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# EDITORIAL NOTE

Dear Readers,

National security begins with border protection. As per its mandate, the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA), through the Customs Department, has been entrusted the key responsibility of preventing the intrusion of illicit products and prohibited drugs in the Republic of Mauritius.

This month has witnessed the coming into operation of a Port Surveillance Command Centre, a state of the art control unit, inaugurated by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.

This Command Centre displays realtime images coming from 201 cameras installed at strategic locations in the port area. Operational on 24/7 surveillance, it allows dedicated Custom Officers to monitor all activities which includes suspicious movement of people and machines.

The MRA will keep on having recourse to latest tools and technologies in line with its spirit of breakthrough innovations.

*Editorial team*

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## Consolidating Border Protection:

# THE PRIME MINISTER INAUGURATES THE PORT SURVEILLANCE COMMAND CENTRE

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, inaugurated a Port Surveillance Command Centre at MRA Customs, Mer Rouge, Port Louis, on Monday 06 February, 2023, in the presence of Dr. the Hon. Renganaden Padayachy, Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Chairperson of the MRA Board, Mr. Nayen Koomar Ballah and Director-General of the MRA, Mr. Sudhamo Lal.

Dr. Taeil Kang, Capacity Building Director at the World Customs Organisation (WCO), H.E. Satrajit Sardar, Chargé d'Affaires, US Embassy in Mauritius and Seychelles, and representatives of the US Department of Justice and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) also graced the function by their presence.

The Port Surveillance Command Centre incurred an investment of some Rs. 20 million. It monitors real time images on devices which are connected to 201 cameras installed in the port area, including different freight stations and at Examination Bays / Port Exits.

This project is in line with MRA's determination to consolidate border protection, enhance integrity and accountability as well as facilitate trade.

The Port Surveillance Command Centre also receives live images of port activities so that Senior Customs Officers from the Control Room can communicate with examining officers in real time. This aims at enhancing transparency in the examination of goods by Customs Officers, at the same time reducing the risk of discrepancies. This initiative also helps in reducing the dwell-time in the examination process.



*The Port Surveillance Command Centre inaugurated at the Custom House*



**Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister**

In his keynote address, Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, emphasized that *“the government is leaving no stone unturned to assist enforcement authorities to fight drug trafficking in our country”*. This training, according to him, comes at an opportune moment, as building the capacity of the enforcement officers goes hand in hand with massive investment in tools and technology for use by the Police and MRA.

The Prime Minister mentioned that *“drugs have devastating consequences on the health and safety of our people as well as the security and economic development of our nation”*. It is also closely linked to other illegal activities, and its earnings are used to finance diverse criminal activities by organized criminal groups and terrorists, he said.

He observed that *“threats to the general public are increasing with illicit drugs being more available and accessible than ever before, because of a steady rise in online sales and contactless delivery methods”*.

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth observed that *“the market is expanding and diversifying, and many synthetic drugs are easily produced close to the markets where they are consumed, using readily available chemicals”*.

The Prime Minister underlined that *“maritime trade routes along the Indian Ocean are being exploited by criminal syndicates to transport illicit goods, namely, narcotics, counterfeit products and protected wildlife”*.

All the island states of the Indian Ocean, namely, Mauritius, the Seychelles, Madagascar, the Comoros and the French Overseas Territories of Mayotte and Reunion, have not been spared. In fact, they are rendered vulnerable by their proximity to a major heroin trafficking route and growing regional methamphetamine and cocaine routes, he added.

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth further elaborated that *“heroin is cultivated in Afghanistan and it is routed via East and Southern Africa to markets in Europe and in the United States. Criminal groups are more than ever*

*before exploiting inherent weaknesses in legislation”*.

He is convinced that *“the logical response to such a challenge is to build the capacity of our law enforcement officers in the fight against transnational crimes”*.

According to the Prime Minister, collaboration and timely exchange of information amongst island states is also vital to prevent criminals from achieving their unscrupulous goals. He explained that the government is engaged in a relentless battle against drug trafficking. Since 2015, Rs. 13.7 billion worth of dangerous drugs has been seized.

The Prime Minister expressed his sincere appreciation to the Mauritius Police Force and in particular to those officers who risk their lives in the fight against drug trafficking.

Also, the K-9 Unit plays a key role in detecting drugs and MRA intends to acquire 5 more sniffer dogs for the Financial Year 2022-2023, he said.





In his address, Mr. Sudhamo Lal, Director-General of the MRA expressed his gratitude to the United States Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). He stated that dangerous drugs worth more than 5.7 billion rupees have been detected since 2014, by the MRA.

Mr. Lal strongly affirmed that *“tools and equipment are only part of the strategy to tackle drug trafficking. It is critical that our officers are also empowered in this relentless battle.”*

He concluded that MRA is fully aligned with the Government’s vision. *“We are guided by the mantra of zero tolerance concerning the illegal entry of drugs and narcotics in Mauritius. It is our sacred duty to free our country from the scourge of drugs and narcotics.”*

For his part, Mr. Vivekanand Ramburun, Director of the Customs Department at the MRA, highlighted the importance of the Port Surveillance Command Centre.



Mr. Sudhamo Lal, Director-General, MRA



Mr. Vivekanand Ramburun, Director, Customs



Left to Right: Mr. Lal and Dr. Taeil Kang, Capacity Building Director at WCO.

## Specialised Training:

# UNDERCOVER AND SURVEILLANCE TECHNIQUES

The MRA launched a training session on 'Undercover and Surveillance Techniques' conducted by the United States Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The objective of this intensive training was to strengthen the technical capacity of law enforcement officers in the collection, analysis and timely dissemination of intelligence in relation to drug trafficking.

Twenty seven participants from the Indian Ocean Island States, namely, Madagascar, Comoros, Seychelles, the Mauritius Police Force (ADSU) and the MRA Customs avail themselves of this training session.

The participants benefited from a one-week intensive training dispensed by seasoned instructors from the US Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) based in the USA, Maputo, Mozambique, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Cape Town, South Africa. The course consisted of classroom-based instructions and practical exercises, which simulate a complex drug investigation, covering several locations.

H.E. Satrajit Sardar, Chargé d'Affaires at the US Embassy, underlined that the "United States has



H.E. Satrajit Sardar, Chargé d'Affaires at the US Embassy

*supported the efforts by Mauritius and other partners in the Indian Ocean region to combat drug trafficking. For many years, we have prioritized our strong relationships with the Indian Ocean to address the shared challenge of maintaining a safe and secure Indian Ocean region."*

The Chargé d'Affaires pointed out that "this is the second year that the US Embassy in collaboration with MRA has welcomed resource persons from the US Drug Enforcement Administration".

## Use of Technologies for Workplace Training:

# LAUNCHING OF A VIRTUAL REALITY TRAINING FACILITY

The COVID-19 pandemic has sped up digital transformation. Likewise, technologies have changed the training method as well. To this end, MRA has set up a Virtual Reality Training Facility with the support of the Customs Cooperation Fund of Korea to improve the physical inspection of containerized cargo at the port.

The Virtual Reality Training (VRT) Facility provides training in a virtual environment. Through this advanced technology, customs officers have been able to learn and understand the procedures of physical inspection of containerized cargo at a maritime port in a 3D virtual setting, interacting with simulated real-world tools, machinery, and other trainees and instructors. The trainees were confronted with different scenarios likewise to detect contraband

items such as drugs, counterfeit goods and explosives smuggled in imported cargo in real-time situations.

It is worth underlining that all the four Regional Training Centres (RTC) of the WCO ESA region, namely RTC Mauritius, RTC Kenya, RTC South Africa and RTC Zimbabwe are amongst the beneficiaries of the VRT equipment from the Government of Korea.





## Official visit:

# MRA RECEIVES A DELEGATION FROM MADAGASCAR

The Mauritius Revenue Authority received a delegation of officials from the Economic Development Board, EDB, of Madagascar on Friday 10 February 2023. The theme of the mission was peer-to-peer learning on public and private sector dialogue based on the Mauritian experience.

The delegation comprised Manisha Dookhony, EU Africa Rise - Key Expert, Economics and Reforms, Ndandu Welkenhuysen, EU Africa Rise - Key Expert, Communication, Samantha Seewoosurrun, EU Africa Rise - Non Key Expert- Expert en Développement des cas écoles, Satyen Bhujun, EU Africa Rise Service Provider, Adesh Bhardwaj, EU Africa Rise Service Provider, Dina Andriantefinirina, Chargée du Dialogue Public-Privé, Economic Development Board Madagascar, Tojo David Ramamonjisoa, Directeur des Réformes et du Développement du Secteur Privé, Economic Development Board, Madagascar, Yoven Veersamy, Senior Analyst, RMCE. The exchange of ideas was cordial and highly fruitful.



## Exposé:

# VIRTUAL CURRENCY EXPLAINED

Virtual Currency is one of the new developments in our modern world. Virtual Currency, also known as digital currency, offers an innovative, inexpensive and flexible method of payment.

Mr. James Abbott, Supervisory Special Agent (SSA) at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) made an ***'Insightful Talk on Virtual Currency and How to Identify/ Detect Misuse of Virtual Currency'***, on 07 February at the Head Office of MRA. Some fifty staff from various departments availed themselves of the presentation.

Mr. Abbott has led multiple FBI nationwide Money Mule initiatives, in which the FBI has worked jointly with domestic Federal law enforcement agencies, as well as international law enforcement partners at EUROPOL to combat the threat of money mules. His area of expertise is Anti-Money Laundering, Financing of Terrorism (AML/ CFT), and Virtual Currency.

MRA looks forward to conducting more trainings to constantly update its personnel on various topics.

*"The future of money is digital currency"*, Jack Dorsey, an American Internet entrepreneur & philanthropist, has said.

Mr. Abbott also paid a courtesy call on the Director-General of MRA, Mr. Sudhamo Lal. Mr. Maunikum, Director, Human Resource and Training Department, HRTD, Mr. Teeluckdharry, Assistant Director, Taxpayer Education and Communication Department and Mr. Dayal, Principal, MRA Training Academy attended the Courtesy call.



## Public Awareness:

# MRA CAMPAIGNS IN FEBRUARY

MRA attaches great importance to sensitizing the public. 15 "One-minute radio programmes" produced by the Taxpayer Education and Communication Department (TECD) were aired on MBC Radio. The selected topics were based on the most recent activities at the MRA, which included the Contribution Rates of Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund, Prime à L'Emploi, Financial Support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Export Oriented Enterprises (EOEs), among others.

To further enhance taxpayer education, short explanatory videos were produced by the Taxpayer Education and Communication Department (TECD) team. They are available on [MRA Facebook Page](#) and [MRA YouTube Channel](#).

Explanatory videos are also disseminated to MRA stakeholders, including the media, through e-press releases and a taxpayer mailing list.

Taxpayers who have not yet done so, may subscribe to the MRA Taxpayer Mailing List through the MRA website: [www.mra.mu](http://www.mra.mu) to receive notifications concerning new developments.



Today's youth are tomorrow's taxpayers



e-Invoicing: Le nouveau projet phare de la MRA



Une synthèse du 'Prime à L'Emploi'





## CSR Activity:

# MRA DONATES MAGAZINES TO THE MAURITIUS PRISON SERVICE



The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA), through its Documentation Centre, donated a consignment of back issues of magazines to the Mauritius Prison Service on 22 February 2023. The magazines selected for the donation are in very good condition and treat subjects of general interest.

MRA is a learning organization. As such, there is a culture of knowledge-sharing among the staff members as well as with external stakeholders and members of the public. In the same vein, it is believed that the inestimable information contained in the magazines will be treasured by the detainees of the different wings of the Mauritius Prison Service, including those of the Correctional Youth Rehabilitation Centres.

Besides providing recreational reading materials to the detainees, the magazines can also contribute in the rehabilitation process. This noble initiative of benevolently providing those magazines to the detainees of Mauritius Prison Service is an eco-friendly way to reuse them in the most effective way.

The Acting Commissioner of Prisons, Mr. Jaganaden Rungadoo, welcomed this initiative of the Mauritius Revenue Authority and affirmed that they will make optimal use of the stock of magazines. He also looks forward for more collaboration between the two institutions in the future.



## Border protection:

# 10,000 EURO AND 1.41KG OF GOLD POWDER SEIZED AT THE SSR INT AIRPORT

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) seized undeclared currency, worth Euro 10,000, and four cylindrical pellets containing gold powder of an indicative weight of 1.41 kg at the SSR International Airport on 09 February 2023.

A passenger, arriving from Madagascar on Air Mauritius Flight MK 289 and in transit for Dubai on the same day, was intercepted by MRA CANS officers while he was leaving the transit counter at the departure lounge of SSR International Airport.

Upon questioning, the passenger confessed being in possession of currency and precious metals. His luggage was examined and the undeclared currency and gold powder were found therein. The exhibits were secured and the case has been handed over to the police for further enquiry.



### Online Currency Declaration Platform

Section 131A of the Customs Act and Regulations 80 and 81 of the Customs Regulations 1989 stipulate that any person, whether incoming, outgoing or in transit, making physical cross-border transportation of currency or Bearer Negotiable Instruments (BNI) or precious stones and metals, including gold, diamond and jewelry or any goods of high value, including work of arts, of an amount of more than 500,000 rupees or its equivalent in foreign currency, needs to make a declaration.

Our readers are apprised that *“any person who fails or refuses to make a declaration or makes a false declaration under section 131A of the Customs Act shall commit an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine of not less than 20% of the whole amount which is the subject matter of the offence, but not exceeding 2 million rupees and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years”.*

The declaration can be made either manually on the approved declaration form available at the Customs Counter at the place of arrival/departure; or electronically by submitting an Online Declaration Form. He can make his Online Declaration at any time prior to his arrival/departure, through the MRA website: [www.mra.mu](http://www.mra.mu) under the e-services-Customs menu.

**ONLINE DECLARATION TO MRA CUSTOMS FOR:**

.....

*Currency or bearer negotiable instruments (including cheques, traveller’s cheques, other bearer cheques), or Precious Stones and Metals including Gold, Diamond, Jewellery or any goods of high value including Work of Arts of an amount of more than 500,000 Mauritian Rupees*





## **Mr. Jacques Edouard Leo Ferre,** **appointed Director of Fiscal Investigations**

During the month of February, the MRA Management Team welcomed a new Director of Fiscal Investigations, Mr. Jacques Edouard Leo Ferre.

Mr. Ferre has 17 years of service at the MRA. During his career, Mr. Ferre has been involved in the computerization of the Public Service Commission, the VAT department, and in implementing the Tax and Revenue Management system of the Public Sector Collection and Disbursement component of SAP ERP.

As Section Head, he was responsible for audits of operators' licensed under the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act. He also headed the Tax Risk Management Unit, and was responsible for approving charitable institutions for Income Tax purposes.

Prior to joining the MRA, he was posted to the ex-VAT Department.

Mr. Ferre has a first degree in Computing and Information Systems and a Master's in Business Administration from the University of Technology, Mauritius. He is also the holder of an Executive Masters in Taxation from the "Ecole Nationale d'Administration et de Magistrature".

We wish Mr. Ferre continued success in his new responsibilities.



# DID YOU KNOW?

INTERESTING FACT

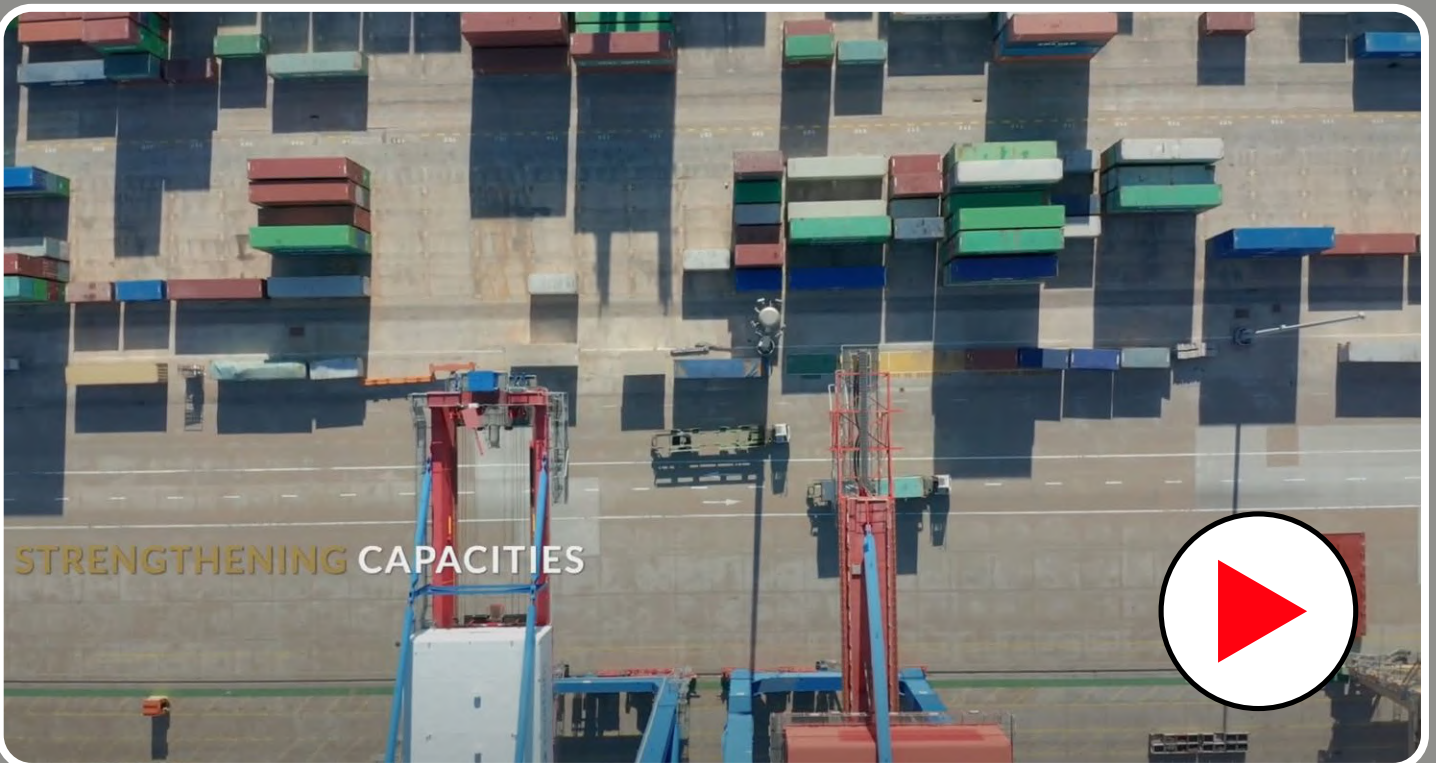
## CONTAINER CONTROL PROGRAMME (CCP)

People are the most valued asset at the MRA and Capacity Building of its personnel is at the heart of the Organisation.

The Container Control Programme (CCP) is an innovative project on which training was recently provided at MRA under the aegis of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Customs Organization (WCO). CCP is a joint cooperation programme developed by UNODC and WCO to set up a Port Control Unit to identify transnational crimes and inspect high risk shipments in the port with minimum disruption to legitimate

trade.

Apart from ensuring capacity building, the Container Control Programme provides logistic facilities to countries seeking to improve their risk management, and increase control of high-risk consignments in the supply chain without disrupting legitimate trade in seaports for land border crossings.



For further information, our readers can visit the website of MRA on [www.mra.mu](http://www.mra.mu)





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