

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
SINGAPORE
OFFICIAL REPORT
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INCREASE IN NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE ELECTORATES SINCE LAST GENERAL ELECTION

1 **Mr Gan Thiam Poh** asked the Prime Minister (a) to date, what is the total increase in the number of eligible electorates since last general election; (b) which is the electoral division that has the highest number of increase; and (c) what is the projected increase in the number of eligible electorates in three years' time.

Mr Teo Chee Hean (for the Prime Minister): The latest certified registers of electors contain the names of all Singapore citizens qualified as electors as at 1 February 2015. The increase in the number of electors since the last General Election in 2015 and the electoral division with the highest increase will only be known when the registers of electors are next revised.

The Elections Department does not make projections on the number of qualified electors and works on the basis of the actual number of electors when the registers of electors are revised.

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STUDIES ON IMPACT OF PRO-FAMILY MEASURES ON RAISING FERTILITY RATES

2 **Ms Foo Mee Har** asked the Prime Minister (a) what studies or research have been conducted to understand the impact of various pro-family measures such as baby bonus and faster access to HDB flats, on raising fertility rates; and (b) how will the findings guide implementation of future Government interventions.

Mr Teo Chee Hean (for the Prime Minister): The Government regularly reviews the Marriage & Parenthood (M&P) Package to see how we can better provide a supportive and family-friendly environment in Singapore. We conduct surveys and studies to better understand the impact and take-up of our measures. For example, we carry out the M&P Survey every three to five years to better understand Singaporeans' attitudes towards marriage and parenthood, including their views on relevant support measures. We also draw on studies by academics and other groups, such as the survey by The Straits Times and Employer Alliance on Work-Life

Integration in 2014. Relevant studies of M&P trends in other countries are similarly referenced for insights.

In addition, we hold consultations with diverse groups of Singaporeans, including married couples with and without children, singles, students in tertiary education institutes, caregivers of young children, and people sector representatives. Through these consultations, we have received positive feedback that measures such as the Baby Bonus Scheme have helped parents defray child-raising costs, while others such as housing measures have facilitated young couples' plans to settle down and build their families.

The learning points from these studies and consultations have been important in helping us to refine the M&P Package, which has been enhanced progressively and significantly since it was first introduced in 2001. For instance, last year, we announced further enhancements to Paternity Leave and Shared Parental Leave to better support shared parental responsibility between mothers and fathers.

Even as we continue to refine policy measures, we are cognisant that birth rates do not depend only on government initiatives. Social norms shape M&P decisions and these are in turn a result of multiple factors. Fortunately, aspirations for marriage and parenthood among Singaporeans remain strong. To get ready for Millennial families, we will need the support of the whole of society - employers, co-workers, community organisations, businesses and Government - to promote a more family-friendly environment where marriage and parenthood are achievable, enjoyable and celebrated.

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BREAKDOWN ON NUMBER OF FOREIGN DOMESTIC WORKERS IN SINGAPORE FROM 13 SOURCE COUNTRIES

3 **Mr Dennis Tan Lip Fong** asked the Minister for Manpower whether he can provide a breakdown of the current number of foreign domestic workers in Singapore from each of the 13 source countries.

Mr Lim Swee Say: As of June 2016, there were 237,100 foreign domestic workers in Singapore. MOM does not provide a breakdown of the data by nationality.

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FORENSIC MEDICAL EXAMINATION FOR VICTIMS OF SEX CRIMES

4 **Mr Chen Show Mao** asked the Minister for Home Affairs (a) whether victims of sex crimes are required to make a police report before they can get a forensic medical examination done and, if so, why; and (b) whether this examination is only available at three hospitals in Singapore and, if so, why is this not more widely available.

Mr K Shanmugam: Sexual crimes are serious and reportable crimes. The Police encourage all victims to come forward to report these offences, so that the perpetrators can be brought to justice.

Forensic medical examination is an important part of the criminal investigation into sexual crimes. The Police issue Sexual Assault Examination Kits to Singapore General Hospital (SGH), KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) and National University Hospital (NUH), because these are the only hospitals with 24/7 Obstetrics and Gynaecology (O&G) Specialist Clinics that can facilitate forensic medical examination at any time of the day.

Trained O&G specialists use these kits to gather and preserve physical evidence in cases of serious sexual assault, including semen, blood, body fluids, and hair, in order to assist the criminal investigation and any subsequent prosecution. It is thus important that a Police report is lodged first, to enable the Police to commence investigations swiftly. The forensic medical examination is not a medical treatment process. A Police report is not needed for the victim to seek immediate medical attention.

The Minister for Home Affairs recently announced a new initiative to make forensic medical examinations more convenient for rape victims. The Police have partnered SGH's O&G department to operationalise the new One-Stop Abuse Forensic Examination Centre, or OneSAFE Centre, at Police Cantonment Complex. Since 15 January 2017, adult rape victims whose cases are reported within 72 hours of the assault, and who do not require any other medical attention can go through the necessary forensic medical examination at the OneSAFE Centre, without needing to travel to one of the three hospitals.

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COMMUNITY DISPUTE APPLICATIONS RECEIVED BY COMMUNITY DISPUTES RESOLUTION TRIBUNALS

5 **Ms Tin Pei Ling** asked the Minister for Law (a) over the past 12 months, how many community dispute applications have been received by the Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals; (b) of these, how many have been (i) accepted by the tribunals (ii) successfully resolved and (iii) given orders for one of the parties to receive a mental health assessment.

Mr K Shanmugam: The Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals (CDRT) was established on 1 October 2015 as a forum to help neighbours with difficult disputes resolve their conflicts after avenues such as community mediation have been exhausted.

Between 1 October 2015 and 31 January 2017, the CDRT received 109 applications. Out of these 109 applications, 102 claims have been disposed of and seven claims are pending. Out of the 102 claims that have been disposed of, a total of 73 claims were successfully resolved - 55 claims were withdrawn/discontinued and a Consent Order was granted in the other 18 claims. As for the remaining 29 claims, the CDRT granted orders after trial or dismissed/struck off the applications.

The Community Disputes Resolution Act 2015 does not provide the CDRT with the power to order a party to undergo a mental health assessment. However, there are existing measures in place to facilitate the referral of parties who may be suffering from mental health issues for examination. The CDRT's in-house psychologists and court counsellors will first conduct a preliminary assessment on the party's suspected mental health issue. They will then provide inputs to the Judge on whether the party will benefit from a referral to the Institute of Mental Health for medical examination and treatment, and facilitate the referral.

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DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR BEDOK STADIUM AND BEDOK SPORTS COMPLEX

6 **Miss Cheryl Chan Wei Ling** asked the Minister for Culture, Community and Youth (a) whether there are any development plans for the Bedok Stadium and Bedok Sports Complex; and (b) if there are none, whether the running tracks within Bedok Stadium will be upgraded as their current condition poses safety concerns for users.

Ms Grace Fu Hai Yien: In 2011, under the Housing and Development Board's "Remaking our Heartlands" initiative for the East Coast area, the Bedok Sports Complex was identified for redevelopment as part of the upcoming "Heartbeat@Bedok" integrated complex, which will also house the Kampong Chai Chee Community Club, Bedok Public Library, Bedok Polyclinic, as well as other facilities. When ready, the sports facilities at Heartbeat@Bedok will comprise a sports hall, sheltered tennis courts, gymnasium, as well as aquatic facilities such as a sheltered swimming pool and interactive play pools. The development will be opening in phases at the end of this year.

Bedok Stadium was last refurbished in 2002. Sport Singapore plans to replace the stadium's running track by September 2017.

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DATA ON VACANT OR UNUSED GOVERNMENT PROPERTIES AND FACILITIES

7 **Ms Foo Mee Har** asked the Minister for National Development what is the number, size and location of Government properties and facilities that are currently vacant or unused, including schools, institutes, factories and industrial facilities.

Mr Lawrence Wong: Based on returns collated from key Government agencies that own significant number of properties, there are around 1,000 government properties that are vacant. These properties are of various sizes and located all over Singapore.

The properties are vacant for various reasons, such as in the process of being leased, under review for redevelopment, or pending demolition.

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UPDATES ON NEW AND INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES FOR HDB RESIDENTS WITH LIFT ACCESS PROBLEMS

8 **Assoc Prof Fatimah Lateef** asked the Minister for National Development (a) whether there are updates on new and innovative technologies that can offer HDB residents, whose units are located in infrastructurally challenging positions, the lift access to their dwelling units; and (b) what is the proportion of such units within our HDB catchment.

Mr Lawrence Wong: The Lift Upgrading Programme (LUP) was launched in 2001 to provide direct lift access to flats and enhance convenience for residents, especially the elderly and less mobile. At the start of the programme, there were more than 5,300 HDB blocks without 100% lift access. Among them, more than 1,000 blocks were initially found to be unfeasible for LUP due to cost or technical constraints.

Over the years, HDB has adopted innovative technical solutions and conducted some lift pilot trials to help such blocks with lift access. Some examples of these solutions that have been successfully implemented include lifts that do not have a machine room at the top of the shafts (that is, machine room-less elevators) and bubble lifts. In some blocks, HDB has also successfully reconfigured lift access with new entry points to residents' homes. More recently, HDB piloted the Pneumatic Vacuum Elevator and the Vertical Platform Lift in an effort to offer LUP to more blocks. However, both solutions have been assessed to be unfeasible for heavy residential use, and will not be implemented in HDB estates.

Through the various innovations solutions, the vast majority of the 5,300 blocks are now able to benefit from LUP. There remains only about 150 blocks where HDB has not found any solutions to overcome the existing constraints. On a flat basis, less than 1% of our sold flats do not have direct lift access. Singaporeans who are in urgent need of direct lift access due to medical conditions or disability may approach HDB for housing and financing assistance. HDB assesses each request on a case-by-case basis to see how best to render help.

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PROPORTION OF UNSUCCESSFUL FIRST-TIME HDB BTO FLAT APPLICANTS AFTER FIFTH ATTEMPT

9 **Assoc Prof Fatimah Lateef** asked the Minister for National Development (a) what proportion of first-time applicants for HDB BTO flats have not succeeded in getting a unit after balloting for five times or more in the recent years; and (b) what are the main reasons for the unsuccessful attempts.

Mr Lawrence Wong: Most first-timer families who apply for a Build-To-Order (BTO) flat in the non-mature estates are able to book a flat within their first or second try, and definitely on their third try.

Those who are unsuccessful in getting a flat after five or more attempts would have applied for BTO flats in the mature estates, or flats under the Sale of Balance Flats (SBF) exercises. Such flats have very high application rates, and lower chances of success in the ballot. Hence we encourage first-timer families to apply for BTO flats in non-mature estates, so that they can get their homes soon.

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CONTAMINATION RATE OF RECYCLABLES FROM HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING

10 **Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang** asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources whether the Ministry can clarify what is (i) the contamination rate of recyclables from household recycling and (ii) the most common form of or reason for this contamination.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli B M M: Under the National Recycling Programme (NRP), Public Waste Collectors (PWCs) are required to provide a blue co-mingled recycling bin at every HDB block and for all landed residential premises. Recycling receptacles must also be provided in condominium developments. This co-mingled recycling bin system under the NRP makes it convenient for residents as they do not have to spend additional time and effort to segregate the different types of recyclables (that is, paper, metal, plastic and glass) nor set aside space in their homes to store different types of recyclables separately.

While much effort has been put into encouraging domestic recycling, our domestic recycling rate was only 19% in 2015. We need to work harder to achieve our target of a domestic recycling rate of 30% by 2030. This includes inculcating responsible recycling habits, such as preventing the contamination of recyclables in the co-mingled recycling bins by placing only items which can be recycled in such bins.

According to the PWCs, about 40% of items found in the recycling bins have to be disposed of as they cannot be recycled. Some of the common non-recyclable items found deposited in recycling bins include soft toys and old shoes. Food waste found mixed with recyclables is another problem. Recyclables contaminated with food waste cannot be recycled and also create pest and odour problems.

All co-mingled recycling bins in the NRP have clear labels that indicate what items can be recycled, such as clean paper, plastics, metal cans, glass and old clothing. Through public

education programmes in schools and at grassroots events, my Ministry and the National Environment Agency strongly encourage everyone to contribute to our recycling efforts and to ensure that only items which are suitable for recycling are deposited in the co-mingled recycling bins.

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ENCOURAGING UPTAKE OF 'HAZE-FREE' COOKING OIL BY RESTAURANTS

11 **Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang** asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources considering the ready availability of 'haze-free' cooking oil (or certified sustainable palm oil) in Singapore (a) whether the Government will consider subsidising its higher cost to increase the uptake by restaurants; and (b) what other methods the Ministry is considering to encourage its uptake.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli B M M: The Ministry supports efforts by industries and non-governmental organisations to promote the use of certified sustainable palm oil (CSPO). Uncontrolled burning for land preparation is not permitted in the production of CSPO. Wider adoption of CSPO would help to reduce the likelihood of haze pollution in South East Asia where nearly 90%¹ of the world's palm oil is produced.

Globally, the availability of CSPO is limited. The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), an internationally recognised certification body for sustainable palm oil, certifies only about 17%² of the total palm oil produced globally. Emerging markets, such as China and India³, account for nearly half of the global palm oil imports. We hope that greater awareness of the impact of unsustainable farming practices in the palm oil sector will encourage consumers to demand more CSPO. This is already happening in Europe, where companies and Governments have started to harmonise initiatives across countries to green the palm oil supply chain⁴.

The Ministry is pleased to see ground-up efforts in Singapore, by industries and non-government organisations (NGOs), to promote the adoption of CSPO. We support the mission of

¹Source: <https://www.worldpalmoilproduction.com/>

²Source: <http://www.rspo.org/about/impacts>

³Source: <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2015-10-15/india-and-china-are-key-to-ending-asia-s-haze>

⁴Source: <https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/news/game-changer-sustainable-palm-oil/>

the Singapore Alliance on Sustainable Palm Oil (SASPO), founded by the World Wide Fund (WWF) Singapore, Unilever, Danone, Ayam Brand, IKEA and Wildlife Reserves Singapore. In addition, the Singapore Environment Council (SEC) has launched a new product category for products that contain palm oil under its Singapore Green Labelling Scheme (SGLS). Consumers can play a part by purchasing products with either the RSPO label or, in future, the SGLS label.

We are heartened that Singapore's biggest supermarket chain NTUC FairPrice carries CSPO products⁵. The People's Movement to Stop Haze (PM.Haze), a local NGO, has also produced a "Haze-Free Cooking Oil" Guide for local consumers and businesses to encourage them to make the switch to cooking oil from CSPO sources. Contrary to general perception, the price of CSPO cooking oil can be comparable to that of non-CSPO cooking oil⁶.

Together, we can work towards the vision of CSPO becoming the norm in Singapore and internationally.

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REASON FOR RISE IN LITTERING CASES

12 **Er Dr Lee Bee Wah** asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources (a) what is the reason for the rise in littering resulting in more than 31,000 summons issued by NEA last year; (b) whether any analysis been done to understand the underlying cause; and (c) what is the Ministry doing to address this problem.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli B M M: A survey commissioned by the National Environment Agency (NEA) in 2010 found that around a third of Singaporeans would litter if they think they can get away with it. In addition, the survey found that while people realise that littering is an anti-social act, many still hold the false perception that throwing small items such as tissue papers and plastic wrappers does not constitute littering.

To tackle the littering problem, NEA has stepped up enforcement against littering. Last year, NEA issued more than 31,000 tickets to littering offenders, about 18% more than in 2015. We have also enhanced the penalties for litterbugs. In April 2014, the Environmental Public Health Act (EPHA) was amended to double the maximum fines for littering to \$2,000 for the

⁵Source: <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/environment/eco-friendly-cooking-oil-now-available-at-fairprice>

⁶An example of CSPO cooking oil available in Singapore that is not more expensive than non-CSPO cooking oil is Cabbage Brand cooking oil.

first court conviction, \$4,000 for the second conviction and \$10,000 for the third and subsequent convictions. Repeat offenders would also be issued Corrective Work Orders.

In 2013, NEA launched a Community Volunteer (CV) programme to foster greater ownership of the environment by engaging volunteers to encourage members of the public to bin their litter. More than 330 individuals have come on board the CV programme and engaged over 3,700 litterbugs.

We have also been working with stakeholders such as the Public Hygiene Council (PHC) to encourage everyone to keep Singapore clean and inculcate a sense of responsibility toward our environment. The annual "Operation WE Clean Up!" is one such activity by the PHC which aims to galvanise the community through litter-picking activities across the island. The NEA and the PHC, together with partners such as the Singapore Kindness Movement, have also worked with the Ministry of Education (MOE) to encourage students to undertake daily cleaning in their schools, to inculcate a sense of responsibility among the students.

The problem of littering cannot be solved just by enforcement or by the Government alone. Everyone has to take greater care of our environment and play a part in keeping Singapore clean.

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WATER CONSUMPTION AND FORTHCOMING PRICE INCREASE

13 **Er Dr Lee Bee Wah** asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources (a) whether there will be assistance for households who cannot cope with the forthcoming increase in the price of water; (b) what is the current percentage of households that are consuming more water than the national average; and (c) whether the Ministry has conducted a study on the water usage of non-residential facilities.

14 **Mr Png Eng Huat** asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources for the past 10 years, what has been the average number and percentage of households whose annual water consumption are below the national average, broken down by HDB flat types and private housing types respectively.

15 **Mr Png Eng Huat** asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources for the past 10 years, what has been the domestic water consumption per capita of Singapore

compared to other First World countries.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli B M M: In raising the water price to ensure sustainability in water supply, the Government will be providing assistance to help lower income households manage the price increase. Details on the revisions in water prices, and measures to assist households, will be announced by Minister (Finance) in the Budget Statement on 20 February 2017.

Members have asked about water consumption by households and businesses. Currently, 45% of water demand is from the domestic sector, while 55% is from the non-domestic sector, which covers industries and commercial buildings.

Today, the national average water consumption for households is 17 cubic metres of water per month, down from 19 cubic metres ten years ago. About 40% of households consume more water than the national average today, as was the case 10 years ago. [For more details on the monthly average water consumption by dwelling type, members may refer to the SP Services website⁷.]

If we look at per capita usage, households' water consumption in Singapore is 148⁸ litres per capita per day (LPCD). This is lower than that of Melbourne (159), London (155), New York City (476), Tokyo (220), and Hong Kong (211). But, we should not be complacent. We must continue to learn from other cities such as Copenhagen and Amsterdam, which have achieved lower LPCD levels of 101 and 136 respectively. Notwithstanding contextual differences such as climate, we can still save more water by adopting more water-saving habits and making use of more water-efficient appliances in our households.

As for the non-domestic sector, PUB has since 2015 required the submission of Water Efficiency Management Plans (WEMP) for large water users that consume 60,000 cubic metres or more a year, equivalent to 24 Olympic-sized swimming pools. These plans help companies identify ways to reduce consumption. In 2016, more than 600 large water users have submitted their plans. With the data collected from WEMP, PUB will develop water efficiency benchmarks and good practice guidelines for water intensive sectors to help them further identify opportunities to improve water efficiency.

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⁷<http://www.singaporepower.com.sg/irj/servlet/prt/portal/prtroot/docs/guid/609ffede-040d-2f10-f5b4-de464caacd39>

⁸From 2016 onwards, Singapore's per capita water consumption indicator has been revised to focus on water consumption within household premises only (i.e. usage in purpose built dormitories and common areas excluded).

PRIMARY 1 PUPIL DATA FORM

16 **Mr Leon Perera** asked the Minister for Education (Schools) (a) when was the Primary 1 registration form (pupil data form) last updated; and (b) whether there are plans to update the form so as to modify the occupations listed for both parents to reflect the gender diversity in an increasing number of occupations.

Mr Ng Chee Meng: MOE periodically updates the Pupil Data Form, when necessary. It was last updated in 2016, to make changes to the declaration clause.

The occupations listed in the form are those that have been more commonly reported by parents. Parents whose occupations are not listed can specify their occupation under 'Others'.

MOE is planning to digitise the form via an upcoming online portal for parents called Parents Gateway. As part of this shift, we are undertaking a comprehensive review of the various data fields in the form, including the lists of occupations for both parents.

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Office of the Clerk of Parliament
Singapore, 20 February 2017