

SHIMA MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST

MAURITIUS

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POLITICS

[DOMESTIC]

● PAUL BERENGER RESIGNS AS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER



(Photo Credit: DefiMedia)

On the 20th of March, Paul Bérenger, Leader of the MMM (Mauritian Militant Movement) party, announced his resignation as Deputy Prime Minister at a press conference. He submitted his resignation letter to H.E. Dharambeer Gokhool, President of the Republic, later the same day. He declared that that he could no longer

remain in a government coalition where his warnings were being ignored, concluding, "I have my reasons."

● DIVISIONS WITHIN THE MMM PARTY

After Paul Bérenger announced his resignation, the vast majority of his elected members have refused to follow him. 16 of the 18 Members of Parliament from the MMM have chosen to remain in the government. Many members openly criticized Bérenger's solitary decision-making style. They argued that the party must respect the five-year mandate given by voters and continue its work for the country. Tensions have also flared regarding the future leadership of the party.

● JOANNA BERENGER RESIGNS AS JUNIOR MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT

On the 23rd of March, Joanna Bérenger resigned as Junior Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, three days after her father, Paul Bérenger, stepped down as Deputy Prime Minister. "I believe in activist values and I trust the

one who has best embodied them for 50 years,” Joanna Bérenger wrote on her Facebook page after her resignation. Reflecting on her tenure, she expressed gratitude to the civil servants and officers who she worked alongside of.



(Photo Credit: L'express Maurice)

● MMM CENTRAL COMMITTEE VOTES IN FAVOUR OF REMAINING IN GOVERNMENT



(Photo Credit: Le Mauricien)

On the 27th of March, the Central Committee of the MMM gathered in Ebene to cast a vote to decide if the party will remain within the government. The results were 49 votes in favour, against 2, out of 51 members present. The Central Committee will therefore ask the Assembly of Delegates to ratify the vote on the 11th of April, which is seen as a very important date for the future of the party.

● PAUL BERENGER HOLDS A RALLY IN PLAZA

On the 28th of March, Paul Bérenger held a rally at Plaza in Rose Hill alongside Joanna Bérenger and MP Chetan Baboolall. Paul Bérenger outlined the four options currently facing the MMM:

- Remain in the government as backbenchers.
- Refer the matter to the MMM Assembly of Delegates, which is expected to meet on the 11th

of April, and seek to obtain the support of the majority at this meeting.

- Appeal to the Supreme Court. Paul Bérenger stated that an appeal to the Supreme Court would be difficult and requires careful study to see if it is worth the effort. He warned that without this legal action, the party risks losing its name, purple color, and heart symbol.
- Create a new party, a new MMM, for the upcoming elections.



(Photo Credit: DefiMedia)

● HIGH LEVEL COMMITTEE TO MONITOR THE IMPACT OF THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION

On the 17th of March, at the first seating of the Parliament following resumption, Prime Minister DR the Hon. Navin Ramgoolam warned that Mauritius' growth could drop from 3.4% to 3.2%, or even below 3% if the conflict in the Middle East persists. He also warned about a decline in tourist arrivals, a rising cost of food and petroleum imports and an inflation rate potentially reaching 6%. The Prime Minister announced the setting up of a High-Level Committee to monitor the evolving situation. The government does not envisage introducing any allowance to counter the rise in prices at this stage.

[FOREIGN AFFAIRS / DIPLOMACY]

● MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT IMPACT OUTCOMES OF NEGOTIATIONS ON CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO

The US-UK military base on Diego Garcia, as well as the question of sovereignty between Mauritius and the UK over the Chagos Archipelago, are now at the core of escalating geopolitical tensions triggered by the March 2026 Israeli-American strikes on Iran.

On the 2nd of March, amidst tensions with Iran, US President Donald Trump criticized British Prime Minister Keir Starmer for taking “far too long” to authorize the United States to use British military bases, including the Diego Garcia base in the Chagos Archipelago, against Iran. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced, the previous day, that he had agreed to allow the United States to use British military bases to strike Iranian missile sites, as requested by the Americans.



(Photo Credit: Le Mauricien)

On the 3rd of March, in Mauritius, an Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Chagos Archipelago, chaired by the Prime Minister, Dr the Hon. Navin Ramgoolam, met to examine the delay in the entry into force of the treaty signed on 22 May 2025 regarding sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, along with the escalating crisis in the Middle East involving Iran. Mauritius, committed to respecting the rules-based international order, calls for an immediate ceasefire and the use of peaceful means to resolve disputes between the States concerned. The Committee also deplored the lack of clarity regarding the implementation timeline of the sovereignty agreement. Another point of concern is the unauthorized presence of British Chagossians on one of the islands of the archipelago.

On the 10th of March, the High Court in London refused to grant leave to proceed with legal action against the British Foreign Office concerning the agreement between the United Kingdom and Mauritius regarding the Chagos Islands. Three British Chagossian plaintiffs were challenging the UK-Mauritius agreement. They argued that the British government had not consulted the Chagossians before concluding the arrangement with Mauritius. The plaintiffs are considering an appeal.

In the United States, on the 16th of March, Republican Senator John Kennedy has introduced the Diego Garcia Treaty Oversight Act in the US Congress. The bill aims to prevent any transfer of sovereignty over the archipelago—and therefore potentially block the agreement between the UK and Mauritius—until the US Senate approves any changes to the defense treaty signed in 1966 between Washington and London. This right of veto could therefore prevent the implementation of the UK-Mauritius agreement, even if it is adopted by the British Parliament.



(Photo Credit: DefiMedia)

On the 17th of March, during Prime Minister’s Question Time (PMQT) in the National Assembly in Port Louis, several Members of Parliament questioned Prime Minister Ramgoolam about the economic consequences of the delay in ratifying the treaty on the Chagos Archipelago. In his response, the Prime Minister reiterated that this agreement marks a major step forward, with the United Kingdom recognizing Mauritian sovereignty over the entire Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia. However, the agreement remains conditional upon its ratification by both parties. Prime Minister Ramgoolam confirmed a shortfall of Rs 10 billion for the current fiscal year which is expected to lead to cause an 1.3% increase in the budget deficit as a percentage of GDP and an equivalent increase in public debt.

During his state visit to Mauritius, on the 12th of March, the President of the Seychelles, Dr Patrick Herminie, reaffirmed his country’s commitment to Mauritius regarding the sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago. However, the office of the President of the Maldives, Mohamed Muizzu, told the BBC that the Maldives had expressed its opposition to the agreement between the UK and Mauritius on sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago through two written objections. The

Maldives opposes Mauritian control of the Chagos Archipelago and asserts historical claims to the archipelago dating back centuries. British Foreign Secretary Stephen Doughty stated that the sovereignty of the Chagos Islands is a matter between the UK and Mauritius, not the Maldives.

On the 20th of March, US sources reported two missiles were launched from Iran and towards the US–UK military base on Diego Garcia in the Chagos Archipelago. However, no impact was recorded. One of the projectiles reportedly failed in flight, while the other was intercepted by defense systems deployed in the area. While Iran denied launching long–distance missile towards the base, the British Foreign Secretary, Yvette Cooper, condemned the Iranian strikes against a joint US–UK military base on Diego Garcia. Furthermore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mauritius released a communique labelling the act as a grave violation of international law which undermines peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean.

● FALLOUT OF CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST ON MAURITIUS

On the 28th of February, Israel and the United States launch attacks on Iran, killing many civilians, as well as high–profile officials, including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. In the following weeks, Iran launched retaliatory strikes against Israel, as well as against US military bases in the Persian Gulf. Additionally, Iran has launched strikes on civilian aviation facilities, including international airports in Kuwait and the UAE. Closure of the Strait of Hormuz resulted in the disruption of global oil and gas shipment.



(Photo Credit: DefiMedia)

This crisis had a number of impacts on Mauritius. At first, travel to the Middle East region was discouraged

by the Mauritian government, while efforts were made by the government, as well as Mauritian diplomatic missions in Riyadh and Dubai, to ensure the safe repatriation of Mauritian nationals in the region. The strikes also led to airspace closures in the United Arab Emirates, affecting Emirates flights between Dubai and Mauritius.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Hon. Ritesh Ramful, emphasized that Mauritius has always maintained a neutral stance in international conflicts. He endorsed the African Union’s statement and called on all parties involved to prioritize diplomacy to resolve existing disputes. Meanwhile, economic effects of the crisis have manifested in the form of rising prices of gas and diesel, calls to use electricity sparingly, a risk of shortages and rising prices caused by disruptions to maritime traffic and rising freight costs, as well as disruptions to the tourism sector owing to effects on air connectivity.

● H.E. DR PATRICK HERMINIE, PRESIDENT OF SEYCHELLES, CONDUCTS STATE VISIT



(Photo Credit: DefiMedia)

H.E. Dr Patrick Herminie, President of the Republic of Seychelles, accompanied by his spouse, conducted a State Visit in Mauritius from the 11th to 14th of March, as the Chief Guest at the Flag Raising Ceremony at the Champ de Mars, Port Louis on Mauritius’ National Day on the 12th of March.

During his visit, the President notably paid a courtesy call on H.E. Mr. Dharam Gokhool, President of the Republic of Mauritius; held a meeting with the Prime Minister, Dr the Hon. Navin Ramgoolam, followed by a Delegation Level Meeting; witnessed the exchange of agreements and made a joint statement to the media;

attended the State Banquet; participated in a Wreath Laying Ceremony and Tree Planting at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanic Garden; and visited the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site and the Intercontinental Slavery Museum.

A number of Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were exchanged between Mauritius and Seychelles as part of the visit, including:

- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Mauritius and the Government of the Republic of Seychelles on Access for Seychelles Vessels to the Mauritius Fishing Zone.
- MoU between the Republic of Mauritius and the Republic of Seychelles in Agriculture, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Issues.
- MoU between the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service of the Government of the Republic of Mauritius and the Seychelles Fire and Rescue Services Agency of the Government of the Republic of Seychelles.
- MoU between Statistics Mauritius of the Republic of Mauritius and the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Seychelles.
- Twinning MoU between Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund of the Republic of Mauritius and the National Heritage Resource Council of the Republic of Seychelles.
- Programme of Cooperation in the fields of Arts and Culture for the Years 2026– 2029 between the Government of the Republic of Mauritius and the Government of the Republic of Seychelles.

● MINISTER RAMFUL PARTICIPATES IN THE RAISINA DIALOGUE IN NEW DELHI



(Photo Credit: L' express Maurice)

The 11th edition of the Raisina Dialogue, India's premier conference on geopolitics and geoeconomics, was held in New Delhi from the 5th to the 7th of March. Hon. Ritesh Ramful, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, represented Mauritius at the conference. During his intervention, the Minister highlighted the vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States to climate change and the urgent need for predictable, accessible and targeted climate finance.

On the sidelines of the Raisina Dialogue, the Minister had a bilateral meeting with Dr S. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs of India, reaffirming the commitment to further strengthen the enhanced strategic partnership between Mauritius and India. They discussed regional and international developments, including the hosting of the Indian Ocean Conference by Mauritius in April 2026, the US–Iran conflict, attacks on Indian–flagged vessels near Sri Lanka, and the situation in the Maldives.

The Minister also held discussions with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Diaspora of the Republic of Seychelles, focusing on bilateral cooperation and regional issues, including maritime and air connectivity, fisheries, energy and food security.

● MINISTER RAMFUL PARTICIPATES IN G-33 VIRTUAL MINISTERIAL MEETING

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Hon. Ritesh Ramful, underlined the importance of placing food security at the centre of the international agenda during his intervention at the G-33 Virtual Ministerial Meeting, hosted by Indonesia, on the 9th of March. The G-33 is a coalition of 47 developing and least developed countries as well as Net Food Importing Developing Countries, including Mauritius, within the World Trade Organisation (WTO), whose goal is to press for flexibility for its members in agricultural trade rules.

● EU SEEKING TO RENEW AGREEMENT ON FISHERIES IN MAURITIAN WATERS

The European Commission recently adopted a formal recommendation to the EU Council, titled: “The

Commission recommends negotiating a new partnership agreement with Mauritius in the field of sustainable fisheries and its implementation protocol.” The goal is to finalize this new instrument before the current protocol expires on the 20th of December 2026. The agreement, initially concluded in 2013 and renewed through successive protocols, authorizes up to 40 tuna purse seiners and 45 surface longliners flying the flags of four EU Member States – France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain – to operate in Mauritian waters. The target species are primarily tuna and other highly migratory species, with the exception of protected species.

JAPAN IN MAURITIUS

● JAPAN DAY 2026 HELD AT TRIBECA MALL



On the 28th and 29th of March, the Embassy held the Japan Day event at Tribeca Mall. This two-day celebration of Japanese culture included a showcase of motor vehicles from Japanese brands, Japanese products from NEC and Sharp, and free food tastings of Mochi, Takoyaki, Norimaki, Japanese tea, as well as matcha ice cream and snacks. Additionally, displays of anime figurines, koi fish, bonsai, ikebana, and furoshiki art were set up, alongside demonstrations of origami and calligraphy. The Embassy booth allowed the Mauritian public to discover scholarship and cultural exchange programs. Lastly, the main stage saw a wide variety of martial arts, as well as musical performances.

● MAURITIUS REPRESENTED AT FOODEX 2026



(Photo Credit: Economic Development Board)

Between the 10th and 13th of March, the annual FOODEX food and beverage trade show was held in Tokyo. The Economic Development Board (EDB) from Mauritius participated in the event with the objective of creating visibility and awareness of 'Made in Mauritius' products in the Japanese and the wider Asian food market. The EDB has facilitated the participation of six local agro-processing companies, ranging from SMEs to larger ones, to showcase their products at the event, including farmed fish, alcoholic beverages, sugar – special sugars and low GI sugar, moringa-based health products, as well as seaweed and seagrass products and vanilla products.

● FOUR MAURITIANS ATTEND THE ISLAND NATIONS GLOBAL SYNERGY MEETING IN TOKYO



(Photo Credit: DefiMedia)

On the 12th and 13th of March, the Island Nations Global Synergy Meeting, organized by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, was held in Tokyo. Among the participants were a delegation of four young Mauritians from the NGO Sov Lanitir. Their message: to strengthen ties between island territories and integrate local knowledge into global policies. The first Island Nations Global Synergy Meeting brought

together, for the first time, island delegations from the Indian Ocean, Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean, to discuss common issues and challenges.

● REVISED VERSION OF NATIONAL OIL SPILL CONTINGENCY PLAN APPROVED



(Photo Credit: DefiMedia)

On the 6th of March, the Council of Ministers approved a completely revised version of the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP), aimed at strengthening Mauritius' capacity to effectively prevent and manage oil spills at sea. Among the key innovations of the new plan, the assessment of the response will no longer be based solely on the volume of oil spilled, while the environmental sensitivity of the affected area will also be taken into account. The plan also includes the integration of trained volunteers into operations. These volunteers include fishermen, seafarers, NGOs, and women's associations. They will receive specialized training in oil spill management, provided continuously by seven Mauritian officers trained in Japan with technical assistance from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION

● PRICE OF GAS AND DIESEL RISES / PRICE OF PETROL REMAINS UNCHANGED

The price of domestic gas has been revised: a 12 kg cylinder has increased from Rs 190 to Rs 250 since midnight on the 28th of March. The government justifies the increase as a measure to reduce the subsidy deficit, estimated at Rs 2.3 billion for the year, resulting from geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. In the same context, the price of diesel has increased by 10%, from Rs 58.95 to Rs 64.80, while that of petrol remains unchanged at Rs 58.45 per litre. The information was communicated by the Minister of

Commerce and Consumer Protection, Hon. Michael Sik Yuen, during a live intervention on Radio Plus after the meeting of the Petroleum Pricing Committee on the 24th of March.

● MAURITIAN GOVERNMENT MOBILIZED TO AVOID DOWNGRADING BY MOODY'S

On the 24th of March, Prime Minister, Dr the Hon. Navin Ramgoolam, revealed that a high-level delegation recently travelled to London to present a comprehensive fiscal consolidation plan to Moody's as Mauritius remains under close surveillance by the credit rating agency, with the Prime Minister warning of a potential downgrading of Mauritius to "junk" status. Central to these discussions are structural reforms, specifically regarding the pension system, which the IMF and World Bank had previously flagged as unsustainable.

Prime Minister Ramgoolam contrasted the current climate with June 2012, when the country held a Baa1 stable rating with public debt at a manageable 59.5% of GDP. He attributed the subsequent decline to the previous administration's economic mismanagement, noting four successive downgrades between 2020 and January 2025. While the Prime Minister asserts that the recent mission to London successfully halted further immediate deterioration, Mauritius remains on "credit watch." The government maintains its commitment to fiscal discipline to protect investors, national growth, and the wider population.

● TOURIST ARRIVALS ON THE RISE IN 2026

Data from Statistics Mauritius reveals a robust start to the year for the tourism sector, with arrivals reaching 107,650 in February 2026—a 12.1% increase over the previous year. This brings the total for the first two months to 233,521 visitors, representing a cumulative growth of 9.7% compared to 2025. This steady upward trend underscores the ensuring appeal and resilience of Mauritius as a destination, despite global economic and geopolitical uncertainties.

SECURITY / SOCIETY

● IMPACT OF CONFLICT IN PERSIAN GULF ON AIR CONNECTIVITY IN MAURITIUS

In the wake of strikes carried out by Iran on Persian Gulf nations, significant disruptions to global aviation have affected flights to Mauritius, notably from the Middle East. Emirates, which operates three daily flights to Mauritius, experienced delays and cancellations due to airspace closures amidst drone strikes on its hub in Dubai. Additionally, Saudia flights from Jeddah also experienced disruptions. Turkish Airlines flights from Istanbul did not experience major disruptions. Meanwhile, Air Mauritius has rerouted its flights to Europe over Africa to keep a safe distance from the Middle East region, while increasing flights to Paris-Charles de Gaulle to offer passengers more travel options amidst the ongoing conflict.



(Photo Credit: DefiMedia)

● HEALTH AUTHORITIES MONITORING RISE IN CASES OF CHIKUNGUNYA AND LEPTOSPIROSIS

On the 14th of March, 37 new cases of Chikungunya have been recorded, bringing the total number of active cases to 70. The Stanley and Plaisance areas of Rose Hill were particularly affected, with an estimated 75% of cases originating from those areas. Between the 9th and 13th of March, 20 new cases of the disease have been reported daily, with hospitals recording just over 100 new cases during this period. Since the beginning of the year, just over 400 cases have been recorded. In light of this situation, health authorities have urged the public to remain cautious and adopt preventative measures to limit the spread of the virus.

Since the start of January 2026, 12 cases of Leptospirosis have been recorded, including three

deaths. Nationwide efforts have been made to clean markets and vacant lots, with rat infestation requiring an aggressive, targeted campaign led by experts to limit the spread of the disease. At the Ministry of Health's multi-sectoral meeting, representatives from municipalities and district councils presented and assessed rat extermination and rodent control operations in different regions.

● SERIES OF TEN SMALL EARTHQUAKES NEAR RODRIGUES

Between the 18th and 19th of March, nearly ten small earthquakes occurred in the vicinity of Rodrigues Island in the span of 24 hours. This seismic activity began with a series of six tremors, before continuing throughout the day. According to the Vacoas Meteorological Station, these events are explained by their location along the Mid-Indian Ridge, a boundary between two moving tectonic plates. A tremor, with a magnitude of 5.0, was recorded on the 19th of March at around 10:30 a.m., at coordinates of 21.4 degrees south and 68.28 degrees east. The Meteorological Station stated that this type of activity can occur regularly without posing a threat to the population.

● INS TRIKAND MAKES PORT CALL IN PORT LOUIS



(Photo Credit: L'express maurice)

The Indian warship INS Trikand made a port call in Port Louis as part of the Mauritian National Day celebrations. Arriving on the 10th of March, the Indian Navy vessel remained in Mauritian waters until the 13th of March and participated in several activities in collaboration with the National Coast Guard. During this visit, several professional exercises and training sessions were conducted on board the ship. These activities focused on secure bridge watchkeeping,

engineering practices and onboard operations, as well as port and air operations from the helicopter deck. The objective was to strengthen cooperation and the sharing of expertise between the Indian and Mauritian navies.

● SIGNING OF STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES BETWEEN FAZSOI AND COAST GUARD



(Photo Credit: GIS Mauritius)

The Mauritius Police Force (MPF) and the French Armed Forces in the Southern Indian Ocean (FAZSOI) signed, on the 12th of March in Port Louis, the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) governing joint operations between the National Coast Guard (NCG) Maritime Surveillance Aircraft and the FAZSOI Ships. As part of the longstanding cooperation between the NCG and FAZSOI, aircraft and ships of the NCG along with French naval assets have regularly conducted joint operations in the South-West Indian Ocean, focusing on Exclusive Economic Zone surveillance, anti-narcotics missions, and combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

SPORTS

● NATIONAL DAY AWARDS 2026: FIVE HONOREES IN THE FIELD OF SPORTS

Among the many individuals honoured by the government as part of the National Day Awards 2026 on the 12th of March, five were awarded decorations for their active contributions towards advancing the field of sports in Mauritius. Firstly, the former Minister

of Youth and Sports, Michael Glover, was appointed a Grand Officer of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean (GOSK), notably for his contributions in the political and sports spheres. Cyclist Kimberley Le Court de Billot-Pienaar was named a Member of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean (MSK), as was para-athlete Yovanni Philippe, who became the first ever Mauritian medalist (bronze) at the 2024 Paralympic Games in Paris. Football coach Sarjoo Gowreesunkur was also named an MSK, as was Nizam Moodeen Nasroollah, who is active in social and sports initiatives.

CULTURE

● MANU DESROCHES REPRESENTS MAURITIUS IN THE RFI DISCOVERY AWARD



(Photo Credit: DefiMedia)

On the 11th of March, Mauritian artist Manu Desroches was selected as one of the ten finalists for the 2026 Radio France International (RFI) Discovery Award. The musical competition was eventually won by the Beninese singer OPA. However, Manu Desroches explained that “I already felt like a winner with all the excitement surrounding it. It’s a huge bonus and increased visibility for Mauritius.” The RFI Discovery Award is open to all adult artists who are citizens or residents of member states of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie in Africa, the Caribbean or the Indian Ocean.

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