

SINGAPORE COUNTRY PROGRESS REPORT ON DRUG CONTROL



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Singapore has maintained its status as a relatively drug-free society. Despite our close proximity to the Golden Triangle, tough anti-drug laws and vigorous enforcement have kept major drug syndicates from establishing themselves in Singapore. The Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) is the coordinating and enforcement body for all matters pertaining to drugs in Singapore, and remains vigilant against any emerging threat to the local drug situation.
2. Since 2007, the number of drug abusers arrested has remained stable. The trend over the decade has been declining on the whole. 1,805 drug abusers were arrested in 2010, a 4% decrease compared to 2009. Repeat abusers continued to make up majority of total abusers arrested at 70%. 539 new abuses were arrested in 2010, a 3% decrease compared to 2009. Heroin and methamphetamine were the main drugs of abuse, accounting for 87% of drug abuser arrests in 2010.
3. Drug traffickers in Singapore generally operate on a small scale with the majority of them trafficking drugs in small amounts. They rely mainly on traditional methods of transactions involving cash and drug exchange between the seller and buyer. Syndicated drug trafficking activities have also been kept in check by rigorous and effective enforcement conducted by CNB.
4. Singapore's national blueprint in tackling the drug problem is a holistic, multi-pronged and multi-agency approach comprising of four main strategies: (i) preventive drug education, or PDE; tough anti-drug laws and vigorous enforcements against drug offenders; (iii) treatment and rehabilitation for all drug abusers; and (iv) continued aftercare. All of these strategies aim to reduce the demand and supply of drugs in Singapore.
5. We recognise that the drug situation in every country is unique and we respect other countries' decision to employ whatever strategies they deem suitable to deal with the issues they face. Singapore is in favour of harm prevention, which undergirds our zero tolerance policy against drugs. We do not advocate harm reduction measures that condone and facilitate drug taking, as it contradicts with our national values. Our approach has been validated by practical success; the number of drug abusers arrested has decreased significantly from 6,165 in 1994 to 1,805 in 2010 – a decrease of more than 70%.

INTRODUCTION

6. Singapore has maintained its status as a relatively drug-free society due to the tough stance it has adopted against drug trafficking and consumption. Despite the Republic's vulnerability to the drug scourge due to its close proximity to the Golden Triangle, tough laws and vigorous enforcement have kept the local drug situation under control.

DRUG SITUATION

7. The drug threat has been contained in Singapore. There are no areas where drugs are openly sold or blatantly abused.

Abuse Situation

8. 1,805 drug abusers were arrested in 2010, a 4% decrease compared to 2009 when 1,883 drug abusers were arrested. Repeat abusers continued to make up majority of total abusers arrested at 70%.

9. 539 new abuses were arrested in 2010, a 3% decrease compared to 2009 when 553 new abusers were arrested. The number of new abusers arrested remained low and stable. They formed 30% of total abusers arrested in 2010.

10. With the classification of buprenorphine as a controlled drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act in Aug 2006, the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) has enhanced enforcement against buprenorphine abuse. This has enabled us to rein in a significant number of buprenorphine abusers. In 2007, 841 buprenorphine abusers were arrested, which made up the largest proportion of total drug abusers arrested at 38%. However in 2010 only 44 buprenorphine abusers were arrested, accounting for only 2% of total drug abusers arrested.

11. Heroin was the most commonly abused drug in Singapore in 2010, accounting for 66% of total drug abusers arrested. 1,196 heroin abusers were arrested in 2010, an 11% increase when compared to the previous year. There was also a 39% increase in the number of new heroin abusers arrested in 2010 when compared to 2009.

12. Methamphetamine abusers made up the second largest proportion of drug abusers arrested in 2010 at 21%, presenting another challenge for CNB. As compared to 2009, there was a 7% increase in the total number of methamphetamine abusers arrested and a 14% increase in the number of new methamphetamine abusers arrested in 2010.

Trafficking Situation

13. The drug traffickers in Singapore generally operate on a small scale with the majority of them trafficking drugs in small amounts. The drug traffickers in Singapore are mostly small bands of people who come together to traffic drugs and their association with each other is often loosely based on friendship or mutual gain. They rely mainly on traditional methods of transactions involving cash and drug exchange between the seller and buyer.

14. Syndicated drug trafficking activities have also been kept in check by rigorous and effective enforcement conducted by CNB. As such these syndicates are relatively less sophisticated and structured compared to organised drug syndicates or cartels in some countries. CNB's sustained enforcement efforts resulted in the break-up of 22 drug syndicates in 2010.

15. Illicit drugs are mainly brought into Singapore via the land route. They are usually found hidden on the person, although some of the larger drug seizures had been found hidden in the specially constructed compartments of motor vehicles.

16. The number of drug traffickers arrested for the unauthorised importation or exportation of drugs across our national borders has remained relatively small over the years. For the year 2010, the following amount of drugs were seized: 49.02kg of heroin, 8.53kg of cannabis, 8,085 tablets of 'Ecstasy', 5.59kg of methamphetamine ('Ice'), 352 methamphetamine tablets ('Yaba'), 12.15kg of ketamine, 43,504 nimetazepam tablets, and 296 buprenorphine tablets (Subutex).

ANTI-DRUG STRATEGY

17. Singapore's anti-drug strategy is targeted at reducing both drug supply and demand. To this end, a multi-pronged approach is adopted, comprising of tough legislation, vigorous enforcement, intensive preventive drug education and co-ordinated rehabilitation as well as aftercare in its fight against drugs.

LEGISLATION

Drug Trafficking

18. The Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA), the main legislation for drug crimes, is a potent weapon that assists CNB in our fight against the drug scourge. The Act, which came into force in 1973 provides for the compulsory committal of drug abusers to a Drug Rehabilitation Centre (DRC) for treatment as well as enhances the punishment for those arrested for trafficking in controlled drugs. In 1975, the Act was amended to incorporate

the death penalty for trafficking in more than 30 grams of morphine and 15 grams of heroin. In 1989, the Act was further amended to include the death penalty for trafficking in more than 1.2 kg of opium, 30 grams of cocaine, 500 grams of cannabis, and 200 grams of cannabis resin. The Act was again amended to include the death penalty for trafficking in more than 1kg of cannabis mixture in 1993, and for more than 250 grams of methamphetamine in 1998.

19. The MDA also provides for the presumption clause for trafficking. This clause places the onus of proof on the defendant to dispute the charge of possession for the purposes of trafficking for specified amounts of opium, morphine, heroin, cannabis (including cannabis mixture and cannabis resin), cocaine, methamphetamine, ketamine and MDMA ('Ecstasy').

Precursor Control

20. The MDA prohibits the manufacture, distribution and possession of controlled substances useful for producing drugs (precursor chemicals) without proper authorisation. This offence carries a punishment of up to 20 years imprisonment, \$200,000 fine or both.

21. In addition, the MDA provides for strict regulations on controlled substances. For example, traders are required under the regulations to maintain records of all transactions involving controlled substances for a period of 2 years. They have to inform CNB concerning the storage of precursor chemicals. It also specifies that all containers of precursor chemicals must be properly marked and labelled. Failure to comply with the regulations may result in punishment of up to 3 years imprisonment, \$10,000 fine or both.

Drug Abuse

22. Drug abusers arrested for the first and second times would be given a chance and sent for treatment and rehabilitation at a Drug Rehabilitation Centre (DRC). Committal to a DRC does not amount to a criminal record. However, if an abuser is arrested for the third time or more for drug consumption, he/she would be liable for the Long Term Imprisonment or LT Regime. The LT regime was implemented in 1998. It provides for 5 to 7 years and 3 to 6 strokes of the cane for abusers arrested for the third time or more (LT1), and 7 to 13 years and 6 to 12 strokes of the case for abusers who are caught again after serving LT1.

23. In July 2005, the drug rehabilitation programme was extended to abusers of methamphetamine, ketamine, 'Ecstasy' and nimetazepam. In Aug 2006, the programme was also introduced for buprenorphine abusers. In Aug 2007, the programme was extended to cocaine and cannabis abusers.

24. The Long Term imprisonment (LT) regime for recalcitrant opiate abusers was extended to recalcitrant abusers of methamphetamine, ketamine, ‘Ecstasy’ and nimetazepam on 1 Mar 2006, buprenorphine on 1 Oct 2006 and cocaine and cannabis on 1 Aug 2007.

Confiscation of Benefits

25. Despite our tough laws and heavy penalties, there are still many who are prepared to wager their lives to embark on drug trafficking ventures. The lure of high profits is the main incentive behind drug trafficking. To deprive the traffickers of their ill-gotten gains, the Drug Trafficking (Confiscation of Benefits) Act came into operation on 30 November 1993. The Act was renamed the Corruption, Drug Trafficking and other Serious Crimes (Confiscation of Benefits) Act in September 1999. This Act enables the authorities to trace, freeze and confiscate the assets of convicted drug traffickers. The Act also makes the laundering of drug proceeds an offence.

ENFORCEMENT

26. CNB is the premier drug enforcement agency in Singapore. CNB’s vision is to be a leading and dynamic law enforcement agency in the fight against drugs and to make Singapore drug-free. CNB’s strategy against drug trafficking is to detect and arrest all local traffickers before they band together and develop into large-scale and sophisticated players in the drug scene. To this end, CNB officers conduct periodic operations against drug suppliers, street pushers and drug addicts to curb the supply of drugs in Singapore. Stiff penalties are meted out to punish those who disregard the law and to deter others from committing the same offence. In addition, close and strategic collaboration with our foreign counterparts remain critical in CNB's fight against cross-border drug trafficking.

PREVENTIVE EDUCATION

27. The success of preventive education programmes is pivotal in the fight against drug abuse. In 1994, CNB became the lead agency for Preventive Drug Education (PDE) on a national scale. Since then, our Preventive Education Unit (PEU) has been carrying out a series of anti-drug programmes directed both generally at students and also specifically at high-risk students and youths.

28. CNB collaborates with the National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA) in these anti-drug programmes and also works with all self-help groups from the Chinese, Malay and Indian communities, as well as with religious and volunteer groups. The focus is on school-based projects such as visits to DRCs, talks by CNB officers during school assemblies, adventure learning camps, anti-drug abuse weeks and preventive drug

education seminars for both teachers and students. Seminars, workshops and developmental activities are constantly organised by these groups to involve the young in healthy activities. CNB also works closely with the Ministry for Education to identify high-risk youths to be selected for drug prevention programmes. There is also close cooperation with other non-governmental organisations such as the Singapore Anti Narcotics Association (SANA) and halfway houses.

TREATMENT & REHABILITATION

29. Singapore adopts a compulsory treatment and rehabilitation regime for abusers of all commonly abused drugs including opiates, amphetamine-type stimulants, hallucinogens, central nervous system depressants, cocaine and cannabis. The Director of CNB is empowered under the MDA to commit drug addicts to DRCs administered by the Singapore Prison Service (SPS). Suspected drug abusers are subjected to instant urine tests (IUT) and positive urine samples are sent for verification to the Illicit Drugs and Toxicology Division of the Health Sciences Authority. Upon confirmation of the IUT results, the drug abusers are admitted to a DRC for compulsory treatment and rehabilitation. The DRC regime includes an initial detoxification phase and programs to instill discipline, social responsibility and good work ethics in the addicts so as to enable them to function as useful citizens. Upon discharge from the DRC, they are also placed on compulsory 2-year drug supervision under CNB. Regular urine tests are conducted on the supervisees to detect drug consumption. If their urine specimen is found to be positive, they will be referred back to the DRC.

30. The Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE) is a key partner of SPS in inmate rehabilitation. To enhance employability of former drug abusers, SCORE gets them “Ready for Work” by working with SPS to administer the Vocational Training Programme and Work Programme to impart employability skills and positive work ethics while the inmates are detained in the DRCs. Thereafter, SCORE ensures that “Work is Ready” for the former drug abusers when they are released. SCORE has an Employment Assistance Unit set up to match ex-offenders with employers who are willing to offer them second chances.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

31. CNB recognises that cooperation with its regional and international counterparts goes a long way to stem the flow of such drugs into Singapore. In this regard, CNB cooperates actively with foreign law enforcement agencies on a bilateral basis. Such cooperation can range from the exchange of information and intelligence to joint investigations and operations. Other collaborations with our counterparts include conducting joint-training courses so that officers from participant countries can benefit

from the sharing of best practices and experiences. Much of CNB's success in fighting drugs would not have been possible without such bilateral cooperation.

32. CNB works closely with the regional drug law enforcement agencies as well as the US Drug Enforcement Administration and the Australian Federal Police. CNB also maintains liaison contacts with the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organisation's Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO), through its Asia and the Pacific office. In addition, CNB has been a member of the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)'s International Drug Enforcement Conference (IDEC) since 2007.

33. CNB also participates in the Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), the ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD) meetings and the ASEAN-China Cooperative Operations in Response to Dangerous Drug (ACCORD) meetings to keep abreast of developments in the regional drug situation and show our commitment to the regional anti-drug fight.

34. Singapore is also a party to all three multilateral Conventions aimed at fighting the drug problem, namely, the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances and the 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances

CONCLUSION

35. The stable drug situation in Singapore is a testament to the success of the efforts to implement the total strategy of demand and supply reduction in the Republic. However, the fluidity of the drug situation means that new varieties of drugs may enter our drug scene and the challenge is to ensure that new drugs of abuse are detected at the earliest possible instance. In this regard, CNB has enhanced its intelligence, enforcement and drug detection capabilities. Armed with stiff penalties and preventive education programme, CNB will continue to maintain a tough stance against drug traffickers and abusers.

CENTRAL NARCOTICS BUREAU MAY 2011

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