



NEWS RELEASE

ANNUAL STATISTICS 2019

Volume Of Travellers And Cargoes Cleared At The Checkpoints Increased

In 2019, the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) cleared over 217 million travellers and 10.6 million consignments, containers and parcels. This is about five million more travellers and 300,000 more cargoes cleared compared to 2018.

	2018	2019	
Number of travellers cleared	212,382,779	217,398,276	2.4% ▲
Number of cargoes cleared	10,338,097	10,666,318	3.2% ▲

2 The volume of travellers and cargoes clearing through our checkpoints has been increasing steadily. Between 2015¹ and 2019, the number of travellers and cargoes cleared by ICA increased by 10.2% and 20% respectively.

3 The increase in cargoes was mainly attributed to the increase in parcels, which grew 5.7%, from 6,141,276 in 2018 to 6,493,162 in 2019. This reflects the growing popularity of e-commerce and online shopping, and the growth is likely to persist.

4 ICA will continue to develop effective strategies and look for innovative ways to facilitate the movement of people and cargoes, while ensuring that our borders remain

¹ ICA cleared 197,354,520 travellers and 8,889,802 cargoes in 2015.

secure. These include redesigning and enhancing workflows, investing in better technology to support these enhanced workflows, and training ICA officers to harness such technologies.


5 For example, we have begun to invest in infrastructure and systems that will allow more travellers to benefit from automated clearance. Since December 2016, ICA has installed 164 automated clearance lanes at the Woodlands and Tuas Checkpoints, which has helped increase the clearance speed of motorcyclists by 30%. ICA also commenced contactless clearance trials at Tuas Checkpoint and Changi Airport in April and November 2019 respectively to enhance clearance efficiency and better authenticate travellers' identities.

6 These measures have enabled ICA to clear more travellers. The proportion of travellers cleared through automated lanes increased from 49% in 2017 to 55% in 2019. This is expected to increase as ICA develops our New Clearance Concept², which aims to provide a seamless and efficient immigration clearance experience for all travellers by 2022.

Number Of Immigration Offenders Arrested Declined

7 In 2019, ICA mounted more than 100 operations per month to detect and remove immigration offenders (IOs) from Singapore, as part of sustained enforcement efforts inland and at the checkpoints. The total number of IOs arrested³ last year decreased by about 13%, from 1,071 in 2018 to 932 in 2019. Specifically, there was a decrease in the numbers of overstayers (by 14.5%) and illegal immigrants (by 2.3%) arrested.

	2018	2019
Illegal immigrants arrested	131	128
Overstayers arrested	940	804
Total immigration offenders arrested	1,071	932

13% 

² Announced in May 2019, New Clearance Concept (NCC) is a suite of initiatives that will be rolled out progressively by ICA to transform the immigration clearance experience. The NCC will leverage advance arrival information, data analytics and biometrics to allow travelers to use automated immigration gates.

³ The number of IOs arrested comprises those arrested inland and at the checkpoints.

8 Despite the challenge of a growing traveller volume, ICA has kept the IO situation under control through a combination of enforcement efforts and use of technology. At the checkpoints, our biometric identification system scans all travellers' fingerprints to more effectively detect IOs who are attempting to use someone else's identity or a false identity.

9 As ICA explores new technologies to enhance our immigration clearance, we are also enhancing our officers' training to better equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to assess and detect IOs at the checkpoints.

Case #1 – Three Malaysians convicted for attempting to smuggle a Myanmar immigration offender out of Singapore

10 On 28 February 2019⁴, ICA officers stopped a departing Malaysia-registered car for checks at Woodlands Checkpoint. While performing checks, officers found a female Myanmar immigration offender hiding in the car boot. ICA officers spotted a second car idling at the post-immigration area and swiftly intercepted the car for further checks.

11 Subsequent investigations revealed that three female Malaysians were involved in the illegal conveyance of the Myanmar immigration offender. The trio, who were in the two cars, had planned for one car to convey the immigration offender, while the second car monitored the situation.

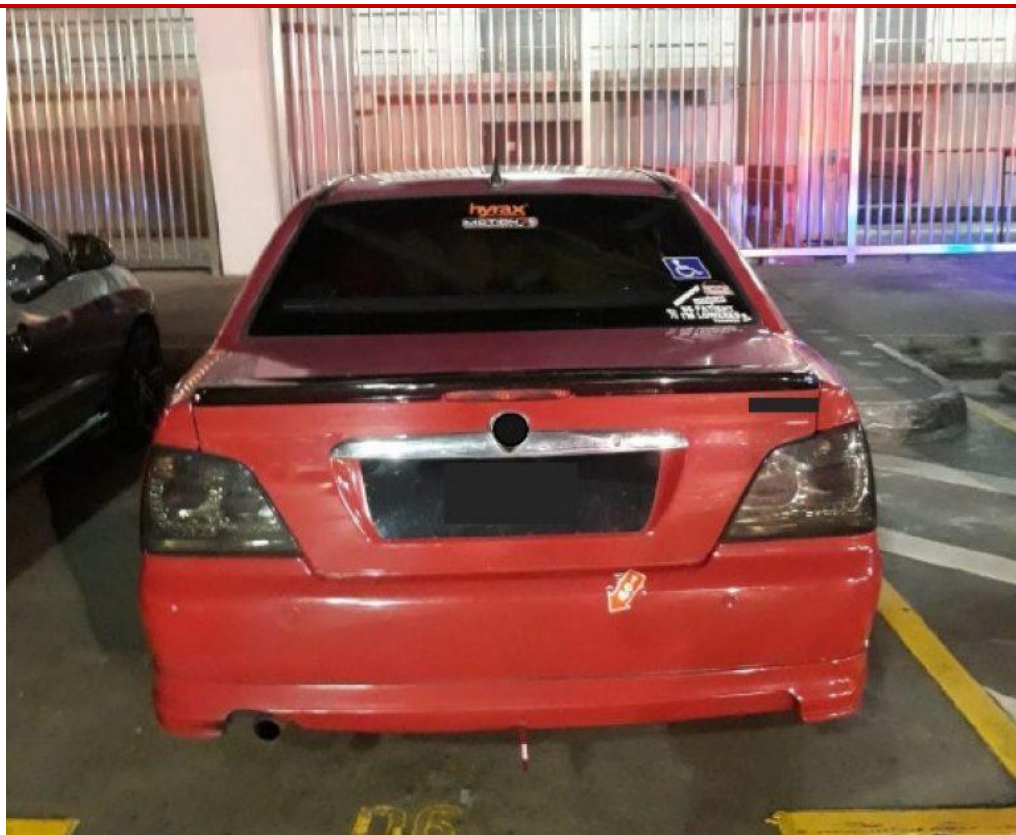
12 The Myanmar immigration offender was sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment and fined S\$1,500 on 15 March 2019 for offences of illegal entry and attempted illegal departure. The three female Malaysians were each sentenced to two years and three weeks' imprisonment on 12 April 2019 for engaging in the business of conveying a prohibited immigrant out of Singapore. The keen operational instinct of the ICA officers manning the checkpoint led to the detection of this case.

⁴ ICA's news release, "Four Malaysians arrested for attempting to smuggle a woman out of Singapore illegally" was issued on 4 March 2019.



The Myanmar national hiding in the boot of a car

Photo: ICA



The second car that monitored the situation

Photo: ICA

Case #2 – 56 Myanmar and Indian nationals working illegally at cemeteries convicted for immigration-related offences

13 In 2019, a total of 56 Myanmar and Indian nationals found working illegally at cemeteries were convicted for overstaying and illegal entry into Singapore. 39 of them were arrested by ICA at the Choa Chu Kang cemetery during a series of operations that were conducted jointly with the Ministry of Manpower from February to November 2019. They were staying in illegal structures at the cemetery, which were dismantled following the operations.

14 The other 17 immigration offenders comprised illegally employed grave diggers arrested in the vicinity of other cemeteries, as well as those who surrendered to ICA because they were not able to continue their illegal employment due to ICA's sustained enforcement efforts.



Number Of Harbourers Of Immigration Offenders Decreased, But Employers Of Immigration Offenders Increased

15 The total number of harbourers and employers (H/Es) of IOs arrested in 2019 decreased slightly by about 1.8%, from 340 in 2018 to 334 in 2019.

	2018	2019	
Harbourers of IOs arrested	282	248	
Employers of IOs arrested	58	86	
Total	340	334	1.8% ▼

16 The IOs employed by these errant employers were mostly working in the maintenance and F&B industries. While the arrests of such employers increased, there was a drop in the arrests of harbourers of IOs, from 282 in 2018 to 248 in 2019.

17 Most of the H/Es arrested had failed to exercise due diligence to conduct the necessary checks on the foreigners' immigration statuses, before employing them or renting their premises to the IOs.

18 IOs pose a security risk and may turn to crimes to sustain their livelihood in Singapore. We seek the public's and employers' cooperation to deny IOs shelter and jobs, and to report suspected cases quickly to ICA. ICA will continue to work closely with other enforcement agencies to conduct operations against IOs hiding in non-residential premises like forested areas or cemeteries.

Three mandatory checks to conduct when you rent your premises out:

- (a) Check the tenant's original immigration/work pass;
- (b) Cross check the particulars on his/her pass against the particulars on his/her original passport; and
- (c) Verify the validity of his/her pass by checking with the issuing authority (i.e. Ministry of Manpower for work passes at checkwpstatus.mom.gov.sg or download the SGWorkPass mobile application; and ICA for other immigration passes such as the Student's Pass and Long Term Visit Pass at eservices.ica.gov.sg/ipienquiry/web/verifi/landing).

Case #3 – Singaporean sentenced to eight months' imprisonment for employing and harbouring overstayers

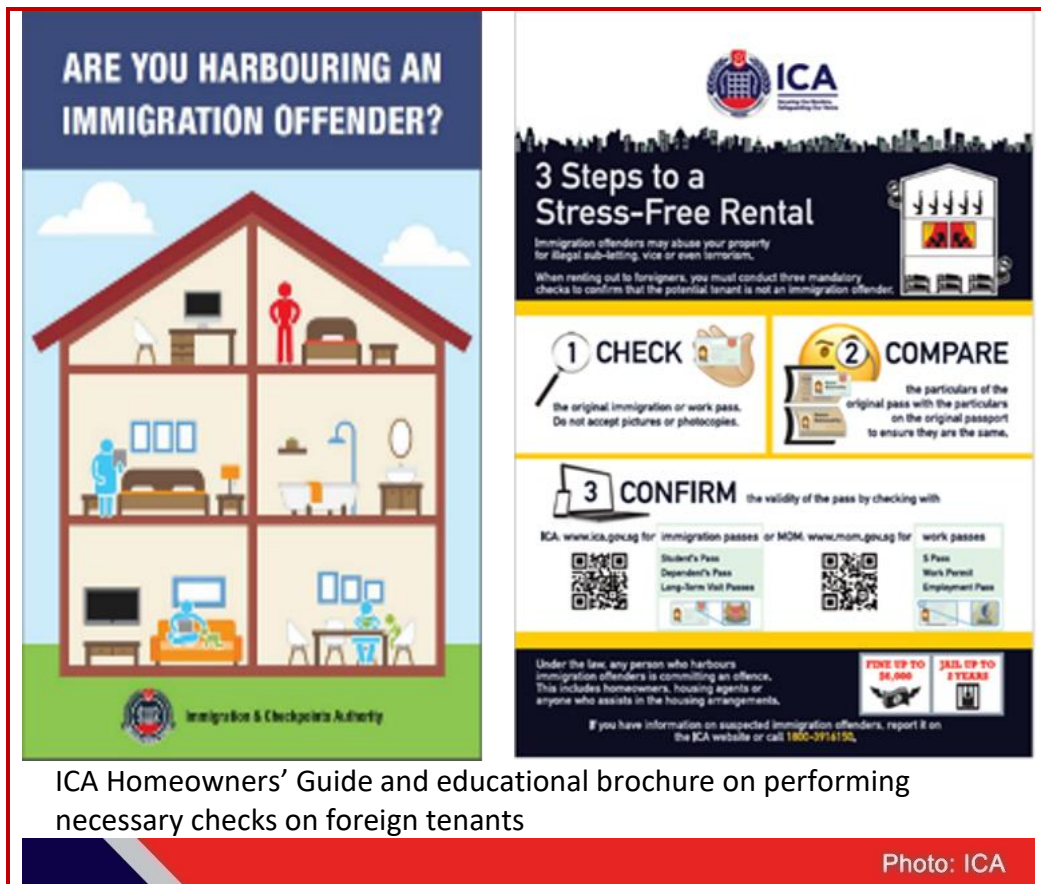
19 On 14 January 2019, ICA officers arrested a 62-year-old male Singaporean, Yousof Khan, for employing and harbouring two overstayers. At the time of arrest, Yousof was the owner of Khan Restaurant Private Limited.

20 Prior to Yousof's arrest, ICA officers had arrested a male Bangladesh national and a male Sri Lanka national at Khan Restaurant for overstaying. Both of them were charged and convicted for overstaying.

21 Investigations revealed that Yousof had employed the two IOs as a general worker and a cook at Khan Restaurant. Yousof did not carry out the necessary checks to verify if their stay in Singapore was lawful. Yousof had also allowed one of them to live in the unit located above the restaurant. Yousof was sentenced to eight months' imprisonment on 30 October 2019 for employing and harbouring immigration offenders.

Public Education Initiatives and Media Publicity to Raise Awareness Against Harboursing And Employment Of IOs

22 ICA conducts public education initiatives against harbouring and employing IOs, such as through the distribution of collaterals such as the Homeowner's Guide. ICA also makes use of mass media platforms and our networks to raise public awareness against harbouring of IOs and their illegal employment.



Contraband Cases Detected At The Checkpoints Declined

23 The number of contraband cases detected at ICA's checkpoints decreased by 14.4%, from 107,771 in 2018 to 92,292 in 2019.

	2018	2019	
Total number of cases detected	107,771	92,292	14.4% ▼

24 While the number of contraband cases detected has fallen, the quantity of contraband seized and referred to Singapore Customs has increased. The average duty and GST that would have been evaded by offenders at the checkpoints increased by 13.2% per case, from \$151 in 2018 to \$171 in 2019.

25 In 2019, ICA thwarted a number of attempts to smuggle controlled items into Singapore through postal parcels. ICA is monitoring this trend closely, especially given the increasing volume of parcels. We also detected huge consignments of contraband cigarettes hidden within legitimate consignments at the land checkpoints. In some of these cases, the offenders had used sophisticated methods of concealment to try and avoid detection. These included hiding the cigarettes in game machines, concrete blocks, paper rolls and in various modified compartments of vehicles, including in moving tyres. It is important for ICA to be able to detect such methods of concealment, as terrorists can attempt to smuggle dangerous items such as weapons or explosives into Singapore using similar methods.

26 To address the challenges of inspecting consignments in large vehicles, ICA uses radiographic scanners to scan cargo vehicles. Bus scanners were also implemented at Tuas Checkpoint in 2018. These scanners allow ICA to detect secret compartments and contraband items more effectively and quickly. ICA also works closely with the Home Team Science and Technology Agency (HTX)'s laboratory network, which has the analytical capabilities to effectively detect chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive (CBRNE) substances at our checkpoints.

Case #4– Detection of glass apparatuses for drug use led to arrests of two Singaporeans for suspected drug-related offences

27 On 9 September 2019⁵, an ICA officer from the Parcel Post Section (Air Cargo Command) noticed anomalies in the scanned image of a postal article from overseas. After further checks, the vigilant officer detected glass apparatuses suspected to be used for smoking drugs.

28 Following this detection, CNB officers raided a residential unit in the vicinity of Yishun Street 31. Officers found other glass apparatuses and two pots of cannabis plants as well as various equipment and printed/written instructions on cultivating cannabis plants in the unit. Two suspected drug offenders, a 44-year-old male and a 52-year-old female, both Singaporeans, were arrested. Investigations by CNB are ongoing.



Equipment and instructions for cultivating cannabis plants, within a residential unit in the vicinity of Yishun Street 31

Photo: CNB

⁵ Joint CNB-ICA's news release, "Cannabis plants seized", was issued on 10 September 2019.



Photo: CNB

Case #5 – Detection of duty-unpaid cigarettes in consignments of cement products and concrete blocks

29 On 23 January 2019, a bowser carrying a consignment of cement slag was referred for further checks after vigilant officers at Woodlands Checkpoint noticed anomalies in the scanned image of the bowser. The officers subsequently uncovered contraband cigarettes hidden behind a wooden partition. A total of 4,899 cartons and eight packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were found.

30 On 27 July 2019⁶, vigilant officers at Tuas Checkpoint referred a Malaysia-registered lorry carrying a consignment of 16 concrete blocks for checks. They became suspicious when they noticed anomalies in the concrete blocks. The officers then drilled holes into the

⁶ ICA's news release, "12,479 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes encased in concrete blocks seized" was issued on 19 August 2019.

concrete blocks and uncovered 12,479 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes encased within. This was the largest haul of duty-unpaid cigarettes uncovered by ICA in the last five years.

31 The 48-year-old male Malaysian driver of the bowser and the 41-year-old male Malaysian exporter of the concrete blocks were sentenced to 33 and 36 months' imprisonment on 12 February 2019 and 3 September 2019 respectively for smuggling contraband cigarettes.



The Malaysia-registered bowser carrying duty-unpaid cigarettes hidden behind a wooden partition

Photo: ICA



4,899 cartons and eight packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were seized

Photo: Singapore Customs



Number Of Persons Convicted For Marriage Of Convenience-Related Offences Decreased

32 Fifteen persons were convicted for marriage of convenience (MOC)-related offences in 2019. This is a decrease of 53.1% from the 32 persons convicted in 2018.

	2018	2019	
Persons convicted for MOC-related offences	32	15	53.1% ▼

33 The number of MOC offenders has been decreasing steadily since the act of arranging or entering into a MOC was criminalised in 2012. 284 MOC offenders were convicted in 2013, but the figure dropped to below 65 within two years in 2015.

34 Over the past three years, ICA has investigated and busted two elaborate webs of sham marriages organised by syndicates. The first case involved six couples and two masterminds, while the second involved 17 people in total, including one mastermind who arranged seven fake marriages.

35 ICA takes a serious view of foreigners engaging in MOCs with Singaporeans to obtain immigration facilities in Singapore. The penalties are a fine of up to S\$10,000 or an imprisonment term up to 10 years, or both.

36 We will continue our enforcement efforts against such offenders and the middlemen who facilitate MOCs. Members of the public should report any suspected cases of MOC, as well as any other immigration-related offences, to ICA at 1800-391-6150 or via the ICA website (www.ica.gov.sg). All information provided will be treated with the strictest confidence.

Case #6 – Singaporean man and Vietnamese woman jailed for entering into a Marriage of Convenience

37 A 56-year-old male Singaporean, Ng Cheng Hoe, and a 27-year-old female Vietnamese national, Do Thi Mai Houg, were arrested on 27 February 2019 by ICA officers for entering into a sham marriage.

38 Investigations revealed that Do, who was on a 30-day social visit pass, had wanted to find work in Singapore. To prolong Do's stay here, another female Vietnamese national "My" offered to find Do a Singaporean husband to enter into an MOC. "My" then asked Ng if he was interested to marry a foreigner in return for a payment of \$6,000. Ng would also be paid \$350 for every successful extension of stay obtained for Do after their marriage.

39 "My" arranged for the three of them to meet in July 2017. During the meeting, Ng and Do took a photograph together that would serve as 'proof' of their relationship in the event that they were questioned. After their marriage solemnisation on 4 December 2017, Ng received \$6,000 from Do through "My". Ng and Do then parted ways.

40 Ng and Do were each sentenced to six months and eight weeks' imprisonment on 15 May and 19 June 2019 respectively for entering into an MOC.

Commissioner ICA's Quote

41 "In 2019, the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) cleared over 217 million travellers and 10.6 million consignments, containers and parcels. These are the highest figures for the past five years.

42 The volume of travellers and cargoes is expected to increase further. ICA has embarked on a multi-year transformation plan, leveraging technology and upskilling our people, to better safeguard our borders whilst enhancing the facilitation of the movement of people and goods.

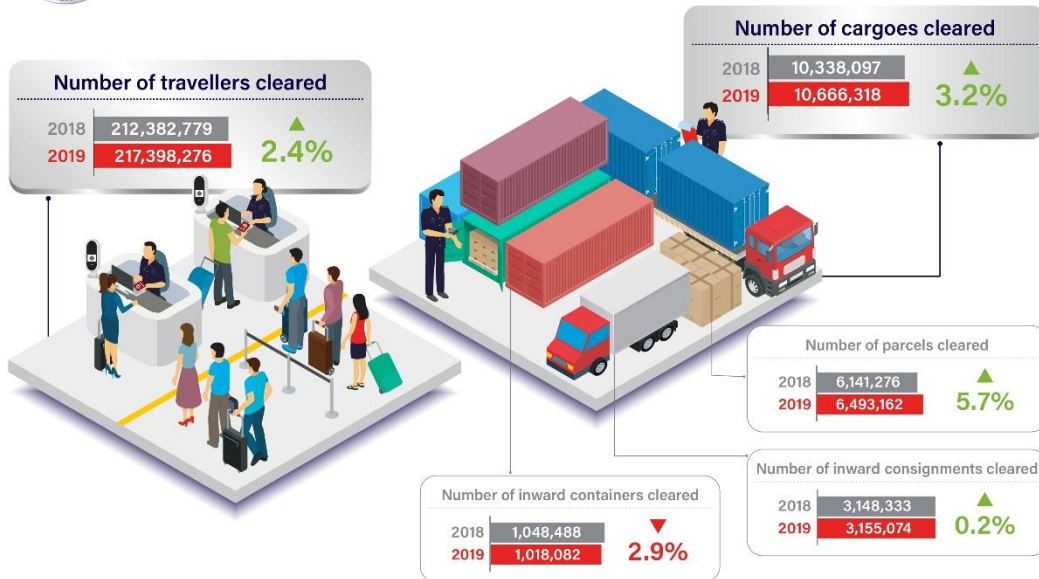
43 In recent weeks, ICA officers also had to rise to the challenge of dealing with the threat of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus. ICA officers have been working tirelessly to implement and enforce tighter border control measures in response to the evolving situation, as they serve as the first line of defence against the spread of such infectious diseases.

44 Whether in peacetime or times of crises, ICA will spare no effort to secure our borders and remain steadfast in our mission to keep Singapore safe and secure."

Marvin Sim

Commissioner of Immigration & Checkpoints Authority

NUMBER OF TRAVELLERS AND CARGOES CLEARED AT THE CHECKPOINTS **2019**



ICA'S ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS INLAND AND AT THE CHECKPOINTS **2019**

