

How to Trade Well

SINCE ancient times, the island of Singapore has relied on performing well as a trading centre to make a living. The manner in which people and goods can move in and out of the country has always been the key to its success in international trade and economic development.

Today, managing trade includes the important administrative activity called customs. And Singapore has been sharing its expertise in this field in training programmes such as the six-day Customs Management Techniques course conducted by Singapore Customs as part of the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP).

The course aims to provide participants with a better understanding of how the Singapore Customs is managed, the various programmes and facilities it has for customs management, and its role in revenue protection and trade regulation.

The 21 course participants are customs officials from around the world, from countries such as Brazil, China, Kenya, Swaziland and Vanuatu. They were all in middle to senior management positions, who had been nominated by their respective governments.

The course comprised classroom lectures as well as site visits to licensed premises and outstations to observe the operational aspects of customs control, cargo clearance and passenger clearance.

Some of the topics covered were: the

organisation and functions of Singapore Customs; the use of the computer application systems to enhance efficiency and effectiveness; documentary control on imports, exports and transshipments through Singapore; customs control of licensed premises; certification of origin of goods; and the strategic goods control system.

For participants like Mr Peter Terence Leonard of St. Lucia (see article below), the sharing of work experiences among course participants from diverse cultures and backgrounds was also a highlight.



Participants of the Customs Management Techniques course conducted under the Singapore Cooperation Programme.

Participants also took time off for some sightseeing around Singapore, visiting tourist attractions such as Sentosa, Clarke Quay and Chinatown.

Singapore has provided technical assistance to developing countries since the 1960s. As a country whose only resource is its people, Singapore believes that human resource development is vital for economic and social progress.

The Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP) was established in 1992, bringing together under one framework various technical assistance programmes offered by Singapore. Since then, Singapore has sponsored training courses and study visits for well over 40,000 officials from 161 countries.



Mr Peter Terence Leonard, Comptroller of the Customs and Excise Department of St. Lucia in the Caribbean.

Struck by Singapore

FOR a man who had written his master's degree thesis on Singapore's economic development, seeing this city-state for the first time after 23 years was quite an experience.

Mr Peter Terence Leonard, Comptroller of

the Customs and Excise Department of St. Lucia in the Caribbean, was in Singapore in November as a participant of the Singapore Cooperative Programme (SCP). A six-day course on Customs Management Techniques conducted by Singapore Customs gave him the chance to see for himself a place he had first studied so many years ago.

Describing the city as having "performed a miracle" with its growth from a place with so few natural resources to an economic stronghold within a short time, Terence was impressed with Singapore's sound economic policies and the discipline with which the people saw them through.

"Singapore is all that I imagined, and more", he beamed. He noticed that there was no compromise in maintaining a balance between urban infrastructure and the natural ecosystem – both exist in harmony here, which he felt is important for a service-oriented city.

Terence's key takeaway from the course was the "single window" concept of Singapore's TradeNet, which is the world's first nationwide electronic trade documentation system that approves permit applications almost instantaneously. "This is the first thing that I would like to put in place back home in

St. Lucia," he declared.

He also hopes to adapt for St. Lucia Singapore's trade facilitation methods for both passengers and cargo, and the approach of forging close partnerships with trade-related agencies.

In order for these systems to be up and running, he cited the high level of cooperation exhibited among government agencies and Singaporeans to be an essential component. "There is a collective responsibility I see here, whereby everyone works towards the benefit of the country," he said. He believes having a common goal spurred Singapore towards achieving economic progress rapidly.

Over the weekend, Terence had the opportunity to visit Sentosa, a recreational island at the southern tip of Singapore. He fell in love with one of the attractions known as the Musical Fountain, which he described as "captivating, electrifying and extremely artistic".

Mesmerised by the choreography of colourful laser displays beamed against a backdrop of water, accompanied by synchronised music, he said: "The cultural orientation I saw in the laser show truly reflects the multiplicity of races in Singapore and the harmony in which people live, work and play here."



Singapore's water sports scene made new waves recently with the HSBC Wakeboard World Cup held at Bedok Reservoir in the northwestern part of the country.

The Wakeboard World Cup is a series of world-class invitational wakeboarding and waterskiing events in major cities around the world. Held on September 30 and October 1, the Singapore event saw 35 of the world's top wakeboarding athletes (24 men and 11 women) from 15 countries compete at WaterFest Singapore 2006 before 16,500 spectators – making it one of the biggest international water sports festivals in Asia.

Wakeboarding, a freestyle sport that developed from surfing and waterskiing, is also influenced by skateboarding and snowboarding. It is the fastest-growing water sport in the world, with competitors performing flips, tricks, spins and a variety of other gravity-defying aerial stunts, sometimes as high as 20 feet in the air.

Mr Derek Leong, Vice President of the Singapore Waterski and Wakeboard Federation, said: "This is the first world-class wakeboarding event to be held in Singapore. It has always been a dream of the federation to bring the sport to highly populated residential areas, and people can now look forward to a world-class event literally at their doorstep."

According to a Singapore Sports Council survey, an estimated 50,000 Singaporeans have tried the sport at least once and it is especially popular among adults 25 to 35 years old.

It has been bonanza time for water sports

enthusiasts in Singapore since the island's many catchment areas have opened up since 2004 for activities on the water. It's all part of Singapore's effort to enhance the quality of life in the Republic, in all its dimensions.

Apart from wakeboarding at Bedok Reservoir, there is sailing at Lower Seletar Reservoir and canoeing at MacRitchie Reservoir. At MacRitchie, nature lovers can also take a slow boat ride through the many small streams there to enjoy nature.

During the women's finals in Singapore, Dallas Friday, a United States Masters and multiple X-Games champion, fell and injured herself during her performance, but nonetheless was initially crowned winner in the Pro Women's category.

But the result was later overturned after fellow American and defending champion Emily Copeland filed an official protest to the International Water-Ski Federation. The judges reviewed the scoresheets and decided to give Copeland more credit for the tricks she did, and award her the US\$10,000 prize and name her the women's overall series winner.

In the men's division, American Phillip Soven beat compatriot Danny Harf in the final to win US\$15,000. Multiple X-Games champion Harf took the overall series title.

Above: Multiple X-Games champion Dallas Friday practising for the HSBC Wakeboard World Cup.

Below: Phillip Soven, 16, takes to the air and sweeps the championship title from the hands of his closest rival Jeff Weatherall. The two men were head-to-head in a close contest in the HSBC Wakeboard World Cup.



Sasha Christian, 11, is the youngest wakeboarder to represent Singapore in an international event.

