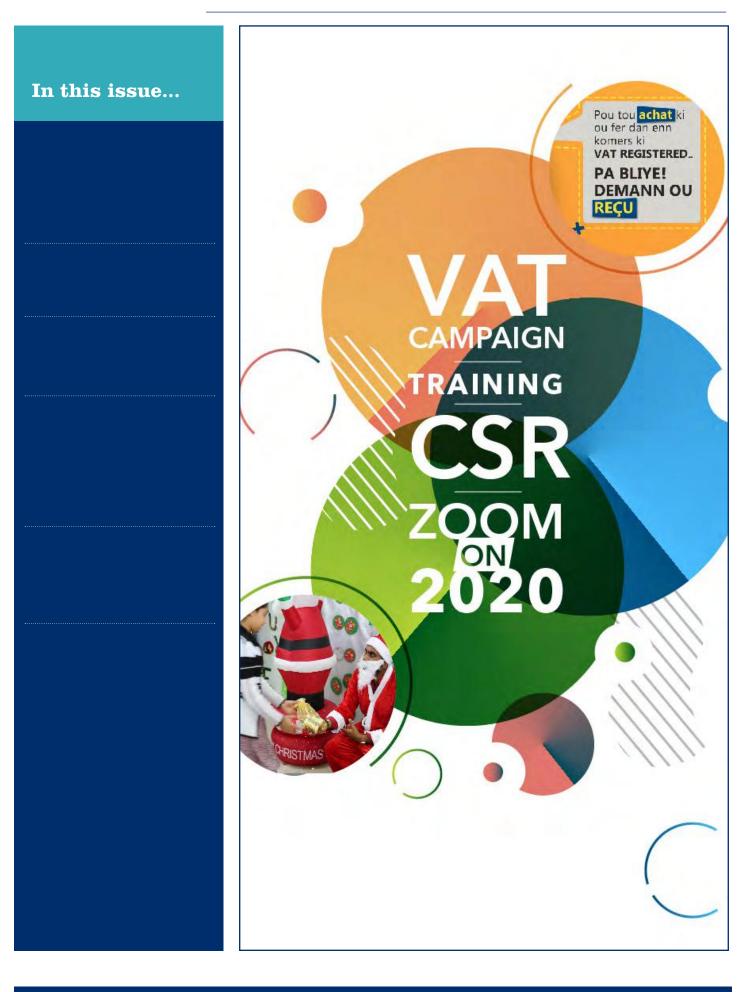


# MRA e-Newsletter

Mauritius Revenue Authority | December 2020



# The MRA sensitizes the public towards VAT compliance

The Mauritius Revenue Authority has initiated a VAT Awareness Campaign, targeting the festive period, December 2020 and January 2021.

The main objective of this campaign is to sensitize the population on the necessity to claim a receipt for every purchase made in a VAT registered outlet. This campaign aims at creating a national momentum whereby members of the public are reminded to claim a receipt for every purchase, especially when it is done at the premises of a VAT Registered person. By adopting this principle any buyer can ensure that the money they pay as VAT is sent to the MRA. It is the right of a consumer to obtain a receipt, and the duty of the vendor to issue one.





The VAT Awareness Campaign consists of various television and radio programs.

A 52-min TV Program in Creole and a 26-min one in Bhojpuri on MBC TV, a 60-min Radio Program in Creole and Bhojpuri on Kool FM and Radio Maurice, respectively, 3 TV Spots in Creole on MBC TV and 3 Radio Spots in Creole on Kool FM, Radio Maurice and Best FM have been earmarked for broadcast by the Mauritius

Broadcasting Corporation. 15-second video spots have equally been programmed for display on digital screens in post offices across the island.

Another means used for this VAT Awareness Campaign is 'Back of bus advertising'. During one month, the advertisement will be at the back of buses of the United Bus Service, Rose Hill Transport and the National Transport Corporation.



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## Safety at Sea for Customs officers

Custom Officers, in the proper discharge of their duties, are called upon to conduct surveillance in the inner and outer port area. They are also required to conduct vessels boarding, search and seizure of dangerous drugs and illicit goods.

In this context, they are equipped with a Fast Interceptor Boat (FIB) to conduct operational duties in the harbor as well as in the vicinities of the Port Area. With a view to promoting safety at sea, the MRA Training Academy conducted a training course on swimming skills for the benefit of Customs Officers engaged in Port surveillance and Anti-Narcotics operations. It is to be noted that Trainee Customs Officers enlisted in September 2018 were the first batch of officers who benefitted from training in swimming at Plaine Verte Swimming Pool.



The success of this first experience led the Training Academy to organize other sessions for serving Officers. The aim is to enhance the security of Customs Officers, who in the performance of their duties, are called upon to patrol the harbor and its vicinity, mount on ships by climbing on pilot ladders, conduct rummage of ships often outside harbor, conduct search and carry-out drug related operations.

Safety comes first, and prevention is better than cure. Hence, the MRA has always ensured a proactive approach for Custom Officers to attend training in swimming.

Officers from the Surveillance and Enforcement Section (SES) as well as those from the Customs Anti-Narcotics Section (CANS), who are actively engaged in operational duties at sea, were earmarked to follow the course in swimming and safety measures at sea.

Necessary arrangements were made with the Municipality of Port Louis to use Les Salines Swimming Pool. Trainers from the National Coast Guard were keen to impart swimming and life-saving techniques to our officers. A first batch of 30 officers started training on 24 September 2020 at Les Salines Swimming Pool and its duration was of 8 sessions, from 13h30 to 15h30 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with a few sessions held at sea.

Each session starts with warm-up and stretching of muscles and joints exercise before entering the water. Then, the different swimming techniques are taught to the recipients, as well as techniques in dealing with casualties at sea, how to react in cases of falling at sea, the effective use of life vests and life buoys, how to tug out someone in danger of drowning and first aid techniques to people saved from drowning. When the participants reached an acceptable standard, a final session was held to practice safety at sea in the event our officers find themselves under life threatening situations.

The MRA is thankful to the Municipal Council of Port Louis for putting Les Salines Swimming Pool at its disposal, the Mauritius Police Force and the NCG for conducting the courses under the able guidance of highly experienced expert trainers, namely, Messrs Ghoorah, Hosanee and Samjhu.

This special training will continue with a fourth batch of officers from SES and CANS early next year. Mr. P. Bheechook, Technical Officer at the Customs Department will once more ensure the coordination of the training.

## **Online application for Rum & Liquor Licence**

The MRA has brought a touch of innovation for the renewal of licenses for the sale of beer, rum, liquor and alcoholic products. Henceforth, applications for the rum and liquor license can be made online. This can be done electronically through the MRA website: **www.mra.mu** 

The holders of the wholesale license must ensure that they have furnished a security by means of a bond to the MRA, prior to availing themselves of the online renewal facility.

The appropriate license fee can be paid by the Direct Debit facility. All the procedures and information for the online renewal are available on the MRA website.

### Onsite Mentoring for Law Enforcement Agencies under the German International Agency (GIZ) Technical Assistance Programme

The German International Agency (GIZ) is, under the Technical Assistance (TA) programme to Mauritius, providing training to the Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), with the aim of enhancing Mauritius overall compliance with the standards of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).



The GIZ has appointed the Optima Group to provide training and mentoring to our LEAs. Mr Alex Ferguson, International Expert from Optima Group, was at the MRA for an onsite mentoring programme on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2020.

The aim of the training was to encourage and develop inter-agency cooperation among relevant law enforcement agencies working on the investigation, prosecution and recovery of proceeds of crimes.

The overall objective of the onsite mentoring is to allow for continuing education through onsite work, to complement the existing virtual mentoring, to equip the nominated champions in developing their own skills set and to encourage joint work and inter agency approach.

Mr Ferguson conducted two sessions for MRA officers posted at the Fiscal Investigation Department (FID) and the Customs Department.



# CSR Activity at shelter for women & children in distress

In line with its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), the MRA regularly extends a helping hand to the needy.

On 22 December 2020, the Large Taxpayer Department (LTD) offered a lunch at Shelter for Women & Children in Distress situated at Forest Side.



Christmas gifts were offered to the residents of the Shelter after lunch.





## **Zoom** on Year 2020 at the MRA

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Year 2020 has been a very challenging year for the MRA. Among all the new projects that were in the pipeline, the Covid-19 pandemic had been a major obstacle in realizing these projects. On the other hand, the lockdown in Mauritius offered the MRA the opportunity to meet new challenges.

#### Zoom on Year 2020 at the MRA

## Implementation of the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme (SEAS) and the Government Wage Assistance Scheme (GWAS)



Some 150 officers from various tax departments at the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) worked from home during the lockdown period to ensure an effective implementation of the Government Wage Assistance Scheme (GWAS) and the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme (SEAS) put in place by the Government.

At the level of MRA Customs, 150 Customs Officers were physically deployed daily in essential services at the Seaport, the SSR International Airport, the Plaisance Air Transport Services (PATS) and the Surveillance & Enforcement Division. A further 180 others were accessing the Customs Management System (CMS) from home to clear consignments. By the 13th of May, 2020, around Rs 4.5 Billion was transferred to the account of employers under GWAS to ensure timely payment of salaries to employees. By the same date, approximately Rs 1.3 Billion was credited to the account of 186,000 self-employed workers, eligible for SEAS, in the informal sector, with all arrangements being processed from home.

The Operational Services Department (OSD) spearheaded the implementation of SEAS and GWAS and interfaced directly with all businesses and self-employed workers having various issues with their applications. In this respect, the officers attended to around 43,700 phone calls received at the Helpdesk 2076000 and responded to some 113,000 emails. The FAD provided helpdesk officers with softphone facilities at home which were primordial to attend to manifold queries.

An unprecedented achievement concerned the Assessment Review Committee (ARC). For the first time in Mauritius, the stakeholders used video conferencing to hear appeal cases lodged by taxpayers. This venture was successfully launched on 13 May, 2020.

To ensure that the MRA was responding effectively to all the challenges posed by the lockdown, Board Meetings and Management Meetings were held regularly from home through skype and zoom under the Chairmanship of Mr. Nayen Koomar Ballah and Mr. Sudhamo Lal respectively. By now, MRA departments have held some 120 virtual meetings to thwart any interruption of business activity. Some online sessions even involved international stakeholders such as the African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF), the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Customs Organisation (WCO) and the European Union (EU).

Referring to SEAS, Mr. Lal labels its implementation as the biggest case study in change management at the MRA. He asserts that it took the organisation several years to reach universal e-filing of some 175,000 income tax returns submitted mainly by the upper middle and the high-income earners. In fact, 10 days following the announcement of the scheme, the MRA received around 176,000 SEAS applications online, mainly from low income earners, including many informal sector operators. Mr. Lal believes that the success of the SEAS can be attributed to providing the right facilities at the right time. The impressive fact is that the MRA attained this success merely from home.

By the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, 2020, the MRA has paid more than Rs 2.5 Billion to some 204,000 workers in the informal sector, and more than Rs 11.6 Billion to some 273,000 employees in the private sector.

#### **MRA Blood Donation 2020**



Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the MRA maintained its engagement towards the Blood Bank by organizing its annual blood donation on 19 August 2020 at the following four locations:

- MRA Head Office
- Custom House
- PATS
- SSR International Airport

Dr. the Honourable Kailesh Kumar Singh Jagutpal, Minister of Health and Wellness, graced the event as Chief Guest. The MRA offered an Aberrometer and two Multi- Parameter Patient Monitors to the Ministry of Health.

**1647 pints of blood** were collected at the four different locations and remitted to the Blood Transfusion Unit of the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

#### Individual Income Tax e-Filing Season 2020



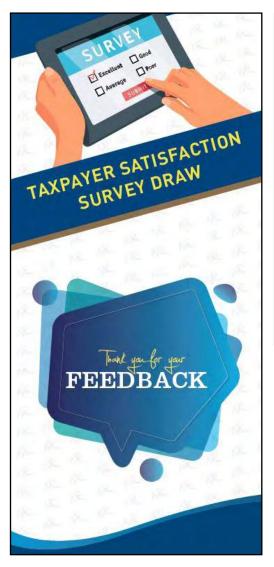


**192,553 individual taxpayers** e-filed their Income Tax Returns through the MRA website and MRAeasy.

This year, the MRA innovated and came up with the e-Free Income Tax Assistance (e-FITA) whereby assistance to individual taxpayers were provided via video call on WhatsApp.

#### Zoom on Year 2020 at the MRA

#### **Taxpayer Satisfaction Survey (TSS) 2020**



**30,553 taxpayers** participated in the online Taxpayer Satisfaction Survey (TSS), qualifying them to participate equally in a draw. The latter was held at the MRA Head Office on Friday 30 October 2020, under the supervision of the Gambling Regulatory Authority.

Three cash prizes were awarded to the winners as follows:

1<sup>st</sup> Prize: Rs 25,000

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: Rs 15,000

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: Rs 10,000

To gauge taxpayers' perception of its services, the MRA launched the fourth edition of the TSS to receive valuable insights from its main stakeholders during the Individual Income Tax e-Filing Season 2020, which ran from Tuesday 01 September till Thursday 15 October 2020.



Year 2020 has been a year of reference for the whole MRA in meeting new challenges, effectively and efficiently.

#### Zoom on Year 2020 at the MRA

## <mark>e-PAYMENT</mark> OF TAXES

Services redefined

# Register yourself for the **DIRECT DEBIT facility**

## HOW?

Download a PLACH DIRECT DEBIT MANDATE form from MRA website: www.mra.mu

**Print** a copy and fill-in the required information.

Send a signed copy of the form to the head office of the MRA, Ehram Court, Port Louis.

For additional information, visit MRA website or phone MRA helpdesk on 207 6000.

Subscribe to MRA's <u>e-Mailing Service</u> on www.mra.mu, its <u>YouTube Channel</u> and <u>Twitter account</u> for latest updates!



