

First Press Conference Since Losing Power

The MSM comes out of its lethargy



The majority of the leading figures of the MSM attended the first press conference of the Party since they went out of office on 11 November 2024 following the results of the General Election. It stands to reason that the Party’s leader, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, should not attend the conference as he is under investigation for money laundering, though a journalist did ask the chair, Joe Lesongard, MSM President, for the reason of his absence. Mr Lesongard did explain that “the members present are here to defend the leader against the allegations made against him.” It is obvious that Pravind Jugnauth would have been in an embarrassing position to answer questions on a matter that is undergoing the legal process.

According to Joe Lesongard, the arrest of the MSM leader on 15 February 2025 on the allegation of money laundering was politically motivated, and so was the arrest of Party’s Secretary-General, Maneesh Gobin, with regard to an allegation of corruption connected with the stag party scandal in the vicinity of Grand Bassin in 2020. The arrest of Devianee Ramchurn, a member of he executive committee of the Party was in the same vein.

The Press Conference was an opportunity for the MSM President to list, in their view, the failings of the new government during the first 100 days it has been in office. He said: “ A feeling of frustration is prevailing in the country owing to the fact that the new government has not honoured the promises made to the people during the electoral campaign. **The first let-down** concerns the payment of the 14th month bonus. The government has decided who should receive it and who should not.

The second act of treachery concerns salary compensation. It’s usually a tripartite decision but the government has decided by itself to grant a compensation of Rs 610 without any consultation with the employees’ unions. In granting this compensation the government has taken it back from the allocation they receive from the MRA (Mauritius Revenue Authority).

Enumerating the grievances, the MSM President highlighted the **increase in the central bank repro rate**. This increase is like a hammer blow on those who have taken loans for the purchase of a house, for the purchase of household requirements and other items. Their monthly interests will rise sky high.

Mr Lesongard laid stress on the promise made by the l’Alliance du Changement that they would bring down **the price of fuel** which would in turn bring widespread reduction in prices. They lied to the people, they have not cut down the price of fuel to bring down costs of products generally. On the contrary prices have soared.

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MSM Press Conference

The State of the Economy

In order to justify the unpopular measures that they are taking and which are harming the people, the PM, soon after taking office, tabled in the National Assembly a document, from nowhere, called **The State of the Economy**. According to this report the PM alleged that the country was bankrupt and, and exhorted the people using the old expression, ‘*bizin serre ceinture.*’. You have a government who tells you that *la caisse est vide*, on the other hand, the Central Bank says that the reserve of the country has increased by 81 billion rupees. It’s not only our central Bank who is saying that, the World Bank also is predicting a better growth than what was forecasted. Furthermore, Moody has kept the same rating for Mauritius after the general election. All that proves that the government *pe raconte zistoire* and is lying about the economy of our country.

I believe that it is a general consensus in the country that **Law and Order** is at its worst now and as never before. Drug is being sold in every nook and corner. PM is surrounded by characters like Mr X which says everything. People have no respect for the authority. **The police is discouraged**, and people in the country are doing what they please. We see crimes of all sorts: assaults, stabbing, kidnapping, rapes. We are shocked by the extent of violence. The roads are no longer safe. There are numerous accidents with serious injuries. Many accidents are caused by drivers under the influence of drugs.

You may today ask yourself the question whether your life has changed for the better since the General Election. Their slogan was that there should be change. Has the change brought you a better life, or as we say in Creole it has brought “La vie margo” for the people?

But now the strategy of the government to divert attention from their shortcomings and empty promises, they have started a politics of vengeance and repression. Their aim to prevent people from raising their voice to defend the country. Their machinations started with the arrest of our leader Pravind Jugnauth based on allegations. For us, the arrested is purely political motivated. A member of the government, Hon E.J. **knew in advance**, before the Financial Crimes Commission (FCC) was to start its investigation, that the MSM leader was to be arrested.

We believe that they are trying to divert attention from the fact that some MPs of the Alliance du Changement have exceeded the amount of money authorised by law for their electoral campaigns. What’s worse is that some lie under oath. I wish to draw the attention of journalists that it is not the first time that the MSM leader undergoes such treatment. On 26 December 2012, they arrested him in the presence of his family on an MITD case. In 2011, under Navin Ramgoolam, they arrested him with regard to the Medpoint case, again in the presence of his whole family. History repeats itself. This time on a case of money laundering based on an allegation. In any case, all members within the party will continue to support our leader Pravin Jugnauth.

Questions Time

The journalists present were invited to ask questions. many questions were put to the MSM President to which he provided answers. A couple of journalists wanted to know why the MSM leader, Pravind Jugnauth, was not present at this conference. Mr Lesongard explained that the leader was under investigation for an alleged case on money laundering and this was not a platform for him to come and defend himself as the case was being investigated by the F.C.C..

To a journalist who asked about The Report on the State of the Economy tabled in the National Assembly by the new PM within days of taking over the reins of government, Mr Lesongard in turn asked the question as to who prepared this report. He said that he asked the question in the National Assembly as leader of the Opposition. He was still waiting for a reply. Better still, questions have been asked as to not only who prepared The Report of the State of the Economy, but also as to who ordered it and when was it ordered, so that it was tabled by the new PM within days of taking over the management of the country.

Pierre Louis

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