



Mr. M. Sudhamo Lal, G.O.S.K, C.S.K



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EDITORIAL NOTE

Dear esteemed readers,

"This prestigious national award belongs to MRA's Management Team and all our staff who have toiled over almost two decades to make MRA the organisation it is today."

It is with these words that the Director-General of the Mauritius Revenue Authority, Mr. Sudhamo Lal, welcomed his elevation to the rank of Grand Officer of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean, G.O.S.K, on the occasion of the National Day Celebrations 2024.

Mr. Lal was conferred the G.O.S.K for his significant contribution in the administration of taxes. Having been recruited following an international call for candidature, he has been at the helm of MRA since its inception in 2006.

Year-in, year-out, MRA is rising to new heights under the leadership of Mr. Lal. So much so that, MRA has been entrusted new responsibilities by the Government of the Republic of Mauritius, that is, the implementation of various financial assistance schemes, something which, along with his team, he has been managing effectively.

Dear Mr. Lal, success is always the result of sincere intention, dedicated effort, intelligent direction, passionate leadership and skilful execution. You have demonstrated all these qualities, every day. We wish you all the best in your new endeavours!

On a similar note, MRA Customs Officers participated in this year's Independence Day Celebrations by showcasing a symbolic and ceremonial display of national pride, unity and patriotism during the traditional parade at Champ de Mars on March 12, 2024.

We wish our readers a happy Independence Day. May the spirit of unity and dedication further guide us in our commitment to forge a better future for all of us!

And at MRA, the future is today!

Editorial team

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National Day Awards 2024

MR. LAL: GRAND OFFICER OF THE ORDER OF THE STAR AND KEY OF THE INDIAN OCEAN (G.O.S.K)

Mr. M. Sudhamo Lal's commitment to excellence and his tireless efforts in the realm of tax administration have not gone unnoticed. On March 12, 2024, Mr. Lal was elevated to the rank of Grand Officer of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean (G.O.S.K), in recognition of his exceptional contributions to tax administration.

Following this award, Mr Lal stated: *"This prestigious national award belongs to MRA's Management Team and all our staff who have toiled over almost two decades to make MRA the organization it is today. Together, we have reformed revenue administration in Mauritius by facilitating both tax compliance and trade. I humbly consider that one of my greatest achievements as Director-General of MRA has been to improve the efficiency in tax collections".*

Under his management, MRA has also successfully assisted the government in non-revenue functions. The provision of financial assistance to the needy since 2017 in the form of Negative Income Tax, Special Allowance, the Government Wage Assistance Scheme (GWAS), and the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme (SEAS), and many other schemes, have enhanced MRA's mandate of revenue collection.

The leadership of Mr. Lal and his strategic vision have significantly impacted the efficiency and effectiveness of tax-related processes. The consistent growth in tax revenues by an average of 18% annually under Mr. Lal's guidance as Director-General of MRA is remarkable.

"I am extremely grateful for the acknowledgment of the valuable contributions my team has made towards the progress of our nation. This has been duly recognized through this G.O.S.K award," said Mr. Lal. This recognition serves as a motivation for MRA to pursue diligently its commitment as a tax administration for the benefit of our nation and its citizens.



Mr. M. Sudhamo Lal, Director-General, MRA

It is to be recalled that in March 2018, Mr. Lal was conferred the rank of Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean (CSK) in recognition of his contribution in the administration and collection of taxes.

We seize this opportunity to extend our heartfelt wishes to our esteemed Director-General for continued success and prosperity in all aspects of his life. His exemplary leadership, dedication, and vision have been instrumental in guiding our organization to greater heights. May he continue to inspire MRA family, and the nation at large with his wisdom and integrity, and his passion for excellence!

National Day 2024

MRA OFFICERS SHOWCASE PROUD PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL DAY PARADE

After a four-year gap, Mauritius celebrated its Independence Day and Republic Day at Champ de Mars in the presence of the President of the Republic of India, Shrimati Droupadi Murmu, gracing the occasion as the Chief Guest. The theme of this Year's Independence Celebrations is **"Ansam Nou Avanse"** that is, 'Together, We move Forward'.

On this auspicious occasion, 35 dedicated Customs Officers proudly marched in front of the various eminent personalities, demonstrating a symbolic and ceremonial representation of national pride, unity,

and patriotism. The officers underwent intensive training for 13 days to prepare themselves for their participation, demonstrating their dedication to serving the nation with excellence.

During this celebration, naval and police helicopters as well as military planes performed fly-past exercises to entertain the crowds and dignitaries. Political leaders from Mauritius and around the world participated in the events designed to celebrate the culture and traditions of the island.



STAKEHOLDERS COMMEND THE WORK OF MRA

Integrity is paramount for tax administration as it forms the foundation of trust among the government, taxpayers, and the public at large. Upholding integrity ensures that tax officials act ethically, honestly and transparently in their daily activities, thereby fostering confidence in the tax system.



The 17th Integrity Advisory Committee (IAC) of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) met on Wednesday, 06th of March 2024 under the Chairmanship of Mr. Sudhamo Lal. The external stakeholders forming part of the committee are: Dr. Drishtysingh Ramdenee, Secretary General, Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), Mr. Mohammad Sallah-Ud-Din Surfraz (Den), the Chairperson, Mauritius Institute of Professional Accountants (MIPA), Mr. Raffeeek Sufurhally, President, Mauritius Taxpayers Association (MTPA), Mr. Ameene. Kodabux, MSK, Treasurer of Mauritius Council of Social Service (MACOSS), and Mrs. Nishta Surajbali, Economist, Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI). They all commended MRA for the strategies put in place to promote efficient tax administration and a business-friendly environment based on integrity.

Mr. Lal, the Chairperson, highlighted that the Integrity Advisory Committee at MRA upholds high ethical standards. He emphasized that integrity is crucial for

trust and credibility within the organization. By fostering a culture of integrity, MRA aims at strengthening the bond with all its stakeholders.

Leading with Integrity

Mr. Lal underlined that, since its inception, MRA has valued the importance of promoting a culture of integrity among both its internal and external stakeholders. Two dedicated divisions, the Internal Audit Division and the Internal Affairs Division, have been set up under the MRA Act to ensure that integrity becomes a common denominator in all operations. The Internal Affairs Division is also mandated to deal with alleged malpractices against employees.

The Internal Audit Division oversees processes by systematically evaluating them and providing independent and objective assurance to Management. These two divisions report directly to the Board of MRA.



Declaration of Assets

MRA has implemented a Declaration of Assets policy, as a control measure to ensure that accretion of its staff's wealth is not attributable to any illicit enrichment. Employees are required to submit asset declarations every three years with a view to upholding transparency, accountability, and integrity within the organization.



From left: Mr. Rajeev Gobin, Officer-in-Charge, Internal Affairs Division

For Mr. Rajeev Gobin, Officer-in-Charge, Internal Affairs Division, the Integrity Advisory Committee guarantees MRA's ongoing ethical conduct. He highlighted the mentorship provided by MRA in the provision of guidance and recommendations to countries in the African, South American, and Asian regions under the World Customs Organisation (WCO) Anti-Corruption and Integrity Promotion (A-CIP) Programme. Four Integrity Experts at MRA, recognised by the World Customs Organisation, namely Mr. Rajeev Gobin, Mrs. Najah Maghooa, Mr. Ahmed Bachun, and Mr. Didier Chateau, team up with other entities, both local and international, to share their knowledge and expertise in integrity management with countries in those regions.

The collaboration between WCO and MRA helps to build trust among the trading partners and enhances compliance with customs regulations. Ultimately, such collaboration benefits both customs administrations and the broader international trade community by promoting a secure and efficient trading environment.

5th Organisational Integrity Perception Survey

In its relentless pursuit of excellence, MRA has embarked on its 5th Organisational Integrity Perception Survey. This pivotal survey is designed to solicit valuable feedback from a wide array of stakeholders, and the public in general, serving as a robust measure to evaluate the degree of integrity prevailing within MRA. The results pinpoint specific areas where enhancement is recommended, especially in the wake of MRA's revamped roles.

To ensure an impartial and in-depth assessment, MRA has retained the services of Economic and Management (E&M) Consultants Ltd, an independent research firm. This comprehensive survey started on the 06th of February 2024 and participation is entirely voluntary. The information collected in each survey helps MRA to further improve the organisation's integrity framework and the quality of its operations.



Mentoring programme: A Leap towards Excellence

Mr. Dhoojanaden Maunikum, the Director of Human Resources and Training (HRTD) at MRA, delivered a compelling address on the significance of fostering an integrity culture within the organization. MRA, he said, upholds the highest standards of integrity and accountability in its recruitment process. For example, as part of its rigorous selection criteria, all recruits at MRA undergo a comprehensive examination, interview, and integrity check before being taken on board.



From left: Mr. Dhoojanaden Maunikum, Director, Human Resources and Training Dept. (HRTD) at MRA

In his presentation, Mr. Maunikum underscored the critical role that integrity plays in its operations at MRA. MRA's mentoring programme, launched in 2023, provides staff with guidance and support from experienced senior officers. *"Through mentorship, we not only empower individuals to reach their full potential but also create a supportive network that propels MRA towards greater achievements. Our mentors and mentees are the architects of our future success."*

External stakeholders commended MRA for transparency and efficiency

Dr. Drishtysingh Ramdenee, Secretary General of the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), commended MRA for its proactive approach in promoting integrity and transparency through the Integrity Advisory Committee.



MAURITIUS TO CHAIR VIRTUAL WORKING GROUP FOCUSED ON INTEGRITY IN EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (ESA)

MRA is proud to announce that Mauritius has been selected to chair the Virtual Working Group (Integrity Matters) East and Southern Africa (ESA).

The Virtual Working Group (Integrity Matters) East and Southern Africa (ESA) is a joint initiative involving 24 Member Countries within the WCO East and Southern Africa Region. These countries include Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Eswatini, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. This platform brings together experienced officers to collaborate on developing a comprehensive framework that promotes integrity in the region. The Virtual Working Group's vision is to promote economic growth and intra-regional trade by emphasizing values such as transparency, probity, commitment, responsibility, respect, and cooperation. The initiative aims at enhancing regional integration, trade facilitation, revenue collection, societal protection, and human capital development within the ESA Member administrations.

Serving as the Chairperson of this group is a significant responsibility, and Mr. Rajiv Gobin is honoured to have been elected to this role by unanimous vote. Mr. Gobin, highlights Mauritius' leadership in promoting integrity and paves the way for substantial advancements in improving ethical standards across ESA.

Working alongside dedicated individuals like Ms. Violet Mulumbwa and Ms. Gloria Nshekanabo, who serve as Deputy Chairperson and Secretary, respectively, is a rewarding experience. The objectives of the VWG include exploring the best integrity practices recommended by the OECD and WCO to address challenges faced by Customs administrations in the ESA region and to establish strategies for building a corruption-resistant Customs community. By actively participating in this forum, MRA continues to demonstrate its dedication to upholding integrity standards and making a positive impact in the region.

The Virtual Working Group is dedicated to fostering collaboration, sharing best practices, and developing solutions to promote integrity and ethical behaviour. *"Together, we are setting a high standard for integrity in the ESA region and create a framework that will guide organizations and individuals in upholding the highest ethical standards"*, Mr. Gobin concludes.



Mr. Rajeev Gobin serves as the Officer-In-Charge of the Internal Affairs Division since 2020. Prior to joining MRA in July 2009, he worked at the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) for 2 years as investigator/senior investigator. He also spent 15 years in the Police Force and left in 2007 as a Police Sergeant.

Since 2019, he has been recognized as an integrity expert by the World Customs Organization (WCO). Mr. Gobin actively shares his expertise and knowledge with other Customs institutions through workshops and webinars organized by the WCO for beneficiary countries of the Anti-Corruption and Integrity Promotion (A-CIP) Programme.

He holds a Bachelor's degree in Police Studies from the University of Mauritius in collaboration with the University of Portsmouth, an Executive Master's in Business Administration from the BIRLA Institute of Technology (India), and an online diploma in Legal Studies from Alison. Mr. Gobin has been accredited as a WCO Customs Modernization Advisor in the area of Integrity Development since January 2024.

MRA CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

On every 08th March, the International Women's Day (IWD) is celebrated around the world, in developing and developed countries alike. This special day, initiated in 1911, is meant to raise awareness on the pivotal role played by women. It is also a day to recognize the achievements of women and to emphasize on their struggles to secure economic, social, civil and political rights in modern times. To that extent, the IWD is no doubt an important annual milestone and reminder, as well as promoter of these rights.

The IWD has assumed a global dimension these days, but if we go down memory lane and cast a spotlight on several decades ago, we can see how women have heaved and toiled as housewives and custodians of households. In those days, the man fitted perfectly in his traditional role: the sole breadwinner. With the advent of women's emancipation and technological advancements, women have been educated, started working and supplementing the family income. Presently, in most, if not all households, both husband and wife are working, sharing household chores and enjoying parenting.

As regards to MRA, since its inception in July 2006, a number of initiatives have been put in place to give equal opportunities to both male and female employees. In terms of staffing, in the year 2006, female employees across MRA consisted of only 23% of the workforce, as compared to 47% presently. The Customs Department which used to be a male-driven domain, has seen the proportion of its female employees increasing significantly from 10% in 2006 to 30% in 2024. Presently, in Support Departments and Compliance Departments, women's representation stands at 48% and 65% respectively. In terms of Grade distribution, the largest proportion of women is found at Grades 1, 2, 3 and 4 levels, with the highest share of 31% at Grade 3 level. Women employees at MRA are, therefore, bringing their contributions across all Departments and grades.

MRA celebrated the International Women's Day on 11 March 2024, being given that the 08th of March was a public holiday. A half-day sensitization session themed on 'Work-Life Balance and Benefits of Yoga' was conducted for staff. The session on 'Work-Life Balance' was a two-hour session conducted by Ms. Kritikaa K. Bangarigadu, Clinical Psychologist from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare, who has extensive experience in child development issues and substance abuse. This session stressed on

the importance and ways of striking the right balance between work and family life, causes of stress, conflict management and emotional intelligence.

The yoga session was facilitated by Mr. Moshin Dowlut, who has over 20 years of experience as a Yoga Coach. The latter performs 'Office Yoga' in several companies and works with different groups of people: in fitness gyms, old-age homes, shelters for children, wellness resort for Rehabilitation of Drug Addicts and blind people, amongst others. During this session, he demonstrated different postures that can be practised at the workplace to detox the mind and the body, thereby promoting mindfulness, a positive life's outlook and inner peace and tranquility. Some 70 staff partook in this sensitization session.

MRA prides itself as an Equal Opportunity Employer. It promotes diversity, equity and inclusion in the organization and, recognizes the contributions of women as being an equal and integral part of its achievements. It is aware that, biologically, there are distinctive differences between women and men, but also understands that in other aspects, such as emotions, feelings and thoughts, men and women share a continuum of common characteristics. The IWD is certainly an important day to highlight all the good work being accomplished by the ladies across MRA. It is also a time to celebrate their acts of courage and determination in shaping MRA, to reflect on their progress and to call for change. The untiring support and assistance of our MRA male colleagues is also to be placed on record, in the journey of our brave ladies.

To all the amazing MRA ladies out there, a BIG THANK YOU! Rest assured that MRA champions you and recognizes that you are a significant part of the equation that leads to its success. As a caring organization, MRA will ensure that each and every one feels represented and valued. We also wish you all the very best in all spheres of life and hope that you will continue soaring in your careers at MRA.

Happy International Women's Day.

Mrs. Vashuda Degnarain

Team Leader,
Human Resources & Training Department,
Mauritius Revenue Authority

MRA PROMOTES WORK-LIFE BALANCE

On the occasion of Women's Day, Miss. Kritikaa K. Bangarigadu, Clinical Psychologist at the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, conducted a sensitization session for MRA staff on the critical importance of mental health at the Custom House, Mer Rouge.

During the session, Miss. Bangarigadu highlighted the concept of burnout, describing it as a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion resulting from prolonged exposure to excessive stress. She emphasized that burnout can manifest through symptoms such as long-term fatigue, reduced interest in activities, increased mental detachment from work responsibilities, decreased motivation, and even suicidal ideation.

Stress can be effectively managed through practices like yoga, meditation, and listening to positive affirmations. These activities can help promote relaxation, mindfulness, and a sense of calm in our daily lives.

This insightful session aimed to raise awareness among MRA staff about the signs and consequences of burnout, while also providing strategies to prevent and address mental health challenges in the workplace. Miss. Bangarigadu's expertise and guidance offered valuable insights to support the well-being and productivity of all employees.



Interview

"Always prioritize the organization's interests and adhere to core principles at work"

In the context of International Women's Day (IWD), Mrs. Sumita Devi Moorooogen, Director of the Internal Audit Division at MRA, shares her valuable insights on gender equality and empowerment in the workplace. In the following interview, she highlights the contributions of women in leadership roles and encourages more opportunities for women to excel in traditionally male-dominated fields.

Today, women are getting more and more empowered in business organizations. However, being at the helm of the Internal Audit Division at MRA should be very challenging. Isn't it?

Yes, to be at the head of quite a sensitive function is very challenging. As head of Internal Audit, the challenge is that often people tend to believe that you are criticizing when you are pointing towards an area for enhancement. But you have to work hard on your soft skills and towards earning the respect of your stakeholders. You always have to work towards the interests of the organization, and sticking to certain principles is very important. I would say that it is challenging but not impossible as I have been in this position since the creation of MRA, which is 18th this year.

However, I would say that holding the Director's position, be it Internal Audit or any other area, is very challenging for each one in their own specific way.

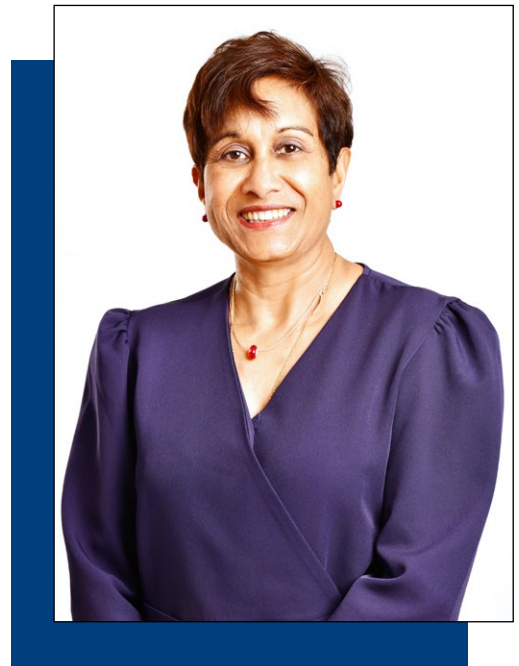
What is the mandate of the Internal Audit Division at the Mauritius Revenue Authority?

First and foremost, Internal Audit provides assurance to the Board and Management about the system of Internal Control, Risk Management and Governance.

While auditing these areas, you continuously provide recommendations to enhance and improve those areas and ensure that MRA adopts the best international practices and standards.

How has Internal Audit evolved?

Traditionally, Internal Audit is used to audit with the idea of finding weaknesses, errors, malpractices etc.



Mrs. Sumita Devi Moorooogen
Director, Internal Audit Division

Despite the fact that all these can be an outcome of internal audit, yet its objective today is to provide assurance and to contribute towards the organisations' maturity level in the above 3 areas. Internal Auditors are agents of change.

Furthermore, in line with international trends, Internal Audit is called upon to provide advisory services to the organization.

With so many changes happening in the business world, Internal Audit needs to be ready to gear itself in the direction where organisations are moving. For example, with digitalization of almost all services, IT and IT Security Audits are a must for auditors.

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Since 2012, MRA has an ISO-certified control system that has enhanced transparency and accountability in our operations.

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Bringing MRA to new heights has had the contribution of the Internal Audit Division as well. Kindly relate some of your key achievements as Head of the Division?

Yes, I think we have contributed significantly to MRA to reach new heights. Some of our key achievements go as follows:

- Through our various audit exercises and interaction with all MRA staff, MRA's Internal Control level has advanced. Management and MRA staff understand the importance of control, and they fully own their control systems.
- One major contribution has been the enhancement of integrity among MRA staff.
- MRA has a control system which is ISO certified since 2012, which has brought transparency and accountability to our systems.
- The Internal Audit Division has championed Enterprise Risk Management across MRA.
- The Internal Audit Division advises MRA and the MRA Board on governance issues, and ensures compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance and international best practices. Recently, MRA Governance has even been subject to the NCCG Scorecard Assessment with very encouraging results.
- In line with the MRA modernization programme, the Internal Audit Division is assisting all Compliance Departments in their move towards adopting electronic working papers, namely TeamMate plus.

“

If you invest in yourself, you work hard with dedication, integrity and professionalism, you do not need to worry about gender.

”

It appears that there are more female staff in your division, than male? How do you explain that?

I do not think there is much to explain here. At the national level, as at 2022, we had a population gender ratio of 51 % female and 49 % male. Similarly, even at the overall MRA level, female staff are nearly 50%. When we recruit, we place more importance on merit in terms of qualifications, competencies, attitude and professionalism etc. The best candidate is recruited, and we happen to have 9 female and 7 male staff in my team. The result of our recruitment has been natural without the need to do any positive discrimination.

How do you assess the potential of the female workforce at MRA?

They have every chance to be similar to male staff. In the Tax Department we have more females than males. Even at the level of Customs, we are now recruiting more and more female customs officers. Actually, we have female staff working in the Anti-Narcotics section. We even have a female dog handler.

What are the challenges awaiting the female worker at MRA?

For me, the main challenge is not at the office. The main challenge for a woman is when you look at the panoply of responsibilities of a woman.

3 main responsibilities i.e. as a working woman, as a mother and wife. At home, generally, we do get help, but I feel women remain the house/home/family Manager. When you add all these responsibilities, it becomes very difficult. Furthermore, as a woman, you are very emotional and when your children have an issue or are not happy etc., that does affect you. I do not know whether this is equally the same for a man.

Is there enough recognition for the potential of the female workforce in business organizations in Mauritius?

We still have room for improvement as far as recognition is concerned. We are progressing and it may be much faster in the public sector. The private sector is also catching up. Recently, a number of initiatives have been taken. We also have the National Committee on Corporate Governance and the Mauritius Institute of Directors helping in that direction. Recently, the Companies Act has been amended, requiring listed companies to have a minimum of 25% of female Directors on their Board.

I believe that everyone should get what he or she deserves. There should be no asking for you to get what you deserve. We should be very conscious that diversity brings value.

You are a Director at MRA. Yet, you are also a mother and a wife. How do you reconcile these roles?

I try to manage the 2 big chunks of my life, i.e. being a mother and my work, as best as I can. When my children were small I had my in-laws looking after them and this helped me to have that peace of mind at work.

Furthermore, I have always delegated my housework to my maid. This approach has helped me concentrate on the 2 big chunks of my responsibilities.

Very important, ladies do take care of yourselves as well. The minimum would be some footing or doing Zumba can help reduce stress and give you a sense of accomplishment, preventing frustration.

CELEBRATING WOMEN IN DIVERSE ROLES

As the world commemorates International Women's Day, it is essential to recognize and celebrate the invaluable contributions of women across various fields and industries. On this occasion, we had the privilege of interviewing two remarkable women, Mrs. Wendy Qeettene and Mrs. Veni Karayappa Naik, who have not only excelled in their respective professions but have also paved the way for gender equality and empowerment in their workplaces.

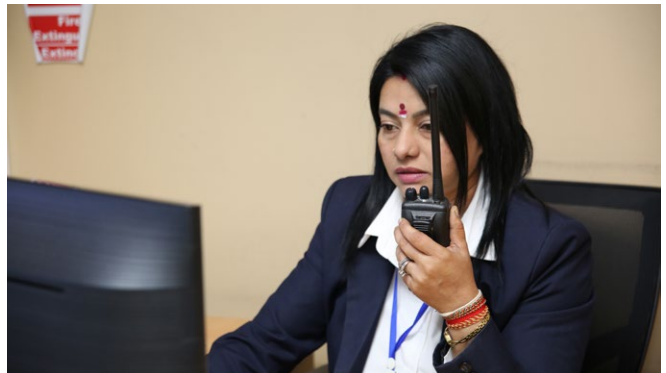
Mrs. Wendy Qeettene, tea lady at the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA), brings to light the significance of confidence and determination in achieving one's goals. With 17 years of experience serving the management team and the Director-General, Mrs. Wendy emphasizes the importance of equality in all roles. She encourages women to work hard and remain committed in their pursuit of success, regardless of the challenges they may encounter.



In her role, Mrs. Wendy finds inspiration in the interactions she has with her team members, underscoring the importance of teamwork and mutual respect. Despite the challenges of balancing work and family life, with two children to care for, Mrs. Wendy manages her responsibilities with efficiency and grace. Through effective time management and open communication, she exemplifies how one can achieve a balance between personal and professional obligations.



On the other hand, Mrs. Veni Karayappa Naik, Head of Security, shares her experiences navigating the male-dominated field of security. Leading a team entirely composed of men, Mrs. Veni emphasizes the importance of confidence, assertiveness, and mutual respect in her leadership approach. By fostering clear communication channels and setting expectations, she creates an inclusive team environment where gender is not a barrier to success.



Mrs. Veni's message to women is one of empowerment and continuous self-improvement. She advocates for *"believing in oneself, seeking mentorship, and embracing opportunities for growth and innovation"*. Despite the challenges, Mrs. Veni highlights the rewards of a career in security, including competitive pay and flexible schedules, making it an attractive option for women seeking fulfilling and impactful professions.

Both Mrs. Wendy and Mrs. Veni exemplify the resilience and determination of women in diverse roles. Their stories serve as inspirations for women everywhere, reminding us of the importance of perseverance, self-belief, and solidarity in achieving gender equality and empowerment in the workplace.



As we celebrate International Women's Day, let us honour the contributions of women, who continue to break barriers and inspire future generations with their remarkable achievements and unwavering dedication.

Dental Caravan 2024

PROMOTING THE WELL-BEING OF STAFF

At the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA), employees' well-being has always been a priority. This month, the Human Resources and Training Department (HRTD) has introduced an innovative initiative aimed at promoting oral health within MRA family.

The Dental Caravan!

Scheduled in the months of March and April 2024, the Dental Caravan provides a range of dental services completely free of charge, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Wellness. With the Dental Caravan stationed at every MRA location, including Custom House, ICCC, and Belfort Tower, staff can conveniently address their dental needs without disrupting their daily routines. The dedicated team of on-site dentists at the Dental Caravan provide a comprehensive range of dental services, including routine check-ups and preventive care such as tooth extraction, dental filling, and scaling, addressing the dental needs of both staff and their families.

Appointment

To guarantee smooth operations and an effortless experience, both staff and their family members have been allocated appointments. Additionally, staff working in shift have also been given the opportunity to benefit from the Dental Caravan, tailored to their respective schedules. This comprehensive approach ensures that everyone has access to essential dental care without any disruption to their work commitments.

To conclude, it is essential to recognise that oral health plays a pivotal role in our overall well-being. With the Dental Caravan event at MRA, staff will have the opportunity to prioritize their dental health.



Educational Tour for Secondary Students

INITIATING STUDENTS TO TAXATION



The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) organized an educational tour at the Integrated Customs Clearance Centre (ICCC) on Friday, 1st of March 2024. During this event, around 200 students from different colleges, namely Loreto Convent College (Mahebourg), Sookdeo Bissoondoyal SSS, France Boyer De La Giroday SSS, and Hamilton College, interacted with the MRA team. They also had the opportunity to view enlightening videos on diverse tax subjects and explored real-life case studies of taxation, making it a truly enriching experience.

This session followed the highly successful one which was held on 09 May 2023, with students from Loreto Convent, Rose-Hill.

Moreover, some 300 students from various colleges namely, Forest-Side SSS, Belle Rose SSS Girls, Renaissance College, Patten College Girls, and Patten College Boys, participated in MRA's educational sessions, organized in their respective colleges. This educational initiative focused on educating students about the importance of taxation, and improving their understanding of tax-related issues.



Promoting a culture of taxation to improve voluntary compliance

With an objective to instilling a tax culture to enhance voluntary compliance, MRA has, since its inception, set up a dedicated department, namely the Taxpayer Education and Communication Department (TECD), within its organisational structure. MRA's goal is to improve compliance through educational initiatives. Its educational approach is diverse, encompassing sessions for major taxpayers, SMEs, the public, and notably, secondary and tertiary students who are destined to become future taxpayers.

Students of today are the taxpayers of tomorrow. As a matter of fact, it is more than necessary to convey the importance of paying taxes to them. The ultimate objective of MRA's education strategy is to gradually shift attitudes from viewing tax payment as an obligation to seeing it as a voluntary contribution in nation building,

Over 10,000 students sensitised about taxation

For the past 5 years, MRA has conducted some two hundred sessions in secondary institutions, reaching more than 10,000 students. MRA is confident that this initiative will further reinforce the moral duty to voluntarily pay taxes, leading to a positive shift towards a greater willingness to fulfil tax obligations in the long term.

Taxes are the lifeblood of our society

During his keynote address at the event, Mr. Sudhamo Lal, Director-General of MRA, emphasized that voluntary compliance is essential for a successful tax system. This entails taxpayer's meeting their tax responsibilities without the necessity of enforcement actions, thus promoting trust and mutual respect between taxpayers and the tax authority.



Mr. Sudhamo Lal, Director-General, MRA

Voluntary compliance cultivates a culture of transparency and integrity

Voluntary compliance conveys a strong message that each individual is responsible for their actions and is committed to upholding principles of fairness and honesty. By willingly disclosing their income and paying the correct amount of tax, taxpayers save themselves from potential penalties and auditing, while also enabling the Government to allocate resources more efficiently towards public services, as Mr. Lal underlined.

For the Director-General, *"taxes go beyond being a mandatory financial responsibility enforced by the Government; they serve as the vital foundation of our society. They provide the necessary funding for crucial public services like education, healthcare, infrastructure, and social welfare initiatives."*



Breakthrough innovation as a mantra for success

Breakthrough innovation is a mantra at MRA, positioning the Organisation to be ahead of time, by constantly seeking new ways of administrating taxation.



Mr. Amick Teeluckdhar, Assistant Director, Taxpayer Education and Communication Dept., MRA

During his speech, Mr. Amick Teeluckdhar, Assistant Director, TECD of MRA, emphasized the need for organizations to embrace a culture of creativity and innovation in view of staying ahead of the curve. By embracing innovation, MRA has been able to adapt to changing environments, and ultimately achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in revenue collection.



Dr. Rakesh Thecka, Team Leader, Taxpayer Education and Communication Dept., MRA

Dr. Rakesh Thecka, Team Leader at TECD, made a presentation on the role of MRA in the Mauritian economy, highlighting the myriads of taxation administered by the organisation. He stressed the importance of the different types of taxes administered by MRA and the revenue that they generate.

On another score, Dr. Thecka dwelt on practical examples and discussed the implications of taxation on individuals and businesses. Thus, the students gained a deeper understanding of taxation, and its important role in the implementation of socio-economic projects.

The session was highly engaging, allowing students to actively participate in question and answer sessions. They also gave their feedback on the education tour, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and the practical application of taxation in our daily lives.

Here is what some students said about their experiences with MRA:

"I never realized how taxation impacts our daily lives until this tour. It was enlightening to see how taxes support vital services and society. The tour was not only informative but also interactive, making complex tax concepts easy to grasp for students," shared Seedam Keona, student from Sookdeo Bissoondoyal SSS. It is commendable to see MRA taking proactive steps to educate and empower the youth on financial matters, she added.

Also intervening from the same college, Asmuth Jhumka highlighted that *"this educational tour was eye-opening to see how taxes are utilized to fund essential services and contribute to the functioning of society as a whole. This initiative will undoubtedly have a lasting impact on the students' understanding of taxation and financial responsibility"*.

"As a participant, I was impressed by the initiative to introduce students to the world of taxation in a practical and engaging manner. The tour not only provided valuable knowledge about tax systems but also highlighted the importance of financial literacy. Congratulations to MRA for investing in the future generation and fostering a better understanding of taxation among students", concluded Anna Angie, student from France Boyer De La Giroday SSS.

Guided tour

At the end of this interactive session, the students were taken to the newly constructed state-of-the-art ICCC building. The participants had the exciting opportunity to witness the skills of MRA's sniffer dogs during the visit. They were able to see the dogs showcasing their remarkable abilities to detect hidden items. This unique experience not only entertained the students but also educated them on the important role that sniffer dogs play in various fields such as law enforcement, search, and border security.

MRA plans to organize many more educational tours in the near future. For instance, two sessions at Mon Plaisir Cultural Centre in Rodrigues will take place on 02 April 2024. These sessions will offer students in Rodrigues a unique opportunity to engage with the MRA team.



Seedam Keona, student from Sookdeo Bissoondoyal SSS



Unlocking Efficiency and Transparency

MRA ENSURES COMPLIANCE AND FOSTERS A TRANSPARENT AND EFFICIENT TAX ENVIRONMENT

In the dynamic landscape of taxation, the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) continues to play a pivotal role in ensuring compliance and fostering a transparent and efficient tax environment. Here are some highlights of March 2024 core tasks, priorities, and notable achievements, showcasing a commitment to excellence and innovation.

Non-filers: A Proactive Approach

Diligent efforts in addressing non-filers have resulted with 611 Value Added Tax (VAT) returns filed and 604 entities submitting VAT returns, with a tax yield of Rs. 108M. In the realm of Corporate Tax (CTAX), 15 entities have submitted returns with a tax yield of Rs. 1.8M.

Through targeted outreach and proactive measures, MRA has engaged with businesses who had overlooked or neglected their filing obligation.

These initiatives aim to foster a culture of responsibility within the taxpayer community, ultimately enhancing revenue collection and ensuring a fair and transparent tax system for all taxpayers.

Information Sharing: Collaborative Initiatives

Collaboration is key in the realm of tax administration, and MRA has actively participated in information sharing. In 58 cases, information has been shared with the GRA (PIMA), showcasing its commitment to a collective and transparent approach to tax management.

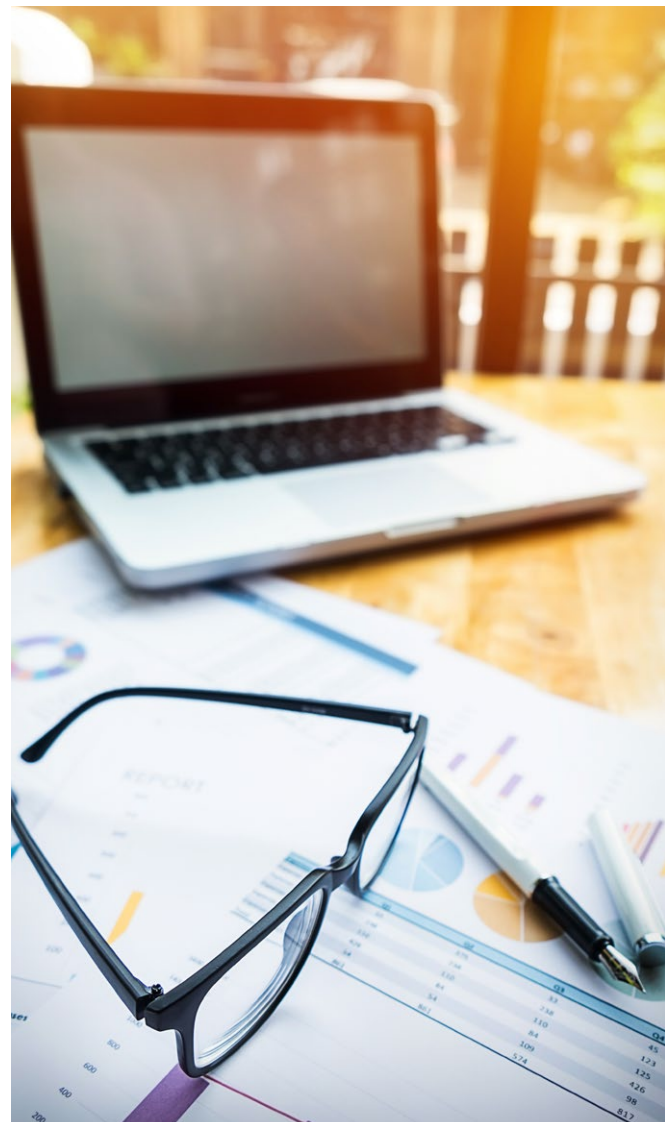
Refund & Repayment: Timely and Transparent

Efficient management of refund and repayment claims is a testament to MRA's commitment to service excellence. Out of 642 claims for Value Added Tax (VAT) repayment received, 79% were processed within 7 days. Concerning Income/Corporate Tax refund claims, for the month of February 2024, 1,397 refunds amounting to Rs. 973.39M were made.

Assessments: Ensuring Revenue Collection

As of 29 February 2024, MRA has issued 589 assessments for an amount of Rs. 213.23 million.

In conclusion, the Mauritius Revenue Authority is making significant strides in tax administration. The report reflects a proactive approach, embracing technology, ensuring transparency, and facilitating efficient processes. As MRA continues its journey, these accomplishments stand as a testament to its commitment to excellence in tax management and administration.



Tax Administration

PRIORITIES OF MRA

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) is central to Mauritius' economic framework, tasked with ensuring tax compliance and revenue collection. Exploring its key tasks and priorities provides insight into how MRA drives fiscal stability and economic progress.

Enforcing Payment of Arrears

MRA focuses on collecting tax arrears, securing Rs. 126.48 million in February 2024.

Processing Returns and Clearing Payments

Efficiently handling VAT, Gaming, Pay As You Earn (PAYE), and Tax deduction at source (TDS) returns, MRA clears payments and issues reminders to promote timely tax compliance.

Addressing Employer Inquiries

Responsive to employer inquiries, MRA aids in resolving payment issues swiftly, fostering cooperation and compliance.

Enhancing Electronic Tax Payment

MRA updates bank account details to encourage electronic tax payments, enhancing efficiency and transparency.

Conducting Audit and Ensuring Compliance

Through audits, MRA upholds tax system integrity, completing 113 payroll tax audits totalling Rs 5.06 million in February.

Facilitating Licensing Procedures

Processing 20 licensing applications in February 2024, MRA supports entrepreneurship and regulated business operations.

Administering Social Security Benefits

Disbursing Negative Income Tax (NIT) / Special Allowance (SPA) to 75,769 beneficiaries, MRA underscores its commitment to social welfare.

The Mauritius Revenue Authority's proactive approach to tax administration and its diverse priorities reflect its dedication to fiscal integrity, economic growth, and social welfare. In navigating global economic challenges, MRA remains a steadfast guardian of Mauritius' financial well-being.



MRA ENHANCES INFORMATION SHARING IN REFUND & REPAYMENT PROCESSES

In the dynamic landscape of financial processes, the efficient management of refund and repayment claims is paramount for both businesses and government agencies. The seamless flow of information and swift processing of claims contribute to economic stability and business confidence. In this article, we explore the noteworthy achievements in the realm of refund and repayment, specifically focusing on the outstanding outcomes resulting from improved information sharing.

VAT Repayment

A total of 489 claims from medium and small taxpayers for VAT repayment were received, and 79% of these claims were processed within just 7 days.

Income Tax Refund Claims

A staggering 1,320 Income Tax refund claims were successfully processed, totalling an amount of Rs. 6.6 million. Among these, 1,204 auto refund cases resulted in the reimbursement of Rs. 4.5 million, while 116 cases for an amount of Rs. 2.1 million were refunded.

CTAX Refund

371 corporate tax claims were processed, resulting in an amount of Rs 95.5 million returned to eligible entities.

VAT Refund

240 VAT refund cases for medium and small taxpayers were processed, amounting to Rs. 8.2 million.

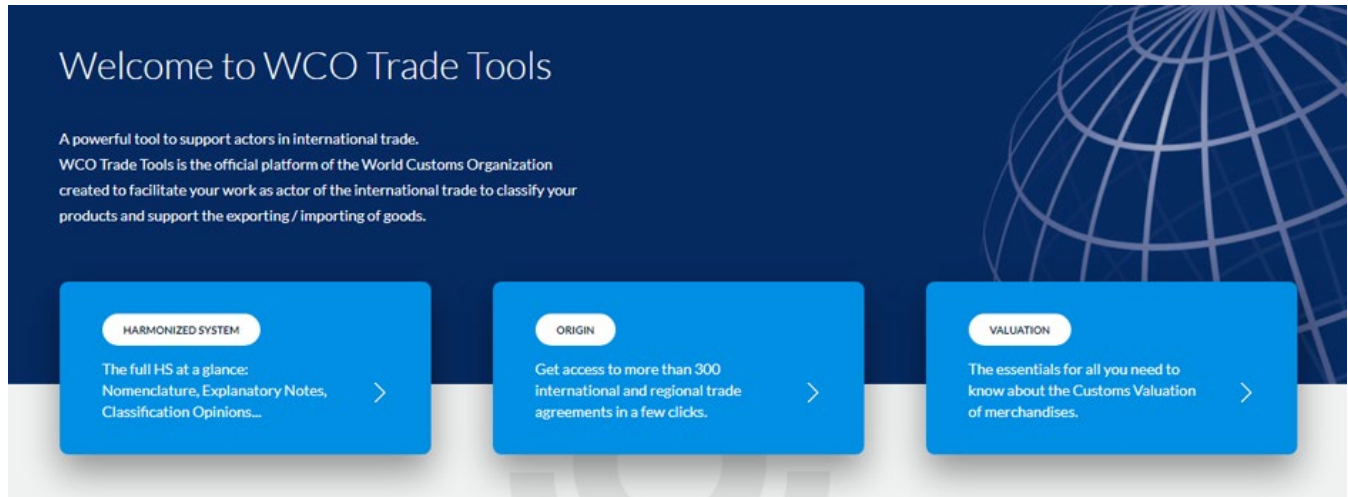
Assessments Update

As of February 29, 2024, a total of 589 assessments have been issued, reflecting the comprehensive nature of financial evaluations.

The positive outcomes highlighted above underscore the transformative power of efficient information sharing in the realm of refund and repayment processes. By leveraging advanced technologies and fostering a collaborative environment, businesses and government agencies can continue to enhance transparency, streamline operations, and contribute to a robust economic ecosystem.



MRA UNVEILS AN INNOVATIVE ELECTRONIC TARIFF TOOL



In the ever-evolving landscape of international trade, the Customs Department of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) is taking bold steps towards modernization and efficiency. The latest development, the implementation of the World Customs Organization (WCO) Electronic Tariff Tool, marks a significant milestone in the department's commitment to providing a seamless experience for both Customs officials and stakeholders engaged in international trade.

Under the EU-WCO Harmonised System Africa Programme, the WCO has extended technical support to MRA, facilitating the implementation of the Electronic Tariff Tool. This revolutionary tool is designed to offer an intuitive and accessible platform for accessing tariff information and classifications online, directly from MRA website. Its primary goal is to streamline and simplify the process of managing and analysing tariffs and trade regulations, ultimately enhancing the efficiency of businesses engaged in international trade.

One of the key features of the Electronic Tariff Tool is its user-friendly interface, providing Customs officials and stakeholders with a straightforward and efficient means of accessing up-to-date tariff information. This functionality not only empowers Customs officials in their daily tasks but also allows businesses to plan their international trade transactions more effectively. The tool's comprehensive and current data sets empower traders to make well-informed decisions, contributing

to a smoother and more transparent international trade environment.

Facilitating the development and implementation of the e-tariff tool is Global Trade Solutions (GTS), based in South Africa. Designated by the WCO for this crucial role, GTS brings expertise and innovation to the table. Three resource persons from GTS conducted an insightful training session for customs officers from the 5th to the 9th of February 2024. This training aimed at equipping Customs officers with the necessary skills and knowledge to leverage the full potential of the Electronic Tariff Tool.

The implementation of the WCO Electronic Tariff Tool aligns with MRA Customs Department's commitment to embracing technological advancements that enhance operational efficiency and transparency. As international trade continues to grow in complexity, this tool emerges as a valuable asset, providing a reliable and accessible resource for all stakeholders involved in the process.

MRA Customs' adoption of the WCO Electronic Tariff Tool is a testament to its dedication to fostering a modern, efficient, and transparent international trade ecosystem. By harnessing the power of technology and international collaboration, the department is paving the way for a future where Customs processes are streamlined, and businesses can thrive in a well-informed and dynamic global marketplace.

MRA in the Media

RADIO/ TV PROGRAMMES



MRA demonstrates sustained commitment to communication and responsiveness

The core values of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) prioritize responsiveness and proactive engagement with its stakeholders. In line with these values, MRA has leveraged media channels to effectively communicate with the public.

For the month of March 2024, MRA conducted a total of 3 TV interventions and 73 radio interventions, covering a diverse range of important topics such as the Tax Arrears Settlement Scheme (TASS) and Start-Ups.

In a bid to promote tax compliance and enhance public awareness, MRA has recourse to effective communication campaigns in Rodrigues as well. A "26-minute" TV programme on *Financial assistance to employers regarding the payment of increase in minimum wage and salary compensation 2024* was broadcast on Monday 04 March 2024.



Border Protection

RS. 6 MILLION SYNTHETIC DRUGS SEIZED

MRA plays a crucial part in combating drug-related activities by actively engaging in the detection, interception, and prevention of the distribution of illicit substances in our country.

This month, synthetic drugs worth Rs. 6 million was seized at a Courier Service as a result of the coordinated effort between MRA and the Police Headquarters Special Striking Team (PHQSST).

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



WITH DEEPEST *Sympathy*



We deeply mourn the passing of
Mrs. Ashreena Bantoo-Ramrachhya,
Support Officer I,
on March 13, 2024.

At 36, she departed too soon, leaving behind a legacy
of dedication and warmth.

Joining us in 2013, Mrs. Bantoo-Ramrachhya served
diligently in both the Operational Services and Fiscal
Investigations Departments. Her professionalism and
positivity touched us all.

Our deepest condolences go to
Mrs. Bantoo-Ramrachhya's loved ones. May her
memory bring them comfort during this difficult time.

Her absence will be deeply felt, but her memory will
endure eternally.

MRA Team



DID YOU KNOW?

INTERESTING FACT

Financial Assistance Scheme: Rs. 38B disbursed as at 20th of February 2024

Since 2017, the Government of Mauritius has entrusted MRA to implement various financial assistances, including ones for negative income, salary compensation, Social Contribution (CSG) Income Allowance, Prime À L'Emploi, Housing Loan Relief Scheme Independence Allowance etc.

As at 20th of February 2024, an amount of Rs. 38 Billion has been disbursed for various schemes.

Amount Disbursed as at 30 June 2023	
Items	Total (Rs.)
Negative Income Tax	705 M
Special Allowance	1.98 B
Government Wage Assistance Scheme (GWAS)	20.8 B
Self-employed Assistance Scheme (SEAS)	6.9 B
Social Contribution (CSG) Income Allowance	4.3 B 5.2 B (in FY 2023/24 as at 29/02/24)
Financial Support for the payment of salary compensation- Employers	106 M
Financial Support for the payment of salary compensation- Employees	55 M
Prime À L'Emploi	166 M 497 M (in FY 2023/24 as at 29/02/24)
Subsidy on scheduled bread to bakeries	16 M 28 M (in FY 2023/24 as at 29/02/24)

Schemes operational as from July 2023	
Independence Allowance	328 M -FY 2023/24 as at 29/02/24
CSG - Child Allowance	581 M -FY 2023/24 as at 29/02/24
Housing Loan Relief Scheme	202 M - FY 2023/24 as at 29/02/24)



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