

**ICA WORKPLAN SEMINAR AT THE HOME TEAM ACADEMY –
SPEECH BY MRS JOSEPHINE TEO,
MINISTER, PRIME MINISTER’S OFFICE AND
SECOND MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS & MANPOWER,
26 APRIL 2018**

**Commissioner Clarence Yeo,
Friends and Colleagues from ICA and the Home Team,**

Introduction

1. Good morning, and thank you for inviting me to your Workplan Seminar.
2. ICA was formed only 15 years ago. Yet in this short time, you have established yourself as a global leader in border security.
 - a. Borderpol, the World Border Organisation, awarded ICA its inaugural “Excellence in Border Management Award”.
 - b. At the Asia Pacific Quality Organisation Conference 2016, ICA was one of only 15 international organisations awarded the highest accolade for world class quality performance.
 - c. Locally, ICA has won multiple accolades for innovation, exemplary service, and business excellence.
3. ICA’s achievements would not have been possible if not for its officers’ dedication, professionalism, and commitment to excellence and innovation.
4. Thank you all for your good work.

5. But ICA is also not exactly “very young”. Since the formation of ICA, the world around us has changed a great deal. It is thus timely for us to talk about what the new challenges look like, and what our responses ought to be.

Challenges: Terrorism

6. One of our key security threats, terrorism, is at its highest level in recent years.
 - a. Terrorists and extremist groups are making use of the Internet and online social media platforms to spread their propaganda and promote their causes.
 - b. We have to deal not just with radicalised Singaporeans, but foreign terrorist fighters and foreign radicalised individuals who may seek to get into Singapore. Our neighbouring countries have already suffered numerous plots and attacks. Singapore is a prized target for these foreign terrorists. We cannot let our guard down.
7. In such an environment, ICA officers’ role as Singapore’s first line of defence against foreign safety and security threats, has never been more critical.
8. Last year, ICA officers detected and turned away more than 280 travellers of security concern.
 - a. In one case, ICA officers detected a traveller with images of security concern in his phone. These images were of a shoe-bomb, as well as fighters from ISIS.
 - b. Three weeks ago, ICA officers at the sea checkpoint stopped a couple for interview, and uncovered their intention to travel to Syria. Our officers turned them back.
9. These cases underscore the importance of ICA’s work. It comes down to what our officers do on a daily basis. We must continue to be vigilant in our security screenings, but at the

National Archives of Singapore

same time, achieve an appropriate balance with enabling smooth and expeditious clearance for bona fide travellers.

Challenges: Increasing Demands and Manpower Constraints

10. Such balance is not easy to achieve, especially with our high traveller volumes.
 - a. 143 million travellers passed through our checkpoints in 2007.
 - b. In 2017, we saw 207 million travellers – an increase of more than 60 million, or about 45%, in just one decade.
 - c. The Singapore-Malaysia land border is the busiest in the world, with a few hundred thousand people crossing it every day.

11. It is not only at the checkpoints, but also at the services centres, where the load is growing.
 - a. The number of passports processed increased from about 440,000 in 2007 to 692,000 in 2017 – an increase of close to 60%.
 - b. Officers at our services centres have also had to manage additional visits as a result of the introduction last year of re-registration of NRIC for those who are 55 and older.

12. Several major infrastructure projects will be completed in the next 10 to 15 years, and these will add to ICA's load:
 - a. The first phase of a new and bigger port at Tuas will be operationalised around 2020.
 - b. About 5 years after that, we will see the KL-Singapore High Speed Rail and the Singapore-JB Rapid Transit Link, come into operation.

- c. Changi Airport Terminal 5 is expected to be completed by 2030. I was personally involved in the decision to develop Changi East, elevate the air hub that we have today into something of an even higher standing. We were challenged by the Ministry of Finance on whether we need such a big air hub and how to justify such heavy investment. We took a strategic position whether it was for the air hub, high speed rail and railway transit link. All of these are a statement of confidence for the future of Singapore. We have got to find a way to realise the vision in a way that is sustainable. We have to look at operational challenges which we will be confronted with.
13. At the same time, with Singapore's ageing population and national manpower constraints, we cannot meet these increasing demands by just growing ICA's workforce. It will not work, and therefore for all of us in particular, our border control and the way we operate must change. Our officers need to find new and more efficient ways to achieve our mission. We will need to do more with less.

Use of Technology

14. In this regard, technology is key. This journey should not be particularly difficult for ICA, as you already have a strong culture of technology innovation and adoption.
15. Last year, ICA was involved in a range of technology and process innovation projects, both at the checkpoints and services centres.
- a. One noteworthy example is the Fast and Seamless Travel concept for Terminal 4.
 - b. ICA worked with the Ministry of Transport and Changi Airport Group to fully automate departure access control and immigration clearance in T4. Those of you who have been to T4 would have experienced the convenience of this automation.
16. In 2018, ICA will continue to roll out new technology initiatives, such as:

- a. The use of radiographic scanning technology to detect hidden compartments in buses. This will replace manual checks, and will be starting at Tuas Checkpoint later this year.
 - b. By the end of the year, ICA will have piloted the Bioscreen Multi-Modal Biometrics System, which will enhance the automated immigration clearance process with additional biometrics – iris and facial recognition. This will reduce the need to refer travellers with unreadable fingerprints for manual checks.
17. Let me talk about what is potentially the biggest challenge but also where the biggest potential may lie.

Changing Role of ICA Officer

18. With extensive and effective use of technology, ICA officers can be freed up for higher value-added tasks.
19. For example, with the shift towards electronic submissions, officers deployed at the services centres will be relieved from handling repetitive administrative tasks. They can instead focus on managing complex cases.
20. Our officers need to respond immediately and effectively. The Immigration Act was amended towards this purpose in January this year. The amendments empower ICA officers within or in the vicinity of checkpoints with selected Police powers, such as powers of search and seizure, security screening, and arrest.
21. Indeed, technology and legislation can empower our officers to do so much more. But there is always a risk that reality does not match up to theory and vision. To fully realise the benefits of technology, our officers will need you, their leaders and co-workers, to guide them and fire up their imagination and enthusiasm, in particular to work differently than they do today.

22. ICA officers tasked with responding to security incidents at the checkpoints will have to undergo protective security training, which will include on-the-job attachments with their Police counterparts.
23. I am happy to update that the first batch has completed their training, and have been deployed at the sea checkpoints.
24. I am also glad that ICA has enhanced its training and learning capabilities.
 - a. One of the major moves was the formation of the ICA Training Command last year to oversee the training curriculum, policy, and management of ICA officers.
 - b. ICA has also launched a Professional Development Programme and Learning and Development Subsidy, to provide more development and training opportunities for ICA officers.
25. These efforts are very useful and are key enablers of an organisation that continuously asks itself - what are the other areas we can do better? And here, I would like to suggest some ideas for you to consider. For example:
 - a. At our services centres, can we work towards zero visits, or at most only one visit in the lifetime of every Singaporean, say, just for to the purpose of collecting his or her biometrics?
 - b. At our checkpoints, can we work towards a vision where Singaporeans would not need to produce their physical passport and boarding pass at all, but they will be recognised through their biometrics, and checks of the validity of their passport and boarding pass will all be performed at the backend?
26. How can we think out of the box to redefine every old problem as a new opportunity for a better future?

Conclusion

27. With these questions and suggestions, let me bring my speech to an end. I mentioned at the start that ICA has done very well in the past 15 years.
28. Moving forward, with the constraints and demands stemming from a more complex security landscape and lesser availability of manpower, ensuring that our borders will continue to be safe and secure will be ever more challenging.
29. Our biggest risk as a successful organisation may well be not changing fast enough. How do we avoid that? How do we get all our officers enthusiastic and committed to working differently? I would like to share with you a book that I read some time ago. It is a book written by Peter Block. The title of the book is “The Answer to How is Yes”. He wrote this book to describe the challenges that organisations encounter when they go through a period of transformation. And in fact, if you go to some business schools and ask them about the case studies and research, the chances of failure are much higher than success. Having worked with many organisations, Peter Block attempted to put down on paper in his book what he saw as the biggest impediment to successful transformation. He said when organisations go through transformation, their intentions are good, and they asked reasonable questions at all levels. The questions are typically ‘how’ questions. Sometimes they may not be the most important and profound questions to ask. In particular, two of them stood out for me, and I thought I would share them with you. One big question that is always asked is “how do we do it?” Before we ask the question of how to do it, the important question that we want to answer is “why should we do it?” It is a question of worth. Why is it worth our effort to do it? As ICA reaches the top of the game, who do we learn from? Who do we benchmark against? If we ask how other people have done it successfully, we would often draw a blank. We are already at the top of the game, can we really do better? So Peter Block’s suggestion is to ask ourselves what do we want to create together, that we care about that is better for the future. That is a question of ownership. This is ours to create. In the “Answer to How is Yes”, there are two important “Yes”s. First, yes, it is worth doing it. Second, yes, I own it. So I leave you with these two thoughts.

30. I am confident, however, that with our officers' professionalism, commitment, and openness to new ideas and improvements, ICA will rise to this challenge. ICA will be able to find the answer of worth and ownership. And, yes, it is for us to create this future together.
31. And on my part, I assure you that MHA is behind you all the way as you go through this very critical transformation, not just for ICA, not just for Home Team, but for Singapore.
32. I wish you a fruitful seminar. Thank you.

National Archives of Singapore