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Children Play therapy

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Editorial

This year is very important as there is another milestone that we need to achieve. As you might have heard, a new Sectoral Agreement (which is different from the Collective Agreement) is being negotiated. The negotiation team of the Malta Police Union, together with our colleagues of the Police Officers Union prepared an excellent proposal to the Government, with the hope that many proposals are accepted. Our aim is to have a more motivated and professional Police Force, not only on paper, but in reality.

As you know, discussions are held behind closed doors and until a final draft is reached, no information can be given. This is very important for the smooth and serene environment within the negotiation structure and also to avoid useless chatters and misinformation. Till there is a final agreement no one can disclose anything as nothing is agreed upon until everything is agreed by all parties. This is common sense.

I take this occasion to disregard any assurances and theories given by my uninformed persons who are not even part of the discussions. Both Unions representing members of the Police Force have their internal structures and policies on how to consult with members whilst a draft has been finalised.

Till that time, I urge you to focus on your work, and let others do theirs, without having to waste time fighting back useless arguments.

 **Neville Mercieca**



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Do you manage an NGO with a Social purpose?

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THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE MALTA POLICE UNION

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New Uniform. New Tattoo & Facial Hair Policy.



(Image by: The Malta Police Force) (Facebook @themaltapoliceforce)

A new police uniform that went into effect on the 10th of January 2023 replaced the traditional blue shirts, neckties, and hats with polo shirts and baseball caps. Police Commissioner Angelo Gafa' stated at a press conference that the new gender-neutral attire is made specifically for the country's climate and will be worn all year.

Inspectors and higher-ranking officers can choose between the new polo shirts and the traditional white shirt, tie, and hat whilst constables and sergeants will put-on navy-blue baseball caps with silver lines running across the rims, black pants, polo shirts, and jackets with bright blue shoulder patches.

The cost of the new uniforms, according to Home Affairs Minister Byron Camilleri, will be €2 million. He claimed that the uniforms are more comfortable than the ones they replaced and are made of superior quality' modern materials. An international request for bids resulted in a Spanish company being chosen to receive the contract.

Tattoos are now permitted they are not on their necks, face, or palms. The strict anti-tattoo stance that the Malta Police Force had long enforced has been modified by the new tattoo policy. It permits visible tattoos on police officers of all genders, with some restrictions. Tattoos are not allowed to be crude, political, or discriminatory in any way. Additionally, only tattoos that are necessary for medical reasons are permitted on the face, neck, or palm.

Previously, while on duty, officers with tattoos had to make sure they were concealed from the public. As he announced the change in policy, Home Affairs Minister Byron Camilleri said, "Having a tattoo is no measure of a person's qualities." "A person should be evaluated based on their output and level of professionalism."



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The Union highlights the importance of abiding with policies:

POL-TAT regarding facial hair & tattoos and
SOP-UAS regarding uniforms & appearance standards.

Should you require assistance, kindly contact us on
info@mpu.mt



In view of the recent changes in Tattoo policies, we thought to gather some information on how to care for your tattoo. Four articles will be published in 2023 to have a complete and holistic guide.

“Tattoos are often telling an important story through art that isn’t expressed in words” Dr Joseph Pierre, University of California, Los Angeles.

Research about tattoo artists, tattoo styles, tattoo colours and tattoo positioning are all part of the steps taken in preparation of getting tattooed to ensure that one leaves the tattoo studio loving the new artwork.

Preparing the skin and body before the tattooing process and appropriate after care, is equally important since the introduction of ink pigment under the skin by repeated skin puncturing disrupts the skin barrier causing the body to react in various ways to heal the wounded area.

The body is best prepared for the tattooing process prior to the appointment by:

- ❖ Drinking lots of water from 24 h before. Hydrated skin takes ink much better making the process smoother for both the individual and the tattoo artist.
- ❖ Avoiding alcohol since it dehydrates the skin.
- ❖ Avoiding activities that drain muscles and make the areas of the body sore. Strained muscles make the tattoo process more painful due to already aching muscles.
- ❖ Eating a high protein meal for energy and stamina throughout the tattooing process.
- ❖ Avoiding tanning and bruising the area to be tattooed since the tattoo will have a more difficult time to heal due to the ongoing skin trauma.

After having finished the appointment with the tattoo artist, well done to both, it is in the hands of the tattooed person to facilitate the healing process, the length of which varies from person to person as well as depends on the tattoo location.

It is expected that the top skin layers heal within a couple of weeks although the deeper layers of the skin can take as long as 6 months to truly heal.

The 3 stages involved in the skin healing process are:

- Stage 1 (Days 1 to 6) Redness, Swelling, Oozing and Scabbing
- Stage 2 (Days 7 to 14) Itching and Flaking
- Stage 3 (Days 15 to 30) The tattoo looks fully healed but may appear slightly cloudy due to the deeper layers of the skin still repairing.

Appropriate tattoo after care is intended to facilitate skin healing and restore its full function as well and quickly as possible, while protecting the tattoo ink for it to remain looking bold and sharp.

The healing process starts as soon as the tattoo studio is exited therefore, the tattoo artist would have the tattooed area cleaned with antibacterial soap and wrapped for added protection against bacteria.

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Each tattoo artist approaches wrapping differently with regards to how long it should be kept on protecting his/her work of art. It is therefore advised to keep on for how long instructed.

Once the wrap is removed, the area needs to be very gently but thoroughly washed making sure the water is not too hot since this would cause further damage to the wound. Proper washing prevents the formation of big scabs while it is recommended to dab the area dry instead of rubbing to avoid removing colour and ink in the process.

The utilisation of Tattoo Specific Anti-Bacterial Soap containing amongst other ingredients, plant derived Chamomile and Calendula which decrease inflammation; Panthenol responsible for boosting skin repair and reducing irritation and Hyaluronic Acid which increases skin hydration, ensures better healing, and reduces healing time.

For a few days the area will be warm, sore, red, and raised (Stage 1). This is because there is increased blood flow to boost the skin's natural healing process.

After the area is cleaned, it is recommended to apply Tattoo Specific Healing Cream containing amongst other ingredients Panthenol, Hyaluronic Acid, Shea Butter, and Vitamin B3 which create a protective barrier while still allowing the skin to breathe as well as calm the skin redness and reduce healing time. For easier application as often as directed, it is suggested to choose a healing cream which Does Not Stain Clothes or Bedding.

Other recommendations during Stage 1 are to avoid:

- Exposing the healing area to the sun and swimming
- Work outs for 48 hours
- Sleeping directly on the new tattoo
- Picking at scabs

Throughout stages 2 and 3, adequate hydration is key since this prevents the unwanted itchy feeling.

The application of a Tattoo Specific Moisturiser will make sure it is fragrance and alcohol free as both would otherwise make the situation worse.

Ingredients such as Vitamin E, Antioxidants and Hyaluronic acid ensure that apart from moisturising properties, the ink pigments under the skin are preserved as much as possible to make the ink look bright and sharp. No Clothes or Bedding staining is another property that the Tattoo Specific Moisturiser should have for more convenient application.

With adequate attention and care, the skin will go through all the healing stages successfully. In this way the tattoo artist's work of art may be enjoyed and admired for as long as possible in excellent condition.



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Why Join the Malta Police Union (MPU)?

Marlon Hili

The question of whether one should join the union has been brought up numerous times over the years, but especially since the Police Force Unions became legal in 2015.

There are those who will always renew their membership no matter what, those who choose to remain impartial and refrain from joining, and others who simply choose to leave on the grounds that everyone will gain if anything positive is achieved.

But who is right?

Obviously and without a doubt, as a member of the MPU Committee, I would choose the first option, which is to join the union, but what if I am not? Should I join the MPU or should I stay impartial?

If I had to choose any comparison between how and why someone should also be a union member, I would most definitely go with an insurance policy. You pay for or invest in one annually, so if you ever need assistance, you won't incur any additional costs.

Consider what would happen if you only paid for your insurance policy when you actually needed it, such as following a car accident or a medical issue. The insurance firms wouldn't have enough cash on hand to cover your expenses.

The same would occur if everyone chose to only pay their Union dues when necessary or, worse yet, completely abstain. As you may know, no entity can function without funds, so there won't be a functional union that can achieve any positive outcomes if the union is left without the necessary resources that would force it to stop assisting its members in their needs.

Can you currently actually imagine yourself pursuing a new sectoral agreement without the Union? Going without a qualified attorney to the disciplinary board for your crime? Feeling unfairly or discriminatorily treated at work and having nowhere to turn for help?

Is joining a Union still a Taboo for Police officers?

Everyone who joined the police force before 2015, the year in which police officers were finally legally allowed to join a union of their choice, is aware that as members of a disciplined force, we were always required to accept everything that was given to us or asked of us with a simple "Yes, Sir" or "Ma'am," regardless of whether it was morally right or wrong. Knowing that there was nowhere you could knock and request assistance was also frustrating.

Although the situation has changed, getting to where we are now required a lot of effort because we needed to work to alter the mindset of new union members and, more challengingly, that of those who implement and issue orders.

Although we continue to receive reports or messages from our members who are being treated unfairly or worse, indirectly threatened by their superiors at their respective branches simply because they choose to uphold their rights, we are happy to note that these situations are gradually becoming less common every day, too, also thanks to the Police Force administration's mentality and response to certain abuse.

More police officers are choosing to support our cause today as the unions in the Malta Police Force, particularly the Malta Police Union, are becoming firmly embedded in our culture.

Together, we can improve the working conditions and quality of life for our members.

Visit our website, www.mpu.mt, or directly use our Revolut Account 79592039 to join the MPU and become a part of the culture today.

You can also join us by getting in touch with one of our committee or shopsteward members, or by sending a message to us directly through our Facebook page or Whatsapp at 79426670.

I'd like to remind you that beginning on January 1st 2023, the Malta Police Union's annual membership fee is 30€, while the RPC's annual fee is a one-time payment of 50€. The three-year membership is no longer available.



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The Personal Accident Benefit Scheme was launched by the Ministry for Finance as from 1 May 2019, to compensate Employees of Departments and Entities within the Public Sector admitted in Schedule A of the Scheme in the event of death or a permanent disability resulting from an accident whilst carrying out duties or service at the place of work.

Four times the annual salary in case of death or in case of permanent disability, in accordance with the disability scale up to 100% as assessed by a Medical Board but capped at €180,000.

All employees assigned with and performing duties with the Malta Police Force, the Armed Forces of Malta, the Malta Civil Protection Department, the Malta Security Service, the Malta Correctional Facilities Services, and the Malta Customs Department who sustain death or a permanent bodily injury resulting from an accident whilst carrying out duties or service at the place of work.

The notification of a claim is to be made by the Head of the Department or Entity of the injured employee, or by the injured employee himself (or by their authorised representative) not later than 14 days from the occurrence of the accident giving rise to the bodily injury or death.



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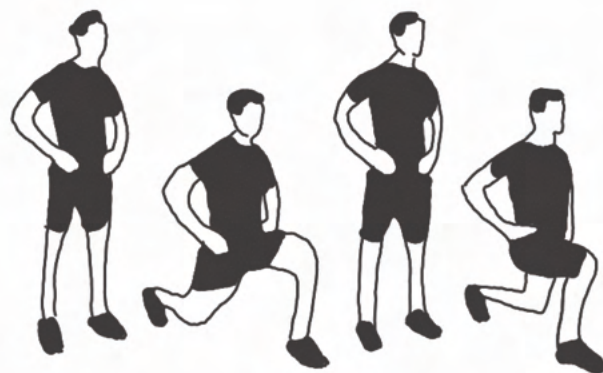
Darren Bezzina



The Lunges

Including lunges in your training programme will help you reap several benefits. First, the lunges will help you develop the muscles of your lower body including the quads, glutes, hamstrings, and even your core muscles. The lunges also force you to push your body from an asymmetrical and unstable position, helping you work on your balance.

To perform a lunge, stand straight with your hands on your hips, and feet hip-width apart. Step forward with one leg and slowly lower your body until the back leg nearly touches the floor and the front leg is bent approximately 90 degrees. Pause slightly at the bottom and quickly push yourself back with the front leg to starting position. Repeat the exercise with the other leg. That's one repetition. It is important that during the whole movement, the core is kept tight, and the torso is kept upright. Performing 3 sets of 10 repetitions can help you go a long way in improving the strength of your lower body.



The Importance of Playtime

Silvan Magro – Play Therapist

While the classroom teaches children many valuable lessons, the playground does. Without realizing it, problem-solving, collaborating and negotiating are all part of the fun!

The world of pretend is a magical place where kids' imaginations come to life and spark dreams that can often fuel future ambitions. Whether riding a rocket ship to Mars, making a major medical breakthrough, or discovering an archaeological wonder, your child's capacity for creativity comes into play when left to their own devices.

Playtime also enhances children's physical skills, teaching them balance and coordination. Skills that require eyes and hands working together sharpen as kids play with building blocks, and they get a leg up on their strength and agility climbing the monkey bars. Equally important, as children race around the playground or park, they are burning off not only pent-up energy (and, in some cases, anxiety and stress) but also calories, helping to fight the risk of obesity.

On an emotional level, play elicits joy in children, pure and simple. It provides endless opportunities for being surprised, excited, and delighted. Moreover, while fun is the objective, there is the added potential for improvisation. The capacity for learning advances as children moves on from familiar games and explore new ground.

Lessons in negotiation, delayed gratification and risk-taking are played out as kids take on various roles and adjust to new rules. For example, children playing Monopoly learn to develop strategies and take risks, while, in card games, they acquire the ability to observe others and evaluate their intent. Even with something so basic as hide-and-seek, children learn mutual respect as they make and break their own rules.

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What cops need to know about autism?

Typical police procedures combined with characteristics of autism can cause misunderstandings that result in a negative interaction. [This article is reprinted with permission from Calibre Press]

In the last two decades, autism diagnoses have increased by nearly 300%. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducted studies on the prevalence of autism using eight-year-old children born in the U.S. and found that 1 in 59 will have the condition.



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT?

With the incidence of autism growing at alarming rates, it's not a question of if you will respond to a call involving an Autistic person, but when. What complicates the matter is that there are no overt physical indicators that would alert an officer to the fact that the person they're dealing with is autistic. Compounding that, behaviours associated with autism, which we'll discuss in a minute, can be easily misinterpreted as being deceptive, furtive, or generally dangerous, thus attracting elevated attention from responding officers and possibly escalating the severity of the contact.

In 2013, my two youngest sons were diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). As I studied the characteristics of the condition I wondered, is law enforcement prepared for interactions with Autistic individuals? It became my mission to make sure they were.

Autism affects three areas of brain development that include social interaction, communication and repetitive or restrictive patterns of behaviours. As officers, deficits in these areas might draw our attention and prompt us to investigate further. Typical police procedures combined with characteristics of autism can cause misunderstandings that result in a negative interaction.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF AUTISTIC PEOPLE

Lack of eye contact: Making eye contact can be difficult for an Autistic person and is one of the easiest behaviours to identify. During an interaction, an Autistic person may look in the opposite direction, look through their peripheral vision, cover their eyes, or simply refuse to visually engage with the person interacting with them.

Lack of communication: A high percentage of Autistic people are non-verbal or have limited verbal skills, but that doesn't mean they can't understand basic language. They may "script," meaning they will recite lines from books, movies, or videos during a conversation. They may also repeat back precisely what is said to them, which is a phenomenon called echolalia.

Repetitive actions: For Autistic people, routines are "everything." This may include wearing specific clothing, taking a particular route, and even saying things in a very particular manner.

Stimming: Self-stimulatory behaviour, often referred to as "stimming," refers to repetitive actions such as hand flapping, rocking, spinning, or humming. These behaviours are used as calming techniques and used to regulate the body.

Sensory issues: Autistic individuals may be hypertensive (over) or hyposensitive (under) to certain senses. Fear of loud noises, bright lights and an aversion to touch are some of the most common sensory issues associated with autism.

Lack of a sense of danger: Autistic individuals may be unable to understand the dangers of a situation. An Autistic person may be found standing in the middle of traffic or entering a body of water without the ability to swim, for example.

Meltdowns: Meltdowns are not temper tantrums like those of neurotypical children. Meltdowns are usually triggered by overstimulation or the inability to communicate certain needs. Meltdowns may include aggressive behaviour, screaming, headbanging and biting. The duration of a meltdown can range from a few minutes to over an hour.

Elopement: Elopement is wandering away from a secure setting and may be a response to overstimulation (think flight, as in fight or flight) or the pursuit of some goal. In cases of elopement, first responders must treat these as critical incidents and use all available resources to locate the person as quickly as possible.

Personal boundaries: Autistic people may not understand personal boundaries. They may stand too close or may attempt to touch first responder equipment. For law enforcement officers this can be seen as a threat.

The two most common types of calls for service law enforcement officers may respond to are aggressive or unusual behaviours and elopement events. A major obstacle law enforcement may encounter is not being told that the person they will be dealing with has an autism diagnosis.

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT WHEN INTERACTING WITH AUTISTIC PEOPLE

Listen: If there are people around who know the person, listen to what they tell you. They may have important information about the person, such as they are non-verbal or are easily overwhelmed by certain situations.

Remember calm brings calm: If you approach the person calmly, use a calm voice and reassure them that you are there to help, they will model what they see and begin to de-escalate.

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Use clear concise, literal commands: Avoid repeatedly asking the same questions. It takes an Autistic person longer to process what you are saying. Ask a question and allow 10-15 seconds for them to respond. Try a “first/then” approach. For example: “First, I need you to stand up, then we can walk to my car.” They may not understand metaphors or sarcasm so use literal commands. Tell them what you are doing. Be specific. For example, “I am going to check your pockets” versus “I am going to pat you down.”

Avoid touching, if possible: Autistic people may be hypertensive to even the slightest touch. This may create a fight or flight response. If the situation dictates that you must touch them, warn them that you are going to touch them.

Reduce overstimulation: Turn off lights and sirens, turn down your radio and manage your back-up officers. Limit the number of people interacting with the person.

Do not interfere with stimming: Stimming is a form of self-regulation. If they are stimming and it is not an officer safety concern, allow them to continue. This includes allowing a person to pace.

Seek alternative forms of communication: Many Autistic people use alternative forms of communication, such as an iPad, American Sign Language, or picture exchange cards (PECS). Police departments can seek assistance from their local school districts in designing PECS cards related to law enforcement.

Create a special needs registry: Registering special needs citizens with their local police department provides vital information to responding officers before arriving. Officers can be given information such as diagnosis, de-escalation strategies or a person’s favourite places (in cases of elopement), which can lead to a more safe and positive interaction.

Seek training: We would never send our officers into a deadly force incident without proper training, why would we send them to calls with our most vulnerable citizens without proper training?

By adopting a proactive approach to educating officers about autism, police departments can enhance officer and public safety. They can also reduce their exposure to liability by recognizing behaviour/signs of autism and responding accordingly, practicing tolerance and patience, and following procedures that ensure the safety and cooperation of an Autistic person.



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The role of the Union Steward is to be a link and conduit of information between the Union members and the Union Executive Board.

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The next hearing of the Court case instituted by the Malta Police Union is on the 13th April 2023.

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Did you know?

1) Maternity Leave

A pregnant employee has a legal right to maternity leave. An employee is entitled to special maternity leave as long as the risk persists if she is pregnant, nursing, or has recently given birth and could be exposed to a risk at work that endangers her health and safety, the pregnancy, or the child.

If antenatal exams must be performed during the employee's working hours, she is also entitled to time off without pay or any other benefit to attend.

An employee who is pregnant may use maternity leave for a continuous period of eighteen (18) weeks. The employer pays wages for the first fourteen (14) weeks, but any additional weeks are not covered by this payment. This does not affect any payment rights that may arise under the Social Security Act about the additional weeks following the first fourteen (14) weeks.

As soon as it is reasonably practical, she must give her employer written notice at least four weeks prior to the start of the date she plans to use this entitlement. The employee is required to use six (6) weeks of the total entitlement as soon as possible following the date of confinement. Unless the employer and employee agree otherwise, a further four (4) weeks are to be taken right before the anticipated date of confinement. The employee may choose whether to use the remaining balance of the entitlement in full or in part immediately before or immediately after the aforementioned periods.

When maternity leave ends, the employee is entitled to return to the position she held at the beginning of the leave, or, if that position is no longer available, to one that is related.

2) Paternity Leave

Paternity leave from work is allowed to all employees who are equivalent second parents, on the occasion of the birth or the adoption of a child for the purposes of providing care.

The paternity leave is of ten (10) working days, to be taken immediately after the birth or the adoption of the child, without loss of wages.

The right to paternity leave shall not be subject to a period of work qualification or to a length of service qualification.



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Rise for Change Training Course

The Union is directing its members at the 12PD not to attend the course as directed in the letter received on the 4th February 2023.

We cannot understand how the lecturer will be online, and our members are asked to travel from Gozo to Malta to find a computer at the Academy to follow the course on their off duty.

DIRECTIVE WITHDRAWN - MATTER SETTLED

Gozo Channel Tickets [DIRECTIVE]

The Union informs that no employee is to buy ferry tickets from his own funds (even if to be reimbursed after) for the ferry crossing for the Police Vehicle and him/her self whilst on active duty.

The Police Force have tickets available for Police Officers when crossings between the Islands are required.

In regard, the Union direct its members at the 12PD and members required to cross the Channel not to buy ferry tickets using own funds for the Police Vehicle or own self, even if requested to do so.

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Spinach Risotto



Ingredients

- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 1 1/2 cup (300g) risotto rice, dry
- 5 cups (1.2L) vegetable stock
- 8 oz. (225g) spinach, frozen
- 3 oz. (85g) parmesan
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- salt and pepper

Prep Time

- Serves: 4
- Prep: 10 mins
- Cook: 30 mins

Nutrition per Serving

- 449 kcal
- 13g Fats
- 68g Carbs
- 14g Protein

Procedure

Heat the olive oil in a large pan over a medium heat. Add the onion and cook for about 5 minutes until softened. Next add in the rice and cook for a further 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Now lower the heat and add in the vegetable stock 1 cup at a time, stirring frequently. Wait until all the stock has been almost absorbed into the rice before adding the next cup. Keep repeating the process for about 16-18 minutes, until rice is cooked.

Stir in the spinach and cook until warmed through. Remove from the heat and stir in the parmesan cheese. Season to taste with a little more salt and pepper if necessary and serve immediately.



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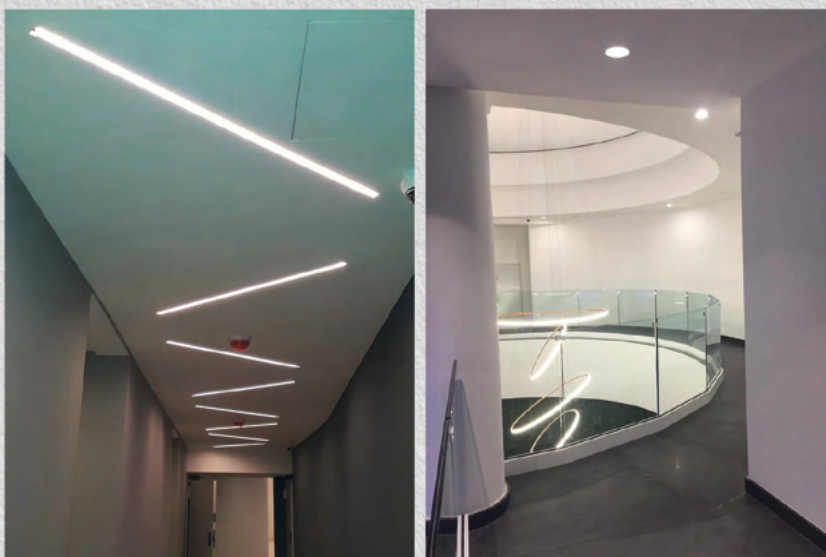


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