

**INAUGURATION OF THE
INTEGRATED CUSTOMS CLEARANCE CENTRE (ICCC)
AND
CELEBRATIONS OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMS DAY 2022**

SPEECH BY HON PRAVIND KUMAR JUGNAUTH

PRIME MINISTER

**WEDNESDAY 26 JANUARY 2022 AT 1000 HRS
(*HON PRIME MINISTER TO ARRIVE AT 1000 HRS*)**

**VENUE: LE CHALAND ROAD
PLAINE MAGNIEN**

Colleague Ministers,

Member of the National Assembly,

**The Chairperson and the Members of the Board
of the Mauritius Revenue Authority,**

**The Director-General of the Mauritius Revenue
Authority**

The Director of Customs,

Representative of the MRA Staff Association,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

I am very glad to be amongst you today to commemorate the International Customs Day and inaugurate the Integrated Customs Clearance Centre building.

Let me at the outset convey my best wishes to all Customs Officers on this very special occasion. I would also like to express my gratitude to you, Customs Officers, for contributing to the success of the MRA as a world-class organisation.

Established in 2006, the MRA has built an impressive track record of innovative successes in fields ranging from tax collection to trade facilitation. The fact that it has remitted revenues amounting to almost one Trillion Rupees to the Consolidated Fund, is a measure of its efficiency.

More specifically, the MRA's Customs department has served the country well by protecting our citizens against illegal drugs, hazardous goods, and illicit practices. Its commitment to make our society safer and more secure has improved the well-being of citizens.

Customs officers have employed state-of-the-art cargo x-ray scanners to efficiently and effectively detect smuggled and prohibited goods in a non-intrusive manner, scanning more than 400,000 containers in the last Financial Year.

The Customs Department has made unprecedented seizures of different types of drugs and psychotropic substances worth more than Rs 5 Billion during the past 5 years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Government will continue to provide unwavering support to the MRA to acquire the latest tools, equipment, and technology to further boost our fight against the trafficking of illicit drugs and narcotics.

Customs constitute an essential service and have been operating 24/7 during the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. They had to take timely and decisive measures to ensure supply chain and business continuity all along.

The role of Customs in the clearance of medicines and relief consignments during this emergency situation must be highlighted. Customs administrations had to deploy staff from

home and harness the power of digital processes through internet-based customs management systems to cope efficiently with the situation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme for this year's International Customs Day is "Scaling up Customs Digital Transformation by Embracing Data Culture and Building a Data Ecosystem". This commemoration is, therefore, an opportunity for the Customs community to engage in discussions about moving towards a fully digital environment. There is a need for creating an operational model that captures and exploits data from across the trade ecosystem.

The focus nowadays is to make data move, instead of people.

Digital technology is at the center of today's economic development and there is no doubt that the Covid-19 pandemic is amplifying the adoption of digitalization and new technologies, be it at work or in our day to day life.

There is a pressing need for businesses and governments to adapt to advancements in digital technology. Embracing technology is no longer an option but a necessity.

In addition to scanners at the port and airport, MRA Customs is using drones, Fast Interceptor Boats, CCTV systems, and data processing tools and

systems. Extensive use of new technologies has helped it enhance risk management and fraud detection capabilities.

MRA Customs is working on a major digital project - The Integrated Single Window project - which will further reduce dwell time and the cost of doing business. This will be yet another major trade facilitation project which will bring numerous benefits to the trade community and its stakeholders.

It will revamp the existing electronic data interchange system and enable the single submission of documents for processing of permits and clearance of goods while eliminating

duplication of business processes across the agencies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The inauguration of the Integrated Customs Clearance Centre building, today, marks another milestone in trade facilitation in Mauritius.

This state-of-the-art building will be a One-stop-shop for air cargo clearance. One important attribute of this building is that it will house several border agencies under one roof. Ministries and Departments involved in the clearance of goods will have offices in the building, in line with the concept of Coordinated Border Management.

This means that stakeholders will be able to conduct transactions, such as application for permits; payment of fees, duty, and taxes; as well as clearance of goods, in this single building.

The Coordinated Border Management will be highly beneficial to the trading community in terms of reduced transactions costs through expedited processing and clearance times and reduced waiting times for moving from one agency to another. All these factors will contribute towards reducing the cost of doing business.

This new building will provide MRA Customs and other governmental agencies with a modern work environment that provides all the necessary comfort

and facilities. At the same time, the trading community will benefit from a value-added service.

I must point out that the Integrated Customs Clearance Centre project is part of a major development plan in the airport area which includes the setting up of a Cargo Village and an extension of the Freeport Zone.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected most of our economic sectors, and today, we are facing the challenge of economic recovery.

More than ever, we have to work hand in hand, in a spirit of patriotism and contribute towards the economic recovery process. This process requires

the patriotic efforts of every individual and every organization.

Our country needs to bind together to recover and rebuild stronger than ever before.

We have been hard hit. The road to recovery will be steep. But by taking this journey together, I am confident that we will be able to bounce back soon.

I urge the MRA to continue to respond decisively and innovatively so as to contribute to a faster recovery,

Thank you for your attention.
