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Singapore strengthens trade ties with China

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FOSTERING TIES, ENHANCING STRENGTHS

In an increasingly globalised world, trade facilitation by customs administrations is not just about making their own procedures efficient, but also coordinating operations with other agencies and international counterparts to achieve better harmonisation and integration of procedures.

This is especially so for Singapore, whose open and free economy is reliant on the global supply chain for its continued prosperity and safety. Singapore Customs understands that to help local traders enjoy the same ease when moving their goods to and from trading partners around the world, our efforts at trade facilitation have to extend outside of the organisation and beyond our shores.

As an active member of the international trading community, Singapore promotes cooperation and engagement on a global level. In July 2012, Singapore Customs and the Ministry of Transport, together with the World Customs Organisation and International Civil Aviation Organisation, organised the first ever joint conference on air cargo security. This provided an opportunity for various industry players to share knowledge, understand each other's perspectives and discuss concrete ways to harness synergy.

Bilateral cooperation is equally important. Singapore and China recently signed a Mutual Recognition Arrangement of Authorised Economic Operator programme (AEO), where certified AEO traders of both countries can enjoy expedited clearance at importation, streamlined processes and time savings.

On a national level, Singapore Customs works closely with other government agencies to support the country's economic growth. With the new Offshore Marine Centre, Singapore Customs' facilitation goes a long way to nurture the thriving local marine and offshore engineering sector.

TAN ZI JIE
Editor



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Forging Global Partnerships to Strengthen Air Cargo Security

For the first time ever, the Ministry of Transport and Singapore Customs hosted the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and World Customs Organisation (WCO) Joint Conference on Enhancing Air Cargo Security and Facilitation on 5 and 6 July 2012, bringing together over 300 aviation security and customs authorities from 40 countries.



The joint conference brought together representatives from ICAO and WCO, as well as several local agencies. From left to right: Non-Resident Ambassador of Singapore to Panama and Cuba and Senior Specialist Adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mary Seet-Cheng, Singapore Customs Director-General Fong Yong Kian, WCO Secretary-General Kunio Mikuriya, Permanent Secretary (Transport) Pang Kin Keong, ICAO Secretary-General Raymond Benjamin, Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore Director-General Yap Ong Heng and Deputy Secretary (International) of Ministry of Transport Lee Yuen Hee.

In October 2010, air cargo packages containing bombs were seized at the airports in Dubai and the UK. Authorities had uncovered a plot to sabotage two air cargo aircraft using improvised explosive devices hidden in printer cartridges. The packages on the two planes were bound for the United States, but discovered at their respective stopover points in the UK and Dubai.

Although disaster was averted by the quick action and sharing of intelligence between authorities, the incident was an unmistakable sign of terrorists attempting to take advantage of perceived vulnerabilities in the aviation security system.

While the terrorist attempt underlines the need for more robust air cargo

security, the challenge lies in making sure the goods flow smoothly and efficiently without impeding global trade, all the while ensuring high security for air cargo.

Given the complexity, multi-modal and cross-border nature of the global supply chain, collaboration at multiple levels is essential.



Mr Raymond Benjamin, Secretary-General of ICAO urged customs authorities, aviation security regulators and industry members to join forces, to tackle the challenge of achieving end-to-end security in the global supply chain.



The two-day conference, held in Orchard Hotel Singapore, attracted participants from 40 countries such as China, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Germany and Nigeria.

“The responsibility cannot and should not be put on the shoulders of just any one actor alone, but must bring in all stakeholders,” said Mr Pang Kin Keong, Permanent Secretary (Transport) in his opening remarks at the conference.

“It is also unwise to place the onus and responsibility on just one node of the global supply chain. It will be less robust security-wise, and inefficient as it is more likely to create choke points,” Mr Pang added.

In the spirit of cooperation, Singapore Customs and the Ministry of Transport,

together with ICAO and WCO, organised the joint conference to bring together the international civil aviation and customs communities for the first time.

Themed ‘Enhancing Air Cargo Security and Facilitation – Synergy Through Cooperation’, the conference was also the first collaboration between ICAO, a specialised agency of the United Nations which promotes aviation security, and WCO, an independent international organisation which promotes the efficiency of customs administrations in facilitating cross-border trade.

More than 300 experts in aviation security, customs administration and the private sector from 40 countries met in Orchard Hotel Singapore to discuss and discover new, sustainable ways to raise the security of cargo, and facilitate its smooth and efficient movement across the globe. Other key players in the global supply chain such as the International Maritime Organisation and Postal Service Union were also in attendance.

COOPERATION IN A COMPLEX WORLD

Air cargo is a critical component of global trade and international civil aviation. According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), cargo carried on aircraft accounts for 35 per cent of all international trade by value. The sector supports some 32 million jobs and generates US\$3.5 trillion of economic activities globally. By the year 2030, IATA expects air cargo traffic to triple to an estimated 150 million tonnes. The ability to move goods securely and efficiently by air contributes significantly to international commerce and economic development.

Currently, aviation security and customs authorities work with operators to ensure that air cargo is subject to the required security and facilitation measures. Such measures may require the inspection of goods and conveyances by aviation security and customs authorities.

However, as aviation authorities and customs administrations have differing standards and requirements, freight companies need to adhere to multiple and often overlapping security standards. This leads to duplicate efforts and additional costs for freight companies.

For example, Annex 17 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (the Chicago Convention) sets out the ICAO’s standards and recommended practices for safeguarding civil aviation against unlawful interference. In addition, WCO’s Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE Framework) sets out the supply chain security and trade facilitation standards for customs administrations.

As such, the two-day conference was a forum for participants to explore

common challenges, and share ideas on how to harmonise standards and measures of aviation authorities and customs administrations at the international and national levels.

“Such collaboration is important because supply chain issues relate to both security and customs procedures. The requirements of aviation security and customs need to be considered at the same time,” said ICAO Secretary-General Raymond Benjamin. “When we coordinate our efforts in this way, we find synergies that can help us to streamline security processes and protect the flow of goods which the world’s economy has come to depend.”

In particular, WCO is keen to share its knowledge of the trading community to contribute to bettering overall supply chain security.

“Customs administrations are specialists in analysing cargo data,” said WCO Secretary-General Kunio Mikuriya. “Sharing of advance information and data could be useful for assessing the risk of air cargo for both customs and aviation regulators.”

Another way forward could be to align and mutually recognise the policy and regulatory frameworks of ICAO, WCO and other agencies to achieve synergy

and avoid duplication of security measures, thereby reducing the administrative burden for the private sector and regulators.

During a plenary session on ‘Harnessing Synergies at the National Level’, Singapore Customs’ Director-General Fong Yong Kian shared Singapore’s efforts to find common ground for both aviation and customs authorities. An inter-agency committee came together to study the possibilities of aligning and integrating various aspects of the Regulated Cargo Agent Regime managed by the Singapore Police Force and Singapore Customs’ Secure Trade Partnership programme. Mr Fong also presented the study committee’s next steps to look into the harmonisation of both programmes to provide greater convenience to the freight industry.

The conference constitutes a milestone in the partnership of the two international organisations. In June 2011, ICAO and WCO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), pledging to join forces to strengthen air cargo security.

At the end of the conference, ICAO and WCO issued a joint communiqué to pave the way forward for enhanced collaboration between both organisations, in securing air cargo from acts of unlawful interference,



Photo: MOT

In his keynote speech, WCO Secretary-General Kunio Mikuriya said WCO’s mission includes ensuring trade security globally by collaborating with other international bodies.

while facilitating the movement of goods by air worldwide. Building on the existing MOU, the communiqué reaffirmed both parties’ commitment towards working for the common goal of a secure and efficient air cargo supply chain.



Photo: MOT



Photo: MOT

Academics, experts from aviation authorities and customs administrations and industry leaders discussed the challenges faced by stakeholders and proposed ways to harmonise standards and measures at the national and international levels during the panel sessions.

The Way Forward

After two days of meaningful dialogue, ICAO and WCO issued a Joint Communiqué on Enhancing Air Cargo Security and Facilitation – Synergy Through Cooperation on 6 July 2012 to demonstrate both international organisations' commitment to coordinate efforts to further strengthen air cargo security and facilitation.

WCO Secretary-General Kunio Mikuriya hailed the conference as a "landmark" event which not only advanced the understanding between ICAO and WCO, but also allowed aviation, customs and private-sector stakeholders from all over the world to gain deeper insights into each other's procedures and systems.

The joint communiqué lists out a number of ways in which ICAO and WCO have agreed to work together. Some of these include:

For more information on the ICAO-WCO Joint Communiqué, please refer to the WCO website at www.wcoomd.org



Photo: MOT

Addressing the media, the Secretaries-General of ICAO and WCO said the joint conference has brought people from various industries and countries together, giving them an opportunity to speak and relate to one another on a personal level. This human network will enable the cooperation on national and international levels that is needed to address the complex issue of air cargo security.

- Enhance international cooperation to prevent acts of unlawful interference;
- Align policy and regulatory frameworks to achieve synergy, avoid duplications, and promote mutual recognition of air cargo security regimes and joint oversight activities;
- Encourage the sharing of information and best practices between all relevant parties in the air cargo supply chain.

"Our common objective is to have trade continue even in the event of any incident. We want to translate this common objective from the senior-management level to the national level. What counts is that at the national level, aviation and customs authorities are working together," said ICAO Secretary-General Raymond Benjamin during a media conference.

SINGAPORE'S NATIONAL COLLABORATION ON AIR CARGO SECURITY

In the final plenary session of the joint conference, Singapore Customs Director-General Fong Yong Kian related Singapore's experiences in studying the alignment of the national aviation security regime with the customs supply chain security programme.



Photo: MOT

"The air cargo supply chain is unique in many ways. Its comparative advantage lies in its speed, predictability and reliability. The stakeholders, both on the side of the government and the industry, have very high expectations of the security aspects versus the speed, reliability and predictability of the cargo flow," Mr Fong said.

Singapore saw the need for local authorities to work together to provide a one-stop national security arrangement for the air cargo industry. This would cut duplicate efforts and additional costs imposed on the industry by the aviation and customs regulators.

In December 2010, Singapore Customs, the Ministry of Transport, Singapore Police Force and other agencies came together to examine the possibility of

aligning, harmonising or integrating the different aspects of the national Regulated Cargo Agent Regime (RCAR) for aviation security, with Singapore Customs' Secure Trade Partnership (STP) programme.

Going forward, the study committee is considering harmonising the audit requirements on companies participating in both the RCAR and STP. This will reduce companies' burden of having to interact with and be audited by two different regulatory agencies. Mutual recognition of checks between the two agencies will mean that companies need only be audited once, saving them time and effort.

WCO Secretary-General Commends Singapore Customs' Contribution to Global Customs Community

On the sidelines of the recent Joint Conference on Enhancing Air Cargo Security and Facilitation, Secretary-General of the World Customs Organisation (WCO) Kunio Mikuriya shared with inSYNC his views on the role of customs administrations, cooperation between customs and traders, and Singapore's performance in facilitating global trade.



Secretary-General of the World Customs Organisation Kunio Mikuriya described Singapore Customs as one of the most advanced customs administrations in the world. Mr Mikuriya also complimented Singapore on its cooperative approach in bringing together different stakeholders to work on complex issues such as air cargo security.

inSYNC: What are the roles of WCO and customs administrations in today's globalised economy?

Mr Mikuriya: The World Customs Organisation (WCO) is an intergovernmental organisation that consists of 177 members. WCO's objective is to enhance efficiency and integrity of customs administrations through setting standards for customs procedures, promoting international cooperation, and providing capacity-building assistance to our members.

Customs has been, and still is, a revenue collection agency. Revenue collection is transaction-based, so customs administrations are deployed at the borders. What customs have been doing is fighting against illicit trade or rather protecting the community from the inflow and outflow of hazardous goods such as narcotics, fake medicine or other counterfeit goods which pose a direct threat to health and safety of citizens. Increasingly, especially after terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001, trade security has been added on our agenda.

inSYNC: What are some challenges faced by customs administrations?

Mr Mikuriya: Globally, risks are always present. Terrorists are not only targeting communities with explosives, they also need money for their activities. So they exploit illicit trade as a means to get illegal profits. In west Africa, terrorists are extensively involved in drug-trafficking. Often, organised crime and terrorist activities overlap. They try to corrupt customs and other revenue officers. In that way, they undermine the state authority. This is what we sometimes see in a fragile state.

Unfortunately these networks of terrorists and organised crime are not limited to one region; they are spreading all over the world. ASEAN is no exception. We have to be very determined to fight against illicit trade, because behind the scenes you can see the usual suspects. We try to mitigate those risks by working together to share intelligence between customs and other organisations. This is a continuous effort that never ends.

inSYNC: How do WCO and its member customs administrations fulfil the dual role of ensuring trade security while facilitating trade?

Mr Mikuriya: We take a risk-based approach. Based on the data customs administrations receive, we analyse the risks involved in the movement of cargo. Because the vast majority of trade is low-risk, we facilitate legitimate trade while we identify a very small number of high-risk cargo. We concentrate our limited resources on this area. This is how we ensure the smooth movement along the global supply chain of legitimate trade.

Traders have to see that they are partners in security and be more cooperative with aviation authorities, in the case of air cargo movement, and customs authorities. Security is part of an economy's competitiveness. Without security, you cannot really have great trade facilitation.

Customs administrations also develop their partnership with businesses in a concrete manner through the Authorised Economic Operators (AEO) programme. Once we identify trusted traders who can take care of their supply chain, we regard them as our security partners. We trust them and provide facilitation. Of course we check, audit and make sure that they remain trusted. This Customs-Business relationship remains important.

inSYNC: In addition to the AEO programme, WCO also advocates that member customs administrations sign mutual recognition arrangements (MRAs). What are the advantages of MRAs?

Mr Mikuriya: The benefits of the AEO programme is maximised by MRAs between countries. If an AEO-certified trader is authorised by one country, whether the goods are for importing, exporting or even transit, the MRA-partner country will also recognise it. So the advantages of being an AEO are very strong in this way.

Now, WCO is really pushing for support in MRAs and Singapore provides a very good example to the customs community.

You are one of the countries that have the most MRAs signed. Just recently, Singapore signed an MRA with China; it was China's first MRA. In that way, Singapore has shown its leadership in providing vision and support for China to open up and be on a level playing field.

inSYNC: How has Singapore Customs fared in terms of facilitating trade?

Mr Mikuriya: I think it is universally acknowledged that Singapore is very efficient. Recently the World Bank released its Logistics Performance indicators. As always, Singapore is at the top. Of course Singapore's geographical location as a transshipment port is different from landlocked countries. Naturally, you are in an advantageous position.

But Singapore is also one of the real examples that demonstrate coordination, collaboration and cooperation. Firstly, Singapore has a very good single-window system for sharing information among government agencies – you try to compare your own programmes and be complementary. For example, often national aviation authorities will say that aviation security is their area, and they don't need anybody else's help.

But in Singapore you are far-sighted, you think: "Okay, it is in the same trade area, especially when it comes to cargo, therefore why not work together?" And in that manner, Singapore's Ministry of Transport and Singapore Customs have started to compare programmes and find synergy in air cargo security. We can learn from several best practices in Singapore, not only on the technical level, but also on how political support can be garnered for cooperation.

inSYNC: What do you think of Singapore's role in the global customs community?

Mr Mikuriya: Singapore is really one of the most advanced customs administrations, not only in Asia but worldwide. So WCO has been providing best practices from Singapore to other countries. Singapore Customs Director-General Fong Yong Kian told me that almost every month he receives customs administrations from different parts of the world to learn about the work of Singapore Customs.

Singapore has also been very committed to WCO's SAFE Framework of Standards to secure and facilitate global trade. When Singapore chaired the APEC Trade Recovery Programme in 2009, you produced a good example. Trade recovery cannot be achieved by one agency, be it the port or customs, you will need coordinated efforts. I saw the value of that APEC product and quickly took it over – we adjusted the APEC Trade Recovery guidelines and incorporated it in WCO's SAFE Framework of Standards. We made the Singaporean product into a global one. So Singapore's contribution to the customs community is very visible.

Singapore Strengthens Trade Ties with China

Singapore and China's trade relations reached a new milestone with the signing of a mutual recognition arrangement on supply chain security between Singapore Customs and the General Administration of China Customs (GACC). The arrangement, which is China's first such agreement with another customs administration, will facilitate customs clearance for certified companies with robust security practices.



Director-General of Singapore Customs Fong Yong Kian and Vice Minister of the General Administration of China Customs Sun Yibiao (both seated), signed the China-Singapore MRA at the WCO Council Sessions in June 2012. The signing was witnessed by Chairperson of the WCO Council and Chairman of the Revenue Commissioners of Ireland, Josephine Feehily and WCO Secretary-General Kunio Mikuriya.

A mutual recognition arrangement (MRA) on supply chain security was signed between Singapore Customs and the General Administration of China Customs (GACC) during the 119th/120th World Customs Organisation (WCO) Council Sessions in Brussels, Belgium, on 30 June 2012. Singapore Customs Director-General Fong Yong Kian and Vice Minister of the GACC Sun Yibiao signed the MRA.

The MRA recognises the compatibility between the national Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) programmes in both countries – Singapore Customs' Secure Trade Partnership (STP) programme and the GACC's Measures of Classified Management of Enterprises programme. Companies that have been accorded AEO status for their robust security practices under these two

programmes will enjoy greater customs facilitations on both sides.

"As China is the second largest economy in the world and a major trading partner of Singapore, the signing of this arrangement is an important milestone for us," said Mr Fong. "Singapore Customs is very pleased to be the first customs administration to sign a mutual

recognition arrangement with China Customs.”

China was Singapore’s third largest trading partner in 2011, with a trade volume amounting to S\$101.4 billion. Top exports to China include electronic components, fuel oils and industrial chemicals while top imports from China to Singapore include electronic components and telephones.

The arrangement elevates trade facilitation and trade security of the two national AEO programmes to the international level. Thus, AEO companies can now enjoy faster customs clearance not only when exports leave their own country, but also when they arrive in the other MRA country. These companies can therefore better plan their cargo movements and enjoy savings in costs which would otherwise be incurred due to port delays.

Semiconductor manufacturer Infineon Technologies Asia Pacific welcomes the arrangement. Infineon’s Chief Financial & Compliance Officer Hans-Martin Stech considers the MRA an important milestone in the enhancement of supply chain security between Singapore and China.

“Companies like Infineon will benefit not only from the security aspect, but also from faster turn-around time and greater

reliability in deliveries,” he said. “The arrangement marks a significant step towards improving our customer satisfaction.”

Mr Lawrence Lim, Section Manager Logistics of AMD Singapore, another semiconductor manufacturer, said: “Currently our exports to China have been occasionally sampled for customs inspection. As our semiconductor components are sensitive towards static discharge and moisture, we primarily depend on elaborated packing such as use of antistatic materials and vacuum packing technique to protect our products.”

“Whenever shipments are sampled for customs inspections, this packing would be compromised. As a result, customers would reject the affected cartons, giving rise to the need for AMD to bring back the shipment and to send a replacement to the customer, at our own expense, not to mention the additional time required, which hurts our key performance indicators.”

To test out and fine tune the implementation procedures of the MRA, Singapore Customs will conduct a pilot with the Guangzhou Customs District of China from 1 September 2012, before the MRA is fully operationalised in the rest of China.

The Singapore-China MRA is the fourth bilateral arrangement that Singapore

has signed, but it is the first such arrangement for China. It is the latest of some 18 MRAs between customs administrations, based on the SAFE Framework developed and adopted by the WCO Council in June 2005. The SAFE Framework, which recognises the importance for customs to cooperate among each other and with their respective business communities, promotes effective risk assessment which allows customs administrations to balance security controls with trade facilitation.

Singapore is one of 166 customs administrations that have indicated their intent to implement the Framework. Besides China, it has signed MRAs with South Korea (2010), Canada (2010) and Japan (2011), and is in MRA discussions with the United States.

CHINA-SINGAPORE MRA PILOT

The pilot between Guangzhou Customs District of China and Singapore Customs will begin on 1 September 2012. The detailed procedures for STP-Plus companies to enjoy the benefits of mutual recognition are listed in Circular No. 11/2012 at www.customs.gov.sg

STP AND STP-PLUS CERTIFICATION

The Secure Trade Partnership (STP) is Singapore’s national AEO programme to implement the WCO SAFE Framework, which promotes effective risk assessment. Developed and administered by Singapore Customs, the STP was launched in May 2007 as a voluntary certification programme.

It encourages companies to adopt robust security measures in their trading operations, thereby contributing to a more secure global supply chain and preventing disruptions to the smooth flow of goods. The certified companies would be recognised as low-risk and thus enjoy more facilitation.

The STP is open to all supply-chain stakeholders, including importers, exporters, warehouse operators, transporters and terminal operators. Under the programme, participating companies are given structured guidance on developing, implementing, monitoring and reviewing their internal supply chain security measures and practices.

A year after introducing the STP, Singapore Customs found that many companies had in place robust security measures and best practices that exceeded the STP guidelines. They were ready to progress to the next level.

To strike a balance between allowing flexibility and tightening the security standards, Singapore Customs introduced, in October 2008, a new tier known as STP-Plus, whereby companies must meet all minimum criteria.

As of 31 May 2012, there are 86 STP companies, of which 52 are STP-Plus companies. STP companies contributed to approximately 18 per cent of Singapore’s total exports in 2011.

For more information on STP and STP-Plus, please refer to the Singapore Customs website www.customs.gov.sg under Secure Trade Partnership.

Planning for a Future-Ready ASEAN

As ASEAN turns 45, customs heads demonstrated their commitment to build progressive customs administrations and work towards realising the common goal of achieving ASEAN Economic Community in 2015 by endorsing a total of 15 five-year Strategic Plans of Customs Development in the annual ASEAN Customs Directors-General meeting.



The Customs Directors-General of ASEAN member states met in Manila from 5 to 8 June 2012.

Representatives from all 10 ASEAN countries convened in Manila for the 21st Meeting of the ASEAN Directors-General of Customs from 5 to 8 June 2012, hosted by the Philippine Commissioner of Bureau of Customs, Mr Rozzano Rufino Biazon.

The annual meeting is the driving force behind customs cooperation in the region. Mr Fong Yong Kian, Director-General of Singapore Customs, led the Singapore delegation to the meeting.

Among other developments, the Directors-General endorsed 15 Strategic Plans of Customs Development for the period 2011 to 2015.

In their third run since 2005, these five-year work plans detail the actual implementation of measures by ASEAN member states.

To bring about smoother facilitation to traders in the region, the work plans list concrete measures by member states to support customs integration and harmonisation within ASEAN.

Greater harmonisation of customs procedures within ASEAN countries will translate into higher efficiency and cost savings for traders doing business in the region.

The work plans, to name a few, are on Customs Valuation, Customs Clearance and Partnership with Businesses and the Trading Community. Eight of them were developed by the Customs Procedures and Trade Facilitation Working Group (CPTFWG), which is chaired by Singapore Customs.

Singapore Customs has also been re-appointed as the chair of the CPTFWG for another two-year term from 2012 to 2014.

Among other consultations, the meeting also involved a fruitful consultation between ASEAN and China, co-chaired by Singapore Customs Director-General Fong Yong Kian. The consultation discussed customs cooperation between ASEAN and China, measures taken by ASEAN and China to promote trade facilitation and the security of the international supply chain.

The customs chiefs also exchanged updates on recent developments related to trade and customs matters, especially those at the World Customs Organisation (WCO) and World Trade Organisation.

As global trade grows increasingly complex, ASEAN countries continue to cooperate on economic matters to achieve the shared vision of progress and development within the region. Come June 2013, Singapore Customs will play host to the next gathering of the customs heads to further this goal.

Facilitating the Growth of Singapore's Maritime Industry

To advance the growth of Singapore's thriving marine and offshore industry, Singapore Customs facilitates the import, export and transshipment activities at the new Offshore Marine Centre. The centre is an innovative infrastructure that helps businesses in the marine and offshore value chain gain savings in capital costs and allows for quick start-up.

Singapore Customs, in close cooperation with the centre's developer JTC Corporation and operator Jurong Port, is in charge of authorising the movement of specialised cargo at the new Offshore Marine Centre (OMC). With Singapore Customs' facilitation, businesses can now import, export and tranship oil and gas, offshore and marine-related cargo, and also export and tranship sea-stores.

A RISING STAR

The marine and offshore engineering industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in Singapore's economy. Its output in 2010 totalled S\$16 billion. The industry employed more than 90,000 workers in that same year.

Singapore is a key hub for the manufacturing of oil and gas equipment, and responsible for an estimated global market share of 20 per cent for ship repair, 70 per cent for jack-up rig builds, as well as for the conversion of tankers to floating production, storage and offloading units.

To maintain its leading position in the global marine and offshore market, Singapore is sharpening its competitive advantage by pioneering the common user OMC facility, which is specially designed to cater to the infrastructural needs of offshore equipment-makers.

BREAKING NEW GROUND

The OMC is a dedicated marine and offshore terminal with common multi-user facilities for businesses engaged in the manufacturing and fabrication



Photo: Jurong Port

The Offshore Marine Centre facility allows for the loading and unloading of maritime equipment, components and structures such as ship spares. With Singapore Customs' facilitation, marine and offshore businesses can now import, export and tranship cargo at the new terminal.

of offshore and marine equipment, components and heavy structures, as well as the loading, unloading and transportation of raw or finished products. The centre is an infrastructural innovation that optimises the limited waterfront space in land-scarce Singapore.

Businesses in the OMC can enjoy reduced capital costs and lower operating costs by using the shared waterfront facilities such as a common wharf, berthing services and a staging area.

"The OMC is an efficient plug-and-play infrastructure which allows our operations to start with minimal delay.

This is very helpful to SMEs like us," said Mr Victor Lim, Group Chief Executive Officer of engineering services provider Rotating Offshore Solutions.

By creatively extending the use of Singapore's waterfront resources, the OMC meets the growing demands of the marine and offshore equipment industry. In turn, this generates more high-value marine and offshore activities locally. By enabling the smooth and seamless flow of such maritime equipment, components and structures, Singapore Customs helps to maintain Singapore's strong position in the global marine and offshore industry.

A Meaningful Day Out

Committed to giving back to the community, Singapore Customs regularly organises activities to delight the residents of its adopted charity, the Bishan Home for the Intellectually Disabled. On 26 May 2012, Singapore Customs staff brought the home's residents to Bottle Tree Park for some fun under the sun.



Over 50 Customs volunteers and Bishan Home residents tried their hands at fishing and prawning at Bottle Tree Park.

On a bright Saturday morning, 26 volunteers from Singapore Customs gathered at Bishan Home. The blue skies reflected the group's buoyant spirits; some of the volunteers had been volunteering at Bishan Home for years and they were warmly greeted by the home's residents.

After a quick briefing by the home's coordinator Ms Chloe Lee, each Customs volunteer was paired with a resident, and the group set out to Bottle Tree Park in high spirits. On the bus ride there, the excitement felt by the residents was palpable. The group sang their favourite oldies as the bus made its way to Bottle Tree Park in Yishun.

Once they arrived, the group was greeted by luscious green scenery: the majestic bottle-shaped Bottle Trees among fruit trees, ferns and flowers, as well as several ponds teeming with prawns and fishes.

Amidst the idyllic surroundings, everyone took turns to fish and catch prawns from the ponds. The small fish were slippery and quite tricky to catch, but with the help of Customs volunteers, the residents managed to gather them into miniature fish tanks.

The residents also became explorers for the afternoon, bravely traversing the park on a treasure hunt along with

their friends from Customs. They were on a mission to spot flora and fauna of a certain colour, or that had names starting with different letters of the alphabet.

The Bottle Tree Park activities ended all too soon. After a brief photo-taking session, the group was ready for a walk to Lower Seletar Reservoir for lunch and games. However, the skies quickly turned grey and it began to drizzle.

The wet weather did nothing to dampen the group's spirits. In no time, everyone was singing and dancing in the pavilion at Bottle Tree Park. After a satisfying meal of the residents' favourite McDonald's fare such as Filet-O-Fish



Singapore Customs volunteers and residents mingled easily with one another, sharing jokes and posing for pictures together. Many Customs volunteers have continued to help out with Bishan Home residents for years.

and Chicken McNuggets, the group continued playing games. They had a merry time with London Bridge is Falling Down; everyone scrambled to escape the 'collapsing' bridge, drawing smiles and laughter all around.

The day's activities had to come to an eventual end. Despite being tired, the volunteers and residents were reluctant to part ways. Everyone continued to share stories, solve puzzle games and take photos together until the bus arrived to bring them back to Bishan Home.

For Singapore Customs staff volunteers, the day had been a meaningful one.

"I was encouraged by the actions of a resident – he did not give up trying to catch the fishes on his own despite of the physical challenges and many unsuccessful attempts. I shared his joy when he managed to overcome the difficulties and accomplished the tasks on his own," said Chief Information Officer Yeo Beng Huay.

Ms Raine Ng from the International Relations Branch, who has been volunteering for more than five years, said: "An outing to the Bottle Tree

Park may be a typical weekend activity for us. However, to the Bishan Home residents, each outing is a treasured moment as they spend a large part of their lives at the Home. I enjoy each outing, to befriend and help induct them back into the community as much as possible. It is also an opportunity for me to learn and grow from the process; a reminder of the privileged life I lead."

SINGAPORE CUSTOMS' ADOPTED CHARITY

Since 2001, Singapore Customs has adopted the Bishan Home for the Intellectually Disabled as part of its community engagement programme. It believes in fostering relations with the community to bring people and organisation closer together. Singapore Customs encourages its staff to participate actively in community work and service. For the past 11 years, the Staff Well-Being Committee has organised various activities for the home's residents, with the enthusiastic support of its staff volunteers.



Wet weather did not dampen the spirits of Bishan Home residents or their friends from Singapore Customs. Instead of journeying to Lower Seletar Reservoir, the group stayed on in Bottle Tree Park and had a blast singing and dancing, as well as playing games such as London Bridge is Falling Down.

TRAINING CALENDAR

Programme	Dates
<p>SC100 BASICS OF EVERY DECLARANT</p> <p>This three-day course provides trade declarants with an overview of customs procedures pertaining to the import and export of goods, the basic requirements for preparing TradeNet declarations, classification of goods, and the rules of origin.</p> <p>The course comprises three modules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC101 Customs Procedures (2 days) • SC102 Classification and the Harmonised System (Half day) • SC103 Rules of Origin / Free Trade Agreements (Half day) <p>Participants may register for individual modules.</p>	<p>5 – 7 Sep 2012</p> <p>17 & 18 Sep 2012 (SC101 only)</p> <p>3 – 5 Oct 2012</p>
<p>SC200 STRATEGIC GOODS CONTROL PROGRAMME</p> <p>This one-day seminar provides an overview of Singapore's strategic goods control system and its regulations, registration procedures and permit requirements for strategic goods transactions, as well as the essentials of an internal (export control) compliance programme.</p> <p>The seminar comprises two modules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC201 Basics of Strategic Goods Control (Half day) • SC202 Essentials of Internal (Export Control) Compliance Programme (Half day) <p>Participants may register for individual modules.</p>	<p>31 Aug 2012</p> <p>19 Sep 2012</p> <p>19 Oct 2012</p>
<p>TRADERS CLINICS</p> <p>These monthly one-on-one consultation sessions provide an avenue for traders to seek advice and provide feedback on general customs procedures and services.</p>	<p>26 & 27 Sep 2012</p> <p>24 & 25 Oct 2012</p>
<p>OUTREACH PROGRAMME FOR NEWLY-REGISTERED TRADERS</p> <p>This quarterly programme is designed to equip new traders with a better understanding of customs documentation procedures, as well as the various customs schemes and services available. For enquiries, please call 6355 2000 or email customs_documentation@customs.gov.sg</p>	<p>18 Sep 2012</p> <p>26 Dec 2012</p>
<p>OUTREACH PROGRAMME FOR NEWLY-REGISTERED MANUFACTURERS</p> <p>This bimonthly programme is designed to equip newly-registered manufacturers with a better understanding of the Rules of Origin under Singapore's Free Trade Agreements, the application procedures for Certificates of Origin, and the compliance requirements. For enquiries, please email customs_roo@customs.gov.sg</p>	<p>17 Oct 2012</p>

Please note that dates are subject to change. For full programme and registration details, please refer to www.customsacademy.gov.sg



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