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MAS SELAMAT CAPTURED

Fugitive who escaped from Whitley detention centre last year is tracked down and captured in Johor after tip-off from Singapore; he is being held for interrogation by Malaysia



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KUALA LUMPUR: Thirteen months after his audacious escape from detention in Singapore, Mas Selamat Kastari has been caught in Malaysia.

Singapore's most wanted terrorist was captured on April 1 while hiding in Johor, regional intelligence sources told The Straits Times.

It is believed that he was nabbed in the outskirts of Johor Baru and is now being held by the Malaysian authorities for interrogation.

It is not known how he slipped out of Singapore or when he entered Malaysia. Although he was arrested six weeks ago, the Malaysian authorities have not yet announced the capture.

A senior Malaysian government official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, confirmed the arrest and said that Mas Selamat was being held under the country's Internal Security Act.

He declined to say when the terrorist would be handed over to the Singapore au-

thorities.

It is believed that the fugitive had stayed in Johor all this time and had not travelled further north. He is also believed to be detained in Johor.

Sources told The Straits Times that the 48-year-old was tracked down based on intelligence provided by Singapore's Internal Security Department (ISD), and a joint operation by Malaysia and Singapore's security agencies eventually led to his arrest.

The capture of Mas Selamat brings to an end one of the largest manhunts ever undertaken by Singapore and its neighbours for a terrorist on the run.

A source said that the Singapore side had picked up a lead on Mas Selamat's trail towards the end of last year and pursued it.

When that proved to be a credible lead, they passed on the information to the Malaysian authorities.

Mas Selamat's arrest would have occurred around the same time that the Malaysian authorities captured three other people for suspected activities linked to the Jemaah Islamiah (JI) terrorist network.

They arrested Agus Salim, a 32-year-old Indonesian, in March and two Malaysians, Abdul Matin Anol Rahmat and Johar Hassan, on April 1.

Mas Selamat's capture would also mark the third time that the Singapore ISD - which came under tremendous pressure and incurred public wrath for allowing him to escape from detention - had tracked him down.

Mas Selamat, who was born in Indonesia but migrated to Singapore in his youth, is married and has five children - four boys and a girl.

Recruited into the religious council of the Singapore JI cell in 1992, he later be-



Singapore role in arrest

Intelligence provided by Singapore's Internal Security Department late last year led to a joint operation between Malaysia and Singapore's security agencies that eventually saw them arresting Mas Selamat in Johor in April.

It was not the first time that information from Singapore helped to nab the escape artist.

In February 2003, tip-offs by the Singapore authorities had led Indonesian police to monitor Mas Selamat's movements after he arrived in Indonesia. They tracked him to Tanjung Pinang in Bintan, arresting him just after he arrived by ferry from Dumai in Riau.

After Mas Selamat was released in August 2005, the Singapore police made another request to their Indonesian counterparts to track him again.

In January 2006, they found him at a neighbourhood mosque in Sengkaling, East Java. He was handed over to Singapore the following month.

PAGE 2: "That the Singapore and Malaysian security agencies work closely is well-known. Mas Selamat's capture is yet another affirming signal of how such cooperation can pay dividends." - Associate Editor Zuraidah Ibrahim

PAGE 4: Mas Selamat's life on the run

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