

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
SINGAPORE
OFFICIAL REPORT
CONTENTS

Written Answers to Questions

	Page
1. Posting of Job Openings in Public Service on National Jobs Bank (Mr Patrick Tay Teck Guan)	1
2. Plans for Wider Use of Automated Vehicle Systems in Transport System (Dr Lim Wee Kiak)	1
3. Statistics on Malaysian Cars Entering and Leaving Singapore and Traffic Offences Committed (Mr Low Thia Kiang)	2
4. Erection of Noise Barriers between Chua Chu Kang and Bukit Gombak MRT Stations (Mr Zaqy Mohamad)	2
5. Need for Pram-friendly Buses (Mr Desmond Choo)	3
6. Review of Need for Inspection of New Cars from Third Year Onwards (Mr Ang Hin Kee)	3
7. Number of Female Bus Captains Employed by Public Bus Operators (Mr Melvin Yong Yik Chye)	4
8. Green-Man Plus Scheme at Pedestrian Crossing along Potong Pasir Avenue 1 (Mr Sitoh Yih Pin)	5
9. Determination of COE Quota for Category D Vehicles (Mr Thomas Chua Kee Seng)	5
10. Taxi Stand in Vicinity of Blocks 216 to 222 at Lorong 8 Toa Payoh (Mr Sitoh Yih Pin)	6
11. Cyber Security Measures in Place at Key Installations and Critical Infrastructures (Mr Darryl David)	6
12. Government Expenditure on Advertisements and Sponsored Posts on Online Media Platforms (Mr Dennis Tan Lip Fong)	7
13. Regulars, NSmen and NSFs Diagnosed with Mental Health Problems (Mr Dennis Tan Lip Fong)	7
14. Involvement of Phone Scam Suspects Arrested Overseas in Phone Scams in Singapore (Mr Gan Thiam Poh)	8
15. Deployment of Auxiliary Police Officers and CCTVs at Liquor Control Zone in Little India (Mr Melvin Yong Yik Chye)	9
16. Offenders Taken to Task for Consumption of Alcohol in Public Places during Restricted Hours (Mr Melvin Yong Yik Chye)	10

17. Cases Reported on Singapore Academy of Law Website (Assoc Prof Fatimah Lateef)	11
18. Victim Compensation Orders Granted under Section 359 of Criminal Procedure Code (Ms Sylvia Lim)	11
19. Young Persons Processed for Criminal Offences through State Courts (Ms Sylvia Lim)	12
20. Need for Upfront Settlement of Bills by Patients Fully Covered by Insurance Policies upon Discharge from Hospital (Dr Lim Wee Kiak)	13
21. Compliance with National Standards of Care in Nursing Homes (Mr Leon Perera)	14
22. Number of Singaporeans Who Have Signed Advanced Medical Directives (Mr Low Thia Khiang)	15
23, 25. Senior Citizens Diagnosed and Treated for Hearing Impairment (Mr Low Thia Khiang and Mr Desmond Choo)	16
24. Reviews of Standard List of Drugs and Medications of Restructured Hospitals (Assoc Prof Fatimah Lateef)	17
26. Impact of China's 'One Belt, One Road' Initiative on Singapore SMEs (Mr Thomas Chua Kee Seng)	17
27. Non-extension of Income Tax Relief for Foreign Maid Levy to Single Females Supporting Aged Parents (Er Dr Lee Bee Wah)	19
28. Measures to Encourage Parents to Have More Children (Er Dr Lee Bee Wah)	19
29. Holistic Assistance for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities and Their Caregivers (Mr Christopher de Souza)	20
30. Availability of Places in Senior Group Homes and Take-up Rate (Mr Darryl David)	22
31. Subsidies for Preschools to Train and Employ Additional Manpower for Children with Speech Delay, Autism and at Risk of Moderate or Severe Disabilities (Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang)	22
32. Complaints about Pigeons (Ms Tin Pei Ling)	23
33. Measures to Deter Pet Abandonment (Ms Tin Pei Ling)	24
34. Listing of Completed Estate Upgrading Programme and Interim Estate Upgrading Programme Projects in Aljunied GRC (Ms Sylvia Lim)	25
35. Statistics on HDB Studio Apartments Sold by Families upon Demise of Lessee (Mr Gan Thiam Poh)	25
36. Additional Ballot Chance for Unsuccessful First-timer BTO Flat Applicants for Mature Estates (Mr Sitoh Yih Pin)	26
37. Plan for Vacant Land Opposite Bukit Batok MRT Station bounded by Bukit Batok Central (Mr Murali Pillai)	26
38. Appeals Made to HDB for Flexibility in Application of Ethnic Integration Policy (Mr Pritam Singh)	27
39. Land Earmarked for HDB Development (Mr Muhamad Faisal Bin Abdul Manap)	28
40. Relaxation of Rules for Sale of HDB Flats to Singles with Relatives in Mature Estates (Mr Lim Biow Chuan)	28
41. Typical Lifespan of HDB Lifts and Their Replacement (Mr Ang Wei Neng)	29
42. Procedure for Collection of Materials in Recycling Bins by Public Waste Collectors at Point of Collection (Mr Leon Perera)	29
43. Plans and Timeline for a Hawker Centre in Chua Chu Kang Town (Mr Zaqy Mohamad)	30
44. Law on Hybrid Cars with Combustion Engines Switched off when Stationary (Mr Sitoh Yih Pin)	30
45. Implementation of Tray Return Initiative at All NEA-managed Hawker Centres (Assoc Prof	

Daniel Goh Pei Siong)	31
46. NEA's Plans for Appointment of Community Volunteers as Auxiliary Officers (Assoc Prof Daniel Goh Pei Siong)	32
47. Data on Unsold Food Discarded by Supermarkets (Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang)	33
48. Development Plans for Wet Market and Hawker Centre at Block 511, Bedok North Street after Expiry of Lease (Mr Muhamad Faisal Bin Abdul Manap)	35
49. Early Detection and Intervention Measures for Young Students with Learning Difficulties (Mr Christopher de Souza)	35
50. Graduate Employment Survey on Local and Overseas Graduates (Mr Png Eng Huat)	36

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POSTING OF JOB OPENINGS IN PUBLIC SERVICE ON NATIONAL JOBS BANK

1 **Mr Patrick Tay Teck Guan** asked the Prime Minister whether all job openings in the Public Service can be posted not just on Careers@Gov but on the National Jobs Bank which is a portal to encourage job postings by all employers other than those mandated under the Fair Consideration Framework.

Mr Teo Chee Hean (for the Prime Minister): Currently, Public Service agencies have to separately prepare and post up job advertisements on the Careers@Gov portal and Jobs Bank if they wish to advertise the same job on both portals. Notwithstanding this, Public Service agencies have been posting an average of 268 jobs on Job Banks per month, which is about 21% of total public sector jobs advertised.

To make the process more convenient, PSD is working with WDA to build an interface between Careers@Gov portal and Jobs Bank. The interface allows job advertisements on Careers@Gov portal to be easily copied to Jobs Bank. This is expected to be ready by the end of the year.

[Back to Contents](#)

PLANS FOR WIDER USE OF AUTOMATED VEHICLE SYSTEMS IN TRANSPORT SYSTEM

2 **Dr Lim Wee Kiak** asked the Minister for Transport (a) whether there are plans to incorporate a wider use of automated vehicle systems into our transport system; (b) how energy-efficient and cost-effective are these systems; and (c) what plans are there to help drivers who may be inevitably displaced.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: There is a broad spectrum of automated vehicle systems. Driverless trains have been in use in our MRT and LRT networks for more than 15 years. As for self-driving vehicles that can travel freely on public roads, the technology is advancing rapidly. My Ministry is leading a Committee on Automated Road Transport for Singapore, comprising public and private sector members, to chart the development and deployment of the technology

in Singapore. Four major initiatives are being pursued concurrently. First, we are working with industry and research institutions to develop and trial self-driving buses. Second, we are planning for fleets of self-driving pods to provide on-demand, point-to-point mobility services for first-and-last-mile travel in the neighbourhood, and will be trialling them in Sentosa and One-North for a start. Third, we are working with PSA to trial truck-platooning between our port terminals, where one driven container truck can lead a few other driverless ones following behind. Fourth, we are working with National Environment Agency (NEA) to develop and trial self-driving utility vehicles such as for road cleaning, and these can be deployed for service during the wee hours, reducing road congestion.

The technology is expected to improve cost effectiveness of the respective operations in the long run. However, as it is still evolving, it is premature to say by how much.

Singapore faces a shortage of bus, truck and other drivers. In the near term, automation can help alleviate some of this shortage. However, there may indeed come a day in the further future when the need for driving is substantially reduced. We will then need to equip existing drivers with new skills for different vocations.

[Back to Contents](#)

STATISTICS ON MALAYSIAN CARS ENTERING AND LEAVING SINGAPORE AND TRAFFIC OFFENCES COMMITTED

3 **Mr Low Thia Khiang** asked the Minister for Transport (a) how many Malaysian cars have entered and left Singapore each year from 2010 to 2015; and (b) how many traffic offences involving Malaysian cars have there been during this time.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: From 2010 to 2015, Malaysia-registered cars made an average of 4,000,000 trips to Singapore each year. In the same period, foreign-registered cars were involved in an average of 11,000 traffic offences each year.

[Back to Contents](#)

ERECTION OF NOISE BARRIERS BETWEEN CHUA CHU KANG AND BUKIT GOMBAK MRT STATIONS

4 **Mr Zaqy Mohamad** asked the Minister for Transport (a) when will noise barriers be set up between Chua Chu Kang and Bukit Gombak MRT stations; (b) what are the locations of these

barriers; and (c) whether the Ministry will consider the inclusion of new BTO developments such as Keat Hong Pride and Keat Hong Crest in the implementation of these noise barriers due to their close proximity to the MRT tracks.]

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: The Land Transport Authority (LTA) will call the tenders to install noise barriers near the residential blocks between Chua Chu Kang and Bukit Gombak MRT stations in the second half of this year. The noise barriers will be installed at viaducts fronting

- a. Block 369 to Block 338 and Block 383 to 395, Bukit Batok West Avenue 5
- b. Block 296D to 297D and Block 272 to Block 279, Chua Chu Kang Avenue 2
- c. Block 224 to 223 Chua Chu Kang Central, and
- d. Block 353 to 355 Chua Chu Kang Loop.

New residential developments that are close to existing railway viaducts, including Keat Hong Pride and Keat Hong Crest, must comply with setback and noise mitigation requirements. These should be able to address the noise issue adequately.

[Back to Contents](#)

NEED FOR PRAM-FRIENDLY BUSES

5 **Mr Desmond Choo** asked the Minister for Transport as the current design of wheelchair-accessible buses does not provide for means to secure open prams and LTA has deemed it safer for the caregiver to be seated with the child in his or her arms and the pram folded, how can LTA help to ensure inclusiveness in our public transport system to better cater to the needs of families with young children.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: I agree with the Member that our public transport system must be inclusive and cater to the needs of different commuters, including families with young children. Our bus captains and MRT station staff are trained to assist passengers with strollers. We have priority seats for young children and their caregivers. LTA, together with our bus operators, is also studying ways of safely securing strollers on board our buses.

[Back to Contents](#)

REVIEW OF NEED FOR INSPECTION OF NEW CARS FROM THIRD YEAR ONWARDS

6 **Mr Ang Hin Kee** asked the Minister for Transport (a) whether the Ministry will consider reviewing the current practice of subjecting registered new cars for inspection from the third year onwards to the fourth year instead as increasingly there have been new improvements in car designs and higher safety standards in vehicles; and (b) whether inspection works done by authorised car dealers who provide servicing and maintenance of fairly new vehicles can also qualify as approved inspection works and their reports taken as a proxy for the third year instead of sending the vehicle to an inspection center.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: The inspection passing rate for three-year-old cars is about 93% and has not improved in the last five years. This is despite new car designs and technological features. There is therefore no strong case for conducting the first inspection in the fourth rather than the third year.

LTA's authorised inspection centres do not provide vehicle repair and maintenance services. This allows them to be independent and objective in their inspection, and removes any possibility of a conflict of interest. This is not the case for motor dealers.

[Back to Contents](#)

NUMBER OF FEMALE BUS CAPTAINS EMPLOYED BY PUBLIC BUS OPERATORS

7 **Mr Melvin Yong Yik Chye** asked the Minister for Transport (a) what is the breakdown in numbers of female bus captains currently employed by the four public bus operators; and (b) whether LTA has any plans to work with the public bus operators to recruit more women to join the bus captain profession especially those seeking to re-enter the workforce.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: The four public bus operators currently employ 575 female bus captains, of whom 404 are in SBS Transit, 142 in SMRT Corporation, 26 in Tower Transit Singapore, and 3 in Go-Ahead Singapore. They make up about 6% of the total number of bus captains.

LTA has been working with the operators to recruit more local bus captains, including women. For example, SBS Transit and SMRT Corporation have introduced part-time employment schemes which can appeal to those who need some work schedule flexibility because of family commitments. Tower Transit Singapore and Go-Ahead Singapore offer female

employees up to 26 weeks of paid maternity leave. Tower Transit Singapore also offers female employees an enhanced maternity benefit of \$300 to \$700 annually, as well as additional childcare leave.

[Back to Contents](#)

GREEN-MAN PLUS SCHEME AT PEDESTRIAN CROSSING ALONG POTONG PASIR AVENUE 1

8 **Mr Sitoh Yih Pin** asked the Minister for Transport whether the implementation of the Green Man Plus Scheme at the pedestrian crossing along Potong Pasir Avenue 1 between blocks 109 and 141 that is currently scheduled for June 2017 can be done earlier so as to aid the elderly and disabled residents living in the vicinity.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: LTA prioritises its implementation of Green Man Plus in areas where there is a high number of elderly residents. LTA will look into whether it is possible to expedite the implementation at Potong Pasir Avenue 1.

[Back to Contents](#)

DETERMINATION OF COE QUOTA FOR CATEGORY D VEHICLES

9 **Mr Thomas Chua Kee Seng** asked the Minister for Transport (a) how is the COE quota for Category D vehicles being determined; and (b) what is the long-term trend of the allowable motorcycle population in Singapore in view of the needs of low-income workers to own motorcycles due to their work requirements.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: The number of Category D COEs available for bidding every quarter is based on the number of motorcycles deregistered in the preceding quarter. Adjustments are then made to account for the allowable growth rate for the vehicle population, cancelled and expired COEs, as well as contributions to the Open Category. It is no different from how we derive quotas for the other COE categories.

The number of motorcycles we should allow in Singapore is tied to how much we can grow our overall vehicle population, which will ultimately be limited by our land constraints. In this regard, at some point, we will have to bring the allowable vehicle growth rate to zero. By giving motorcycles a distinct COE category, Category D, we have limited the extent to which

motorcycles will be replaced by cars within the vehicle population. We have also reduced the contribution by various COE categories, including Category D, to the Open Category from 25% just a few years ago, to 10% currently. We will continue to monitor the trend of Category D quotas, and make further adjustments if necessary.

[Back to Contents](#)

TAXI STAND IN VICINITY OF BLOCKS 216 TO 222 AT LORONG 8 TOA PAYOH

10 **Mr Sitoh Yih Pin** asked the Minister for Transport whether a taxi stand can be implemented at a suitable location in the vicinity of blocks 216 to 222 at Lorong 8 Toa Payoh at the request of the residents who reside in the area.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: We build taxi stands in locations where there is high taxi demand, to facilitate pick-up and reduce disruption to traffic flow. As the taxi demand along Lorong 8 Toa Payoh is relatively irregular and low, it would be difficult to justify building a taxi stand there.

[Back to Contents](#)

CYBER SECURITY MEASURES IN PLACE AT KEY INSTALLATIONS AND CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURES

11 **Mr Darryl David** asked the Minister for Communications and Information what are the cyber security measures in place in key institutions and installations such as the stock exchange, airports, sea ports, MRT stations, power stations and other critical infrastructure to ensure that the systems and networks of these institutions and installations are protected from cyber-attacks.

Assoc Prof Dr Yaacob Ibrahim: The Cyber Security Agency (CSA) adopts a sectorial approach to ensure Critical Information Infrastructure (CII) is protected from cyber threats. It does this by working closely with regulators in the eleven CII sectors (Aviation, Banking & Finance, Energy, Government, Healthcare, Infocomm, Land Transport, Maritime, Media, Security & Emergency Services, and Water). The eleven sector regulators in turn ensure that entities that operate CII facilities have adequate plans to deal with the cyber threat.

To validate the sectorial and operator plans, CSA conducts cybersecurity exercises with and across critical sectors. This year, CSA conducted a multi-sector exercise, codenamed Cyber Star. The exercise validated the incident management capabilities of CSA and four critical sectors (Banking & Finance, Energy, Government and Infocomm) to deal with a large-scale cyber attack. CSA will continue to conduct exercises to validate the plans of other sectors, and also enhance the sophistication of the exercise scenarios.

CSA is currently developing a National Cybersecurity Strategy, and the protection of CIIs from cyber threats will be an important part of the strategy. In 2017, we intend to introduce a new Cybersecurity Act that will enhance and improve existing rules on CIIs in the areas of protection, information sharing and incident response.

[Back to Contents](#)

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE ON ADVERTISEMENTS AND SPONSORED POSTS ON ONLINE MEDIA PLATFORMS

12 **Mr Dennis Tan Lip Fong** asked the Minister for Communications and Information (a) for each year from 2011 to 2015, how much has the Government spent on advertisements and sponsored posts on online media platforms including but not limited to Facebook, YouTube and Google; and (b) what is the breakdown of this spending by each Ministry.

Assoc Prof Dr Yaacob Ibrahim: The Government does not keep track of the total amount ministries spend on online advertisements. However, MCI itself spent approximately \$4.3 million last year (or 0.5% of our operating budget) on digital advertisements to support a wide range of major policies and initiatives such as the Pioneer Generation Package, SkillsFuture, Marriage and Parenthood and Integration issues. This was spread out across multiple online media platforms, including YouTube, Facebook and Google.

[Back to Contents](#)

REGULARS, NSMEN AND NSFS DIAGNOSED WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

13 **Mr Dennis Tan Lip Fong** asked the Minister for Defence (a) for each year from 2011, what is the breakdown of numbers of regulars, NSmen and NSF's diagnosed with mental health problems as a result of or aggravated due to service; (b) how does the SAF train its commanders

to identify and support personnel with mental health issues and ensure compliance with the necessary protocols; and (c) whether the SAF takes responsibility for the treatment and compensation for such cases including that for servicemen who have left service.

Dr Ng Eng Hen: The SAF is a microcosm of Singapore society as we enlist males for full-time National Service and In-Camp Training thereafter. The incidence of mental health conditions among NSFs is about 4% and is lower than the 7% national incidence of Singaporeans age 18-34, reported in a 2012 study by the Institute of Mental Health¹.

Many factors can predispose an individual to mental health problems which include individual, familial and relationship factors and may not be related to his place of work or service. Whatever the cause, the SAF's goal is to ensure the mental and physical well-being of its servicemen through a multi-prong approach. Training is conducted for commanders to enhance their understanding of mental health problems, so that they can better identify and manage servicemen with such problems which include referral to trained professionals. Servicemen with known mental health conditions before enlistment are monitored and provided with counselling and medical treatment. There are also dedicated psychologists at the formation level. In addition, servicemen can call a 24-hour SAF Counselling Hotline whenever they need help.

Compensation for injuries, both mental and physical, sustained in the course of service follows closely the Work Injury Compensation Act (WICA) but is generally more generous in amounts paid. Medical expenses incurred for the treatment of the condition at government and restructured hospitals or clinics is also paid as long as treatment is required, even after the serviceman has left service.

[Back to Contents](#)

INVOLVEMENT OF PHONE SCAM SUSPECTS ARRESTED OVERSEAS IN PHONE SCAMS IN SINGAPORE

14 **Mr Gan Thiam Poh** asked the Minister for Home Affairs (a) whether the phone scam suspects arrested recently by several countries have also been involved in Singapore's phone

¹Chong SA, Abdin E, Vaingankar JA, Heng D, Sherbourne C, Yap M, Lim YW, Wong HB, Ghosh-Dastidar B, Kwok KW, Subramaniam M. A Population-based Survey of Mental Disorders in Singapore. *Annals Academy of Medicine, Singapore*. 2012. 41(2): 49-66.

scam; (b) if so, how do the authorities work with the international agencies to bring them to justice; and (c) whether the suspects can be tried in Singapore if found to have committed the phone scam crime in Singapore especially where there are Singaporean victims.

Mr K Shanmugam: The widespread use of social media and messaging platforms on mobile phones has given rise to new scam tactics. Scams are now being committed not just through phone conversations but also over the Internet accessed through mobile phones. Such scams include credit-for-sex scam, internet love scam, kidnap hoax scam and lottery scam. There were 2,450 of such cases in 2015 as compared to 1,015 cases in 2014.

These cases are typically committed by sophisticated scam syndicates based overseas. The transnational nature of these crimes present significant enforcement challenges. The syndicates know that such transnational crimes are not easy to solve. They hide behind the anonymity of the Internet platforms, leverage the ease of online payment and choose victims that are not from the country where the syndicate is based.

Where foreign law enforcement agencies are willing to cooperate, the Singapore Police Force (SPF) will work closely with them to take action against these overseas syndicates. In 2015, the SPF conducted a joint investigation with the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) of the People's Republic of China into a credit-for-sex scam syndicate that targeted Singaporean victims. The syndicate operated from China, using social media platforms to deceive Singaporean victims into paying money for non-existent sexual services. According to the Chinese Police, this syndicate may have also targeted victims in Australia. As a result of the joint investigation, the Chinese Police conducted successful raids at various locations in China that led to the arrest of 43 individuals. These individuals will be dealt with by the Chinese authorities.

The best defence against online and phone scammer is prevention. Together with the National Crime Prevention Council, the Police will continue with its public education and outreach efforts to create more public awareness about the various scam tactics. Members of the public are advised to exercise caution and vigilance to avoid falling victim to such scams.

[Back to Contents](#)

DEPLOYMENT OF AUXILIARY POLICE OFFICERS AND CCTVS AT LIQUOR CONTROL ZONE IN LITTLE INDIA

15 **Mr Melvin Yong Yik Chye** asked the Minister for Home Affairs (a) what is the

number of Auxiliary Police Officers (APOs) deployed and the number of CCTVs installed at the Liquor Control Zone (LCZ) in Little India; and (b) whether the APOs conduct vertical foot patrols of the staircase landings of HDB blocks within the LCZ.

Mr K Shanmugam: The Police deploy Auxiliary Police Officers (APOs) and Security Officers (SOs) in Little India on a daily basis to deter crime and dis-amenities such as urination, littering and spitting. During the peak periods on weekend nights, eves of Public Holidays and Public Holidays, more than 90 APOs and SOs are deployed. This is in addition to the Police officers on patrol.

Currently, there are 34 Police Camera Zone CCTV cameras installed within the Little India Liquor Control Zone (LCZ), and SPF has plans to install an additional 50 cameras in this zone by the end of the year.

The APOs and SOs will patrol the common areas as well as specific areas of concern. This includes the higher floors and staircase landings of HDB blocks where specific feedback has been received about congregations or dis-amenities.

[Back to Contents](#)

OFFENDERS TAKEN TO TASK FOR CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL IN PUBLIC PLACES DURING RESTRICTED HOURS

16 **Mr Melvin Yong Yik Chye** asked the Minister for Home Affairs since the Liquor Control (Supply and Consumption) Act came into effect on 1 April 2015, how many offenders have been taken to task for consuming alcohol in public places during restricted hours, particularly within the Liquor Control Zone in Little India.

Mr K Shanmugam: As of 31 May 2016, more than 1,800 individuals were found to be consuming liquor during restricted hours since the Liquor Control (Supply and Consumption) Act came into effect on 1 April 2015. Within the Liquor Control Zone in Little India, about 230 individuals were found to be consuming liquor during restricted hours.

Most of these individuals were first-time offenders and were issued with advisories. There were 48 repeat offenders island-wide, of which three were within the Little India Liquor Control Zone, and they have all been offered composition fines. For subsequent repeat offences, SPF will commence investigations with the view to prosecute and the offenders will be subject to stricter

penalties.

[Back to Contents](#)

CASES REPORTED ON SINGAPORE ACADEMY OF LAW WEBSITE

17 **Assoc Prof Fatimah Lateef** asked the Minister for Law (a) how does the Singapore Academy of Law decide on the cases to be reported on its website; (b) what is the duration for which the cases will remain on its website; (c) what are the requirements for their removal; and (d) whether Court of Appeal cases heard in overseas jurisdictions are included in the website or only those heard in Singapore.

Mr K Shanmugam: The Singapore Academy of Law (SAL) manages two websites which contain judgments, namely the Singapore Law Watch website (at www.singaporelawwatch.sg) (the SLW Website) and the Singapore Law website (at www.singaporelaw.sg) (the SgLaw Website).

According to SAL:

a. All judgments from the Supreme Court of Singapore are published on the SLW Website and the SgLaw Website. There is no selection process.

b. Judgments from the Supreme Court of Singapore are published on the SLW Website for a period of three months, and on the SgLaw Website in perpetuity.

c. Judgments are redacted or not published only where this is required by law, or by an order of Court.

d. The SLW Website and the SgLaw Website only publish judgments from the Supreme Court of Singapore. They do not publish judgments from other jurisdictions.

[Back to Contents](#)

VICTIM COMPENSATION ORDERS GRANTED UNDER SECTION 359 OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE CODE

18 **Ms Sylvia Lim** asked the Minister for Law (a) how many victim compensation orders have been granted by the courts under section 359 of the Criminal Procedure Code in 2014 and 2015 respectively; (b) whether the courts have made any orders of compensation against the prosecution or informant for frivolous or vexatious prosecutions under section 359(3); and (c) what is the range of compensation amounts awarded and for what types of offences.

Mr K Shanmugam: Section 359 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) allows for claims for compensation in criminal proceedings and makes it mandatory for a court convicting a person of any offence to consider whether a compensation order should be made, and the court will make such compensation orders where appropriate. The number of victim compensation orders that were granted by the Courts under section 359 of the CPC in 2014 and 2015 can be found in the following Table:

Compensation Orders	Number of Cases (At least 1 Charge in respect of which a compensation order was made)	Number of Charges
2014	48	53
2015	34	46
Total	82	99

Of the compensation orders made in 2014 and 2015, 84% were made in relation to cases involving hurt, mischief, theft, cheating and criminal breach of trust. In 75% of all instances where compensation orders were made, the compensation amounts were less than \$2,000. In the remaining instances, the compensation amounts were between \$2,000 and \$10,000, with one compensation order amounting to \$57,000 (rounded) for a charge of criminal breach of trust.

The State Courts tracks the total number of compensation orders made under section 359 of the CPC. No breakdown is available on the number of orders made under the different sub-sections in that provision.

[Back to Contents](#)

YOUNG PERSONS PROCESSED FOR CRIMINAL OFFENCES THROUGH STATE COURTS

19 **Ms Sylvia Lim** asked the Minister for Law (a) how many young persons aged between 16 and 18 years have been processed for criminal offences through the State Courts in the last three years; (b) which offence types have been most often charged against these young persons; and (c) what have been the most common types of sentences or orders made upon conviction of such persons.

Mr K Shanmugam: Between 2013 and 2015, 2,254 young persons aged between 16 and 18 years have been charged for criminal offences in the State Courts.

The most common types of offences which these young persons have been charged with are the offences of theft and cheating under the Penal Code, and offences under the Moneylenders Act, Tobacco (Control of Advertisements and Sale) Act, and the Road Traffic Act.

While we continue to underscore the need to maintain law and order in our criminal justice system, we recognise the importance of rehabilitation as well for young offenders in appropriate cases. Between 2013 and 2015, 2,046 young persons aged between 16 and 18 years were convicted, of which close to half of these young persons were given Probation (or Probation and other types of sentences such as a fine), while about 30% were sentenced to a fine (or a sentence of fine and disqualification from holding or obtaining a driving licence under the Road Traffic Act) and about 15% were sentenced to Reformatory Training (or Reformatory Training and other types of sentences such as a fine).

[Back to Contents](#)

NEED FOR UPFRONT SETTLEMENT OF BILLS BY PATIENTS FULLY COVERED BY INSURANCE POLICIES UPON DISCHARGE FROM HOSPITAL

20 **Dr Lim Wee Kiak** asked the Minister for Health (a) what is the reason for holders of health insurance policies being required to pay first and be reimbursed later after they are discharged from hospitalisation even though they are fully covered by their insurance policies; and (b) whether the Ministry can look into streamlining the payment process for policy holders who are fully covered by their insurance plans.

Mr Gan Kim Yong: With the implementation of MediShield Life for all Singaporeans, we have streamlined our processes so that Singapore Citizens who choose Class B2 or C wards will not need to pay deposits. There is an exception of a small number of patients, who will need to pay a deposit if they choose Class B2 against financial counselling advice so as to encourage them to choose the class they can better afford. The public hospitals will also advise patients who need help with their healthcare bills and discuss with them options for assistance.

For private patients who choose private hospitals or Class A or B1 wards in the public

hospitals, their bills are much higher as they do not enjoy the heavy subsidy for B2/C wards. Thus, hospitals may require them to make upfront payment, such as a deposit pre-admission, to cover their estimated hospitalisation cost. Once the bill and the insurance payout is finalised, they will be reimbursed for any excess payments.

Even if the patient has private insurance, hospitals have no certainty over the patient's insurance payout, given the range of private insurance policies with different coverage, terms and exclusions for pre-existing conditions. Therefore, they may collect a deposit. However, hospitals may waive or reduce the deposit if the patient's insurer issues an upfront Letter of Guarantee to cover all or part of the estimated bill. Today, all the six Integrated Shield Plan insurers issue Letters of Guarantee usually with coverage of up to \$10,000, if the patient meets their criteria.

[Back to Contents](#)

COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL STANDARDS OF CARE IN NURSING HOMES

21 **Mr Leon Perera** asked the Minister for Health (a) whether there is a set of national standards to ensure that the care offered in nursing homes meets minimum standards for facilities, space, staff training, experience, hygiene, management and supervision; (b) whether there is third party assessment by a national accreditation body to ensure compliance to such standards; and (c) if not, whether the Ministry will consider implementing such a system.

Mr Gan Kim Yong: All nursing homes are licensed under the Private Hospitals & Medical Clinics (PHMC) Act. The licensing requirements cover standards in areas such as medical and nursing care, facilities maintenance and up-keeping, and general hygiene.

MOH conducts regular checks to ensure that nursing homes meet the licensing requirements and care standards. MOH also engages independent auditors to further assess care standards in areas such as infection control, wound care and nursing management in the nursing homes. In addition, we have the Nursing Home Visitors Programme where volunteers will visit the nursing homes to obtain direct feedback from residents and their family members, as well as observe the living environment.

MOH regularly reviews and enhances the care standards in our nursing homes. In 2014, an industry-led workgroup was convened to develop enhanced nursing home standards in the areas

of clinical care, social care and organisational excellence. The workgroup's recommendations were subsequently incorporated into licensing requirements in April 2015 and enforced with effect from April 2016.

[Back to Contents](#)

NUMBER OF SINGAPOREANS WHO HAVE SIGNED ADVANCED MEDICAL DIRECTIVES

22 **Mr Low Thia Khiang** asked the Minister for Health (a) what is the number of Singaporeans who have signed Advanced Medical Directives (AMDs) each year from 2010 to 2015; (b) what is the total cumulative number of Singaporeans who have signed AMDs; and (c) what is the total cumulative number of cases where healthcare institutions acted on AMDs.

Mr Gan Kim Yong: An Advance Medical Directive (AMD) is a legal document that enables a person to voluntarily and in advance, register his or her wishes not to have any extraordinary life-sustaining treatment to prolong his or her life when the person becomes terminally ill and unconscious or unable to make a rational judgment on his or her own treatment.

The AMD was introduced in 1997. A cumulative total of 24,682 Singaporeans made an AMD between 1997 and 2015. During the same period, 10 AMDs were effected.

Between 2010 and 2015, the numbers of AMDs made by Singaporeans are as follows:

Year	Number of AMDs made
2010	1256
2011	1165
2012	2025
2013	1880
2014	2807
2015	2981
Total	12,114

Besides AMDs, Advance Care Planning (ACP) is also available and practised at hospitals. This allows forward planning for end-of-life care arrangements, such as the extent of medical treatment and place of death. Though not legally binding, the care preferences of the person are recorded as a document to guide medical professionals and family members in the care arrangements for the patient. We formally rolled out ACP through the Agency for Integrated

Care in 2011. Between then and 2015, about 5,100 Advance Care Plans were completed.

[Back to Contents](#)

SENIOR CITIZENS DIAGNOSED AND TREATED FOR HEARING IMPAIRMENT

23 **Mr Low Thia Khiang** asked the Minister for Health (a) between 2013 and 2015, how many senior citizens have been diagnosed with hearing loss requiring the use of hearing aids; (b) how many have applied for subsidies for hearing aids under the Seniors' Mobility and Enabling Fund (SMF); (c) how many have been granted a subsidy for hearing aids; and (d) what is the total amount of subsidy disbursed for hearing aids.

25 **Mr Desmond Choo** asked the Minister for Health (a) how many elderly Singaporeans are currently suffering from hearing impairment and have gone for treatment at polyclinics and public hospitals; (b) how many of them have received subsidies for hearing aids under the Seniors' Mobility and Enabling Fund (SMF); (c) what is the average amount that seniors have to pay for their hearing aids after the subsidy; and (d) what happens if an elderly person cannot afford to pay for the remaining amount after the subsidy is given.

Mr Gan Kim Yong: Between 2013 and 2015, our public hospitals diagnosed about 16,300 Singaporean seniors aged 60 and above with hearing loss requiring the use of hearing aids. Of these, about 5,500 seniors eventually took up the use of a hearing aid. These figures would include seniors who visit polyclinics for hearing loss problems who are referred to specialists at our hospitals for further assessment and prescription. We do not have figures on diagnosed cases at private healthcare institutions.

Over the same period, 3,954 seniors applied for subsidised hearing aids under MOH's Seniors' Mobility and Enabling Fund (SMF), with 3,934 seniors (i.e. 99.5% of applicants) eventually received the subsidies. On average, seniors paid about \$300 as co-payment, after about \$2,700 subsidies from SMF, to purchase a pair of hearing aid. Seniors who have difficulties with the co-payment can approach the medical social workers to apply for further financial assistance. Of the 3,954 seniors, about 640 needy seniors, such as those who are on public assistance or Medifund assistance, received 100% subsidy from SMF for their hearing aids.

About 100 seniors with disabilities have also tapped on the Assistive Technology Fund (ATF) and the former Special Assistance Fund (SAF)* under MSF to purchase hearing aids. A total of \$10.4 million from the three funds, SMF, ATF and SAF, was disbursed to subsidise seniors for hearing aids between 2013 and 2015.

[Note: The SAF was closed in 2015 following expansion of coverage and enhancement to the ATF.]

[Back to Contents](#)

REVIEWS OF STANDARD LIST OF DRUGS AND MEDICATIONS OF RESTRUCTURED HOSPITALS

24 **Assoc Prof Fatimah Lateef** asked the Minister for Health how frequent is the standard list of drugs and medications of restructured hospitals reviewed especially in respect of costs and prices of brands that have become generic.

Mr Gan Kim Yong: Our Standard Drug List (SDL) is reviewed annually based on assessments by the Drug Advisory Committee (DAC).

The DAC receive applications from public healthcare clinicians for additions to the SDL. In assessing these applications, the DAC may consider research evidence and consult other clinicians. The DAC is guided by three main considerations:

- a) Whether the drug is essential for the treatment of medical conditions that are important causes of morbidity and mortality in Singapore;
- b) Whether the drug offers a significant improvement in terms of efficacy and effectiveness, as compared to existing drugs in the SDL; and
- c) Whether there is sufficient evidence of long term safety and cost-effectiveness of using the drug.

Our public healthcare institutions procure generic versions of the drugs where available. As generic drugs are generally cheaper, patients prescribed these generic drugs would benefit from the lower costs.

[Back to Contents](#)

IMPACT OF CHINA'S 'ONE BELT, ONE ROAD' INITIATIVE ON SINGAPORE SMES

26 **Mr Thomas Chua Kee Seng** asked the Minister for Trade and Industry (Industry) what is the impact of China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative on our small and medium-size enterprises.

Mr S Iswaran: Singapore welcomes China's "Belt and Road" Initiative (B&R), as it is a mutually beneficial initiative that will encourage further economic integration, infrastructural cooperation and people-to-people linkages between countries in the region.

A key component of this initiative is the internationalisation of Chinese companies. As a key financial, transportation and trading hub in the region, Singapore is well-positioned to be a base for Chinese enterprises venturing into Southeast Asia. In 2015, Chinese investments into Singapore amounted to US\$4.96 billion, an increase of 76.5% from the previous year. To date, more than 6,500 Chinese companies have established their presence in Singapore, almost twice the number of companies five years ago. Singapore companies can benefit from collaboration opportunities with this growing pool of Chinese companies venturing into the region, in sectors such as transport and logistics, mixed-use park developments, construction materials and financing.

The B&R initiative will also open up possibilities for Singapore companies in China. Various provinces in China have rolled out infrastructure and development plans to support the initiative, resulting in greater opportunities for Singapore companies in sectors such as information and communications technology (ICT), urban solutions, transport and logistics, as well as infrastructure and related services. A key example of this is the Chongqing Connectivity Initiative (CCI), the third Government-to-Government project between Singapore and China. Under this initiative, Singapore companies can access opportunities and bring on board our expertise in the areas of financial services, aviation, transport & logistics and ICT.

The Government is helping our SMEs to prepare themselves to seize these opportunities. For example, companies can seek support from SPRING for capability development efforts in developing innovative technologies, products and services in areas such as environmental management, logistics and engineering services.

Companies can also tap on IE Singapore's schemes and initiatives to access opportunities in China and countries along the B&R. The Market Readiness Assistance (MRA) scheme provides broad-based assistance for companies new to internationalisation, while the Global

Company Partnership (GCP) scheme provides customised help for companies with more established presence overseas. In 2015, IE Singapore supported 34,000 companies in their internationalisation efforts and over 80% of these companies were SMEs.

IE Singapore has recently signed MOUs with the Bank of China, China Construction Bank and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China to provide more financing options for Singapore companies undertaking infrastructure projects along the B&R. IE Singapore also works with Trade Associations and Chambers (TACs) to organise overseas in-market workshops in key target markets, including China. These workshops help SMEs gain first-hand experience of market conditions and facilitate the building of networks with potential local business partners.

[Back to Contents](#)

NON-EXTENSION OF INCOME TAX RELIEF FOR FOREIGN MAID LEVY TO SINGLE FEMALES SUPPORTING AGED PARENTS

27 Er Dr Lee Bee Wah asked the Minister for Finance (a) what is the reason for the income tax relief for foreign maid levy being not extended to single females who are supporting their aged parents; and (b) whether the Ministry will look into extending the tax relief to cover all female tax payers who have to employ a foreign maid to care for their aged parents.

Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam: The Government had introduced the foreign maid levy relief to encourage married women to stay in the workforce. For this reason, other individuals including singles are not eligible for the foreign maid levy relief.

Nonetheless, singles, whether men or women, can apply for the foreign domestic worker concessionary levy if they have young children, or are living with family members who are aged or have disabilities, as long as qualifying conditions are met. We have also reduced the levy over the years, most recently in Budget 2015, where the concessionary levy rate was halved from \$120 to \$60 a month.

[Back to Contents](#)

MEASURES TO ENCOURAGE PARENTS TO HAVE MORE CHILDREN

28 Er Dr Lee Bee Wah asked the Minister for Social and Family Development in support of the Government's policy to encourage more parents to have more children (a) whether the Ministry has considered giving free childcare for Singaporean pre-school children; and (b) how

much this will cost the Government if it is implemented.

Mr Tan Chuan-Jin: We understand that childcare costs are a concern to many young parents. Our approach is for the government to play a strong supporting role by defraying parts of the child-raising costs, including subsidising childcare.

Initiatives to help parents manage the costs of child-raising include Baby Bonus, tax benefits, housing grants, and medical grants. In particular, the Government recently enhanced the Child Development Account (or CDA) by introducing the CDA First Step, which provides the first \$3,000 of Government contributions, without parents having to save first. CDA funds can be used to pay for education and healthcare needs of the child, including childcare fees.

The Early Childhood Development Agency also works to ensure childcare remains affordable for families. This is achieved in two ways.

First, centres under the Anchor Operator and Partner Operator schemes are subject to fee caps. Today, over 40% of Singaporean children enrolled in childcare are in these centres, which is a significant increase from about 20% in 2012.

Second, through basic and means-tested childcare subsidies which were enhanced in 2013. This allows lower-income families to pay as little as \$3 per month. Parents can also use money in their CDAs to pay for the balance of the fees.

Through these enhancements, we have significantly increased government spending on early childhood. We spent about \$600 million on pre-school related efforts last year, which is more than one and a half times of what we spent in 2012.

This approach keeps childcare affordable, while allowing parents to choose from a variety of options according to their preferences. Conversely, provision of free childcare may limit the range of childcare programmes available to parents, and result in a higher burden to taxpayers. It may also have the unintended consequence of driving over-consumption and hence raising demand, so parents truly in need of childcare might find it difficult to secure a place.

We will continue to monitor and review our measures to ensure quality childcare remains accessible and affordable, as part of a range of measures to support the parenthood aspirations of Singaporeans.

[Back to Contents](#)

HOLISTIC ASSISTANCE FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL

DISABILITIES AND THEIR CAREGIVERS

29 **Mr Christopher de Souza** asked the Minister for Social and Family Development (a) what measures are being taken to provide holistic assistance for (i) individuals with intellectual disabilities and (ii) their caregivers; and (b) whether the Ministry will consider extending existing subsidies such as the VWO Transport Subsidy Scheme, to cover all persons with disabilities regardless of their financial background.

Mr Tan Chuan-Jin: Persons with Disabilities (PwD)s, including those with intellectual disabilities, are supported through a range of early intervention, education, employment and care services. From the time a child is assessed as special needs, they will be supported through the Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIC) and in the school going years at Special Education (SPED) schools which offer customised education programmes for children with intellectual disability. SPED schools also train and help the transition to employment in the later years.

Persons with intellectual disabilities can acquire relevant skills and receive job matching and support services from SG Enable and its Voluntary Welfare Organisation (VWO) partners such as the Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS).

Persons with intellectual disabilities can also receive a range of care services from Drop-in Disability Programmes, Day Activity Centres (DACs) and home based care. DACs equip persons with disabilities with living skills to enhance their independence. We are in the process of adding 600 new DAC places by 2018 to provide this service.

Caregivers hiring a foreign domestic worker (FDW) to care for PwDs requiring assistance with their daily activities are eligible to pay a lower monthly FDW Levy. Caregivers of PwDs with moderate to severe disability can separately receive a monthly FDW Grant should their monthly per capita household income be less than \$2,600. In addition to the care services and FDW Levy concession and Grant, caregivers of PwDs can also apply for a Caregivers' Training Grant each year to attend training on caregiving or self-care skills.

Public Transport subsidies are provided to all PwDs today through the Public Transport Concession Scheme and are not means-tested. Under this scheme, all persons with permanent disabilities will receive 25% off bus and train travel. Private transport options such as taxis and dedicated transport are subsidised through the Taxi Subsidy Scheme and the Voluntary Welfare

Organisation Transport Subsidies (VWOTS) and these are means-tested. Under the current means test criteria, up to two-thirds of households in Singapore would be able to meet the scheme's income criteria. Such an approach has enabled us to channel limited resources to persons who need them most.

In addition to end-user subsidies, the Ministry has also awarded grants to three transport operators serving persons with disabilities in 2015 to help keep transport cost low for dedicated transport users. The subsidised transport rates offered by funded transport operators are available to all PwDs regardless of their income level.

[Back to Contents](#)

AVAILABILITY OF PLACES IN SENIOR GROUP HOMES AND TAKE-UP RATE

30 **Mr Darryl David** asked the Minister for Social and Family Development (a) how many places in Senior Group Homes are currently available; and (b) what has been the take-up rate for these places.

Mr Tan Chuan-Jin: The Senior Group Homes (SGHs) promote ageing in place for frail seniors without family support and living in HDB rental flats. Each Home comprises five to eight rental flats, and each flat is shared among two to three seniors. MSF appoints voluntary welfare organisations to coordinate and provide services, such as home care services, to the residents. The seniors are also encouraged to participate in social activities and to provide mutual support to one another. There are currently 14 SGHs of which 11 started operations from late 2015. The Homes can accommodate up to 250 seniors.

As at end April 2016, 39 seniors are residing at the Senior Group Homes. MSF is working with MOH and other partners to improve coordination of care options in the community, to enable seniors to age-in-place.

[Back to Contents](#)

SUBSIDIES FOR PRESCHOOLS TO TRAIN AND EMPLOY ADDITIONAL MANPOWER FOR CHILDREN WITH SPEECH DELAY, AUTISM AND AT RISK OF MODERATE OR SEVERE DISABILITIES

31 **Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang** asked the Minister for Social and Family Development in

light of the higher number of children below the age of seven years with speech delay, autism and at risk of moderate to severe disabilities and the longer waiting time for early intervention services at VWOs, whether the Ministry will consider (i) funding or increasing subsidies to the preschools to train and employ additional manpower similar to the role of a shadow teacher or allied educator in schools and (ii) making recommendations to increase the ratio of teachers to students in preschools who accept these children in the interim.

Mr Tan Chuan-Jin: Today, pre-schools may accept children with mild to moderate developmental delays and who may benefit from integration into the mainstream environment. To support this, the Ministry for Social and Family Development funds the Development Support Programme (DSP) at more than 300 pre-schools. Under DSP, therapists and specially-trained Learning Support Educators (LSEs) provide targeted learning and development for the children, and also work with the main teacher during classes to integrate the child in a group setting. We will expand the DSP to 30 more centres this year.

In addition, the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) has been collaborating with training institutes to provide subsidised modular Continuing Professional Development courses to equip pre-school teachers with the skillsets to support pre-school children with developmental needs. Given the diversity of needs, ECDA does not prescribe a specific staff-child ratio for preschools with these children. However, pre-schools with these children are able to deploy more teachers if needed. Pre-schools are also encouraged to work with the child's parents and developmental specialists for the child's development.

For children with more severe needs, there are currently 17 Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIC) centres supporting some 2,600 children in their developmental needs. The EIPIC centres also support the integration of children into mainstream pre-schools. MSF will increase the capacity to 3,200 places by 2018.

Beyond expanding current services, MSF will work with our partners to develop a continuum of services for children with different needs and to train a multi-disciplinary team of pre-school teachers, LSEs, therapists and psychologists to support more children with special needs in the learning environment that is most appropriate for their development.

[Back to Contents](#)

COMPLAINTS ABOUT PIGEONS

32 **Ms Tin Pei Ling** asked the Minister for National Development (a) how many complaints about pigeons have been received by AVA and town councils on average per month over the past year; and (b) what have been done in response to these complaints.

Mr Lawrence Wong: Over the past year, Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) received about 320 pigeon-related feedback each month. The feedback pertains mainly to the feeding of pigeons and pigeon-related nuisances, e.g. soiling of laundry by pigeon droppings.

The management of pigeon-related issues requires a multi-stakeholder approach. AVA enforces against pigeon feeders and NEA enforces against littering offences, which could contribute to food sources for birds. AVA and the Town Councils also conduct pigeon control operations when necessary.

In addition, to reduce food supply for the birds, it is important for the Town Councils to maintain the cleanliness of the estates, while NEA ensures good food waste management in food centres and coffee-shops.

AVA distributes advisories to residents on the environmental health and hygiene issues caused by pigeons. Members of the public have a role to play by not feeding pigeons, which would result in an increase in the pigeon population and pigeon-related nuisance.

[Back to Contents](#)

MEASURES TO DETER PET ABANDONMENT

33 **Ms Tin Pei Ling** asked the Minister for National Development what are the measures taken to deter pet abandonment and lower the burden of proof in a pet abandonment case so that the irresponsible owner can be taken to task.

Mr Lawrence Wong: Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) has been educating the public on responsible pet ownership to reduce pet abandonment. To prevent impulsive pet buying, AVA has restricted pet retailers from selling pets to individuals below 16 years old since January 2014. Pet retailers are also required to assess the suitability of their customers as pet owners prior to sale of the pet animal.

In addition, AVA raised the dog licensing fees for unsterilised dogs from \$70 to \$90 in February 2014. This will encourage dog owners to sterilise their pets to prevent non-intentional

breeding, which could contribute to abandonment of unwanted puppies.

The Animals and Birds Act was amended in 2014 to enhance animal welfare. To lower the burden of proof, the amendments made the act of abandonment an offence without having to consider whether the animal was suffering or in distress as a result of abandonment. In addition, a person found guilty of pet abandonment may be fined up to \$10,000 and/or jailed up to a year for first-time offenders.

[Back to Contents](#)

LISTING OF COMPLETED ESTATE UPGRADING PROGRAMME AND INTERIM ESTATE UPGRADING PROGRAMME PROJECTS IN ALJUNIED GRC

34 **Ms Sylvia Lim** asked the Minister for National Development if he can provide an updated listing of completed Estate Upgrading Programme (EUP) and Interim Estate Upgrading Programme (I-EUP) projects in Aljunied GRC, with dates of commencement and completion and a brief description of the nature of works.

Mr Lawrence Wong: Three estates in Aljunied GRC were selected for EUP, namely Serangoon Gardens in Batch 1; Rosyth, Hillside & Kovan in Batch 2; and Charlton Park in Batch 6. The selection of the three estates for EUP was first announced in 2000, 2001 and 2008 respectively, and upgrading was completed in 2004, 2006 and 2014 respectively. The EUP works typically consist of upgrading of park facilities, and improvements to public infrastructure such as footpaths.

The I-EUP was conducted over three phases islandwide. All I-EUP works in Aljunied GRC have been completed as at March 2016, and included footpath lightings, notice boards, banner stands, directional signages and rain shelters.

[Back to Contents](#)

STATISTICS ON HDB STUDIO APARTMENTS SOLD BY FAMILIES UPON DEMISE OF LESSEE

35 **Mr Gan Thiam Poh** asked the Minister for National Development (a) since 1998, how many HDB Studio Apartments have so far been sold by the families upon the death of the lessee; and (b) whether the sale proceeds of the Studio Apartments have been released to the

beneficiaries of a deceased's estate who are the children or relatives of the deceased.

Mr Lawrence Wong: Studio Apartments (SAs) were sold on a 30-year lease to eligible senior citizens for occupation. SAs cannot be re-sold on the open market.

If the lessee passes away, the SA will be passed to the owner's estate. Family members, if eligible, can continue living in the SA for the remaining lease. Alternatively, the SA can be returned to HDB, and HDB will reimburse the residual lease value to the estate of the deceased owner.

[Back to Contents](#)

ADDITIONAL BALLOT CHANCE FOR UNSUCCESSFUL FIRST-TIMER BTO FLAT APPLICANTS FOR MATURE ESTATES

36 **Mr Sitoh Yih Pin** asked the Minister for National Development whether the HDB scheme to allot an additional ballot chance for subsequent applications of first-timer applicants for BTO flats who have been unsuccessful for two or more applications in non-mature estates can be extended to include first-timer applicants for mature estates.

Mr Lawrence Wong: The allotment of an additional ballot chance only applies for first-timer (FT) families applying for BTO flats in the non-mature estates. The intention is to help FT families with more urgent housing needs secure their first home.

Extending this to those who have applied for BTO flats in the mature estates may not be as effective, given the high demand for the limited flats in such estates.

Flat buyers who wish to purchase flats in the mature estates can consider applying under the various priority schemes, such as the Married Child Priority Scheme, Multi-Generation Priority Scheme or the Parenthood Priority Scheme. Alternatively, they may consider buying a resale flat on the open market. Eligible FT families buying resale flats can receive up to \$90,000 in housing grants, comprising the CPF Housing Grant, Additional CPF Housing Grant and Proximity Housing Grant.

[Back to Contents](#)

PLAN FOR VACANT LAND OPPOSITE BUKIT BATOK MRT STATION BOUNDED BY BUKIT BATOK CENTRAL

37 **Mr Murali Pillai** asked the Minister for National Development (a) what is the development and implementation plan for the piece of vacant land directly opposite Bukit Batok MRT station that is bounded by Bukit Batok Central; and (b) whether this land is being safeguarded for the provision of supporting infrastructure and facilities for the growing population in Bukit Batok Neighbourhood 4 and, if so, what are the details of these plans.

Mr Lawrence Wong: The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and Housing Development Board work together to plan for infrastructure and facilities to meet the needs of residents in each of our towns.

In March 2016, URA launched a mixed commercial and residential site under the Government Land Sales Programme at Bukit Batok West Avenue 6, which is within Bukit Batok Neighbourhood 4. The tender for the site was awarded in May 2016. When completed, residents at Bukit Batok Neighbourhood 4 can look forward to a supermarket, a foodcourt and a childcare centre, amongst other retail facilities, at this mixed-use site.

The vacant land opposite Bukit Batok MRT is safeguarded for longer-term commercial and residential uses as indicated in URA's Master Plan. The development timeline and details of the site will be announced when the plans are ready.

[Back to Contents](#)

APPEALS MADE TO HDB FOR FLEXIBILITY IN APPLICATION OF ETHNIC INTEGRATION POLICY

38 **Mr Pritam Singh** asked the Minister for National Development (a) how many appeals have been made over the past three years for HDB to exercise flexibility in resale transactions on the ethnic limits under the Ethnic Integration Policy and on what grounds; (b) of these, how many have been rejected; and (c) what are the grounds for such rejections.

Mr Lawrence Wong: Between 2013 and 2015, HDB received about 1,200 appeals for a waiver of the Ethnic Integration Policy. Four in five appeals were not successful. For most of these unsuccessful cases, the applicants did not cite any reasons for their appeals, hence there was no basis to consider their requests. Several also cited reasons like financial difficulty or divorce. While we empathise with these cases, they do not provide sufficient grounds to justify the waiver of the ethnic limits, which are needed to ensure a good mix of residents in our

neighbourhoods and public housing estates. Furthermore, HDB's observation is that many flat sellers are still able to secure buyers from eligible ethnic groups given the large volume of resale transactions annually.

[Back to Contents](#)

LAND EARMARKED FOR HDB DEVELOPMENT

39 **Mr Muhamad Faisal Bin Abdul Manap** asked the Minister for National Development (a) of the land earmarked for HDB development, what is the percentage of undeveloped residential land; and (b) what is the percentage of residential land occupied by flats built in 1986 and before.

Mr Lawrence Wong: About 20% of the land earmarked for HDB residential development by 2030 have not been developed.

Of the total land used for HDB residential development today, slightly less than half are occupied by HDB flats built in 1986 and before.

[Back to Contents](#)

RELAXATION OF RULES FOR SALE OF HDB FLATS TO SINGLES WITH RELATIVES IN MATURE ESTATES

40 **Mr Lim Biow Chuan** asked the Minister for National Development whether HDB will relax the rules and allow the sale of HDB flats to singles in mature estates if the singles have relatives living in the mature estate.

Mr Lawrence Wong: The housing policy for singles was relaxed in 2013 to allow first-timer singles aged 35 and above to buy a subsidised 2-room Flexi flat in non-mature estates from HDB. Land for public housing in mature estates is limited, and flats offered by HDB are mostly prioritised for families.

However, singles aged 55 years and above may apply for a 2-room Flexi flat on a short lease in both non-mature and mature estates from HDB. This flexibility is given to elderly singles to meet their ageing-in-place and/or mutual care and support needs.

Younger singles who wish to live in mature estates have the option of applying for an HDB flat with their parents. In addition, they can buy a resale flat in any location on the open

market, and enjoy a Proximity Housing Grant of \$10,000 if they buy a resale flat to live with their parents.

[Back to Contents](#)

TYPICAL LIFESPAN OF HDB LIFTS AND THEIR REPLACEMENT

41 **Mr Ang Wei Neng** asked the Minister for National Development (a) what is the typical life span of HDB lifts; (b) in the past five years, how many HDB lifts have been replaced before the end of the specified life span as stated at the point of procurement; and (c) of these, how many lifts have been replaced due to unavailability of spare parts.

Mr Lawrence Wong: Like any machinery or equipment, there is no definitive life span for a lift. Much depends on the intensity of use and standard of maintenance. Nevertheless, as a guide to help the Town Councils (TCs) in their planning and budgeting, HDB has recommended a schedule of 28 years for lift replacement.

HDB does not have statistics on the number of lifts replaced before 28 years, or the condition of lifts at the point of replacement, as the maintenance and replacement of lifts are the responsibility of the respective TCs.

[Back to Contents](#)

PROCEDURE FOR COLLECTION OF MATERIALS IN RECYCLING BINS BY PUBLIC WASTE COLLECTORS AT POINT OF COLLECTION

42 **Mr Leon Perera** asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources (a) whether it is standard procedure for recycling bins to be emptied into a single receptacle by public waste collectors at the point of collection; and (b) if so, what is the objective of asking residents to separate the waste into different bins for different recyclable items.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli B M M: Under the National Recycling Programme (NRP), public waste collectors are required to provide a blue co-mingled recycling bin at every HDB block and landed premises. This co-mingled system makes it convenient for residents to recycle as they do not need to spend additional time and effort to segregate the different types of recyclables (i.e. paper, metal, plastic and glass) nor set aside additional space in their homes to store the different types of recyclables.

The National Environment Agency (NEA) requires the public waste collectors to use dedicated trucks to collect recyclables. These trucks are labelled accordingly as vehicles for the collection of recyclables. NEA monitors these trucks to ensure recyclables are collected and sent to the Materials Recovery Facility. NEA will impose a financial penalty on any public waste collector found to have collected waste and recyclables using the same truck. At the Material Recovery Facilities, the recyclables are sorted, baled and sent to local recyclers or exported for recycling.

Besides the NRP implemented for households, we also encourage private premises such as shopping malls and hotels to participate in the recycling effort by providing recycling bins on their premises. For these premises, the infrastructure and collection methods are decided and provided by the premises owner and these can vary across premises. Some premises may provide segregated recycling bins as patrons tend to dispose of singular items such as aluminium cans or plastic bottles.

[Back to Contents](#)

PLANS AND TIMELINE FOR A HAWKER CENTRE IN CHUA CHU KANG TOWN

43 **Mr Zaqy Mohamad** asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources what are the Ministry's plans and timeline to set up a hawker center in Chua Chu Kang Town.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli B M M: Chua Chu Kang is one of the towns identified for a new hawker centre by 2027. My Ministry is working on the details of the location and timeline of the new hawker centre and more information will be provided when the plans are ready.

[Back to Contents](#)

LAW ON HYBRID CARS WITH COMBUSTION ENGINES SWITCHED OFF WHEN STATIONARY

44 **Mr Sitoh Yih Pin** asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources whether section 21 of the Environmental Protection and Management (Vehicular Emissions) Regulations applies to hybrid cars which have their combustion engines switched off (with transfer to the use of an electric motor) when the car is stationary.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli B M M: Under Regulation 21 of the Environmental Protection and Management (Vehicular Emissions) Regulations, it is an offence to leave the engine of a vehicle running when it is stationary for reasons other than traffic conditions. Leaving the engine running when the vehicle is stationary results in fuel wastage and unnecessary environmental pollution.

Hybrid vehicles are equipped with an internal combustion engine and an electric motor powered by a battery pack. If the battery pack is unable to meet the electrical energy needed to operate the in-vehicle auxiliary systems such as the air-conditioning or the radio when the vehicle is stationary, the internal combustion engine will automatically re-start to provide the energy needed, thereby generating tailpipe emissions. Hence, hybrid vehicles can still emit tailpipe emissions when stationary and thus the regulations on idling engines also apply to hybrid vehicles.

To promote greater awareness of the regulation, National Environment Agency (NEA) has installed anti-vehicle idling signage at places where vehicles frequently congregate, such as carparks, loading/unloading bays and along the roadside near schools. In addition, NEA also works closely with stakeholders such as the authorised vehicle inspection centres, private and public transport operators and schools to disseminate educational pamphlets and decals.

[Back to Contents](#)

IMPLEMENTATION OF TRAY RETURN INITIATIVE AT ALL NEA-MANAGED HAWKER CENTRES

45 Assoc Prof Daniel Goh Pei Siong asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources (a) whether the tray return initiative for hawker centres started in 2012 has been implemented for all NEA-managed hawker centres; (b) if so, what is the total cost of the initiative; (c) whether and how the initiative has been assessed for its success; (d) whether the initiative has reduced the number of cleaners needed; and (e) how is the tray return system integrated with the food waste recycling trials at the two hawker centres undergoing these trials.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli B M M: Tray-return was introduced by the National Environment Agency (NEA) to hawker centres in 2012 and tray-return facilities have been progressively implemented in all hawker centres since July 2015 at an average cost of about \$11,000 per hawker centre.

The tray-return rates at our hawker centres vary from centre to centre, with the highest tray-return rates at Tiong Bahru Market and Block 137 Tampines Street 11. However, we can and should do better in achieving higher tray-return rates. The NEA is working with the Public Hygiene Council and the Singapore Kindness Movement to raise awareness of the tray-return initiative, for example by garnering support from schools, community organisations and corporations, including food court and fast food operators under the Tray-Return Partnership. We are also looking at incorporating tray-return stations that are more visible, prominent and accessible. Through these efforts, we hope to co-develop solutions to make it easier for everyone to return their trays and make the dining experience at hawker centres a more pleasant one for all.

At Ang Mo Kio Block 628 Market and Tiong Bahru Market where on-site food waste recycling projects are ongoing, food waste is segregated by cleaners when crockery is returned at the tray-return stations and when they collect the crockery during table-cleaning. The segregated food waste is then brought to the bin centre for recycling. NEA and the appointed food waste recycling companies have conducted training sessions with the cleaners at both centres on how to segregate food waste at the tray-return stations and during table-cleaning.

Tray-return will improve the overall level of cleanliness and hygiene in hawker centres by minimising the amount of food scraps left on the tables. It will also help the cleaners increase their work efficiency and will, over time, ease the manpower constraints faced by the cleaning sector. My Ministry will continue with our efforts to educate and raise awareness of tray-return to build this culture. Ultimately, cleaning up after ourselves is not just about raising productivity or ensuring better hygiene and cleanliness but simply a reflection of our social graciousness and consideration for others. I hope that all of us can continue to play our part in returning our trays not just in hawker centres but in other food outlets as well.

[Back to Contents](#)

NEA'S PLANS FOR APPOINTMENT OF COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS AS AUXILIARY OFFICERS

46 **Assoc Prof Daniel Goh Pei Siong** asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources (a) what are the immediate plans for appointing community volunteers as auxiliary officers to assist NEA in performing its functions; (b) what enforcement powers will be given to

the volunteers; and (c) how many volunteers will be deployed and for what purposes.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli B M M: The National Environment Agency (NEA) started the Community Volunteer (CV) Programme in 2013 to empower members of environment-related non-Government organisations (NGOs) to take on larger roles in strengthening public ownership of the environment. Since May 2016, individuals who are not members of any NGO but who meet the stringent selection criteria and fulfil the requisite training can also be appointed as a CV. There are currently about 380 CVs and about another 100 individuals have expressed interest to join the CV programme.

The role of the CV is to engage and educate environmental offenders to keep our environment clean as well as to inculcate greater community ownership of the environment. CVs are required to adopt specific geographical areas and lead by example to promote good social norms through participating in monthly environmental activities such as litter picking and educating environmental offenders within these adopted areas. The newly-appointed CVs are also required to be accompanied by NEA officers as part of their training to learn how to engage offenders.

As the primary role of the CVs is to encourage members of the public to take responsibility for the environment, the CVs will not be issuing enforcement tickets directly. The CVs will only use their authority card to request the particulars of a non-compliant offender for NEA's investigations. NEA will then follow through with enforcement where necessary. With the passing of the National Environment Agency (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2016 earlier this year, the CVs will be provided with powers to request particulars from persons found to have committed environmental offences beyond littering, such as smoking in prohibited places, spitting, urinating or defecating in public places, failing to properly remove animal faecal matter from public places, as well as leaving the engine of a stationary vehicle to idle.

Through the CV programme, we hope that more people will learn to take ownership of the environment. After all, care for the environment is a shared responsibility and everyone needs to play a part in ensuring a clean and liveable Singapore.

[Back to Contents](#)

DATA ON UNSOLD FOOD DISCARDED BY SUPERMARKETS

47 **Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang** asked the Minister for the Environment and Water

Resources (a) whether the Ministry currently collects data on the amount of unsold food discarded by supermarkets every year; and (b) if it does, how much unsold food is discarded and, if it does not, whether it will consider collecting such data.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli B M M: While my Ministry currently does not collect data on the amount of unsold food disposed of by supermarkets specifically, it tracks the total amount of food waste disposed of in Singapore. This is obtained from waste sampling and disposal data at incineration plants. My Ministry also keeps track of the total amount of food waste recycled which is compiled from the records of food waste recyclers.

Under the mandatory waste reporting requirements, my Ministry collects data on the amount of food waste recycled by large hotels and shopping malls. The mandatory reporting of waste data and waste reduction plans helps build greater awareness among building managers on the potential for waste reduction on their premises.

Over the past 10 years, the amount of food waste generated in Singapore has increased by almost 50% and is expected to rise further with population growth and greater affluence. Besides the effort and energy needed to collect and dispose of it, food waste also contaminates recyclables and gives rise to odour and pest issues if not managed properly. Hence, there is a need to manage food waste in a holistic way in terms of minimisation, redistribution and recycling.

As part of ongoing outreach efforts, my Ministry launched a programme last November to encourage everyone to reduce food wastage. It has also worked with various food retail businesses, including the supermarkets, to encourage consumers not to waste food. In addition, my Ministry is working on good practice guides for food manufacturers, retail establishments and supermarkets to minimise waste across the food supply chain. These include guidelines for the proper handling and re-distribution of unsold and excess food to food distribution organisations such as Food Bank Singapore and Food from the Heart.

My Ministry is also conducting projects to evaluate cost-effective methods for collecting and recycling food waste. On-site food waste recycling machines have been installed at two hawker centres to convert food waste to either water or bio-fertiliser. In a separate project, source-segregated food waste will be collected from multiple premises in Clementi. The collected food waste will be mixed with used water sludge to produce biogas at a pilot facility at

the Ulu Pandan Water Reclamation Plant.

With regard to the suggestion to collect food waste data from supermarkets, my Ministry is currently considering enhancing the mandatory waste reporting requirements and extending waste reporting to other premises that generate large amounts of waste including food waste.

[Back to Contents](#)

DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR WET MARKET AND HAWKER CENTRE AT BLOCK 511, BEDOK NORTH STREET AFTER EXPIRY OF LEASE

48 **Mr Muhamad Faisal Bin Abdul Manap** asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources what are the development plans for the wet market and hawker centre at Block 511, Bedok North Street after the expiry of its lease in October 2017.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli B M M: Currently, when the lease for a wet market and hawker centre expires, stall-owners who wish to continue their businesses will have the option to do so. Those previously on the subsidised scheme will pay the current subsidised rent while those who were not previously subsidised can either pay the prevailing market rent or tender for vacant stalls. The National Environment Agency (NEA) has been studying alternative management models for hawker centres and will consider where it can be applied so long as the fundamental objective of hawker centres in providing affordable, hygienic food is maintained.

Just like other sold centres whose leases had expired earlier, the wet market and hawker centre at Block 511, Bedok North Street 3 will continue to operate after the stall leases expire on 31 October 2017. The Town Council remains responsible for the maintenance of this centre and must arrange for any necessary repairs and redecorations (R&R) to be done.

[Back to Contents](#)

EARLY DETECTION AND INTERVENTION MEASURES FOR YOUNG STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

49 **Mr Christopher de Souza** asked the Acting Minister for Education (Schools) what measures are currently in place to provide for the early detection and intervention for young students who have learning difficulties and what more can and will be done to help such students and their parents.

Mr Ng Chee Meng: Schools have measures in place to identify students with learning difficulties and provide timely and appropriate intervention.

Upon entry into Primary 1, schools conduct early literacy and numeracy screening to identify students who need additional support to level up their literacy and numeracy skills. There are learning support programmes to help these students acquire the basic literacy and numeracy skills. Support in these programmes is extended all the way to secondary school levels if the child needs it.

In addition, students with dyslexia may attend the School-based Dyslexia Remediation (SDR) Programme or the MOE-aided literacy remediation at the Dyslexia Association of Singapore. MOE also provides resources for parents to support their children with dyslexia on the MOE Social Media Platforms such as Schoolbag.sg. Students with learning difficulties may also be referred to MOE Psychologists for further assessment and consultation on follow-up support.

There are also trained personnel such as Teachers trained in Special Needs, Allied Educators for Learning and Behavioural Support, and School Counsellors to provide case consultation and intervention for students with learning disabilities such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or mild Autism Spectrum Disorder. MOE also collaborates with the Institute of Mental Health to make available the REACH (Response, Early Intervention and Assessment in Community mental Health) services where students can be assessed for further support and intervention including advice for parents and caregivers.

[Back to Contents](#)

GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT SURVEY ON LOCAL AND OVERSEAS GRADUATES

50 **Mr Png Eng Huat** asked the Acting Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills) whether the Ministry will consider conducting a comprehensive and robust Graduate Employment Survey (GES) that covers graduates from all six local universities as well as overseas graduates and graduates from local trans-national university programmes so as to provide a broader data source on graduate employment prospects to complement the GES exercises published by some individual universities.

Mr Ong Ye Kung: The Ministry of Education (MOE) currently publishes comprehensive

information on the employment outcomes of fresh graduates from the full-time degree programmes offered by the five local Autonomous Universities (AUs), i.e. NTU, NUS, SMU, SIT and SUTD. Results for UniSIM will be available in 2018 when its first batch of full-time students graduates.

Instead of having one comprehensive survey for all AUs, each AU conducts its own survey, with MOE standardising the methodology. That way, students have access to more information, on the full-time permanent employment rates and monthly salaries for graduates from each degree programme from each university, and can make better-informed decisions when choosing their course of study.

The Council for Private Education (CPE) has commissioned a pilot graduate employment survey for graduates from Private Education Institutions (PEIs). The pilot survey polled graduates from nine of the largest PEIs, which covered the majority of private degree graduates in 2014. As mentioned in Parliament on 28 January 2016, CPE will make available information from this survey, to help support individuals in their decision making.

MOE however does not track Singaporeans who go overseas to pursue their undergraduate studies.

[Back to Contents](#)

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