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Mr. Sudhamo Lal:
'MRA seized Rs. 5 billion of drugs
during the last five years'

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MRA seized Rs. 5 billion of drugs during the last five years.

To mark the **International Day against Drug Abuse & Illicit Trafficking**, Mr. Sudhamo Lal, Director-General of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) was invited to deliver a speech at the University of Mauritius on Tuesday 28 June 2022. An exhibition of drones, fiberscope, and drug test kit was also displayed by the MRA. The event was hosted by Prime Minister's Office in collaboration with the Forensic Science Laboratory, the Mauritius Police Force, University of Mauritius and MRA.

In his address, Mr. Sudhamo Lal pointed out that the MRA has increased its vigilance to the maximum at the port, airport and courier services. He underlined that the MRA has seized Rs. 5 billion of drugs since five years.

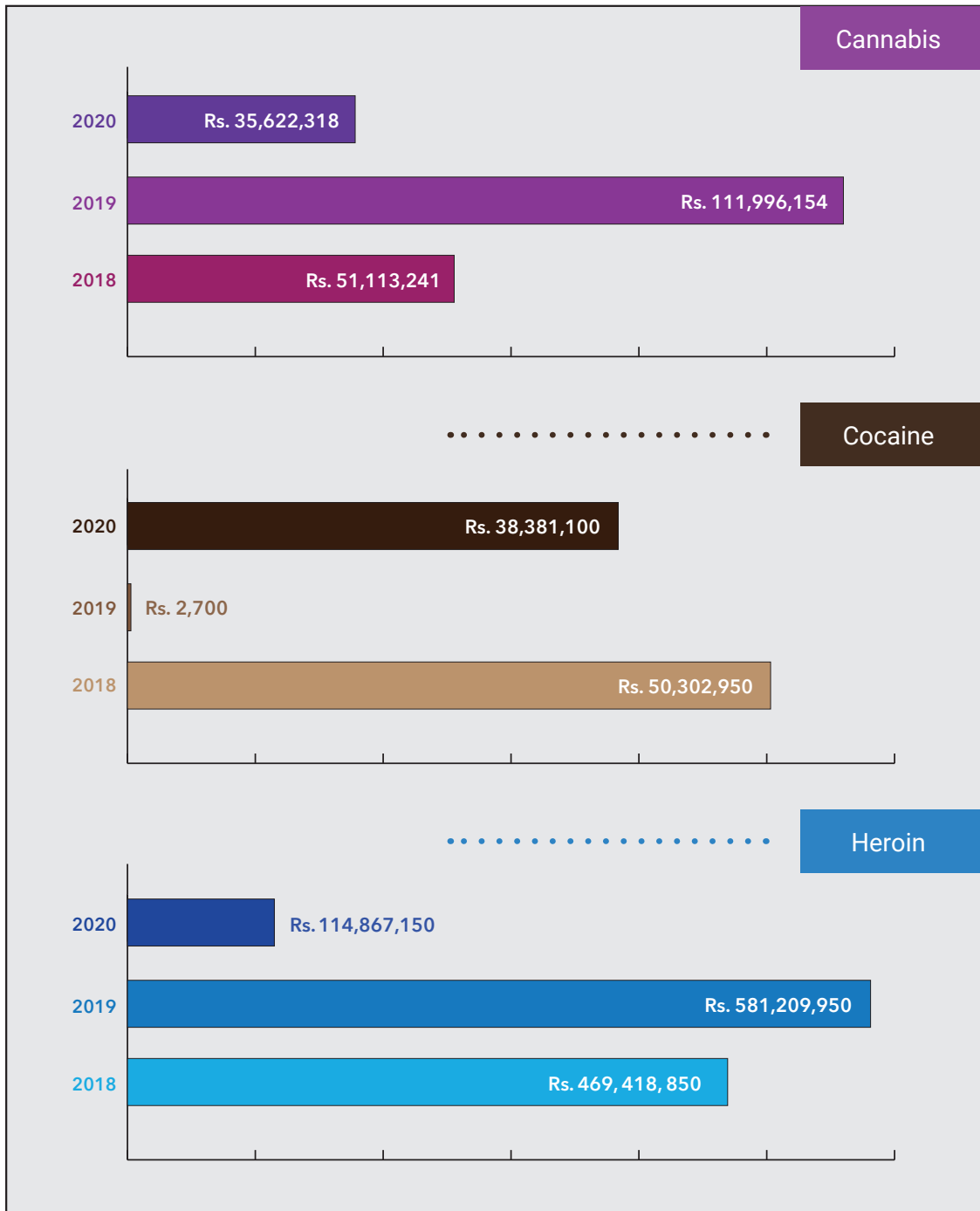
Mr. Sudhamo Lal highlighted that, the MRA has made use of several modern detection equipment and technologies such as X-ray container scanners, Fast interceptor Boats, Vessel Tracking System, drones, sniffer dogs, CCTV systems, Advance Passenger Information etc.

A similar event took place at the University of Technology, Mauritius and the topic of the seminar was Fight against Illicit Trafficking - The Role of the MRA. Undoubtedly, these two talks have been helpful to inform our youngsters on the dangers of drug consumption.





MRA PURSUES ITS FIGHT AGAINST DRUG TRAFFICKING



Year	Total Street Value * (Rupees)
As at 28 June 2022	Rs 119,677,110
2021	Rs 378,127,680
2020	Rs 231,126,468
2019	Rs 764,100,334
2018	Rs 639,012,423

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) has been leading a relentless fight against Drug Trafficking ever since its inception in 2006.

Drugs with a market value of 5 Billion rupees have been seized by the MRA during the last five years. The major Drug Seizures effected by MRA are:

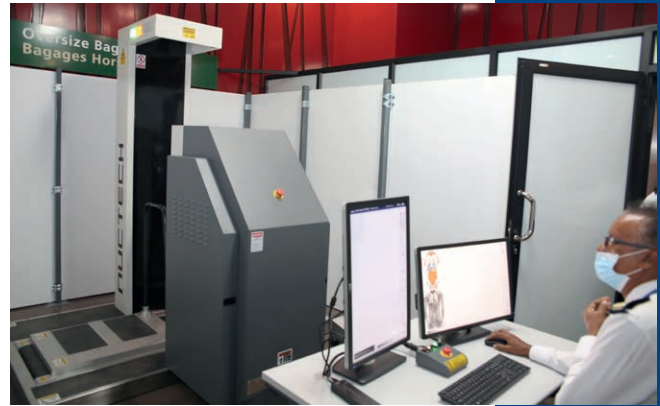
Cocaine, Cannabis (leaves, seeds and resin), Heroin (Powder) Ecstasy (Tablets), Psychotropic substances (Units), Synthetic Drugs, Subutex and other pharmaceutical drugs.

To this end, a series of sophisticated equipment are deployed by the MRA along with much emphasis on training of Customs Officers, engaged in the fight against this scourge.

Full body scanner

In January 2022, the MRA installed a full body scanner worth Rs. 7 million at the SSR International Airport to further enhance the operational capabilities of Customs officers. This rapid and accurate body scanner has provided promising results. For example, the Customs Anti-Narcotics Section (CANS) of the MRA has seized heroin with a market value of Rs. 80 million during the past four months.

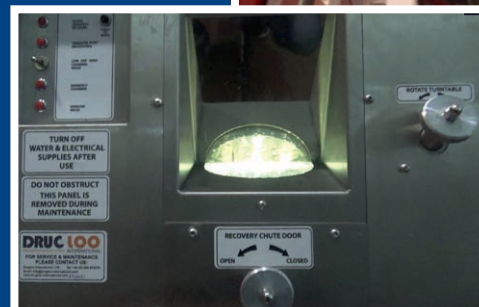
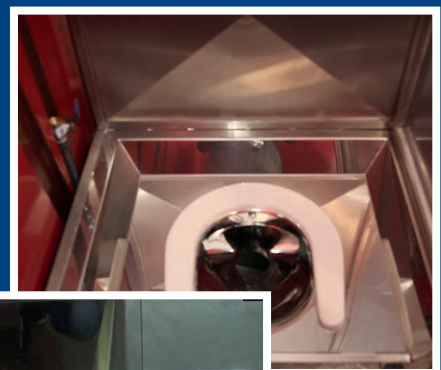
Moreover, to further pursue its fight against drug trafficking, the MRA has recently acquired another full body scanner worth Rs. 5 million, which will be deployed at the port.



Drug loo

A drug loo facility has been set up at the SSR International Airport to supervise bowel movement of passengers suspected of having swallowed drugs. Manufactured as a specialized toilet, the drug loo enables the packages to be separated from all other unwanted debris which is then washed away, leaving the packages to be sterilized within the equipment and discharged directly into an evidence container.

This drug loo assists in the safe and hygienic recovery of packages containing illicit substances, ingested by travellers with operator protection from contamination and without contaminating the evidence and compromising the chain of continuity of evidence, as the Customs Officer has no direct physical contact with anything inside the equipment.



Centralised Control Room

In line with MRA's determination to enhance integrity and accountability, a Centralised Control Room worth Rs 20 million was created to monitor real time information as well as enhance the trade facilitation and border protection.

It consists of three different components namely:

1. CCTV Control Room for live viewing of:

- Cameras in the Port Area (MPA & CHCL cameras)
- Cameras at different CFS stations.
- MRA Cameras at Examination Bays/ Port Exits.



2. Scanning Room where live images from container scanners are received for final clearance by supervisory officers.

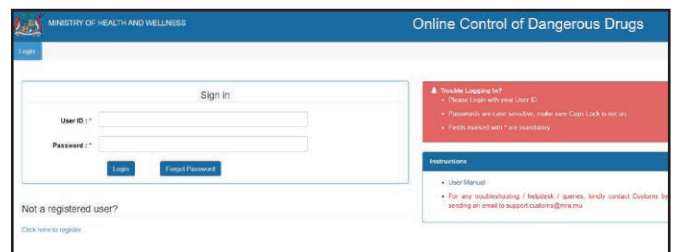
3. Control Rooms for receipt of images through body-worn cameras.

Supervisors from the Control Room communicates with examining officers and they also have access to live viewing of the examination through cameras worn by the examination officers, thus enabling live instructions from supervisors to examination officers.

Online Platform of Dangerous Drugs

The MRA has successfully implemented an Online Platform for Control of Dangerous Drugs in the illicit manufacturing of psychotropic substances.

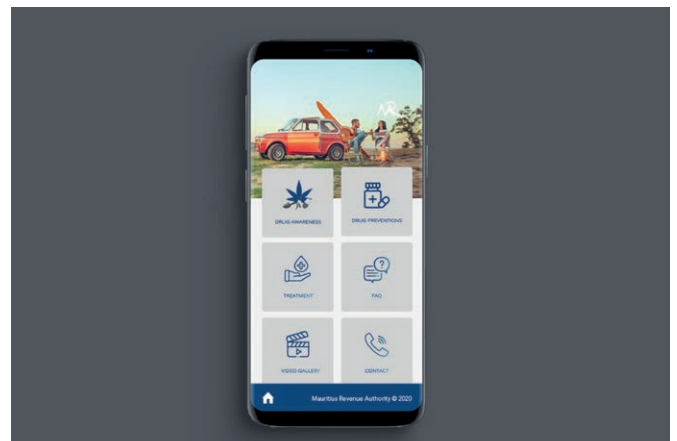
It caters for the sharing of information amongst law enforcements agencies and the Ministry of Health and Wellness.



DrugFreeMoris

On 26 January 2021, the MRA launched "DrugFreeMoris", a mobile application to raise drug issues in Mauritius.

Hosted on App Store and Google Play Store, this App promotes drug awareness, rehab centres, drug prevention and treatment to support the community at large.

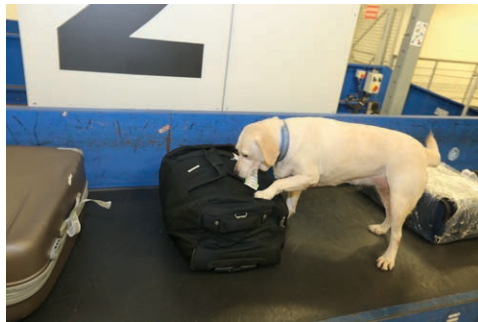


K9 Sniffer dogs

The MRA K-9 Unit has nineteen narcotics sniffer dogs for detection of narcotics (hard and synthetic) and tobacco which are deployed at the Port, Airport, Parcel Post, Courier Services and Container Terminal. However, the MRA intends to acquire 5 sniffer dogs for the Financial Year 2022-2023.

Sniffer dogs are highly efficient to detect any suspicious drug. For instance, the Customs Anti-Narcotics Section (CANS) of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) in collaboration with the Anti-Drug Smuggling Unit (ADSU) have seized 620 grams of heroin worth approximately Rs. 9,300,000 on Sunday, 03 July 2022 at a Courier Service.

Number of Drug Seizures cases carried out by K9 Sniffer dogs	
Year	Quantity
2013	32
2014	28
2015	17
2016	19
2017	50
2018	51
2019	67
2020	32
2021	30
2022 (as at 28 June 2022)	12



Advanced Electronic Information for Courier Packets

The MRA use advanced electronic information for Courier Packets for exchanging meaningful data. It enhances the MRA risk management and ensures effective targeting of suspicious consignments.

Besides addressing the issue of drug trafficking by mail, MRA Customs have efficiently improved cooperation with law enforcement agencies and e-commerce operators to identify high-risk packages and enhance data sharing.



Customs Anti-Narcotics Section

60 officers of the Customs Anti-Narcotics Section are always present at the frontiers on a 24 x 7 basis to curb drug smuggling. Non-intrusive inspection tools, such as the Fiberscope, amongst others, are used to search and detect drug concealments by viewing in real time, images of angles, tubes and difficult access points on vessels, aircrafts, vehicles and cargo.

The MRA Customs also use two fast Interceptor Boats (FIB), two rigid Hull Interceptor Boats (RHIB), and one patrol boat to facilitate intervention and enhance border surveillance.



FORTHCOMING MRA PROJECTS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST DRUGS

Setting up of Visit, Board, Search and Seizure Simulator (VBS3) facility by UNODC. This facility will be used as a simulator of a ship for practical training for local and regional law enforcement bodies to enhance boarding, searching and tactical operations to combat contraband.

iOne (Indian Ocean Navigate Easy) will be developed in-house by MRA, for sharing of information on small vessels, boats and yachts at regional level.



THE MRA INVESTS IN CAPACITY- BUILDING AND RESOURCES

1. Internal training

To be a world class Revenue Authority respected for its fairness and integrity, the MRA invests in capacity-building and resources. In this perspective, some in-house training courses were organized with the support of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) USA. More details are listed as follows:

- 38 Drug Enforcement Agency Officers have followed a Three-Day US funded Training on 'Combating Drug Trafficking in April 2022, to enhance their skills on identification of precursor chemicals and dangerous drugs. The topics covered were: Emerging Drug Trends, Precursor Chemicals, Dark Web, Evidence Handling and Chain of Custody. The training was dispensed to 36 officers from Customs, 15 officers from ADSU, 5 officers from Forensic Science Laboratory and 1 from the DPP's Office.



- To build capacity building into surveillance, intelligence gathering, identification and investigation of dangerous drugs and illicit goods, a Narcotics Investigations Course was held on February 2018 and April 2022. This training was dispensed to 20 officers from the Customs Department, 10 people from the Mauritius Police Force and one from the Ministry of Fisheries.

2. External training

To further enhance the skills of MRA officers in Intelligence Gathering and Informant Handling, a 5-day Training on Intelligence was organized in May 2022 at the Custom House, Mer Rouge. This training essentially forms part of the International Regional Co-operation Program, led by the Regional Customs Directorate of Reunion Customs, under the aegis of the Delegation for International Relations of the General Directorate of French Customs.

Additionally, the MRA organizes an external training capacity building for the benefit of Customs administrations of neighbouring countries such as Malagasy Republic, Seychelles, Comoros Island and Reunion Department to respond in a concerted and timely manner in order to boost regional cooperation.

The effective fight against the scourge of drug trafficking requires sustained and coordinated effort in the East and Southern Africa Region (ESA). To this end, RTC Mauritius has organized a regional training on the 'Identification of New Psychoactive Substances and Drug Profiling Techniques' from 26 to 28 October 2021.

It is noteworthy to point out that even at Customs Officers, in particular, front liners and enforcement officers are called upon to conduct body search of suspected persons and their belongings including search of vehicles. They are also required to interpret live images from scanners at the port and airport.



Networking

Networks of the Revenue authorities in the neighboring countries have also been successful to share Intelligence. In this vein, sharing of information and close cooperation between Customs authorities with the Anti Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU), National Coast Guard (NCG), Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC), Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) and other law enforcement agencies have helped to prevent cross border crimes and promote trade facilitation worldwide.



Having the best equipment and technology in the world is not enough. The human mind is equally essential. For example, human capital has contributed successfully in drug seizures. Accordingly, the MRA scrutinizes all the passengers embarking for Mauritius and profile them using information available from various sources, including the **Advance Passenger Information System**.

It is worth mentioning that that risky passengers within the profiling process are then subject to thorough scrutiny such as physical examination or body scan. For example, the MRA has flagged a passenger for detailed examination on the ground that he was a Kenyan citizen coming to Mauritius from Kenya, but his ticket was bought, surprisingly, in Reunion Island. Subsequently, the MRA has seized Rs. 8 million of drugs from him.

Other examples of drug seizures are further mentioned. The Customs Officers have made several unexpected discoveries such as cannabis inside Ferrero Rocher chocolates and hashish in assorted cakes.

How to report suspected drug cases?

Members of the public are reminded that they may report suspected drug cases/ illicit activities to the MRA through the **MRA Stop Drug Platform (www.mra.mu)** or by calling on the **Hotline 8958**.





MRA CONDUCTS 28 TALKS REACHING A MILESTONE OF 1500 STUDENTS IN COLLEGES

Paying tax is a sacred duty. Likewise, educating future taxpayers is equally imperative.

In that perspective, MRA resource persons conduct regular talks on the importance of paying taxes to students in secondary schools.

For the period of July 2021 - June 2022, the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) has conducted 28 talks reaching over 1500 students in colleges. They are made aware of the purpose of taxation so as to cultivate a 'willingness to pay'. Hence, with the number of students being reached, there is a growing understanding and preparedness for the future among the next generation of taxpayers.

It is interesting to highlight that this initiative has been evaluated through feedback forms and on an average, 97% of students who have been surveyed, indicates that the MRA has been effective in raising awareness and building a positive attitude towards taxation amongst youngsters.

Besides, the culture of tax compliance being strengthened, it is strongly believed that there will be a definite improvement in the moral obligation to voluntarily pay taxes, in years to come.

A series of video on the different aspects of taxation is available on our website: www.mra.mu

TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL SPEECH CONTEST 2022

TOASTMASTERS
INTERNATIONAL

**MR. DAYAL
FROM THE
MRA WINS
THE FIRST
PLACE FOR
MAURITIUS**

Mr. Nemraj Dayal, Principal, MRA Training Academy, participated in the category of 'Table Topic Contest'; for Mauritius Area B1, which comprised five clubs. This Toastmasters International Speech Contest 2022 consist of an impromptu speaking of not more than two minutes and thirty seconds (2min30secs) on any topic that is selected randomly.

Mr. Nemraj Dayal won the first place for Mauritius, Area B1, and then proceeded to a competition against Madagascar which he won. He, thereafter, participated in the Semi-Final Competition which was represented by champions of twelve countries from the East and Southern Africa region. Mr. Nemraj Dayal had to face a very strenuous task during the semi-finals against the most talented African counterparts.

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) commended Mr. Nemraj Dayal and the MRA Toastmasters for his bravery, perseverance and dedication during the Toastmasters International Speech Contest 2022. He came out with flying colours in the preliminaries till the semi-finals.



PRGF CONTRIBUTIONS: AN OBLIGATION TO PAY UNDER THE WORKERS RIGHTS ACT 2019



Administered by the Ministry of Social Security, the Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund is established under the Workers Rights Act 2019 for payment of a gratuity as follows:

- to a worker on his retirement;
- to the legal heirs of a worker, on the death of the worker;
- to a self-employed who has contributed to the PRGF, on his retirement;
- to the legal heirs of a self-employed who has contributed to the PRGF, on the death of the self-employed.

The PRGF was introduced in 2020 but officially came into force in January 2022. **Therefore, the employers are required to submit a monthly PRGF return and effect payment in respect of PRGF contributions to the MRA.**

No PRGF contribution is payable in respect of:

- A worker who has not attained the age of 16;
- A public officer or a local government officer;
- A worker who draws a monthly basic wage or salary of more than Rs. 200,000;
- A worker for whom the employer is contributing to a private pension scheme approved by the Financial Services Commission (FSC);
- A worker whose retirement benefits are payable under the Statutory Bodies Pension Funds Act or the Sugar Industry Pension Fund Act;
- A person under a contract of apprenticeship regulated under the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development Act;
- A person taking part in a training scheme set up by the Government or under a joint public-private initiative with a view to facilitating the placement of jobseekers in gainful employment;
- A non-Mauritian citizen worker or a migrant worker.

The PRGF Contributions are payable as from the month in which a worker takes up employment whether on a part-time, full time or casual basis and whether on probation or not. The PRGF contributions are also payable for a person performing atypical work as well.

Further details are available on MRA's website: www.mra.mu

MRA SENSITIZES 60 MEMBERS OF MEXA

In line with its educational strategy, the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) has sensitized 60 members of Mauritius Export Association (MEXA) on the Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund (PRGF).

This interactive session took place on 09 June 2022 and saw the participation of Mr. Mahmad Oozeer, Director, Operational Services Department at the MRA.



SPECIAL E-NEWSLETTER

Budget Highlights 2022/23

Following the National Budget 2022/2023 which was presented on Tuesday 7 June 2022 by Dr. the Honourable Renganaden Padayachy, Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) has issued

a special e-newsletter which sheds light on the recent budgetary announcements.

Our readers can access this Budget Highlights on **MRA website: www.mra.mu**





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