

■ **April 2002:** Singaporeans hear of Mas Selamat Kastari for the first time, when then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong reveals the JI chief's involvement in the Changi Airport attack plot. Mas Selamat meanwhile is on the run, moving to places in Sumatra, Riau and Kundur island. His family joins him.

■ **February 2003:** He is arrested by Indonesian police in Tanjung Pinang, Bintan, after arriving with his wife and children from Riau. Singapore Home Affairs Ministry officers travel to Bintan to question him.

■ **February 2003-August 2004:** He is sentenced to 18 months' jail on charges of immigration violations and falsifying documents to enter Indonesia. He tries to escape from jail but breaks a leg, suffering a permanent limp.

■ **August 2004-August 2005:** Handed another 16-month sentence in Pasuruan prison for the same offences, he is released early because of remissions given.

■ **January 2006:** He is arrested again in Malang, 40km south of Pasuruan, also

for carrying false identification.

■ **February 2006:** He is deported to Singapore, where he is served an Order of Detention and detained under the Internal Security Act.

■ **Feb 27, 2008:** Mas Selamat escapes from the Whitley Road Detention Centre.

Thousands of soldiers, Gurkhas and police officers fan out in a massive manhunt, border controls are tightened and countless posters and leaflets are

distributed.

■ **April 2008:** Report of a Committee of Inquiry set up to investigate the escape finds several security lapses that allowed Mas Selamat to escape. They include a window with no grilles



(right), guards who failed in their duties and CCTV cameras that were not commissioned. The Government comes under fire, with calls for officials and leaders to be punished.

■ **May 2008:** Nine officers and guards, including the commander of the detention centre and his superior, are penalised for the security lapses. Two are dismissed, three demoted and four relieved of duties or given reprimands and warnings. The Internal Security Department also corrects errors at detention centre and tightens security.

# Living life on the run

Mas Selamat's life in last eight years marked by escape and evasion

By LESLIE KOH

ESCAPE and evasion appeared to have been virtually a lifestyle for the past eight years as far as Mas Selamat was concerned.

The man who set off one of Singapore's largest manhunts last year had eluded capture and escaped detention several times.

And throughout, he always stayed one step ahead of the authorities, displaying the kind of cunning that suggested why he had been chosen in 1999 by alleged Jemaah Islamiah (JI) terror network operations chief Hambali to take over the Singapore cell from Ibrahim Maidin, who was later detained.

In January 2002, when the Singapore authorities discovered plans by the JI to stage a series of terror attacks on local shores and swooped in on JI members here, Mas Selamat somehow got wind of it and fled the country.

Not, however, before taking time to damage a computer hard disk that contained potentially incriminating evidence, so that police could not get more information when they raided his home.

He is believed to have fled with several others to Malaysia, before making his way to Thailand and then to Medan in Indonesia.

For the next year or so, he led the authorities on a wild goose chase across Indonesia, moving from Medan to Denpasar in Bali, Surabaya, Padang or Dumai.

Always, he made sure not to linger for more than a few months in any place, and travelled from one location to the next by ferry or bus.

He also made the effort to change his appearance - shaving his beard, changing his name, or wearing a cap pulled low.

On Feb 2, 2003, however, alerted by the Singapore authorities, Indonesian police caught him in Tanjung Pinang in Bintan just after he arrived from Dumai, a town in Riau, with his wife and children.

Mas Selamat was carrying a fake identity card and passport passing himself off as Edi Haryanto, but the police nevertheless got the right man.

In July that year, he was sentenced to 1½ years' jail on charges of immigration violations and falsifying documents to enter Indonesia.

It was sometime then that he tried to stage his first escape.

One day, he asked to be left alone to say his prayers. When prison guards gave him that private time, Mas Selamat jumped out of a window, landing hard on the ground and breaking his left leg.



SAF personnel combing thick vegetation opposite Mandai West Camp after Mas Selamat escaped from the Whitley Road Detention Centre in February last year. ST FILE PHOTO

The injury left him with a permanent limp, which was to characterise him later when he escaped in Singapore.

The Indonesian police reacted in time, however, and caught him.

When his 18-month jail term ended in August 2004, he was sentenced to another 16 months' jail in Pasuruan, East Java, for the same offences.

He was then released early in August 2005 and spent about five months on the loose.

Then Indonesian police arrested him again in Malang, about 40km south of Pasuruan, on Jan 20, 2006. Again, it was for possessing a false identification card, which gave his name as Hendrawan.

A month later the Indonesian authorities handed Mas Selamat over to the Singapore authorities, ending a four-year wait for the man who had once plotted to hijack an aircraft to crash into Changi Airport.

Mas Selamat was then detained under Singapore's Internal Security Act at the

Internal Security Department's Whitley Road Detention Centre.

Two years later, he staged his second escape.

On Feb 27 last year, the then 47-year-old was due for a visit from family members between 4pm and 4.30pm.

At 3.30pm, two Gurkha guards and a Special Duty Operative escorted him from his cell to a locker block where he was allowed to change into civilian clothes.

Once inside the locker room, Mas Selamat got his plan up and running. He asked the guard for a curtain to change behind, but there were no curtains, so he stood behind a column of lockers to change.

Unseen by the guards, he is believed to have put on at least two layers of clothing, emerging in a light-yellow loose Malay shirt and greenish-grey trousers.

He was then taken to the visitation block, where at 3.54pm, he entered a toilet to shave and comb his hair. He then

went into a urinal cubicle, shut the door - the prison guards stayed outside - and flipped his trousers over a ledge above the cubicle door, before turning on a tap inside to hide his subsequent movements.

He pushed open a ventilation window, squeezed through, and was believed to have used a vertical water pipe to climb down.

Investigations later found that he might have used a packet of seven rolls of toilet paper to cushion his landing, before climbing onto the roof of an enclosed walkway and jumping over a fence.

The prison guard waiting outside the cubicle, tricked by the trousers and the running water, alerted his colleagues only when he noticed that Mas Selamat was taking a long time to emerge.

When a case officer finally kicked in the cubicle door and discovered Mas Selamat gone, he raised the alarm but it was too late.

The escape artist had slipped away. leskoh@sph.com.sg

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