The MMM (the Mouvement Militant Mauricien) fans feel sorry for 81-year-old Bérenger in spite of the fact that, on his own freewill, he has resigned as Deputy Prime Minister and dissociated himself from the coalition government of which his party is a stakeholder. Bérenger feels a bit sore, and so do his loving fans that most of the MMM parliamentarians (with the exception of two), have not followed him and left the coalition government. Mr Bérenger has been explaining why he can no longer sleep in the same bed as Labour Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam. He denounces primarily the state of corruption prevailing within the Government.

On the other hand, The MMM dissidents remaining in government have been explaining why they feel they should not abandon ship. But Bérenger's loving fans, the base as they are called, will have none of it and they are calling the 'remainers' names of all sorts. They qualify them as traitors - traitors to both Bérenger and the Party.



Paul Bérenger at press conference

The MMM dilemma

The MMM dilemma is being discussed, from morn to dawn, at MMM party level, within the government, among other political party leaders, by all parliamentarians, trade unions, by newspapers, on radio and television, and by the public at large. Broadcasters are holding sessions with guests expressing views about Paul Bérenger's departure from government.

Who is the MMM leader Paul Bérenger?

Paul Bérenger is of French origin. It has been said that his grand-parents came to Mauritius as civil servants under French colonial possession.

The same as Mauritians of Indian origin qualify for Indian citizenship so do the descendants of the ancient French colonies. They can hold dual nationality. In Mauritius, there are also the descendants of the ancient French colons. The colons came to take possession of Ile de France in the name of the King of France. By royal decree they were granted title to the lands they appropriated in the colony.

Among the colons emerged the sugar barons. History tells us that the colons brought forced labour from Africa and even from India to work on the land as labourers. So, in Mauritius there were, at the time, two categories of people: the Whites and the Non-Whites.

When Paul Bérenger entered Mauritian politics in 1969 after his overseas studies, with the reputation of having been one of the thousands of students behind the barricades in Paris during the students riots of 1968, he cast his lot with the Non-White element of the island and presented himself as a champion of the working class (As to why he did so is a mystery which has never been elucidated).

Bérenger immediately managed to take control of the students movement initiated by the Principal of the Port Louis High School, Heeralall Bhugaloo, and converted it into the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM) of which he became the leader. He managed, by certain ploy, to wrest control of the dockers' union from Eliézer François, a dedicated Creole.

Bérenger involved the dockers in strikes against the cause of the sugar barons whose productivity formed, then, the backbone of the economy of Mauritius.

Outstanding Political Parcours

Bérenger's *parcours* in Mauritian politics has been outstanding. However, he seems to have been a man of contradictions. He struggles all his political life to be at the top but when he gets there, he becomes restless. He seems to suffer from some form of vertigo. He lets go his achievements to recommence à zéro, as sings Edith Piaf.

Tout dimoune ena zotte la gare (everyone has

their final station) is a Mauritian saying. On Bérenger's resigning as Deputy Prime Minister, with the exception of his substantial number of loving fans, the Mauritian people believe that the MMM leader has reached his final destination.

Whether his fans like it or not, the man is no longer the Bérenger of the late 1960s. He has done his bit. But his loving fans argue that the MMM cannot exist without Paul Bérenger.

Maurice Curé founded the Labour Party in 1936. The Party has existed without him for the past 90 years. Jules Koenig founded Parti Mauricien in the early 1950s, later turned into the Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate (PMSD) by Gaetan Duval. Without both of them, the PMSD still exists. The Mouvement Socialiste Militant was founded by Anerood Jugnauth in 1983. The party still exists without him. But the Independent Forward Bloc (IFB) disappeared with Sookdeo Bissoondoyal and so did the Comité d'Action Musulman (CAM) with the departure of Abdool Razack Mohamed.

Whether the MMM will survive Bérenger depends on Bérenger. One of his options, which he has made known is to create a new political party. If he does, the original MMM may run out of steam and fade away.

But, it must be borne in mind that to create and lead a new political party demands a bit of verve

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and dynamism, is the 81-year old Paul Bérenger up to it?

There is also a question of financial resources. Can Paul Bérenger raise the sort of finance required to keep a political party going? He himself is reported to have said that "aparte mo la peau fesse, mo péna nanyer." (Apart from the skin on my backside, I have nothing). Hard to believe that after 57 years in Mauritian politics his only asset is the skin on his backside.

At an assembly of the Central Committee of the MMM on 27 March, of the 51 members present, 49 members voted to remain as supporters of the coalition government with two against.

Is Paul Bérenger being disavowed by his party? In spite of the fact that he still has his supporters, many members believe that the curtain is coming down for him. It's time to retire to the paddock. it is the life story of everyone on the stage of existence. He has done his bit and it's now time for him to say goodbye to an active political career.

Of course, in the sight of his loving fans, he is still a great man, with a lot of achievements to his credit. Many will agree that the veteran politician has, as well, quite a bit of minuses on his slate. Some of his supporters agree to say that he has his faults, though they do not enumerate them. They take pleasure in the fact that he is still kicking and is in command of his platform eloquence.

praise on the 81-year-old leader as if he is still in his 30s when he used to terrorise veterans like Ramgoolam The Elder. He has of late been challenging Ramgoolam The Younger. It has not worked this time. They all have their vested interests to look after.

The present Labour leader has proved to be a hard nut to crack. The chap has that nasty hoard of million of rupees found in his private safe to sort out. Until this is settled he has to stay at the elm, reigning supreme. He cannot at present be bothered about an elderly Bérenger who is hanging to his pants for more power.

On the other hand, Bérenger has thrown in the towel. Ramgoolam must now look for a new sparing partner. He has quite a few to choose from. Would he have his dear friend Harvin Boolell on board with him. Not likely.

It may be remembered as soon as he (Ramgoolam) was crowned leader of the Labour Party in the 1990s, he exiled the then outgoing Labour leader Sir Satcam Boolell to London to an ambassadorial appointment. He did not want to have him between his legs. A high caste Boolell Jr could be walking on his grave if given too much power. Bérenger, himself, has accused the Labour Party of Caste practice.

The PM, for a deputy at the Finance ministry, may turn to the MMM left-overs who are hanging to their ministerial mantles. Reza Uteem could be called upon to fulfil that Deputy Finance Minister's portfolio left vacant by Bérenger.



Paul & Navin
The Honeymoon is Over.
No longer in the same bed

Karma or Comeuppance

His opponents believe that Bérenger has at last met with his Karma, if this word Karma could be extended to mean his "comeuppance". Bérenger has been no saint while indulging in Mauritian politics. He came to politics with his own vision and plan in mind. He certainly had his own agenda, which to this day no one has been able to decipher.

As we have said, Bérenger is still kicking. But one thing he will not be able to fight for long. It's the element of ageing. It's already catching up with him.

Coonjee S. Beeharry



Paul & SAJ: Partnership of another era

A time for everything under heaven

There is a time for everything under heaven: A time to come and a time to go. Parting is always sad. This is parting time.

Paul Bérenger is no longer riding high in the party. Many MMM members state that he is burned out. They are making fun of him. The President of the MMM, Reza Uteem, seems to be ridiculing him when he says Paul should come back to the MMM. But Bérenger says "have not left the MMM."

Of course many fans are mourning his state of destitution. They really love him, they shower



Paul & Pravind: A courting that never took off (Picture emailed to us)

A Message From Eliézer François JP

Le Rédacteur en chef
Mauritian Overseas Gazette,

Subject: Le Grand Bluffer!

Permettez-moi de reproduire, à l'intention de vos lecteurs, ce bref commentaire que j'avais mis sur ma page Facebook le 18 mars 2026.

Mes Chers Amis Facebookers, jusqu'ici j'ai pas voulu faire de commentaire sur le cinéma de Paul Bérenger. Tout comme l'avait dit une fois, Sir Anerood Jugnauth "Bérenger jamais pa pou changer". Eh bien! J'aimerais partager avec vous tous cette révélation de Josie Lebrasse, son amie, je cite: " Le scénario imaginé par Paul Bérenger a été exécuté de manière impeccable," en parlant du prétendu cancer à la gorge de Paul Bérenger. Ici, je me permets de rappeler à Paul Bérenger cette célèbre citation d'Abraham Lincoln: "You can fool all the people part of the time and part of the people all the time but you cannot fool all the people all the time."

Eliézer François JP

Japan Local Colour

A WALK AROUND A JAPANESE SUPERMARKET

Mylene



When the editor mentioned there was a programme on Mauritian TV about the Japanese eating edible seaweed, my first thought was, of course they do, every day.

Japan's surrounding seas are rich in marine algae. Marine biologists estimate around 1,500 species of seaweed, but only about 20-30 are widely eaten and each one has a different name.

Seaweed appears everywhere in a Japanese kitchen. From miso soup and broths to salads, snacks, and rice dishes.

Most of us have tried maki sushi. Rice is spread onto a sheet of nori (dried seaweed) the filling is added then it is rolled tightly using a bamboo mat before being sliced into neat, bite-sized pieces.



From Moka to the Highest Peaks on Earth:

Mauritian Mountaineer Eyes Seven Summits Milestone



London based Actuary Jaysen Arumugum prepares for Antarctica's Mount Vinson after becoming the first Mauritian to summit Mount Everest.

A Mauritian mountaineer who grew up exploring the mountains of Moka is preparing for one of the most remote and challenging climbs on Earth – a journey that could see him become the first person from our island to complete the Seven Summits, the highest mountain on each continent.

Jaysen will attempt to climb Mount Vinson, the highest peak in Antarctica, in December this year. Standing at 4,892m,

Mount Vinson lies deep within the Antarctic continent and is considered to be one of the most isolated mountains in the world.

If successful, Arumugum will become the first Mauritian to complete the Seven Summits challenge – a mountaineering milestone achieved but only a relatively small number of climbers worldwide.

Originally from Mauritius, Arumugum now lives in London with his wife and two daughters. He works for a global professional services firm Aon, where he has spent 27 years of his career. A qualified actuary by background, he currently serves as an Enterprise Client Leader working closely with major global organisations around risk and resilience.

His climbing career started as a young teenager in Moka, Mauritius, where he grew up for much of his childhood, climbing his favourite mountains close to home. He graduated to high altitude mountaineering starting with Kilimanjaro in 2002, culminating in summiting Mount Everest in 2011 – being the first Mauritian to reach the highest point on Earth and raising funds for Breast Cancer Care in the UK and Link-to-Life in Mauritius.

The Everest expedition was deeply personal. His very close family friend had been diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of just 23, motivating Arumugum to take on the challenge to raise awareness and support for the cause.

The Everest climb itself was far from straightforward. During the two-month expedition he suffered a retinal haemorrhage that left him with a partial vision loss in one eye and forced him to confront difficult decisions about whether to continue.

Despite the challenges, he eventually reached the summit before enduring an ex-



tremely demanding descent, battling exhaustion and dehydration in harsh 8000m+ Death Zone conditions.

Reflection on the experience, Arumugum says the lessons from Everest continue to shape his outlook today.

"Mountaineering strips everything down to the essentials," he said. "When you are operating at your limits, success comes down to focus, discipline and the ability to keep moving – one step at a time."

His upcoming climb of Mount Vinson represents the final step in his Seven Summits journey and a moment he hopes will inspire others in Mauritius.

"Representing Mauritius on the highest mountains around the world has always meant a great deal to me," he said. "If this journey can encourage people – especially young Mauritians – to believe that ambitious goals are possible, that would be incredibly rewarding."

Arumugum is also planning to use the expedition to raise awareness and support for charitable causes in the UK and Mauritius, with further details expected to be announced in the coming months.

Should the expedition succeed, the Mauritian mountaineer will make history as the first person from the island nation to stand on the highest peak of every continent.

A Modern Mauritius



CUT TREES, PLANT CONCRETE

They call it "A Modern Mauritius." A land dressed up in the clothes of progress. Electric buses move through the streets, the Metro Express cuts across the city, and buildings of steel and glass are sold to us as "green architecture." We wrap it all in fancy words, as if saying the right things is enough. But beneath all that shine, there is a quieter, sadder truth, one that smells like fresh sap from a newly cut tree.

We cut the trees. The ones that gave us shade in the harsh midday heat of Port Louis. The ones that held the nests of small red fodies. The ones that brought colour and life to streets that now bake in the sun. We cut the trees that cooled the city, that gave a little relief to someone eating a dhol puri under the noon sun. And in replacing them with man-made canopies, we are left hotter, more frustrated, as if the city itself is reacting to what we've done.

After the destruction along Vandermeesch Street, connecting Beau Bassin to Rose Hill, where so many trees were cut down for the Metro's shining tracks, you would think we had learned something. That trees are not decoration. They are lungs. They are memory. They are community. I often hear people say trees are "too much maintenance."

But maintenance is part of life. Taking care of our health, our relationships, and our environment is what it means to live consciously. The shade and energy of a living tree will always be worth more than a plastic canopy fixed to a pole.

The heavy use of concrete in Port Louis has many consequences. One clear example is how streets now flood quickly during heavy rain, often turning into rivers. This is not just bad luck, it is the result of the choices we keep making in how we build our city. Trees and plants act like a sponge, absorbing water and releasing it slowly. Concrete does the opposite, pushing water away and causing it to build up. While plants alone cannot stop floods, they can reduce how often they happen and how severe they are when combined with proper drainage systems.

Instead of learning, we keep repeating the same mistakes.

Taariq Abdullatif

Un Véritable Guet-apens Pour Les Créoles

Eliézer François JP.



Vu l'euphorie et la grande exaltation de certains, parmi le Vice-Président de la République, Jean Yvan Robert Hungley, autour de la langue Kreol Morisien, je me permettrais de reproduire deux extraits de deux conférences de presse du MAM, tenues à l'intention de tous les mauriciens, en particulier, les créoles, descendants d'esclaves.

1) « Un autre item que MAM tient à cœur c'est la tentative de faire le créole devenir un sujet au programme d'étude scolaire. M. François dit qu'il respecte ceux qui sincèrement croient que cela va aider les enfants créoles. Mais pour sa part il considère qu'un tel projet placerait les enfants créoles dans un ghetto culturel. Il affirme n'avoir aucune honte de parler très bien le créole et se permet de mettre au défi n'importe qui de prouver le contraire. D'ailleurs quand il est parti avec sa famille en Australie il a tout fait pour que ses enfants apprennent le français à l'école et parlent le créole, alors qu'elles étaient encore très petites. Aujourd'hui il se dit fier de voir qu'elles parlent bien leur créole.

Par contre, il est farouchement opposé à l'idée de mettre le créole au programme d'étude scolaire. Ce sera un grand handicap pour les enfants créoles. Déjà ils ont beaucoup de difficulté à assimiler deux langues étrangères qui heureusement sont deux langues internationales. Il est préférable qu'on les aide davantage à se perfectionner en anglais car l'anglais c'est la langue de l'Informatique. Nos enfants ont un plus grand besoin de l'anglais, à cause de l'ordinateur, l'e-mail et l'internet. On ne peut pas les mettre dans un ghetto culturel. « Ici j'aimerais saluer le grand visionnaire sir See-woosagur Ramgoolam qui, même après l'indépendance, a tout fait pour maintenir l'étude de l'anglais et du français au programme d'étude scolaire », a ajouté M. François.

D'ailleurs nos grands écrivains créoles tel que Rémy Ollier, R. Rivet, M. Cabon, J.G. Téléscourt, J. G. Prosper et tant d'autres se sont taillés une réputation internationale dans les lettres, pas en écrivant le créole. Certains se

souviendront sans doute de mes combats acharnés contre Dev Virasawmy et Paul Bérenger qui pronaient dans les années 70 l'étude de la langue créole alors qu'avec leurs enfants à la maison, le premier parlait l'anglais et le second parlait le français, » a-t-il aussi dit.

(2) Le second extrait avait comme titre : « Eliézer François 100% contre l'introduction de la langue créole dans l'enseignement. » Décembre 2019. Je cite : -

« L'enseignement de la langue créole dans le milieu scolaire n'a pas sa raison d'être. C'est une perte de temps, d'argent et de ressources. Cela va davantage nuire à l'avancée de l'éducation qu'autre chose », a martelé, le leader du Mouvement Authentique Mauricien. Avant tout, l'ancien ministre, qui rappelle-t-il était enseignant de langues, s'est positionné contre l'enseignement de la langue créole auprès des écoliers, des collégiens et des universitaires. Selon lui, cette initiative va enfermer les petits mauriciens dans un ghetto culturel et intellectuel. « A quoi ça sert d'enseigner aux enfants, une langue qu'ils ne pourront utiliser nulle part ailleurs ? Beaucoup d'enfants ont déjà des difficultés à apprendre les langues déjà enseignées. La priorité est de se concentrer davantage sur l'anglais et le français qui sont deux langues internationales qui bénéficient à tout un chacun », a-t-il expliqué.

L'ancien enseignant des langues explique par la même occasion que le créole, qui est issu de la langue française, est davantage phonétique qu'autre chose. Et d'ajouter qu'il n'y a nul besoin de l'enseigner car tous les Mauriciens

savent déjà le parler. Selon lui. L'utilisation du créole aide les élèves à mieux comprendre à l'école mais serait inutile en tant que matière.

Le leader du MAM n'a également pas mâché ses mots envers ceux qui 's'entêtent' à inventer des dictionnaires créoles. ' Cette affaire de dictionnaire créole mauriciens, rodriguais et chagossien est une fumisterie. Où cela va-t-il nous mener ? Je mets au défi quiconque de me dire qui sont les parents qui encourageront leurs enfants à apprendre le créole ! » a fait ressortir Eliézer François. D'autre part, il a supplié Arnaud Carpouran Président du Creol Speaking Union et doyen de la faculté des Sciences sociales et humaines à L'université de Maurice (UoM) et Dev Virahsawmy 'd'arrêter ce cinéma'. Ou alors, il lancerait une campagne nationale. Le Journal 21 – 27 décembre 2019.

Quand je faisais mon Diploma in the Teaching of English Overseas à l'Université de Leeds, j'avais une collègue venant de Fidji. Un jour on a essayé de communiquer en créole. Elle me disait que chez elle au Fidji, elle parlait le créole. Mais malheureusement, nous n'avions pas pu communiquer car son créole était un 'Broken English' tandis que le mien était un 'Broken French. Donc, à quoi sert le Kreol Morisien quand on est à l'étranger ?

Finalement, à noter que dans plusieurs de nos Super Marchés, Stations d'essence, etc la plupart des travailleurs étrangers – Indiens, Bangladeshiens, Népalais, Africains et Chinois ne s'expriment qu'en anglais aux clients. Comme dirait feu Robert Rey, mon ex-colistier et collègue : « PAS PROGRÈS ÇA ! »

MMM Press Conference: Where are the young supporters of yesteryears?

