

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
SINGAPORE
OFFICIAL REPORT
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CAUSES FOR DISLODGED PLATFORM DOOR AT SIXTH AVENUE DOWNTOWN LINE STATION

1 **Mr Christopher de Souza** asked the Minister for Transport whether he can provide an update on the causes for the dislodged platform door at Sixth Avenue Downtown Line Station on 4 October 2016 and whether any related issues affecting safety have been resolved.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: LTA and SBS Transit issued a joint press release on 18 October 2016 on this incident. Investigations found that a bolt on the fastener, which secures the platform screen door to the guide rail, had loosened and caused the door to be misaligned. The door was dislodged after coming into contact with the side of a train. No commuters were hurt. The contractors are enhancing the fasteners throughout the Downtown Line to prevent a recurrence.

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MEASURES TO LIMIT NOISE CAUSED BY MRT TRAINS TO CENTRAL GROVE CONDOMINIUM RESIDENTS

2 **Ms Tin Pei Ling** asked the Minister for Transport what will be done to improve the quality of life of residents in Central Grove condominium who have been adversely affected by the loud and consistent noise of passing trains on the MRT track that is adjacent to the condominium.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: The noise level as measured at Central Grove Condominium is lower than NEA's noise threshold of 67 decibels averaged over an hour. We will continue to monitor the situation, while also implementing system-wide measures to mitigate railway noise. These include fitting trains with noise-dampening wheels, using ballast and concrete sleepers on elevated tracks which absorb vibrations from trains better, and servicing train wheels and tracks even more frequently.

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GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE TO HELP MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM BUSINESSES VENTURE OVERSEAS

3 **Mr Thomas Chua Kee Seng** asked the Minister for Trade and Industry (Trade) (a) what

has been the performance of Singapore's trade in services compared to trade in goods, especially in the context of the weak performance of the latter; and (b) how can the Government further help SMEs to export their services.

4 **Mr Thomas Chua Kee Seng** asked the Minister for Trade and Industry (Trade) how can the Government better help the micro and small SMEs to venture overseas to tap a bigger market so that they can continue to grow.

Mr Lim Hng Kiang: Growth in Singapore's services trade has outpaced that of goods in recent years. Between 2010 and 2015, services exports grew by a robust compound annual growth rate of 6.9 percent, compared to a 0.1 percent decline in goods exports. While services exports growth has moderated since 2015, this was in line with the weakening global trade environment, and largely attributable to the slowdown in segments supporting goods trade, such as freight services. Growth remained resilient in segments such as insurance services, and telecommunications, computer and information services, which continue to see regional demand.

Singapore has a broad network of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and regional initiatives that help companies tap into external demand for our goods and services. For example, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) allows our services exporters greater market access to the ASEAN region with restrictions lowered in more than 80 services sectors. The AEC's continuing efforts to facilitate, protect and liberalise cross-border investments enable our companies to venture into the region at lower costs and with greater assurance.

Singapore also has a suite of assistance schemes that help SMEs internationalise and trade with overseas markets. This includes the Market Readiness Assistance (MRA) and the Global Company Partnership (GCP) schemes administered by IE Singapore. The MRA provides broad-based assistance to companies that are starting to internationalise, while the GCP provides targeted assistance to companies with a more established overseas presence. The GCP covers capability and manpower development, market access and financing. Over 80 percent of the beneficiaries of these assistance measures are SMEs.

The Government is also collaborating with Trade Associations and Chambers to help SMEs prepare themselves for overseas opportunities. The IE-SCCCI Singapore Enterprise Centre (ISSEC) in Shanghai which is a joint initiative between IE Singapore and the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce & Industry is an example of such collaboration. Over the past

three years, ISSEC has served more than 5,000 companies through outreach and advisory assistance, and provided research on emerging market opportunities in China. The companies assisted by ISSEC are predominantly SMEs and micro enterprises. ISSEC will be going beyond Shanghai to help such firms build up market expertise and capabilities in other parts of China.

IE Singapore also has an extensive network of Overseas Centres internationally that provides targeted assistance for companies in both developed and emerging markets. These include helping them generate new business leads in Southeast Asian markets such as Indonesia and Myanmar, gaining entry as first movers in emerging markets such as Africa and Latin America, and identifying opportunities to enhance technology capabilities in developed markets such as the UK and US.

Companies need the right talent to embark on internationalisation plans - people who have global mindsets, exposure to international business environments, in-depth understanding of industries, and ability to navigate markets. To build a pipeline of global-ready Singaporeans for international roles, manpower development programmes are also in place. For example, IE Singapore's Young Talent Programme exposes students from universities, polytechnics and ITEs to internship opportunities in overseas markets, and equips them with foundational skills needed for international careers. Skillsfuture Study Awards for International Business are also given out to prepare professionals, managers and executives for international roles through various courses, market attachments and customised overseas immersion programmes.

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RECOURSE FOR EMPLOYERS OF ERRANT FOREIGN DOMESTIC

National Archives of Singapore **WORKERS**

5 Ms Sylvia Lim asked the Minister for Manpower what recourse does an employer of a foreign domestic worker have where the worker has abandoned her work agreement and owes sums to her employer.

Mr Lim Swee Say: Personal loans are usually extended by an employer to the foreign domestic worker (FDW) to help the FDW pay placement fees to the local Employment Agency (EA). Our EA Licence Conditions require EAs to state their refund policies in their contracts with employers, including refunds for loans given by employers for the placement fee.

Therefore, if the FDW terminates her employment prematurely, employers should check the

contract they signed with their EA. The contract will lay out whether and under what circumstances they can get a full or partial refund.

There are also EAs who do not require employers to extend personal loans to the FDWs; so the issue of a refund does not even arise. Employers who prefer such an arrangement can approach these EAs.

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GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE TO SMALL AND MICRO BUSINESSES ON STAFF HIRE

6 **Mr Thomas Chua Kee Seng** asked the Minister for Manpower how can the Government better help SMEs, particularly the small and micro SMEs, to hire the staff they need as they attempt to transform and upgrade their businesses.

Mr Lim Swee Say: Taking a Whole-of-Government approach to help SMEs transform and upgrade, government agencies including SPRING, WSG, IMDA, BCA, STB and EDB, together with e2i, offer one-stop service under the Lean Enterprise Development Scheme (LEDS). The main scope of support covers development of new capability, new capacity and new markets. It also helps SMEs to meet their manpower needs by becoming more manpower lean and improving human resource practices. SMEs on the LEDS may also receive transitional manpower support to keep existing processes running while they transit to new, manpower-lean methods of production or service.

SMEs, particularly the micro and small SMEs, can also receive help from WSG to recruit PMETs through programmes such as P-Max and Career Support Programme. e2i has also developed Place-and-Train programmes for various sectors to help SMEs hire, train, and retain workers. To attract younger talent, SMEs can tap on the SkillsFuture Earn and Learn Programme to recruit local graduates from the polytechnics and Institute of Technical Education. SPRING's SME Talent Programme (STP) further supports SMEs' talent attraction efforts through quality internships.

In addition, WSG helps companies, including SMEs, in their recruitment through career fairs.

As our economy makes the transition to become more manpower lean, we encourage SMEs to make full use of the support offered by LEDS and various agencies. They may

approach any of the 12 SME Centres for assistance.

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MENTAL HEALTH DECLARATION FOR JOB APPLICATIONS

7 **Assoc Prof Daniel Goh Pei Siong** asked the Minister for Manpower what is the Government's position on employers requiring prospective employees to declare if they have a history of mental illness and whether the Government should lead by example by removing such declarations from public service employment application forms for non-sensitive positions.

Mr Lim Swee Say: The Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices emphasises the importance of recruiting and selecting employees on the basis of merit regardless of age, race, gender, religion, disability or family status. Job application forms should only ask for information that is relevant to assessing an applicant's suitability for the job.

The Government requires candidates to fill in a short application form that assesses their suitability for the job. Declaration of any existing medical conditions, including mental illness, does not disqualify a candidate from being considered for a position in the Public Service. Public agencies will select the candidate with the best overall fit for the job, taking into account his skills and qualifications, relevant work experience and personal attributes.

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ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE BY MICRO AND SMALL BUSINESSES

8 **Mr Thomas Chua Kee Seng** asked the Minister for Communications and Information how can the Government better help the micro and small SMEs to take advantage of the digital infrastructure of the Government to benefit their businesses.

Assoc Prof Dr Yaacob Ibrahim: It is increasingly crucial for companies to leverage infocomm technology (ICT) to be competitive and remain relevant in a digital economy.

The Government recognises that micro and small SMEs may require additional assistance in adopting ICT and have introduced programmes that meet their different needs. Under IMDA's iSPRINT scheme, SMEs enjoy subsidies when they tap on a range of pre-qualified and proven ICT solutions to boost their productivity and growth, or when they adopt more advanced ICT

solutions that are tailor-made to their business processes. To date, over 8,000 SMEs have benefited from iSPRINT. In addition, SPRING's Capability Development Grant and Innovation & Capability Voucher provide other forms of support for SMEs to adopt ICT in improving business efficiency.

While using ICT enables new possibilities for companies, it also raises the risk of cybersecurity breaches that would impact the business and reputation of these companies. The Government is mindful that many SMEs may not know what to do to secure their ICT systems. To help SMEs, the Cyber Security Agency and the National Security Coordination Secretariat have worked with the Singapore Business Federation to develop an Employee Cyber Security Kit. The toolkit is a useful resource to enable SMEs to assess their own cyber security readiness, and guide SMEs in developing a cyber security education programme for their employees.

Additionally, the Government offers several digital services that help all companies, including micro and small SMEs, with their business processes. The Business Grants Portal is an accessible one-stop-shop to easily apply for government grants, while LicenceOne plays a similar role in the application and payment of government licences. We are also in the process of rolling out CorpPass, which provides a corporate digital identity for businesses to conduct secure online transactions with the Government.

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MINIMUM ATTENDANCE TO PROCEED WITH PUBLIC FORUM

9 **Mr Leon Perera** asked the Minister for Communications and Information (a) how many people registered for the REACH Public Forum on the Elected Presidency on 29 September 2016; (b) what was the intended attendance and how was it derived; (c) what is the threshold for attendance below which it is deemed necessary to cancel such forums; and (d) who made the final decision on cancelling that particular event.

Assoc Prof Dr Yaacob Ibrahim: The target number of participants for the REACH Public Forum on the Elected Presidency on 29 September was 320. Only 80 signed up as at 27 September. As 30% of sign-ups typically do not turn up for REACH events, REACH decided to cancel the Forum due to the poor attendance. All registered participants were informed of the cancellation, and are welcomed to attend another of REACH's dialogues, or provide their feedback through the REACH website.

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**RECIDIVISM RATE FOR LONG TERM IMPRISONMENT 1 (LT1) AND DRUG
REHABILITATION CENTRE (DRC) INMATES RELEASED
FROM 2010 TO 2013**

10 **Mr Christopher de Souza** asked the Minister for Home Affairs what is the recidivism rate for Long Term Imprisonment 1 (LT1) and Drug Rehabilitation Centre (DRC) inmates who are released from 2010 to 2013.

Mr K Shanmugam: The two-year recidivism rates for persons released from the Drug Rehabilitation Centre (DRC) and Long-Term Imprisonment 1 (LT1) from 2010 to 2013 are as follows.

	2010	2011	2012	2013
DRC	27.5%	31.1%	28.3%	31.9%
LT1	23.8%	34.1%	36.0%	27.0%

The recidivism rates of drug inmates have come down significantly from 60-70% in the 1990s. The improvement was a result of rehabilitation programmes, as well as tough enforcement measures.

Singapore Prison Service (SPS) has been continuing to enhance its rehabilitation programmes. For example, under the enhanced Drug Rehabilitation Regime introduced in 2014, inmates are placed on programmes tailored to their drug addiction issues and re-offending risks.

SPS also introduced the Enhanced Supervision Scheme (ESS) in 2012 to provide more intensive care for high-risk LT inmates. The aftercare enhancements include mandatory casework, individual counselling and community supervision.

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**REHABILITATION PROGRAMMES FOR DIFFERENT RISK PROFILES
UNDER ENHANCED DRUG REHABILITATION REGIME**

11 **Mr Christopher de Souza** asked the Minister for Home Affairs what are the differences in rehabilitation programmes for the different risk profiles in the enhanced Drug

Rehabilitation Regime implemented in 2014 and how is the effectiveness of the outcome of the rehabilitation regime for the respective risk profiles measured.

Mr K Shanmugam: The Singapore Prison Service (SPS) introduced the enhanced Drug Rehabilitation Regime in the Drug Rehabilitation Centre (DRC) in 2014.

Under the enhanced regime, SPS officers will assess the inmates' risks of re-offending and severity of drug use upon admission.

For higher-risk inmates, SPS will assign Correctional Rehabilitation Specialists to conduct high-intensity counselling programmes for them. The counselling programmes address multiple risks and needs, such as criminal thinking and drug addiction issues.

Lower-risk inmates will go through lower-intensity intervention programmes, where they learn about the consequences of drug use and pick up skills to prevent relapse.

All DRC inmates also undergo general programmes which help them in their reintegration journey. These include family support programmes, employability skills training and religious services.

SPS will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the enhanced Drug Rehabilitation Regime. As for the enhanced regime that was only implemented in 2014, the evaluation is still ongoing.

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ACTIONS AGAINST PERSONS FOR ATTEMPTED SUICIDES IN 2015

12 **Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang** asked the Minister for Home Affairs of the 837 persons taken into custody for attempted suicide in 2015 (a) what have been the specific measures used to arrest them; (b) how many have been placed in lock-up and for how long on average; (c) whether any investigations have been conducted to look into the actual impact of these measures on their well-being; and (d) how many of these persons have been referred to Samaritans of Singapore (SOS) and Institute of Mental Health (IMH) respectively.

Mr K Shanmugam: Police officers are trained to respond to cases of attempted suicide with sensitivity and compassion. Persons who attempt suicide are emotionally and psychologically distressed. When responding to such cases, Police's priority is to ensure the person's safety. Police officers will look out for signs of suicidal tendencies, and what actions to

take. Police usually arrest persons for attempting suicide in order to prevent them from doing harm, either to themselves or to others. In these cases, the Police officers will make an assessment and apply handcuffs when there is a need to ensure the safety of the person, the escorting officers or members of public in the vicinity; or to prevent the person from absconding.

For persons taken into custody, depending on their condition, they may be taken to the Police station for investigation, sent to the hospitals directly for medical treatment, referred to the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) for psychiatric treatment, or to the Samaritans of Singapore (SOS) for counselling. Police do not maintain data on the number of persons referred to the IMH, or to the SOS. However, only two out of 1096 cases of attempted suicide reported in 2015 were eventually prosecuted. The purpose of arrest is primarily to ensure that the person receives the appropriate help, and not to bring charges. For persons who are brought back to the Police station, Police will not detain them longer than is necessary to investigate the case and to process the necessary referrals. The actual duration of detention depends on the circumstances of each case.

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RESPONSE TO RANSOM THREATS ON INTERNET

13 Ms Foo Mee Har asked the Minister for Home Affairs whether payment of ransom is legal and how corporations and consumers should respond to ransom threats on the Internet.

Mr K Shanmugam: In some situations, payment of ransom, for kidnapping, could be an offence under the Kidnapping Act. Beyond that, payment of ransom, for example, to be free from some other threat, is generally not an offence.

There is a trend on the internet, termed as "ransomware", where a cybercriminal locks the victim's files, computer system or mobile device and restricts its access, until a ransom is paid.

While it is generally not an offence to pay ransom to a cybercriminal who deploys ransomware on the victim's computer or device, victims are nevertheless advised not to pay the perpetrator. There is no guarantee that their files can be recovered even if they have paid a ransom. There have been instances where users were unable to access their files again. Instead, victims of ransomware should lodge a Police report as soon as possible.

Prevention is key to avoid falling prey to ransomware and other cybercrime. Individuals should be careful when dealing with emails from unfamiliar sources or when interacting with

strangers on the internet, and not to download suspicious files or open attachments in emails from these unfamiliar senders. The public and corporations should also protect their computers or devices with firewalls, spam filters and up-to-date anti-virus softwares. They should also backup their data regularly.

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CONSIDERATIONS FOR REVIEW OF FIRE CODE AFTER JURONG WEST MARKET AND COFFEESHOP FIRE

14 **Assoc Prof Daniel Goh Pei Siong** asked the Minister for Home Affairs (a) what is the cause and origin of the Jurong West market and coffeeshop fire; (b) how did the fire spread quickly and widely; (c) whether the presence of automatic sprinkler systems at the market and coffeeshop would have slowed or stopped the fire from spreading; and (d) whether the risks of fire spreading and requirements to minimise the risks for markets and coffeeshops should be reviewed for the Fire Code.

Mr K Shanmugam: Police believe that the Jurong West market fire on 11 October 2016 was caused by arson. Police have arrested a male Chinese. He has been charged. Investigations at the incident site revealed that fire was set to several styrofoam and cardboard boxes at two different stalls. As a result, the fire spread quickly from these two areas to the other parts of the market. The fire was set probably at about 2.30am in the morning. The SCDF received multiple 995 calls about the fire at 2.42am and arrived within six minutes. By 4.26am, the fire was fully extinguished. The property damage was extensive and three residents who had breathing difficulties were conveyed to hospital.

The SCDF adopts a risk-based approach in prescribing mandatory fire safety requirements for building premises. Automatic fire sprinklers have not been a requirement for all buildings. Such systems are useful in controlling fire spread in higher risk premises, such as those with a large open floor area of more than 4,000 square metres, high-rise enclosed buildings of more than 24 metres in height, or enclosed basements. It has not been mandatory for wet markets like the Jurong West market, which are not enclosed and are designed to be well ventilated.

The deliberate act here is more appropriately dealt with as a criminal act. SCDF's assessment is that there is no need for additional Fire Code requirements on all wet markets.

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LICENSING OF JACKPOT OUTLETS FROM 2006 TO 2015

15 **Mr Chen Show Mao** asked the Minister for Home Affairs (a) how many jackpot licences have been issued thus far; (b) of these, how many have been issued after 2010; (c) how many licensed jackpot outlets are there currently; and (d) how much revenue have been generated from licensed jackpot outlets in each of the years from 2006 to 2015.

Mr K Shanmugam: Private lotteries clubs (PLCs) are issued permits under the Private Lotteries Act, to operate jackpot machines.

There are currently 84 PLCs in operation, compared to 97 in 2010.

Since 2010, Police have issued 7 new PLC permits, while 20 PLCs have ceased operations.

The private lotteries duties from jackpot machines operated by PLCs between FY 2006 and FY 2015 are listed in the following table.

	FY2006 (\$'m)	FY2007 (\$'m)	FY2008 (\$'m)	FY2009 (\$'m)	FY2010 (\$'m)	FY2011 (\$'m)	FY2012 (\$'m)	FY2013 (\$'m)	FY2014 (\$'m)	FY2015 (\$'m)
Private lotteries duties from jackpot machines operated by PLCs	291.05	336.37	342.74	330.97	249.50	200.93	207.47	213.12	213.17	213.45

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STAFFING AND CASELOAD OF SERIOUS SEXUAL CRIMES BRANCH

16 **Mr Chen Show Mao** asked the Minister for Home Affairs (a) what is the number of officers assigned to the Serious Sexual Crimes Branch of the CID; (b) what is the rationale for the staffing numbers at the Serious Sexual Crimes Branch; (c) what is the annual number of cases investigated by the Serious Sexual Crimes Branch since its establishment; and (d) what are the criteria for referring cases to the Serious Sexual Crimes unit.

Mr K Shanmugam: Sexual crime investigations are generally led by specialist units in the Singapore Police Force. The Serious Sexual Crimes Branch (SSCB) in the Criminal

Investigation Department (CID) leads investigations into serious sexual crimes such as rape and aggravated cases of sexual assault by penetration (SAP). Specialist teams in the Police Land Divisions lead investigations in other sexual crimes, such as outrage of modesty cases, sexual penetration of minors and SAP cases that do not involve aggravating factors.

The investigation officers in the SSCB and the Police Divisions are supported by other Police resources including in the fields of intelligence and forensics. Depending on the volume of cases, Police also scale up SSCB's resources where necessary, by leveraging on other investigation teams.

As Member will note, the Police resources used for investigations will vary according to the needs of a case, and because investigations may cover a broad area, not everything needs to be done by SSCB. The investigation will be led by SSCB and the total investigative resources could come from a larger pool of officers.

In the last three years, the SSCB investigated on average about 170 cases of rape and sexual assault by penetration each year. Nearly all these cases were solved.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL OR PSYCHIATRIC ISSUES RELATED TO PROBLEM GAMBLING

17 **Mr Chen Show Mao** asked the Minister for Health (a) how many people have been identified with psychological or psychiatric issues related to problem gambling in each year from 2006 to 2015; and (b) of these, what are the most common psychological or psychiatric issues identified.

Mr Gan Kim Yong: Between FY08 and FY15, the number of patients seen by the National Addictions Management Service (NAMS) for suspected gambling disorder each year varies between 168 and 526, averaging 407 over the last five years.

Among patients with pathological gambling treated at NAMS, the top associated psychiatric conditions were adjustment disorders, depression and substance abuse.

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COORDINATED AND HOLISTIC HELP FOR SMES TO TRANSFORM

18 **Mr Thomas Chua Kee Seng** asked the Minister for Trade and Industry (Industry) how can Government agencies be more coordinated and holistic when helping our SMEs to transform in an environment where many SMEs may have immediate concerns of survival.

Mr S Iswaran: Singapore is facing a period of slow growth. Some sectors have been more adversely affected, such as wholesale trade and marine & offshore engineering. We are also seeing weakness in industries like food services and real estate, though there remain bright spots such as in the information & communications, education and health & social services sectors.

Against this backdrop, the Government is committed to supporting our SMEs in their growth and restructuring efforts. Our agencies have been working closely with industry partners such as our Trade Associations and Chambers (TACs), Centres of Innovation (COIs), SME Centres and financial institutions to reach out to and provide assistance to our SMEs. Our agencies have coordinated their efforts to address needs at the industry and firm level.

At the industry level, we have embarked on a \$4.5 billion Industry Transformation Programme where Industry Transformation Maps (ITMs) are being developed for more than 20 key industries. This involves a coordinated Whole-of-Government effort, in partnership with key industry partners and multipliers. Each ITM will be tailored to the needs of the industry. In developing the ITMs, the Government will examine the industry landscape, the future trends and needs to set out a suite of initiatives to systematically raise productivity, develop skills, drive innovation, and promote internationalisation, so as to catalyse transformation and achieve the stated vision of each industry. The ITMs are focused on providing more integrated assistance for companies across domains to ensure our industries can stay competitive in the medium term, and our workers get to secure and retain good jobs.

At the firm level, our agencies work closely together on initiatives to better support our SMEs to address their immediate needs such as in financing, as well as capability development and internationalization to position them for growth. In Budget 2016, we launched the SME Working Capital Loan (WCL) to help local enterprises access unsecured working capital financing during this period of slower economic growth. Under the WCL, enterprises can access a loan quantum of up to \$300,000 for their daily operations. There has been a strong take-up for the WCL, and over \$400 million in loans have been given to SMEs to-date.

The 12 SME Centres provide first-stop assistance through one-to-one advice and guidance to SMEs, spanning immediate needs as well as business plans for the medium term. From this year onwards (2016), the SME Centres will focus on enhancing business capabilities and driving the adoption of solutions, to ensure that the assistance provided translates to tangible business outcomes for the SMEs. Through the SME Centres, SMEs have access to support schemes across government agencies. This includes support for capability development and internationalisation. To help more companies with capability development, SPRING introduced a simplified Capability Development Grant (CDG) application process for grants below \$30,000 in 2015 to encourage more companies to take the first step to upgrade their capabilities in areas such as productivity, financial management and human capital development. The response to this move has been positive. As at October 2016, more than 2,000 CDG projects have been approved.

Our TACs also play an important role as partners in providing assistance to SMEs. For example, through the TAC-led Collaborative Industry Projects (CIPs), TACs will identify and drive the adoption of solutions to address common industry-specific needs. Since the launch of the programme in 2016, five TACs have embarked on projects which are expected to benefit 600 SMEs.

More recently, we have taken steps to make our grants more accessible through the Business Grant Portal (BGP). This is an online application platform for businesses to apply for grants across different Government agencies. Through the BGP, businesses can easily find the relevant grants to support their business needs, without the need to approach multiple agencies. The beta version of the BGP was launched on 3 May 2016 with IE Singapore's Market Readiness Assistance (MRA) grant and subsequently BCA's Building Information Modelling (BIM) grant, and over 900 applications have been received thus far. The BGP will be launched soon, and businesses can expect more grants to be introduced onto the BGP progressively.

As we navigate the challenges ahead, the Government will need to work collectively with our companies, workers, unions and industry associations for successful economic transformation. It is critical that SMEs stand ready to embrace new technologies and business models, and on its part the Government will remain firmly committed in supporting our companies through this phase.

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SPECIAL AUDITS BY AUDITOR-GENERAL ON GOVERNMENT-RELATED BODIES

19 **Mr Leon Perera** asked the Minister for Finance (a) in the past 20 years, how many Government-related bodies have undergone a special audit by the Auditor-General outside of the regular annual audit exercises by the Auditor-General; and (b) what are the details and rationale of each case.

Mr Heng Swee Keat: The Auditor-General's Office (AGO) annually conducts audits of the Government Financial Statements which covers the accounts of the Ministries, Departments and Organs of State. In addition, it also carries out selective audits on a selection of public agencies which involves checks on their compliance with rules and procedures.

Besides these audits, AGO had carried out two special audits over the past 20 years:

(a) "Healthcare Subsidy Audit" in 1996

Following a Parliamentary resolution to verify the fees charged and health care subsidy provided by Government polyclinics and public hospitals, including a claim made in Parliament that "health care costs are hardly subsidised at all", the Select Committee on Verification of Health Care Subsidy of Government Polyclinics and Public Hospitals was formed and AGO was requested to carry out an audit to verify the Government's health care figures (such as fees charged, subsidy level provided). Government's health care figures were independently verified by AGO and confirmed to be free from material errors, and the details of AGO's findings were tabled and debated in Parliament on 30th September 1996 and 10th October 1996 respectively.

(b) "Audit of Aljunied-Hougang-Punggol East Town Council (AHPETC)" in 2014

AGO was directed to carry out an audit of AHPETC's FY2012 accounts following repeated and serious concerns raised by AHPETC's auditors. AHPETC's auditor submitted a disclaimer of opinion on AHPETC's Financial Statements for FY2011 and FY2012. The auditor also issued a qualified opinion on AHPETC's other legal and regulatory requirements, stating that AHPETC has not complied with the provisions of the Town Councils Act and Financial Rules in various respects. AGO submitted its report on 6th February 2015, and the details of its findings were debated in Parliament on 12th and 13th February 2015.

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BETTING AND SWEEPSTAKES DUTY COLLECTIONS FROM EXEMPTED REMOTE GAMBLING OPERATORS

20 **Mr Png Eng Huat** asked the Minister for Finance (a) what is the estimated betting and sweepstakes duty that will be collected from the exempted remote gambling operators; and (b) what is the financial effect of exempting Singapore Pools and the Singapore Turf Club on the total collection of betting and sweepstakes duty.

Mr Heng Swee Keat: The certificate of exemption made under Section 26 of the Remote Gambling Act does not confer exemption from the payment of betting and sweepstakes duty. The collections received through terrestrial or remote gambling channels are both subject to the following betting duties¹:

(a) Totalisator and Sports Betting: 25% of Gross Profits (that is, gross bets less winnings paid out); and

(b) Lotteries (i.e. 4D, Singapore Sweep, TOTO): 30% of Gross Bets.

Singapore Pools launched its remote gambling channel on 25 October 2016, and Singapore Turf Club is scheduled to do so on 15 November 2016. As such, it is premature to ascertain any financial impact of remote gambling on the operators or betting duties.

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SUPPORT FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED KINDERGARTENS AND CHILDCARE OPERATORS

21 **Mr Ang Hin Kee** asked the Minister for Social and Family Development (a) how many small and medium-sized kindergartens and childcare operators have ceased operations since 2015; and (b) how does the Ministry support small and medium-sized operators to remain viable.

Mr Tan Chuan-Jin: Fewer than 30 pre-schools, constituting about 2% of the 1,700 pre-schools in Singapore, ceased operations in 2015. While some of these were standalone pre-schools, there were also those part of a larger group.

¹Information is publicly available on IRAS website.

The Government's priority is to provide good quality, accessible and affordable early childhood services, so as to ensure a good start for every child. To achieve this, the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) has implemented a range of initiatives to support operators of different sizes.

First, we have the Anchor Operator and Partner Operator schemes to support selected larger and smaller pre-school operators respectively. Besides keeping their fees to the specified caps, these operators are also supported to improve the quality of their pre-schools. We have also seen smaller operators coming together to achieve greater economies of scale and tap on government support under the Partner Operator Scheme.

Second, we have a number of broad-based initiatives to help all operators develop and attract more educators to the sector. These include the new Skills Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education, the Professional Development Programme, and ECDA's Scholarships and Training Awards. In addition, the Government also provides funding support for operators to adopt smart solutions, such as for attendance-taking and temperature-taking, to support educators in their work and to raise sector productivity.

Third, support schemes are available to help operators defray costs and keep their fees affordable. These include the Community and Sports Facilities Scheme under the Urban Redevelopment Authority, as well as the Portable Rental Subsidies and the Workplace Child Care Centre Scheme under ECDA. Operators can receive centre development grants, furnishing and equipment grants, or rental cost subsidies if they meet affordability and quality requirements.

Finally, small and medium-sized operators can also tap on the Capability Development Grant, Innovation and Capability Voucher and other programmes offered by SPRING Singapore. Operators can make use of these schemes to build capabilities via staff training, technology adoption or by defraying the cost of consultancy projects in the areas of human resources, financial management, innovation and productivity.

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AVERAGE ANNUAL SPENDING BY PROBLEM GAMBLERS FROM 2006 TO 2015

22 **Mr Chen Show Mao** asked the Minister for Social and Family Development for each year from 2006 to 2015 (a) what has been the average spending by problem gamblers; and (b)

what has been the respective percentage of the aggregate number of problem gamblers according to their household income deciles.

Mr Tan Chuan-Jin: The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) commissions the Survey on Participation in Gambling Activities among Singapore Residents every three years. The survey includes screening questions to detect probable pathological gamblers, based on diagnostic criteria in the fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) developed by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). The same diagnostic criteria have been used in similar studies in Hong Kong, Macau and the United States. As the survey is conducted via face-to-face interviews, the screening questions only capture the respondents' self-professed behaviour and do not represent a clinical assessment of actual gambling disorders.

Based on the latest survey in 2014, the proportion of respondents classified as probable pathological gamblers is 0.2%, compared to 2.1% in 2005, 1.2% in 2008 and 1.4% in 2011.

The average monthly betting amount among probable pathological gamblers was \$313 in 2014. This has decreased from the average monthly betting amount of \$637 in 2005, \$619 in 2008 and \$1,713 in 2011.

The surveys collected information on monthly personal income by income brackets, instead of the monthly household income. The probable pathological gambling rate by monthly personal income brackets is shown in Table A.

Table A: Prevalence of Probable Pathological Gambling By Personal Income

Personal Income	2005	2008	2011	2014
No Income	0.5%	0.8%	0.8%	0.1%
\$1 - \$999	0.7%	0%	0.5%	0%
\$1,000 - \$1,999	2.1%	2.3%	1.5%	0.4%
\$2,000 - \$2,999	4.2%	2.1%	1.9%	0.2%
\$3,000 - \$3,999	5.9%	1.1%	1.4%	0.6%
\$4,000 and above	4.7%	0%	1.7%	0%

While the probable pathological gambling rate has dropped in 2014, we cannot be complacent and will continue to monitor the trends in future runs of the survey.

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STATUS OF PROPOSED INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT AT OPEN FIELD NEXT TO BUANGKOK MRT STATION

23 **Mr Gan Thiam Poh** asked the Minister for National Development what is the progress in the development of the proposed integrated development at the open field next to Buangkok MRT station.

Mr Lawrence Wong: The site is intended to house a residential development, which will be integrated with a bus interchange and Buangkok MRT station. There are also plans to include community facilities and commercial amenities.

The Urban Redevelopment Authority is working closely together with other agencies on this effort, to ensure that the various uses are properly planned and integrated in the future development, bearing in mind that each of these uses has its own space and layout requirements.

More details on the future development will be provided once the plans are finalised.

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PLANNING PROCESS FOR INSTALLATION OF MOBILE PHONE BASE STATIONS

24 **Er Dr Lee Bee Wah** asked the Minister for National Development whether the Ministry will review the planning process for the installation of mobile phone base stations to enable such stations to be built during a building's construction stage and make mobile coverage a mandatory compliance for that building's Temporary Occupation Permit.

Mr Lawrence Wong: Adequate mobile coverage should be provided to new buildings in a timely manner. Currently, Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) install mobile base stations on the rooftops of selected new HDB blocks to ensure that the area will have good mobile coverage when the residents move in. However, there could be operational delays, such as construction delays to blocks selected for base station installation.

HDB has been working with all stakeholders, including Town Councils, IDA and MNOs, to study how to expedite the installation of such base stations. For example, HDB and IDA are looking into the possibility of expediting approval procedures between MNOs and Town

Councils. HDB and IDA are also exploring the possibility of incorporating MNOs' infrastructure and engineering requirements during the pre-tender planning phase of new HDB developments, so that the subsequent physical base station installation works could be accelerated.

Finally, MCI and IDA are considering amendments to the Telecommunications Act to facilitate the use of rooftop space of one building to provide mobile coverage in another building. If implemented, it will be easier for MNOs to deploy their equipment on the rooftops of adjacent buildings to improve mobile coverage of a particular area.

Given these ongoing efforts, there may not be a need to mandate mobile coverage as a TOP condition for each new building. Ultimately, it is more important to ensure close and effective co-operation among all the relevant stakeholders, which go beyond the developer of the building project.

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COMMISSION TO HANDLE ISSUES RELATED TO ANIMAL WELFARE

25 **Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang** asked the Minister for National Development whether the Ministry will consider setting up a dedicated commission to handle all issues related to animal welfare that is similar to the Personal Data Protection Commission (PDPC) either by expanding the scope of the current Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration Committee for Animal Welfare or setting up a new committee comprising of animal welfare groups, businesses in the pet industry, veterinarians, grassroots community leaders and other relevant stakeholders.

Mr Lawrence Wong: There are currently no plans to set up a dedicated commission to handle issues related to animal welfare.

The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) already works closely with multi-stakeholder committees to enhance animal welfare. This approach has led to positive results. For example, AVA had close working relations with the Animal Welfare Legislative Review Committee (AWLRC), a group made up of Members of Parliament, grassroots leaders, animal welfare groups, the pet industry, and the veterinary profession. AVA worked with AWLRC in a review of Singapore's animal welfare legislation in 2012. AVA also supported the AWLRC's recommendations to enhance stakeholders' collaboration in animal welfare.

In addition, AVA has close working relations with the Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration Committee (MSCC), which comprises representatives from animal welfare groups, the pet

industry, the veterinary profession, and the community at large. AVA worked with them on the recently issued Code of Animal Welfare for the pet industry. AVA continues to engage with the MSCC on issues relating to training for the pet industry, as well as on outreach initiatives to promote awareness about animal welfare.

AVA will continue to engage with the relevant stakeholders to further the cause of animal welfare in Singapore.

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PROVISION OF PARKING LOTS IN PROPOSED BTO DEVELOPMENT IN KAKI BUKIT

26 **Mr Muhamad Faisal Bin Abdul Manap** asked the Minister for National Development (a) what is the number of parking lots available for the newly proposed Build-To-Order (BTO) HDB development in Kaki Bukit launching in November 2016; and (b) whether the Ministry will consider constructing more parking lots to supplement the shortage of parking lots at carparks B45 and B48 of Bedok North Street 3.

Mr Lawrence Wong: The proposed HDB BTO development in Kaki Bukit located along Bedok North Avenue 1 will be provided with 66 carpark lots and 34 motorcycle lots.

As for carparks B45 and B48 at Bedok North Street 3, there are currently sufficient parking lots for residents' season parking needs. However, as these carparks also serve local amenities, such as the hawker centre and market, short-term parking demand may be high. Due to site constraints, HDB is unable to construct more parking lots at these two carparks. Nevertheless, to help ease the short-term congestion, HDB will reconfigure B45 to provide additional loading and unloading bays in the carpark. This will help to address the short-term congestion caused by goods vehicles carrying out loading and unloading activities at B45.

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PROVISION OF MANDATORY CHANGING FACILITIES FOR BABIES IN MALE AND FEMALE RESTROOMS IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS

27 **Mr Muhamad Faisal Bin Abdul Manap** asked the Minister for National Development whether the Ministry will look into making it a requirement to have changing facilities for babies in both male and female restrooms in public buildings.

Mr Lawrence Wong: Since 2014, the Code on Accessibility already requires the provision of diaper changing facilities in both male and female restrooms. This requirement applies to buildings that are frequented by families with young children, including shopping centres, transport nodes, community centres, and sports complexes. Building owners also have the alternative of providing diaper changing facilities in individual unisex family restrooms, in lieu of having to provide them in both male and female restrooms.

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PROGRAMMES TO HELP SCHOOLS HANDLE SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT

28 **Mr Chen Show Mao** asked the Minister for Education (Schools) what are the programmes to help (i) schools handle sexual assault and harassment in schools and (ii) students, teachers, and staff understand their rights in cases of sexual assault and harassment.

Mr Ng Chee Meng: Students learn about personal safety and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in MOE's Sexuality Education curriculum. They are taught how to recognise sexual abuse and harassment, acquire skills to protect themselves both in real life and online, and understand the laws in Singapore that protect them. They also learn that they have the right to safety and protection and to seek help from trusted adults, such as their parents, teachers and school counsellors.

Teachers look out for signs of distress in students and refer them to the school counsellor or other professional support where necessary. Suspected cases of sexual abuse are managed sensitively. Guidelines are provided by Child Protection Services, Ministry of Social and Family Development, for reporting such cases, and MOE and schools work closely with Child Protection Services to support affected students.

For teachers and staff who experienced harassment or abuse at work, they are advised to seek the support and guidance of their school leaders. Those who are psychologically or emotionally affected will be supported by professional counsellors. MOE takes a serious view of any inappropriate conduct that is committed against our teachers and staff, and will investigate and take the appropriate action in each and every case.

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REVIEW OF COURSES SUBSIDISED BY WDA AND SKILLSFUTURE

29 **Er Dr Lee Bee Wah** asked the Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills) (a) whether the Ministry will expand the courses subsidised by WDA and SkillsFuture credits to include more professional qualifications such as Certified Internal Auditor courses or Certified Information System Auditor courses; and (b) how frequently does WDA review the relevance of its courses to keep its offerings updated.

Mr Ong Ye Kung: SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) has been taking an inclusive approach to build up the list of courses eligible for the SkillsFuture Credit. The key consideration is relevance to work. However, we will need the co-operation of training providers as there will be administrative tasks at their end, in order for their courses to be included.

SSG has reached out to training providers of preparatory courses and assessments for professional certifications under the Certified Internal Auditor (CIA) and Certified Information System Auditor (CISA) to invite them to come on board the SkillsFuture Credit. So far, SSG has included the Institute of Singapore Chartered Accountants (ISCA)-CIA Challenge Exam Prep Course, delivered by the Institute of Internal Auditors, in the SkillsFuture Credit directory. SSG will continue to work with training providers to include more of such professional courses and assessments for the SkillsFuture Credit. I thank the Member for her feedback.

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