

## An enhanced Port Surveillance Command Centre at MRA Customs



*The Prime Minister inaugurated the Port Surveillance Command Centre at the Custom House in Mer Rouge*

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, inaugurated the Port Surveillance Command Centre at MRA Customs on Monday 06 February, 2023, in the presence, amongst Dr. the Honourable Renganaden Padayachy, Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Chairperson and Director-General of the MRA. This SADC-funded project necessitated an investment of more than Rs 20 million.



### [Inauguration of the Port Surveillance Command Centre](#)

Dr. Taeil Kang, Capacity Building Director from the WCO, Board Members, and the Management Team of the MRA, Representatives of the US Department of Justice and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) were also present.

On the same occasion, the MRA launched a training on 'Undercover and Surveillance Techniques' conducted by the United States Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) with the participation of H.E. Satrajit Sardar, Chargé d'Affaires, US Embassy in Mauritius and Seychelles.

The 'Undercover and Surveillance Techniques' will 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 will avail themselves of this training. The participants will benefit 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 will consist of classroom-based instructions and practical exercises, which will simulate a complex drug investigation covering several locations.

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 proceeds are used to finance diverse criminal activities by organised 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 due to a steady rise in online sales and contactless delivery methods”*.



*Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius*

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”*.

On this score, 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 and 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”*.



*Many eminent personalities were present for the launching of the Port Surveillance Command centre*

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 and some 20,000 people have been arrested.

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.



## [Speech by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister](#)

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.

Mr. Lal dwelt on MRA's Scheme. He mentioned that the revenue collections have picked up steadily. During the last six months, from July to December 2022, the MRA has collected 54% more revenues than the period July to December 2020, which was basically a COVID-19 affected period. There is clear evidence of economic recovery from the revenue collection figures, he said.

He further underlined that MRA has directly supported some 230,000 self-employed and indirectly assisted up to 270,000 employees through the Self-Employed and the Government Wage Assistance Schemes. MRA has also paid more than one billion rupees to traders to ensure that households benefitted from the subsidy on essential goods last year.

In regard to the Negative Income Tax and Special Allowance Schemes, Mr. Lal pointed out that MRA is paying some 60,000 people around Rs 30 million on a monthly basis.

With the recently introduced CSG Income Allowance, some 340,000 persons earning up to Rs 50,000 monthly are being paid a total of Rs 340 million every month, he said.

He indicated that during the calendar year 2022, MRA has paid salary compensation to some 43,000 employees as per the policy of the Government to assist enterprises, particularly SMEs, in difficult times.

Mr. Lal underscored that *"2,000 unemployed persons from 485 enterprises are being supported under the Prime à l'Emploi, and the registration is ongoing."*

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. This is why this morning we are launching one-week Training on Undercover and Surveillance Techniques which will be conducted by experts from the Drug Enforcement Administration.”*



*Mr. Sudhamo Lal, Director-General of the MRA*

Mr. Lal underlined that the participants will learn novel skills and knowledge in areas such as surveillance, investigation, intelligence gathering and interventions that will sharpen their abilities to prevent and detect the entry of illicit drugs and narcotics in Mauritius.

Mr. Lal 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.”*



[Speech by Mr. Sudhamo Lal, Director-General of the MRA](#)

For his part, Mr. Vivekanand Ramburun, Director of the Customs Department at the MRA, highlighted that the Port Surveillance Command Centre has necessitated an investment to the tune of Rs 20 million to monitor real time information displayed on devices connected to cameras installed in the port area.

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



*Mr. Vivekanand Ramburun, Director of the Customs Department at the MRA*

The Port Surveillance Command Centre consists of three different components, namely: a CCTV Control Room for live viewing of images from cameras in the Port Area. Moreover, there is a Scanning Room where live images from container scanners are received for final clearance by supervising officers. He further emphasized that *“there is a Control Room for the simultaneous monitoring of images through the body worn cameras.”*



[Speech by Mr. V. Ramburun, Director, Customs at the MRA](#)

Thanks to this innovative project, supervisors from the Control Room can communicate with examining officers and they can access live viewing of the examination through cameras worn by the examination officers, thus enabling live instructions from supervisors to examination officers. This process enhances transparency in the examination of goods by Customs Officers, and reduces the risk of discrepancies. More importantly, it also reduces the dwell-time in the examination process.

Also present on the occasion, H.E. Satrajit Sardar, Chargé d’Affaires at the US Embassy underlined that the “*United States has long supported 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.*”



*H.E. Satrajit Sardar, Chargé d’Affaires, US Embassy in Mauritius and Seychelles*

He 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*”. During the next week, a team of dedicated agents and instructors will work side-by-side with Mauritian local law enforcement to build capacity, share intelligence, and conduct training, he added.



[Address by H.E Satrajit Sardar, Chargé d’Affaires to the U.S. Embassy](#)