

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

SINGAPORE

OFFICIAL REPORT

CONTENTS

Written Answers to Questions	Page
1 Withdrawal of Hospitalisation and Surgical Insurance Scheme by Statutory Boards (Er Dr Lee Bee Wah)	5
2 Impact of Grab-Uber Proposed Takeover (Ms Joan Pereira)	6
3 Educational Qualifications of 54,000 Private-hire Car Drivers (Mr Patrick Tay Teck Guan)	7
4 Language Assistance for Candidates More Proficient in Own Vernacular Languages for Private Hire Car Driver's Vocational Licence Test (Mr Sitoh Yih Pin)	8
5 Effectiveness of Enforcement on Designated Parking for Shared Bicycles (Mr Christopher de Souza)	9
6 Raising Minimum Age Requirement for Private-hire Car Drivers to that for Taxi Drivers (Mr Christopher de Souza)	9
7 Detrainment of Passengers in Bukit Panjang LRT Breakdown (Mr Liang Eng Hwa)	10
8 Security Deposit or Performance Bond by Shared Bicycle Operators to Ensure Protection of Deposits or Pre-payment Made by Bicycle Hirers or Consumers (Mr Lim Biow Chuan)	11
9 Construction of Longer Tunnels for Residents to Nearest MRT Stations (Mr Lim Biow Chuan)	12
10 Regulating Monopolistic Private-hire Car Market (Miss Cheng Li Hui)	12
11 One-off Exemption for Motorcycles Manufactured between 1993 and 2003 under Classic Vehicles Scheme (Mr Ong Teng Koon)	13

12 Rectification Works by Or Kim Peow Contractors for Faulty Construction of Viaduct Structure Linking PIE and TPE at Upper Changi Road East (Mr Dennis Tan Lip Fong)	13
13 Recruits to SAF Volunteer Corp (Assoc Prof Fatimah Lateef)	14
14 Incidents of Vehicles with Objects not Properly Secured and Falling off onto Roads (Mr Ang Hin Kee)	15
15 Root Cause of Fire in Pulau Busing and Measures in Place to Handle Such Emergencies (Assoc Prof Fatimah Lateef)	16
16 Educational Levels Attained by Prison Inmates (Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang)	18
17 Plans for Polyclinic within MRT Station in Vicinity of Potong Pasir (Mr Sitoh Yih Pin)	19
18 Increasing Subsidy Rates under Community Health Assist Scheme for non-Pioneer Generation Seniors above 60 Years of Age (Mr Kwek Hian Chuan Henry)	19
19 Payment of SG Bonus (Mr Murali Pillai)	20
20 SMEs' Share of 4.5% Overall Labour Productivity Growth in 2017 (Mr Thomas Chua Kee Seng)	20
21 Infrastructure Support to Ensure Uninterrupted Business Transactions and Daily Digital Operations from Power and Technical Breakdowns (Mr Ang Hin Kee)	22
22 Calculation of Published Data for Singapore's Gini Coefficient Measuring Income Inequality (Mr Dennis Tan Lip Fong)	24
23 Review of Requests for Airbnb-type Facilities (Assoc Prof Fatimah Lateef)	24
24 Waiver of Resale Levy for Senior Citizen Applicants Aged 55 and Above for 2-room Flexi Flats (Mr Gan Thiam Poh)	25
25 Successful Applicants for HDB Rental Flat Awaiting Vacant Unit (Mr Zainal Sapari)	26
26 Installation of CCTVs in Multi-storey Carparks and Lifts (Er Dr Lee Bee Wah)	27
27 Extending Lease Buyback Scheme to 5-room HDB Flats (Mr Kwek Hian Chuan Henry)	28
28 Outcome of AVA's Proposals to Prevent Mass Roosting of Mynahs on Trees in front of Bukit Timah Plaza (Ms Rahayu Mahzam)	28
29 Sold and Unsold Two-room HDB Flexi Flats (Mr Png Eng Huat)	29
30 Subsidy for Replacement of Non-fire Rated Doors under Optional Improvement Works Scheme (Mr Ong Teng Koon)	30
31 Effectiveness of Deployment of Recycling Bins to HDB Blocks under Enhanced National Recycling Programme (Mr Ang Hin Kee)	30

32 Update on 2016 Pilot Study of Releasing Bacteria-carrying Mosquitoes into Environment (Mr Patrick Tay Teck Guan)	32
33 Increasing Penalties for Pollution of Water Resources with Toxic Industrial Waste (Mr Yee Chia Hsing)	33
34 Air Quality in Vicinity after Fires at Pulau Busing and Kranji in March 2018 (Ms Joan Pereira)	35
35 Ensuring Comparable Food Prices at Hawker Stalls and Coffee Shops in New HDB Estates vs-a-vis Those in Mature Estates (Mr Gan Thiam Poh)	36
36 Status in 2028 of Motorcycles Registered before 2003 under LTA's Classic Vehicle Scheme (Mr Zainal Sapari)	38
37 Measures to Help Students Better Understand Socio-economic Opportunities in Southeast Asia (Mr Desmond Choo)	38
38 Measures to Assess and Ensure Children Continue to Uphold Relevant Oriental Core and Family Values (Mr Gan Thiam Poh)	39
39 Breakdown of PSLE Cohorts Entering University from 75th to below 30th Percentiles Based on PSLE Results (Mr Gan Thiam Poh)	40
40 Promoting Integration between Students Attending International and MOE-run Schools (Mr Christopher de Souza)	41
41 Plans to Meet Increased Demand for Primary School Places in Bukit Batok SMC (Mr Murali Pillai)	42
42 Percentage of Students Promoted from Normal Technical to Normal Academic and Express Streams in Past Five Years (Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang)	42
43 Students Seeking Assistance from Career Guidance Offices in Polytechnics and ITEs (Ms Rahayu Mahzam)	43
44 Proportion of Fresh Graduates of Autonomous Universities, Private Educational Institutes Offering Degrees, Polytechnics and ITE Hired by Public Service (Mr Leon Perera)	44
45 Estimated Annual Revenue from Imposition of Parking Fees for Teachers in Schools (Mr Leon Perera)	45
46 Resident Employment Rate for Persons Aged 25-64 with Education Qualifications below Secondary School Level (Mr Melvin Yong Yik Chye)	45
47 Proportion of Jobseekers Placed in Jobs by Workforce Singapore and e21 (Mr Desmond Choo)	46
48 Additional Interest Rates for Low-income Groups' CPF Savings (Mr Gan Thiam Poh)	47
49 Workfare Income Supplement Employee-recipients by Age Group (Mr Zainal Sapari)	48

50 Reasons for Rejection of Non-domestic Work Permit Applications (Mr Kok Heng Leun)	50
51 Regulation of Living Conditions and Protection of Rights of Foreign Domestic Workers after Arrival and before Employment (Assoc Prof Daniel Goh Pei Siong)	51
52 Employers Notifying MOM of Downward Revision to Salary Terms for Work Permit Holders (Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang)	52
53 Custody of Children in Divorce Cases (Mr Seah Kian Peng)	53
54 Self-harm Cases Involving Children Aged 14 and below (Assoc Prof Daniel Goh Pei Siong)	55
55 Counselling Services for Children or Young Persons Involved in Statutory Rape and Sexual Misconduct Cases Carried out by Persons Known to Victims (Miss Cheng Li Hui)	56

WITHDRAWAL OF HOSPITALISATION AND SURGICAL INSURANCE SCHEME BY STATUTORY BOARDS

1 **Er Dr Lee Bee Wah** asked the Prime Minister with the withdrawal of the hospitalisation and surgical insurance scheme by some statutory boards (a) whether the Ministry is aware that officers previously on this scheme who have pre-existing medical conditions can only get insurance cover under MediShield Life at Class C and B2 levels and that these officers are unable to buy a rider or upgrade for their medical insurance policies; and (b) whether the Ministry can negotiate with insurance companies to offer a comprehensive coverage for all civil servants, especially those with pre-existing illnesses who had better coverage before the withdrawal.

Mr Chan Chun Sing (for the Prime Minister): Public officers who joined the Service after 1994 are placed on the Medisave-cum-Subsidised Outpatient (MSO) scheme. This is a portable medical benefit scheme which provides 2% of an officer's monthly salary as additional Medisave contributions, in lieu of hospitalisation benefits, and an annual subsidy of \$500 for outpatient treatments. Under the MSO scheme, an officer may receive an additional Medisave contribution of up to \$2,730 annually¹. The MSO scheme is regularly reviewed to ensure it remains market competitive. In the last review in 2015, the Civil Service increased additional Medisave contributions from 1% to 2%.

All Singaporeans are covered under MediShield Life. On top of that, public officers can use their additional Medisave contributions to purchase Integrated Shield Plans (IPs) to supplement their MediShield Life coverage. In addition, the Public Service Division (PSD) has also appointed a panel of insurance companies to offer portable IPs at

¹ The maximum additional Medisave contributions that an officer will receive in a year is \$2,730, i.e. \$140 per month x 17 months (12 months ordinary wages and 5 months additional wages) + \$350 (from the \$500 outpatient subsidy if unutilised).

discounted premiums to public officers and their dependants. These IPs are individual contracts between the officers and insurers, and will continue to cover officers even after they change employers.

Over and above the MSO scheme benefits, and PSD's facilitation for public officers and their dependants to take up portable IPs at discounted premiums, one particular Statutory Board (SB) had further arranged for its officers to be covered under a Group Hospitalisation and Surgical (H&S) plan. This is even though there is no obligation to do so. Under H&S plan, the insurance is not portable and will not cover officers after they leave the SB. The H&S plan of the SB expired in Dec 2017. The SB is working to arrange for an insurer to offer H&S coverage to its officers.

[Back to Contents](#)

IMPACT OF GRAB-UBER PROPOSED TAKEOVER

2 **Ms Joan Pereira** asked the Minister for Transport following the Grab-Uber proposed takeover (a) whether many people will be out of a job as a result of this deal; (b) if so, how many people will be so affected and what is being done to help these workers; and (c) what is the impact of this on the overall public transport service.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: The Grab-Uber merger impacted several groups of workers and drivers, but to different degrees. First, about 300 former employees of Uber were given paid leave of up to three months while Grab identifies suitable positions for them. Those who are not placed within Grab will be compensated in accordance with the Tripartite Advisory on Managing Excess Manpower and Responsible Retrenchment.

Second, Uber used to have 300 to 400 contract workers. Grab has committed to take over and honour the terms and durations of their contracts

Third, Uber had about 10,000 drivers driving exclusively for it at the point of merger. More than 9,000 of the affected Uber drivers have since joined Grab. For those who do

not, Workforce Singapore and the NTUC's Employment and Employability Institute are helping them secure new employment. MOM and LTA are also working with the National Private Hire Vehicles Association (NHPVA) and National Taxi Association (NTA) to help them resolve any outstanding payments or contractual disputes with Uber.

The point-to-point transport sector is still evolving. The industry is not yet at its steady state. The Ministry of Transport and LTA are monitoring the development and will intervene as necessary, including instituting a fair regulatory framework to ensure that it stays open and contestable, so that no one single market player can dominate the industry to the detriment of commuters and drivers.

[Back to Contents](#)

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF 54,000 PRIVATE-HIRE CAR DRIVERS

3 **Mr Patrick Tay Teck Guan** asked the Minister for Transport whether he can provide a breakdown of the educational qualifications (primary, secondary, junior college, ITE, diploma, degree, masters and higher) of the 54,000 private-hire car drivers in Singapore.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: Of the 54,000 private hire car (PHC) drivers as of 31 March 2018, about 40% have attained tertiary / post-secondary level qualifications, including degree, diploma and ITE qualifications. The highest qualification attained by another 40% of drivers is secondary school level qualifications. The remaining 20% have attained primary school level qualifications or other qualifications, such as the Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications, as their highest qualification.

[Back to Contents](#)

LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE FOR CANDIDATES MORE PROFICIENT IN OWN VERNACULAR LANGUAGES FOR PRIVATE HIRE CAR DRIVER'S VOCATIONAL LICENCE TEST

4 **Mr Sitoh Yih Pin** asked the Minister for Transport whether language assistance can be arranged for candidates who are more proficient in their respective vernacular languages for the Private Hire Car Driver's Vocational Licence (PDVL) test while retaining a minimum proficiency requirement in the English language.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: The provision of chauffeured services puts drivers in contact with a wide range of commuters every day. Hence, private hire car (PHC) and taxi drivers must be able to speak simple English to communicate effectively with all commuters – both Singaporeans and tourists. Drivers must also be able to read basic English, so that they can navigate roads and buildings, the names of which are primarily in English.

Nonetheless, we understand that there are Private Hire Car Driver's Vocational Licence (PDVL) applicants who may have language difficulties. If they wish to look for other jobs or transit to other industries, they can approach e2i or Workforce Singapore for employment assistance. For those who would still like to drive PHCs, and who require assistance in preparing for their PDVL tests, they can sign up for remedial classes conducted by the training providers – the Singapore Taxi Academy (STA) and ComfortDelGro (CDG) Taxi. Based on feedback, we understand that these have been useful in helping applicants pass their tests. LTA will also work with the training providers to ensure that language assistance is available to applicants who require them.

[Back to Contents](#)

EFFECTIVENESS OF ENFORCEMENT ON DESIGNATED PARKING FOR SHARED BICYCLES

5 **Mr Christopher de Souza** asked the Minister for Transport how effective has enforcement of designated parking for shared bicycles been and what further measures will be taken to prevent shared bicycles creating inconveniences to other path users.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: We know that indiscriminate bicycle parking is a major issue on the ground. LTA has stepped up enforcement efforts and has issued more than 3,300 removal notices to date.

To more effectively address the issue, LTA will implement a licensing regime for bicycle-sharing operators by end 2018. This will allow LTA to manage the size of each operator's fleet, require operators to manage indiscriminate parking and encourage responsible user behaviour.

Under the licensing regime, operators will be required to implement QR code geofencing and impose a penalty on users who do not park within the designated areas. Users who repeatedly park improperly will be banned temporarily from renting shared bicycles from all operators.

Apart from regulatory measures, LTA has worked with the operators on a public awareness campaign to educate users on responsible parking. More parking spaces will also be added to cater to a growing number of cyclists.

[Back to Contents](#)

RAISING MINIMUM AGE REQUIREMENT FOR PRIVATE-HIRE CAR DRIVERS TO THAT FOR TAXI DRIVERS

6 **Mr Christopher de Souza** asked the Minister for Transport whether any new considerations have surfaced for the Ministry to consider raising the minimum age requirement for private-hire car drivers to that required for taxi drivers to better ensure the safety of passengers.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: Where safety is concerned, we are of the view that the number of years of driving experience is more important than age. In this regard, LTA requires a minimum of two years' driving experience for applicants for the Private Hire Car Driver's Vocational Licence (PDVL).

[Back to Contents](#)

DETRAINMENT OF PASSENGERS IN BUKIT PANJANG LRT BREAKDOWN

7 **Mr Liang Eng Hwa** asked the Minister for Transport (a) how is the detrainment of passengers carried out when there is a Bukit Panjang LRT breakdown; (b) what are the measures taken to ensure passenger safety during detrainment; and (c) whether there is a need to strengthen the detrainment process.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: Detrainment procedures are designed to ensure the safety of passengers and are similar across all our rail lines. During a breakdown, the first priority for any operator is to resolve the fault and resume service quickly, so that passengers can alight at the platform. If this cannot be done, passengers may need to be detrained to the tracks.

During any detrainment, the safety of passengers is the key consideration. Prior to detrainment, train services must be halted and traction power switched off in the affected zone. Passengers will be informed through in-train announcements that a detrainment is necessary, and that assistance is on its way. Customer Service Officers (CSOs) will be dispatched to the affected train to guide passengers to the nearest station safely. Before exiting the train, the CSOs will brief passengers on how to detrain safely, including how to exit the train cabin and where to walk on the emergency walkway in order to avoid trackside equipment. Any passengers with special needs, such as those on wheelchairs, will also be assisted by the CSOs, with the help of fellow passengers.

The current detrainment process is safe and has worked well so far. LTA monitors and reviews how our Public Transport Operators (PTOs) respond to each train disruption. The lessons learnt are used to continuously improve incident management plans, including the detrainment process. The PTOs also conduct regular exercises to ensure that staff are operationally ready to manage a detrainment.

[Back to Contents](#)

SECURITY DEPOSIT OR PERFORMANCE BOND BY SHARED BICYCLE OPERATORS TO ENSURE PROTECTION OF DEPOSITS OR PRE-PAYMENT MADE BY BICYCLE HIRERS OR CONSUMERS

8 **Mr Lim Biow Chuan** asked the Minister for Transport whether LTA will require shared bicycle operators to place a security deposit or performance bond to ensure that deposits or any pre-payment made by bicycle hirers or consumers are protected.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: LTA will study the need for bicycle-sharing operators (BSOs) to place a security deposit or performance bond if there are BSOs which require user deposits when the licensing regime is implemented from October this year. Currently, seven BSOs have applied for licences. None of them require user deposits. A number of them are existing BSOs who even under the light touch approach adopted today do not require user deposits.

To facilitate the growth of this nascent industry and ensure that bicycle sharing services remain affordable, LTA has refrained from over-regulating BSOs as this can increase their compliance costs, which could in turn be passed on to users. The licensing regime is primarily targeted at minimising disamenities to the public caused by the indiscriminate parking of shared bicycles. To be licensed, BSOs must put forward a responsible and sustainable bicycle management plan to operate in our local context.

Going forward, LTA will monitor and strengthen the licensing regime as necessary, as well as work with relevant organisations such as the Personal Data Protection

Commission, the Consumers Association of Singapore, National Parks and the Town Councils on public education and outreach, so as to strike the right balance between the viability of the industry and the interests of users and the general public.

[Back to Contents](#)

CONSTRUCTION OF LONGER TUNNELS FOR RESIDENTS TO NEAREST MRT STATIONS

9 **Mr Lim Biow Chuan** asked the Minister for Transport whether LTA will consider constructing longer tunnels to provide a better sheltered link for residents to their nearest MRT stations.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: Underground tunnels cost substantially more than at-grade sheltered walkways, and may involve a lot more disruptive diversion works in mature estates. At-grade sheltered walkways are also more inclusive, as they provide cover to all footpath users, not just MRT commuters. Under the Walk2Ride programme, more than 200km of at-grade sheltered walkways will be built by the end of this year.

[Back to Contents](#)

REGULATING MONOPOLISTIC PRIVATE-HIRE CAR MARKET

10 **Miss Cheng Li Hui** asked the Minister for Transport on the merger between Grab and Uber (a) how does the Government intend to regulate a monopolistic market for private-hire cars; (b) what will be the impact to consumers, drivers and Singapore's transportation landscape as a whole; and (c) whether the Government will expedite the regulatory framework to control the growth of private-hire cars.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: Over the last three years, private hire cars (PHCs) have emerged as an important point-to-point mode of transport for Singaporeans. To protect the interests of commuters and drivers, the Land Transport Authority is reviewing the

regulatory framework for the point-to-point sector to ensure that the PHC industry remains open and contestable. This framework will be announced later this year.

In the meantime, the Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore (CCCS) has issued the Proposed Infringement Decision (PID) to Grab and Uber, which includes proposed remedies to restore market contestability in the point-to-point transport sector. The CCCS is currently seeking public comments on whether any of the remedies proposed are sufficient to address the identified competition concerns.

[Back to Contents](#)

ONE-OFF EXEMPTION FOR MOTORCYCLES MANUFACTURED BETWEEN 1993 AND 2003 UNDER CLASSIC VEHICLES SCHEME

11 **Mr Ong Teng Koon** asked the Minister for Transport whether the Ministry will consider allowing motorcycles manufactured between 1993 and 2003 to be given a one-off exemption to register under the classic vehicles scheme.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: The Classic Vehicle Scheme (CVS) allows individuals to own cars and motorcycles which are of heritage value to Singapore. To qualify, the vehicle must be at least 35 years old from its original registration date. Vehicles registered under the CVS can only be used on the roads for up to 45 days a year. Motorcycles registered between 1993 and 2003 are currently 15 to 25 years old, which is way below the minimum requirement of 35 years for the CVS. Hence, we have no plans to grant any exemption for them to be registered under the CVS.

[Back to Contents](#)

RECTIFICATION WORKS BY OR KIM PEOW CONTRACTORS FOR FAULTY CONSTRUCTION OF VIADUCT STRUCTURE LINKING PIE AND TPE AT UPPER CHANGI ROAD EAST

12 **Mr Dennis Tan Lip Fong** asked the Minister for Transport whether Or Kim Peow Contractors will be responsible for (i) the carrying out of all the rectification works

required by LTA arising from any faulty construction of the viaduct structure linking PIE and TPE at Upper Changi Road East and (ii) all the additional cost arising from the rectification works required and surveys carried out on behalf of LTA.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: LTA has reached an agreement with Or Kim Peow Construction Pte Ltd (OKP) to terminate the contract to construct the viaduct from TPE towards PIE (Tuas) and Upper Changi Road East, including the recovery of appropriate costs from OKP. LTA will engage a new contractor to complete the construction of the viaduct, including the rectification of any structures which are deemed unsafe by the independent Professional Engineer appointed by LTA. The project timeline and completion date will be reviewed, after the award of the new contract.

[Back to Contents](#)

RECRUITS TO SAF VOLUNTEER CORP

13 **Assoc Prof Fatimah Lateef** asked the Minister for Defence (a) what is the total number of recruits to the SAF Volunteer Corp since its inception; (b) what is the ratio of male to female recruits; (c) what is the current dropout rate and what are these cases due; and (d) whether there will be any review of the programme and training based on the observations and feedback thus far.

Dr Ng Eng Hen: Since the Singapore Armed Forces Volunteer Corps (SAFVC) was launched in October 2014, more than 700 SAFVC Volunteers (SVs) have been carefully selected, out of over 2,700 applications received. We are also heartened by the strong commitment and enthusiasm shown by our SVs, with a low drop-out rate of 3%. The reasons cited for dropping out were mainly due to being unable to meet the medical and training requirements. Our pool of SVs comprises a good balance of males and females, with over 40% being females. The high number of interested females is heartening, and many of them have excelled. SV1 Nur Fadilah Bte Judir is one example. SV1 Fadilah had

joined the SAFVC to better understand and appreciate what male Singaporeans go through to defend Singapore. Through her SAFVC training and subsequent deployment as an Auxiliary Security Trooper, she was able to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to national defence.

MINDEF/SAF has continually looked at ways to enhance the SAFVC scheme, to better achieve its objectives of allowing more Singaporeans and Permanent Residents to contribute to national defence, show support for National Service, and deepen their understanding and ownership of national defence. SVs are deployed alongside national servicemen and regulars to support the SAF's operations and training, and the SAFVC's training is regularly reviewed to ensure that it is safe, progressive, and effective. From this year, SVs, along with all MINDEF/SAF personnel, will also participate in the Counter-Terrorism (CT) Community Response Module (CRM) as part of their training. This new module will equip SVs with the knowledge and skills to aid others and support first responders in the event of a terrorist attack.

The SAFVC has also expanded the range and scale of deployment opportunities for SVs, to provide more avenues for their participation. For instance, more SVs are now deployed to support key national and SAF events, such as the National Day Parade, Army Open House and the RSAF50@Heartlands exhibition. This year, MINDEF/SAF has launched 15 new roles for SVs, to allow more SVs to contribute to national defence in more areas of interest and expertise such as Safety, Counselling, Music, Engineering and Supply Chain. Along with the introduction of the new roles, SVs will also be equipped with the required skills to carry out their duties effectively.

[Back to Contents](#)

INCIDENTS OF VEHICLES WITH OBJECTS NOT PROPERLY SECURED AND FALLING OFF ONTO ROADS

14 **Mr Ang Hin Kee** asked the Minister for Home Affairs (a) what is the number of incidents of vehicles with objects not properly secured and falling off onto the roads in the past three years; (b) how many of such occurrences resulted in an accident; (c) how does LTA track such incidents and accidents; and (d) what are the measures to reduce such cases from occurring.

Mr K Shanmugam: Between 2015 and 2017, Traffic Police (TP) enforced against 248 instances of drivers who failed to properly secure the loads on their vehicles. Of these, heavy vehicles accounted for 80%.

In the same period, 13 accidents occurred due to vehicle loads falling onto the road, 11 of which involved heavy vehicles.

To deter motorists from driving with unsecured loads, TP conducts regular enforcement operations, particularly along roads used by heavy vehicles. Offenders are liable for composition fines of up to \$180 and up to six demerit points.

TP also regularly engages heavy vehicle fleet-owners and drivers, through road-safety dialogues. TP uses these dialogues to share and encourage the adoption of best practices, including those related to securing loads on vehicles.

In addition, the Workplace Safety and Health Council (WSHC) has issued advisories, such as the “Workplace Safety and Health Guidelines on Safe Loading of Vehicles”.

Among other things, these advisories provide guidance on proper loading techniques for different types of cargo.

[Back to Contents](#)

ROOT CAUSE OF FIRE IN PULAU BUSING AND MEASURES IN PLACE TO HANDLE SUCH EMERGENCIES

15 **Assoc Prof Fatimah Lateef** asked the Minister for Home Affairs (a) what is the root cause of the fire at Pulau Busing; (b) whether it could have been prevented; and (c)

whether there are suitable capabilities on the island itself for handling such emergencies or is there a need to mobilise emergency resources from the mainland.

Mr K Shanmugam: Investigations into the oil storage tank fire at Pulau Busing are on-going. Preliminary findings indicate that the fire was caused by a lightning strike on the rooftop of the tank.

The Fire Code requires oil storage tanks to have a lightning protection system. The SCDF is investigating why the system seemed to have failed in this case.

The first responders to the fire were the company's Company Emergency Response Team, also known as CERT, stationed on Pulau Busing itself. Under the Fire Safety Act, companies storing more than five metric tonnes of petroleum and flammable materials are required to form a CERT. CERT members are trained in fire-fighting, rescue and first aid and are the first responders to fight the fire, before SCDF arrives. Companies are also required to provide a suite of fire-fighting systems and equipment. These include fixed and mobile fire-fighting monitors, foam-pouring protection systems, and water pumps. These regulatory measures helped to contain the Pulau Busing fire.

The CERT managed to prevent the spread of the fire before SCDF arrived. During the fire, other companies on neighbouring islands also provided resources to help fight the fire. This is part of the industry-led Emergency Mutual Aid scheme.

This was a large-scale fire and SCDF had to mount a complex operation to prevent the fire from spreading to adjacent oil tanks, and to extinguish it. The SCDF deployed 128 SCDF personnel, and 48 firefighting and support vehicles. Special large monitors that discharge 23,000 litres of foam solution per minute were deployed to fight the fire. Specific fire appliances to cool the adjacent oil tanks were also deployed. The fire was extinguished only after six hours.

[Back to Contents](#)

EDUCATIONAL LEVELS ATTAINED BY PRISON INMATES

16 **Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang** asked the Minister for Home Affairs for each of the past three years, what is the breakdown of the educational level attained of persons entering the Drug Rehabilitation Centres, the Long-Term Imprisonment 1 and the Long-Term Imprisonment 2 regimes respectively.

Mr K Shanmugam: The tables below show the breakdown of DRC, LT1 and LT2 inmates by educational level attained, as declared by inmates upon admission.

DRC Admission	2015	2016	2017	2015 to 2017
No Education	0.3%	0.9%	0.6%	0.6%
Primary	20.4%	17.4%	13.6%	17.1%
Secondary	58.7%	54.1%	59.1%	57.3%
Pre-U	1.9%	3.4%	2.6%	2.6%
Vocational	12.2%	15.8%	14.5%	14.2%
Tertiary & Above	6.5%	8.4%	9.5%	8.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

LT1 Admission	2015	2016	2017	2015 to 2017
No Education	2.7%	2.1%	1.4%	2.1%
Primary	32.0%	37.4%	34.0%	34.5%
Secondary	56.0%	49.7%	52.2%	52.6%
Pre-U	1.2%	1.4%	2.2%	1.6%
Vocational	6.6%	8.4%	8.8%	7.9%
Tertiary & Above	1.5%	1.0%	1.4%	1.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

LT2 Admission	2015	2016	2017	2015 to 2017
No Education	2.4%	1.0%	1.1%	1.5%
Primary	46.0%	46.7%	49.8%	47.5%
Secondary	42.6%	43.7%	42.0%	42.8%
Pre-U	0.7%	1.5%	0.9%	1.0%
Vocational	7.7%	7.0%	5.6%	6.8%
Tertiary & Above	0.7%	0%	0.7%	0.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

[Back to Contents](#)

PLANS FOR POLYCLINIC WITHIN MRT STATION IN VICINITY OF POTONG PASIR

17 **Mr Sitoh Yih Pin** asked the Minister for Health whether there are plans to operate a polyclinic within one MRT station from the vicinity of Potong Pasir and, if there are, where will it be located.

Mr Gan Kim Yong: MOH will be developing a new Polyclinic – Kallang Polyclinic – in the Kallang-Balestier area.

The new polyclinic will be located adjacent to Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital. It is within walking distance from Boon Keng MRT station, and one MRT stop from Potong Pasir MRT station.

[Back to Contents](#)

INCREASING SUBSIDY RATES UNDER COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSIST SCHEME FOR NON-PIONEER GENERATION SENIORS ABOVE 60 YEARS OF AGE

18 **Mr Kwek Hian Chuan Henry** asked the Minister for Health whether the Government will consider increasing the subsidy rates under the Community Health Assist Scheme for non-Pioneer Generation seniors above the age of 60 as their levels of retirement adequacy is considerably lower than younger Singaporeans.

Mr Gan Kim Yong: The Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS) was launched in 2012. The Ministry reviews CHAS regularly to ensure that the scheme continues to meet the objective of providing Singaporeans with access to affordable and quality primary care in the community. For example, in 2014 and 2015, we increased the number of chronic conditions covered under CHAS.

We will continue to review the Scheme regularly and will take into account feedback from the Member.

[Back to Contents](#)

PAYMENT OF SG BONUS

19 **Mr Murali Pillai** asked the Minister for Finance (a) whether the date for the payment of SG Bonus has been determined; and (b) whether details on receiving the SG Bonus by eligible Singaporeans have been finalised and, if so, when will the announcement be made.

Mr Heng Swee Keat: SG Bonus will be disbursed to all adult Singaporeans at the end of the year. Individual letters and SMS notifications will be sent in October 2018 to inform citizens about the amount of SG Bonus they will be receiving, and the payment dates.

Citizens who have registered for PayNow and linked their NRIC to their bank account can also receive their payout earlier via PayNow, compared to those being paid through direct bank crediting or cheques.

[Back to Contents](#)

SMES' SHARE OF 4.5% OVERALL LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY GROWTH IN 2017

20 **Mr Thomas Chua Kee Seng** asked the Minister for Trade and Industry (a) how much of the overall labour productivity growth of 4.5 per cent in 2017 was attributable to our SMEs; and (b) what is the productivity performance of SMEs in the respective sectors.

Mr Chan Chun Sing: In 2017, overall labour productivity, as measured by real value-added (VA) per actual hour worked (AHW), rose by 4.5%. Due to data collection constraints, data on real VA per AHW by firms' SME and non-SME status are not available.

The Government also measures labour productivity in terms of real VA per worker. In 2017, real VA per worker in the overall economy increased by 3.8%. Based on MTI's

estimates, SMEs recorded slightly lower real VA per worker growth of 3.2% in 2017. A breakdown of SMEs' productivity performance by sectors is not available.

The Government has put in place several initiatives to support SMEs in raising their productivity. Across all sectors, SMEs can approach any of the 12 SME Centres for free business advisory services. The SME Centres collectively engage over 20,000 businesses each year through advisory sessions, capability workshops and outreach events. The number of SMEs that embarked on capability development projects with support from the SME Centres almost doubled from 600 in 2013 to 1,100 in 2017. SMEs can also approach experts at the two Productivity Centres for assistance in productivity solutions. The Singapore Innovation and Productivity Institute focuses on manufacturing, engineering, logistics and related industries, while the Singapore Productivity Centre focuses on the retail, food services and hotel sectors. SMEs can also leverage technology and digital solutions to raise productivity through schemes like the \$110 million Productivity Solutions Grant (PSG) for pre-scoped equipment and IT solutions.

On top of these broad-based efforts, the Government works with industry and unions to foster improvements in Productivity, Jobs & Skills, Innovation, and Trade & Internationalisation within and across 23 key sectors, through the Industry Transformation Maps. JTC also works with industry to develop high-rise Innovative Facilities with shared services that help SMEs in the same value chain improve their land productivity and streamline production processes for higher labour productivity.

Our industry partners play an instrumental role in driving these productivity efforts. Trade Associations and Chambers (TACs) can spearhead industry-level initiatives, aggregate the needs of their members, and coordinate the deployment of solutions. To support our TACs across all sectors in these endeavours, Enterprise Singapore co-funds up to 70% of supportable costs through the \$115 million Local Enterprise and Association Development (LEAD) programme.

[Back to Contents](#)

INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT TO ENSURE UNINTERRUPTED BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS AND DAILY DIGITAL OPERATIONS FROM POWER AND TECHNICAL BREAKDOWNS

21 **Mr Ang Hin Kee** asked the Minister for Trade and Industry as Singapore gears up to be "Smart Nation" ready (a) what is the infrastructure support available to ensure that business transactions and daily digital operations are not affected when there is a power or technical breakdown such as the recent CBD power outage; and (b) whether there are plans to identify skill sets and put in place standard operating procedures to ensure workers are equipped with the skills and know-how to prevent similar incidents.

Mr Chan Chun Sing: The Government recognises the importance of reliable and secure infrastructure, both in terms of power and telecommunication systems, as Singapore gears up for increasing digital operations as a "Smart Nation".

On the power system front, SP Power Grid (SPPG), the national grid operator, has a comprehensive infrastructure planning and maintenance regime to increase system reliability and minimise disruptions. This includes building in redundancy for critical components, continuous monitoring of the transmission network, and conducting preventive maintenance. Workers are trained and reminded to adhere strictly to operating procedures. That said, there can still be the occasional instance of human error, such as during the blackout on 1 June 2018. We have adopted a calibrated risk-based approach in systems planning, with a framework in place to enable quick restoration of power when needed. This calibrated risk-based approach has served us well, with our power system being among the most reliable in the world. For instance, from FY13 to FY17, Singapore's average annual disruption per consumer ranged from 12 seconds to 45 seconds, compared to latest FY15 figures of 4 minutes for Tokyo and 23.4 minutes for Hong Kong.

For telecommunication infrastructure, MCI and IMDA have also put in place measures to ensure resilience. These include Codes of Practices that set baseline requirements to ensure that our telecommunication networks are fit for purpose and on par with international best practices, as well as to encourage telecommunication operators to adopt more advanced resilience practices. IMDA also engages the telecommunication operators regularly to conduct exercises on recovering from service disruptions, and discuss initiatives to enhance the resilience of our networks.

Telecommunication service disruptions sometimes occur due to cable cuts committed by errant contractors. MCI and IMDA have therefore put in place several measures to mitigate the risk of such disruptions. For example, the Telecommunications Act requires contractors to employ licensed Telecommunication Cable Detection Workers to detect the presence of underground cables prior to commencing earthworks. In addition, IMDA holds regular dialogue sessions with contractors to encourage the adoption of precautionary measures when carrying out earthworks, as well as the need for training for workers. Where disruption to telecommunication services occurs due to cable cuts, IMDA will not hesitate to enforce any breaches of the Telecommunications Act by prosecuting the relevant parties in Court. MTI and EMA also have similar measures in place for earthwork damage to electricity cables, and these are enforced through the Electricity Act, relevant Code of Practices and licensing conditions.

To minimise the impact on consumers in the event of disruptions, IMDA incentivises telecommunication licensees to restore services quickly by imposing penalties that will take into account the duration of the disruption, amongst other factors. IMDA also prescribes baseline requirements for key telecommunication licensees' business continuity planning to facilitate recovery during service disruptions

[Back to Contents](#)

CALCULATION OF PUBLISHED DATA FOR SINGAPORE'S GINI COEFFICIENT MEASURING INCOME INEQUALITY

22 **Mr Dennis Tan Lip Fong** asked the Minister for Trade and Industry (a) whether published data for Singapore's Gini coefficient measuring income inequality includes both employer and employee CPF in the definition of income; and (b) if it does, what will be the latest Gini coefficient data if CPF income is excluded.

Mr Chan Chun Sing: The Gini coefficient published by the Department of Statistics (DOS) is computed based on household income from work. Both employer and employee CPF contributions are included in the definition of household income from work. This is because CPF contributions are a significant component of compensation from work, and can be used by households for housing, healthcare and investment purposes. Nonetheless, DOS also publishes a Gini coefficient that excludes employer CPF contributions from household income from work.

Both Gini coefficients are available on DOS' website. In 2017, the Gini coefficient which includes employer CPF contributions was 0.459, while the Gini coefficient which excludes employer CPF contributions was 0.468. The former is lower because there is a cap on employer CPF contributions for employees who have reached the wage ceiling of \$6,000.

DOS does not publish a Gini coefficient that excludes both employer and employee CPF contributions from household income from work.

[Back to Contents](#)

REVIEW OF REQUESTS FOR AIRBNB-TYPE FACILITIES

23 **Assoc Prof Fatimah Lateef** asked the Minister for National Development whether the Ministry will be reviewing requests for Airbnb-type facilities and, if so, how

and what will be the criteria for the regulation and monitoring of the industry and its enforcement.

Mr Lawrence Wong: The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) is currently conducting a consultation exercise to seek the public's views on a proposed regulatory framework for the use of private homes as short-term accommodation (STA).

Under this framework, URA proposes to establish a new use category for STA under the Planning Act. URA will assess the eligibility of a property for STA use by considering factors such as its location and surrounding uses. For strata-titled developments such as condominiums, STA use will only be allowed if there is support of at least 80 per cent in share value.

The framework proposes several measures to mitigate the potential dis-amenities arising from STA. These include an annual 90-day cap on STA use, an occupancy cap of six persons per home, and submission of STA guests' details as part of the registration process. All STA units will also need to comply with fire safety regulations.

In addition, we are studying the possibility of regulating STA platforms through a licensing framework. This means that platform operators will be required to obtain a licence to advertise any STA activities in Singapore.

URA will work with relevant government agencies to review the feedback obtained through the ongoing consultation exercise, before finalising the regulatory framework for STA.

[Back to Contents](#)

WAIVER OF RESALE LEVY FOR SENIOR CITIZEN APPLICANTS AGED 55 AND ABOVE FOR 2-ROOM FLEXI FLATS

24 **Mr Gan Thiam Poh** asked the Minister for National Development whether HDB can consider not to impose a resale levy on applicants of 2-room flexi flats who are senior citizens aged 55 years and above.

Mr Lawrence Wong: Singapore Citizen households enjoy a significant housing subsidy when they buy a new flat from HDB or a resale flat from the open market with a CPF housing grant. If they purchase another flat from HDB, they are no longer eligible for the full subsidy, which is meant for first-timers only. Hence a resale levy is imposed if they are not a first-timer.

Nonetheless, we have put in place various measures to help seniors who purchase a 2-room Flexi flat from HDB. Since 2015, we have waived the accrued interest for seniors liable for the percentage resale levy². For those who purchase a short lease 2-room Flexi flat, we provide further help by capping their resale levy and adjusting it for the shorter lease. This means that the maximum resale levy that would be paid on a 2-room Flexi with a 45-year lease is \$18,000, much lower than what the normal resale levy would be.

We will continue to review our policies to ensure that they maintain a fair allocation of public housing subsidies between first-time buyers and other buyers.

[Back to Contents](#)

SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS FOR HDB RENTAL FLAT AWAITING VACANT UNIT

25 **Mr Zainal Sapari** asked the Minister for National Development (a) what is the current number of families that are successful in their application for a HDB rental flat but are awaiting a vacant unit; (b) whether there has been an improvement in the waiting period for vacant rental flats; and (c) what is the targeted number of rental flat tenants that will be placed under the Fresh Start Housing Scheme within the next three years.

Mr Lawrence Wong: There are currently about 450 families who were successful in their application and are waiting to be allocated a public rental flat.

² Flat owners who sold their first subsidised flat before 2006 were subject to a compound interest of 5% per annum if they chose to defer the payment of the levy until they collect keys to their second subsidised flat.

At this juncture, families can be allocated a rental flat in about 2 months from the time of their application, if they are not particular about location. This has fallen significantly from a peak of 21 months in 2008. Some waiting time is inevitable as HDB needs to assess each application. The allocation of rental flats is also subject to considerations such as the household's locational preferences, the quotas under the Ethnic Integration Policy, and the setting aside of vacant flats to house existing tenants whose rental blocks are due for redevelopment.

The Fresh Start Housing Scheme was launched in December 2016 to help second-timer families with young children living in public rental housing to own a home again. As of May 2018, 70 households have been emplaced on the scheme. While we do not have a target, we will continue to work with all eligible families who are keen on homeownership, and hope to see another 100 households emplaced in the next 3 years.

[Back to Contents](#)

INSTALLATION OF CCTVS IN MULTI-STOREY CARPARKS AND LIFTS

26 **Er Dr Lee Bee Wah** asked the Minister for National Development whether HDB can install CCTVs in its multi-storey carparks and the lifts serving the carpark to deter crime and those who smoke in the lifts.

Mr Lawrence Wong: The Singapore Police Force (SPF) works closely with HDB and Town Councils to ensure and enhance security in public housing estates. Currently, HDB Multi-Storey Car Parks (MSCPs) have Police cameras installed at strategic locations such as lift lobbies, entrances and staircases. These cameras have proven to be effective in helping to deter crime. HDB will install CCTVs in existing MSCP lifts, where necessary.

As for smoking in lifts, the National Environment Agency (NEA) takes a serious view towards smoking violations, and NEA officers are deployed to investigate and

enforce against smoking violations. Ultimately, residents must also do their part and be considerate by not smoking in the lifts.

[Back to Contents](#)

EXTENDING LEASE BUYBACK SCHEME TO 5-ROOM HDB FLATS

27 **Mr Kwek Hian Chuan Henry** asked the Minister for National Development whether HDB will consider extending the lease buyback scheme to 5-room HDB flats given the current difficulty some residents face in selling their flats in mature estates.

Mr Lawrence Wong: The Lease Buyback Scheme (LBS) was first introduced in 2009 as a monetisation scheme for low-income elderly living in 3-room or smaller flats, as these households have limited monetisation options compared to households in larger flat types. With the extension to 4-room flats in 2015, many more households are now eligible.

Elderly households in 5-room flats currently have several monetisation options. They can either rent out a room, or the entire flat and move in with their family members. They can also right-size to a smaller flat. If they right-size to a 2- or 3-room flat, they may also apply for the Silver Housing Bonus.

MND and HDB are committed to providing elderly flat owners with various monetisation options to suit their retirement needs. We will continue to monitor the situation and consider the need to extend existing monetisation schemes.

[Back to Contents](#)

OUTCOME OF AVA'S PROPOSALS TO PREVENT MASS ROOSTING OF MYNAHS ON TREES IN FRONT OF BUKIT TIMAH PLAZA

28 **Ms Rahayu Mahzam** asked the Minister for National Development what is the outcome of AVA's proposals to prevent the mass roosting of mynahs on trees in front of

Bukit Timah Plaza and to reduce the incessant noise created by the birds during the wee hours of the morning and in the evening.

Mr Lawrence Wong: AVA has worked with NParks to address the noise nuisance caused by mynahs roosting in trees around Bukit Timah Plaza. NParks has increased the frequency of tree pruning since 2017, and this has improved the situation. AVA also conducted a trial using a bird deterrent chemical on the trees in the area in the second half of 2017. However, the chemical was not effective in deterring mynahs from roosting. AVA is assessing other measures that can be deployed in this area.

The public can also play a part by maintaining the overall cleanliness of the environment and not feeding wild birds. Enforcement actions will be taken against those who do not comply.

[Back to Contents](#)

SOLD AND UNSOLD TWO-ROOM HDB FLEXI FLATS

29 **Mr Png Eng Huat** asked the Minister for National Development as of June 2018, what is the number and percentage of 2-room flexi flats that are (i) unsold including those under construction (ii) sold under a 99-year leasehold and (iii) sold under 15 to 45 year leaseholds.

Mr Lawrence Wong: As at May 2018, 15,200 2-room Flexi flats have been offered for sale since HDB introduced such flats in August 2015. This comprises 1,900 (13%) unsold flats, 7,000 (46%) sold under 99-year leases³, and 6,300 (41%) sold under 15- to 45-year leases.

[Back to Contents](#)

³ Includes a small number of flats sold on 50- to 65-year leases under the Fresh Start Housing Scheme.

SUBSIDY FOR REPLACEMENT OF NON-FIRE RATED DOORS UNDER OPTIONAL IMPROVEMENT WORKS SCHEME

30 **Mr Ong Teng Koon** asked the Minister for National Development whether there is a subsidy for the replacement of non-fire rated doors under the Optional Improvement Works Scheme of the Home Improvement Programme and, if so, whether HDB will consider to provide the same quantum of subsidy for the replacement of a fire-rated door.

Mr Lawrence Wong: Since 1996, the Fire Code requires the main doors of some HDB flats, e.g. those which face fire escape routes, to be fire-rated. All flats built by HDB since then have been provided with fire-rated main doors, where required. HDB also carried out a one-off door replacement exercise for flats built prior to 1996 which needed fire-rated main doors to comply with the Fire Code, at no cost to residents.

As the units with fire-rated doors have already enjoyed a free replacement of doors by HDB, HDB will not provide any further subsidy for the replacement of their fire-rated doors.

[Back to Contents](#)

EFFECTIVENESS OF DEPLOYMENT OF RECYCLING BINS TO HDB BLOCKS UNDER ENHANCED NATIONAL RECYCLING PROGRAMME

31 **Mr Ang Hin Kee** asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources (a) whether the deployment of recycling bins to HDB blocks under the enhanced National Recycling Programme has been effective since it was implemented in 2011; (b) whether the Ministry enforces checks to ensure that the bins are returned to their designated spots after the waste have been collected; and (c) whether technology such as geo-fencing can be deployed to ensure that these bins are not inevitably moved or relocated.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli B M M: The National Recycling Programme (NRP) was launched in 2001 to complement the efforts of the informal recycling sector. Since then, the National Environment Agency (NEA) has enhanced the NRP to make it more

convenient for residents to recycle. For example, from 2011, one blue recycling bin is provided for every HDB block, an increase from one for every five blocks.

These efforts have contributed to an increase in the recyclables collected under the NRP, from 25,300 tonnes in 2011 to 44,400 tonnes in 2017. A survey conducted in 2015/2016 also showed that among residents who recycle, 9 in 10 use the NRP blue bins. While we have made progress on this front, we can do more to make recycling a part of daily living for all Singaporeans. Our recycling rates have not caught up with our increased consumption and purchasing habits, with Singapore's domestic recycling rate hovering at around 20 percent since 2012. We encourage Singaporeans to recycle more and make sustainable living choices so as to lower our carbon footprint.

The Government will continue to facilitate recycling. For example, all new HDB developments will provide dual chutes for refuse and recyclables, to make it more convenient for residents to recycle. From 1 April 2018, new non-landed private residential developments taller than four storeys are similarly required to be equipped with dual chutes. We will also require existing condominiums to provide one recycling bin per block from 1 August 2018. Everyone must also play their part to segregate their waste and utilise the recycling facilities provided. More importantly, let us all be gracious and not waste the efforts of our fellow Singaporeans by contaminating recycling bins with food or liquid waste.

Public Waste Collectors (PWCs) are required to return recycling bins to their designated locations after collection. NEA conducts spot-checks to ensure that recycling bins are at their designated locations. From the second half of 2018, starting with the public waste collection contract for the Pasir Ris-Bedok sector, NEA will introduce a new requirement for PWCs to mark the locations of the recycling bins on the floor. Members of the public who find recycling bins outside the demarcated area should inform NEA,

which will then conduct investigations and penalise the respective PWC if they are found liable for the breach.

NEA is also conducting a trial using side-loader trucks which have mechanised arms that will empty recycling bins to load recyclables in the truck. As part of this trial, the existing blue recycling bins will be replaced with new bins which are larger and more difficult to move. This will reduce the likelihood of unauthorised movement of the bins.

We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of these measures, before deciding if further measures, such as geo-fencing, are necessary.

[Back to Contents](#)

UPDATE ON 2016 PILOT STUDY OF RELEASING BACTERIA-CARRYING MOSQUITOES INTO ENVIRONMENT

32 **Mr Patrick Tay Teck Guan** asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources whether he can provide an update on the 2016 pilot study of releasing bacteria-carrying mosquitoes into the environment.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli B M M: The National Environment Agency (NEA) is evaluating the use of male Wolbachia-carrying *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes (Wolbachia-*Aedes*) to further suppress the *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes in the community. Phase 1 field study was conducted at three selected sites at Braddell Heights, Tampines West and Nee Soon East from October 2016 to December 2017. The study had met its objectives and demonstrated that the released male Wolbachia-*Aedes* mosquitoes had successfully competed with urban male mosquitoes and mated with some female mosquitoes. The releases led to 50% suppression of the urban *Aedes aegypti* mosquito population at the study sites.

The field study surfaced two challenges posed by Singapore's high-density and high-rise landscape. First, NEA discovered that mosquitoes moved from surrounding areas into the study sites, thus reducing the impact of Wolbachia-*Aedes* in the sites. Second,

NEA found higher *Aedes aegypti* mosquito densities at high floors of some blocks, as insufficient numbers of male Wolbachia-Aedes mosquitoes had reached those floors.

To address the high-density and high-rise challenges, NEA is carrying out Phase 2 field study from April 2018 to January 2019. Phase 2 field study will improve the release methodologies to distribute the male Wolbachia-Aedes mosquitoes to where they are needed. NEA will release Wolbachia-Aedes mosquitos at same Phase 1 study sites at Tampines West and Nee Soon East and their extended areas. Phase 2 field study is an important and necessary step for NEA to refine the release methodologies and address the unique challenges faced due to our urban landscape, in preparation for the subsequent suppression trial.

NEA will continue to engage residents and stakeholders. The co-operation and support from residents and local stakeholders were crucial in ensuring the success of Phase 1 study. Residents and local stakeholders are encouraged to continue supporting NEA in Phase 2 field study. Residents are also encouraged to continue carrying out mosquito control procedures and the 5-step Mozzie Wipeout.

[Back to Contents](#)

INCREASING PENALTIES FOR POLLUTION OF WATER RESOURCES WITH TOXIC INDUSTRIAL WASTE

33 Mr Yee Chia Hsing asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources

whether the Ministry will consider increasing the penalties for pollution of our water resources with toxic industrial waste, especially for recalcitrant offenders.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli B M M: My Ministry takes any pollution of our water resources very seriously as it directly affects the environment as well as the quality of our water sources. Two-thirds of Singapore is water catchment area and raw water collected there is meant to be treated into potable water. Meanwhile, the used water collected in our public sewerage system is largely treated and reclaimed for NEWater.

To safeguard our water resources and the environment, both PUB and the National Environment Agency (NEA) require Written Approvals or Written Permissions to be obtained prior to the discharge of trade effluent into public sewerage systems, or into watercourses and onto land, respectively. As part of the Written Approvals or Written Permissions, companies must comply with the relevant provisions under the Sewerage and Drainage Act (SDA) or Environment Protection and Management Act (EPMA) and their respective regulations when they discharge their trade effluent. These include the requirement to install pre-treatment facilities, to provide sampling test points as well as to comply strictly with the discharge limits for specified substances.

Under the SDA and EPMA, where trade effluent is discharged into the public sewers without a Written Approval or into drains or land without a Written Permission, the offender could be fined up to \$20,000 with a further fine not exceeding \$1,000 per day if the offence continues after conviction. Similar penalties apply if the discharge is not in accordance with the conditions of the Written Approval or Permission. Under the SDA, if the trade effluent discharged into the public sewers contains dangerous or hazardous substances, a fine of up to \$50,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or both can be imposed on first-time offenders. For repeat offenders, the maximum fine will be doubled to \$100,000. The maximum penalties are further increased to \$200,000 or to a jail term not exceeding 2 years should the illegal discharge cause injury or death to any person or disrupt the water reclamation processes. Similarly, under the EPMA, any person who discharges any toxic or hazardous substance into inland water so as to be likely to cause pollution of the environment would be liable to a fine of up to \$50,000 or to imprisonment for a term up to 12 months or to both. The EPMA also provides for heavier penalties for repeat offenders.

Both PUB and NEA also have the powers to require an offender to immediately cease any process or work that produces toxic, dangerous or hazardous substance or trade

effluent that contains such substances. The offender may also be ordered by the Court to restore the public sewerage system to its original condition, or ordered by NEA to remove and clean up the toxic substance from the drain or land.

We take a serious view of keeping the watercourses and sewers free from pollution and will not hesitate to take enforcement action. We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of our regulatory regimes in safeguarding our water resources and review the penalties, if necessary.

[Back to Contents](#)

AIR QUALITY IN VICINITY AFTER FIRES AT PULAU BUSING AND KRANJI IN MARCH 2018

34 **Ms Joan Pereira** asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources following the fires at Pulau Busing and Kranji in March 2018 (a) whether these fires have affected the air quality in the vicinity; and (b) what is the procedure for activation of the NEA team to monitor air or water quality following a major fire involving hazardous products.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli B M M: NEA monitors air quality in Singapore through a network of real-time monitoring stations. Besides monitoring key air pollutants such as sulphur dioxide and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), these stations also monitor Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). VOCs are often associated with the handling and combustion of fuel oil.

In the event of major fires, in addition to SCDF being activated, NEA officers will be deployed to monitor air and water quality in the vicinity of the affected premises during and after the incident.

In the case of the Pulau Busing fire on 20 March 2018, the fire occurred at an oil storage tank operated by M/s PB Tankers Ltd. NEA officers monitored the ambient air quality and meteorological conditions while SCDF and the Company's Emergency

Response Team (CERT) were fighting the fire. The prevailing winds then were blowing from the northeast and the air quality was in the “Good to Moderate” range, with no spikes in the PM2.5, sulphur dioxide, VOCs, and other air pollutant levels. The firefighting water was contained within the bund of the affected oil storage tank and the coastal water quality around Pulau Busing was not affected.

As for the fire incident that occurred at No.11 Kranji Crescent on 22 March 2018, NEA officers monitored air and water quality near the affected premises during and after the incident, and did not detect any spikes in the air or water pollutant levels.

[Back to Contents](#)

ENSURING COMPARABLE FOOD PRICES AT HAWKER STALLS AND COFFEE SHOPS IN NEW HDB ESTATES VS-A-VIS THOSE IN MATURE ESTATES

35 **Mr Gan Thiam Poh** asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources what can the Ministry do to ensure that the food prices at hawker centres and coffee shops in new estates such as Sengkang, Tampines and Sembawang are comparable to those in matured estates as shown in the Makan Index.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli B M M: The Makan Index, developed by the Institute of Policy Studies, is based on the average prices of five food types observed at selected hawker centres, food courts and coffee shops. The Government does not regulate the prices of food sold in coffee shops, food courts or hawker centres.

Nevertheless, my Ministry ensures that affordable food options are available at all our hawker centres, including those in new estates. To moderate stall rentals and prevent rent-seeking behaviour, my Ministry has disallowed the subletting of stalls. We have also removed the reserve rent in our monthly stall tender exercises. This means that even if the bidding price for these vacant stalls is below market price, the National Environment Agency (NEA) will allocate the vacant stall to the highest bidder as long as there are

competitive bids. About 40% of cooked food stalls have been awarded at bids that are below 85% of the assessed market rent.

To assist stall holders with rising manpower costs, we are deploying productivity measures, such as centralised dishwashing, automated tray return, e-payment options, and kitchen automation in our hawker centres. These initiatives will reduce the workload of the hawkers and allow them to focus on food preparation and cooking, especially during peak hours. In addition, NEA has approved more than a hundred applications (worth about \$214,000) since the Hawkers' Productivity Grant was launched in October 2017 to assist hawkers adopt stall-level productivity measures. Those who have benefited from the grant have given feedback that the equipment helps to reduce food preparation time significantly.

The availability of numerous stalls allows consumers to compare food prices and take into account affordability in their purchase decisions at hawker centres. This also helps to moderate the increase in food prices.

We are committed to upholding the role of hawker centres as community dining rooms in both mature and new estates so that Singaporeans from all walks of life can enjoy food at affordable prices. We announced in 2015 that 20 new hawker centres with approximately 800 stalls will be built by 2027. Some of these new hawker centres will be located in new towns such as Sengkang, Tampines and Sembawang. The managing agents appointed to run these new centres will be required to provide affordable food options. An example is Hawker Centre @ Our Tampines Hub (OTH), where hawkers selling local food offer at least one meal option priced at \$2.80 or less.

[Back to Contents](#)

STATUS IN 2028 OF MOTORCYCLES REGISTERED BEFORE 2003 UNDER LTA'S CLASSIC VEHICLE SCHEME

36 **Mr Zainal Sapari** asked the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources whether all motorcycles registered before 2003 and of at least 35 years old by 2028 will be allowed to continue under LTA's Classic Vehicle Scheme.

Masagos Zulkifli B M M: All motorcycles registered before 1 July 2003 will no longer be allowed for use on Singapore's roads after 30 June 2028. Motorcycles on the Classic, Vintage (Restricted) and Revised Vintage Vehicle Schemes are exempted due to their limited usage on the road. Motorcycles registered in Singapore before 1 July 2003 and which are at least 35 years old on or before 30 June 2028 are eligible for conversion to the Classic Vehicle Scheme if they meet the relevant requirements like those pertaining to vehicle inspection and motor insurance coverage, as specified by the Land Transport Authority (LTA).

[Back to Contents](#)

MEASURES TO HELP STUDENTS BETTER UNDERSTAND SOCIO-ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

37 **Mr Desmond Choo** asked the Minister for Education how is the Ministry helping students to better understand the social-economic opportunities in South East Asia with a view towards helping them thrive in an economically important region in the longer term.

Mr Ong Ye Kung: Given the opportunities in Southeast Asia, it is useful for students to develop a good understanding of the region. Students will also benefit from establishing networks within the region early.

To raise awareness and understanding of the region, students are introduced to ASEAN in primary school. Through the Social Studies curriculum, students will learn about the cultural and economic ties member countries share with one another. In secondary school, students can offer subjects such as Economics, Geography, History,

and Social Studies, which include a deeper understanding of the region. Through Economics, Geography and History at the pre-university level, students learn about the economic and trade policies of Southeast Asian countries, trends in regional economic developments, as well as economic integration through ASEAN.

Students extend their understanding of Southeast Asia through ASEAN-themed forums and seminars. They observe ongoing economic developments and expand their understanding of the region when they undertake overseas trips to Southeast Asian countries. In addition, our student-athletes also forge friendships with their fellow athletes from the different Southeast Asian countries through the ASEAN Schools Games.

Our Institutions of Higher Learning organize immersion programmes, student exchanges with institutions in the region, and overseas internships. Students also perform community projects in rural areas in the region. For many years, our institutions also take in a small proportion of students from ASEAN countries. While in Singapore, they forge bonds with Singaporean students and enrich the higher education experience.

[Back to Contents](#)

MEASURES TO ASSESS AND ENSURE CHILDREN CONTINUE TO UPHOLD RELEVANT ORIENTAL CORE AND FAMILY VALUES

38 **Mr Gan Thiam Poh** asked the Minister for Education how will the Ministry assess regularly and ensure that our children continue to uphold relevant oriental core values and family values such as filial piety, care for the elderly and savings habits that have made Singapore what it is today.

Mr Ong Ye Kung: As part of our national curriculum, schools emphasise the values of respect, resilience, responsibility, integrity, care and harmony in classroom lessons, through co-curricular activities and experiential activities like the Values in Action (VIA)

programme. Topics such as filial piety, caring for others and importance of saving are covered in subjects such as Character and Citizenship Education (CCE).

Schools also work with parents and the community in reinforcing values education. Schools encourage parents to build on what is taught in schools at home. Schools also work with community partners for students to live out the core values through age-appropriate experiential learning. By engaging with the elderly through VIA for example, students better understand their needs and the role they can play to make a difference.

Schools review their programs regularly on the effectiveness of the curriculum in inculcating values. The Ministry also conducts regular reviews and improve on the syllabuses and pedagogical approaches in teaching values through the various subject areas. Home and community efforts coupled with what is taught in schools will maximise our students' ability to internalise the values taught and demonstrate them in their daily lives.

[Back to Contents](#)

BREAKDOWN OF PSLE COHORTS ENTERING UNIVERSITY FROM 75TH TO BELOW 30TH PERCENTILES BASED ON PSLE RESULTS

39 **Mr Gan Thiam Poh** asked the Minister for Education in the past 10 years, how many students from each PSLE cohort successfully entered university, broken down according to their PSLE results that are (i) in the 60th to 75th percentile (ii) in the 50th to 60th percentile (iii) in the 30th to 50th percentile and (iv) below the 30th percentile.

Mr Ong Ye Kung: Our education system provides students with multiple pathways and opportunities to pursue an education best suited to their needs, interests and strengths. Students may attend university and pursue an academic education, or develop skills and technical expertise through other pathways. PSLE results need not and should not be the only determinant of the future success of any pupil.

Notwithstanding, the data requested by the member is as follows:

- The proportion of students who gained admission to local publicly-funded degree courses increased steadily from 23% for the 1997 PSLE cohort to 31% for the 2006 PSLE cohort, in tandem with expansion of university places.
- From 1997 to 2006, the proportion of PSLE cohort with results in the 51st to 75th percentile, and admitted to publicly-funded degree courses, increased from 24% to 38%.
- The corresponding figure for those whose PSLE results are in the bottom half increased from 4% to 10%.

[Back to Contents](#)

PROMOTING INTEGRATION BETWEEN STUDENTS ATTENDING INTERNATIONAL AND MOE-RUN SCHOOLS

40 **Mr Christopher de Souza** asked the Minister for Education what is being done to promote integration between students attending international schools and students attending schools run by the Ministry.

Mr Ong Ye Kung: Our schools strive to develop cross-cultural competencies among students. Through Character and Citizenship Education lessons, and exchange programmes with international schools in Singapore and overseas, schools provide opportunities for students to value diversity and work with others of different cultures and nationalities. Further opportunities for deeper student interaction between the mainstream and international schools include sports competitions, Model United Nations conferences, debating championships and common interest youth groups.

Our schools will continue to actively create opportunities for students to interact across schools so as to develop the cultural literacy of our students and promote an inclusive society.

[Back to Contents](#)

PLANS TO MEET INCREASED DEMAND FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES IN BUKIT BATOK SMC

41 **Mr Murali Pillai** asked the Minister for Education in light of the recently completed and upcoming completion of BTO developments in and near Bukit Batok SMC, what is the expected increase in demand for primary school places in primary schools located within and near Bukit Batok SMC and what are the Ministry's plans to meet this increased demand.

Mr Ong Ye Kung: MOE regularly reviews the demand and supply trends for school places at the national and regional levels. Our school planning takes into account the current and projected population and planned housing development programmes to ensure that there are sufficient school places to meet the needs of families with school-going children in each residential area.

MOE is aware of the new housing developments that were recently completed in Bukit Batok and those that will be completing in the next few years. The demand from these new housing developments have been taken into account in the planning of school places.

There are currently 9 primary schools within 2km of the new housing developments in Bukit Batok SMC. There is sufficient capacity in these schools to meet the projected demand from residents.

MOE will continue to monitor the demand and supply situation of the primary schools in this area closely.

[Back to Contents](#)

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS PROMOTED FROM NORMAL TECHNICAL TO NORMAL ACADEMIC AND EXPRESS STREAMS IN PAST FIVE YEARS

42 **Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang** asked the Minister for Education in each of the past five years for each cohort of students, what is the percentage of students who are

promoted from (i) Normal Technical to Normal Academic and (ii) Normal Academic to Express respectively.

Mr Ong Ye Kung: For students who have completed secondary school over the last five years:

- Close to 10% of the Normal (Technical) students transferred to the Normal (Academic) course; and
- About 5% of the Normal (Academic) students transferred to the Express course.

Beyond lateral transfers to another course, many more students selectively offer specific subjects at a higher level, in line with their strengths. This is known as Subject-based Banding, which is part of our efforts to offer multiple pathways and opportunities to students to pursue an education best suited to their needs, interests and strengths.

[Back to Contents](#)

STUDENTS SEEKING ASSISTANCE FROM CAREER GUIDANCE OFFICES IN POLYTECHNICS AND ITES

43 **Ms Rahayu Mahzam** asked the Minister for Education (a) what is the number of students who have sought assistance from career guidance offices situated in all the polytechnics and ITEs in the last two years; (b) what is the percentage of these students out of the total student population within the same period; and (c) whether there has been an assessment or review of the effectiveness of the enhanced career guidance programmes in these institutions.

Mr Ong Ye Kung: All students at our polytechnics and ITE undergo forty to sixty hours of ECG curriculum, guided by their lecturers and ECG Counsellors. Students are also exposed to career options through learning journeys to companies, workshops with industry representatives and alumni, career fairs, and internships. In addition, all students have access to the MySkillsFuture portal, a key resource for education and industry information, with tools to support career development.

In 2016, MOE set up ECG centres in every polytechnic and ITE college to serve as touchpoints for all students. All students are introduced to the ECG services and resources offered at these centres, which include ECG workshops and talks, and career and industry related materials and references. Students who require more targeted ECG support can approach their lecturers for advice, or the ECG Counsellors at the ECG centres for individual or group Counselling sessions. In the last two years, about 1 in 25 students have scheduled one-on-one or group guidance sessions with the ECG Counsellors.

There is awareness of the usefulness of ECG, and the utilisation of the resources will increase with time.

[Back to Contents](#)

**PROPORTION OF FRESH GRADUATES OF AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITIES,
PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES OFFERING DEGREES,
POLYTECHNICS AND ITE HIRED BY PUBLIC SERVICE**

44 **Mr Leon Perera** asked the Minister for Education (a) what proportion of fresh graduates of autonomous universities, private educational institutes offering degrees, polytechnics, and ITE are hired by the public service as their first job; and (b) how does this proportion compare to other developed countries such as the US, UK, Japan, Korea, Australia, Germany, France and Israel.

Mr Ong Ye Kung: Based on the latest Graduate Employment Survey, 26% of employed Autonomous University respondents reported that they were working in the Government, statutory boards or organs of state six months after their final examinations. The proportions for Private Education Institution full-time degree, polytechnic and ITE respondents were 7%, 13% and 13% respectively.

The Ministry of Education does not have comparable statistics from other developed countries.

[Back to Contents](#)

ESTIMATED ANNUAL REVENUE FROM IMPOSITION OF PARKING FEES FOR TEACHERS IN SCHOOLS

45 **Mr Leon Perera** asked the Minister for Education what is the estimated annual revenue that will be derived from the imposition of parking fees for teachers in schools.

Mr Ong Ye Kung: The estimated revenue from car park charges collected by our 360 primary schools, secondary schools and junior colleges is estimated to be \$8-10 million a year. The revenue will be retained by the schools.

[Back to Contents](#)

RESIDENT EMPLOYMENT RATE FOR PERSONS AGED 25-64 WITH EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS BELOW SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

46 **Mr Melvin Yong Yik Chye** asked the Minister for Manpower (a) what is the resident employment rate for those aged 25 to 64 with education qualifications below secondary school level; and (b) what are the initiatives to help those in this category who are currently unemployed to find a job.

Mrs Josephine Teo: The employment rate for residents⁴ aged 25 to 64 with below secondary qualifications was 67% in 2017⁵, higher than most OECD countries. Of the remaining 33% who were not in employment, 30%-points were outside the labour force (i.e. not looking for a job), mainly due to family responsibilities and health-related reasons, and the remaining were unemployed (i.e. looking for a job). In 2017, the annual average unemployment rate of 2.6% for residents with below secondary qualifications was lower than the overall resident annual average unemployment rate of 3.1%.

There is a wide range of support under the Government's Adapt and Grow initiative to assist unemployed jobseekers, including those with below secondary qualifications.

⁴ Residents refer to Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents.

⁵ Data from Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM.

(a) To address “missed matches”, Workforce Singapore’s (WSG) Careers Connect and NTUC’s Employment and Employability Institute (e2i) centres provide a suite of career matching services that caters to the different needs of each jobseeker.

(b) To address mismatches in skills or expectations, there are programmes such as Place and Train and Career Trial to help jobseekers secure a job.

Through the Adapt and Grow initiative, the Government placed about 2,500 jobseekers with below secondary qualifications into new jobs and careers in 2017.

[Back to Contents](#)

PROPORTION OF JOBSEEKERS PLACED IN JOBS BY WORKFORCE SINGAPORE AND E2I

47 **Mr Desmond Choo** asked the Minister for Manpower (a) in each of the last three years, what proportion of jobseekers are placed into jobs that are directly introduced by Workforce Singapore (WSG) and e2i; and (b) whether there are plans to improve the overall placement rates by WSG and e2i.

Mrs Josephine Teo: The proportion of jobseekers registered with WSG’s Careers Connect and NTUC’s e2i centres who are placed into jobs has improved over the last three years (see Table 1).

Table 1. Average 6-month Job Placement Rate for

WSG’s Careers Connect and NTUC’s e2i centres

Years	2015	2016	2017
Placement rate	56.0%	69.8%	70.5%

WSG and NTUC's e2i continually seek to improve the effectiveness of their services to jobseekers. In July 2017, WSG career centres were upgraded to Careers Connect with an expanded suite of customised career matching services. Jobseekers who require more in-depth support can undergo tailored career management and counselling programmes and receive dedicated one-to-one career coaching suited to their needs.

WSG has also launched the MyCareersFuture portal to help jobseekers and employers perform smarter and faster job searches. It prioritises search results according to the relevance of a jobseeker's skills and shows jobs that are supported by the Adapt & Grow programmes.

In addition to career matching services, jobseekers can also tap on programmes such as the Professional Conversion Programmes (PCPs) and Career Support Programme (CSP) to help them overcome mismatches in skills and wage expectations.

[Back to Contents](#)

ADDITIONAL INTEREST RATES FOR LOW-INCOME GROUPS' CPF SAVINGS

48 **Mr Gan Thiam Poh** asked the Minister for Manpower whether additional interest rates can be given to the low income groups' CPF savings that will support their retirement needs.

Mrs Josephine Teo: The CPF system has a progressive interest rate structure that provides a higher effective interest rate to CPF members with lower balances.

Balances in the Ordinary Account earn 2.5% per annum, while those in the Special Account, Retirement Account, and Medisave Account earn 4% per annum. On top of this, an Extra Interest of 1% is paid on the first \$60,000 of combined CPF balances. CPF members aged 55 and above also receive an Additional Extra Interest of 1% on the first

\$30,000 of their combined CPF balances. Therefore, CPF members with lower balances are earning a higher effective interest rate per annum on their CPF savings.

The Government also provides CPF top-ups to help low-wage Singaporeans build up their retirement savings, via the Workfare Income Supplement (WIS) Scheme. For example, eligible low-wage employees aged 45 to 54 receive up to \$2,200 of WIS payouts a year, comprising of 60% in CPF top-ups and 40% in cash. Older workers receive even higher WIS payouts. In total, more than \$650 million in WIS payouts were paid to over 400,000 low-wage workers in 2017, of which more than \$400 million were credited into their CPF accounts.

[Back to Contents](#)

WORKFARE INCOME SUPPLEMENT EMPLOYEE-RECIPIENTS BY AGE GROUP

49 **Mr Zainal Sapari** asked the Minister for Manpower for each year from 2015 to 2017 (a) what is the number of Workfare Income Supplement (WIS) employee-recipients based on the four age groups under WIS; (b) what is the total corresponding expenditure incurred in each year to disburse WIS to the employee group; and (c) what are the considerations taken into account in determining the WIS payout.

Mrs Josephine Teo: Table 1 shows the number of employees receiving Workfare Income Supplement (WIS) in each of the four WIS age groups, and the total amount of WIS allotted annually for work done in 2015 to 2017.

Table 1: Number of employees receiving WIS and total amount of WIS allotted for work done in 2015 to 2017⁶

Work Year (WY)	2015		2016		2017	
WIS Age Groups⁷	No. of employee recipients	Amount of WIS (\$)	No. of employee recipients	Amount of WIS (\$)	No. of employee recipients	Amount of WIS (\$)
60 and above	155K	342M	162K	359M	169K	367M
55 - 59	72K	114M	69K	109M	65K	101M
45 - 54	105K	122M	95K	110M	85K	95M
35 - 44 ⁸	57K	40M	52K	36M	47K	30M
Total	389K	618M	377K	614M	366K	592M

WIS is targeted at workers in the bottom 20% by income percentile, with graduated support provided to those up to the 30th income percentile. The amount of WIS an employee receives depends on his age and income. In general, older employees receive higher payouts than younger employees.

The WIS scheme was introduced in 2007 and has consistently benefitted more than 20% of Singaporean employee workforce. The number of WIS recipients fluctuates each year and tends to decline in periods of rising incomes. Between 2015 and 2017, nominal wage at the 20th percentile of full-time employed citizens has grown by an average of 4.7% p.a. This explains the smaller number of WIS recipients in 2017 compared to 2015.

Such changes in incomes are taken into account at every three-yearly review of WIS to ensure that more than 20% of Singaporean employees remain eligible for WIS. The results of the next review will be announced next year, for implementation in 2020.

⁶ Data for WY 2015 as at February 2017; Data for WY 2016 and 2017 as at February 2018

⁷ Age as at respective years

⁸ Includes Persons with Disabilities (PWD) WIS recipients aged below 35

[Back to Contents](#)

REASONS FOR REJECTION OF NON-DOMESTIC WORK PERMIT APPLICATIONS

50 **Mr Kok Heng Leun** asked the Minister for Manpower over the last 12 months (a) what are the top five reasons for rejecting non-domestic work permit applications other than the reason of the employer not meeting the dependency ratio; and (b) what channels are open to the worker and employer to find out the reason for the rejection.

Mrs Josephine Teo: Applications for work permits are screened to minimise incidence where undesirable persons are inadvertently allowed to work in Singapore. Apart from this factor and the employer not meeting dependency ratio, the top reasons for rejecting non-domestic work permit applications were:

- (i) The employer or applicant had adverse record(s);
- (ii) The employer did not have sufficient Man-Year Entitlement⁹;
- (iii) The employer did not have enough higher skilled work permit holders to hire new basic skilled workers¹⁰;
- (iv) The worker had exceeded the maximum employment period; or
- (v) The worker was not from an approved source country.

Employers or their employment agents can view the rejection reasons for their work permit applications through MOM's Work Permit Online (WPOL) service on the MOM website. Applicants can also check with their employment agents or prospective employers. Where there are security concerns, the reasons for rejection may not always be specified. Instead, the employer is advised to look for another candidate.

⁹ The Man-Year Entitlement (MYE) reflects the total number of work permit holders a main contractor in the construction or process sector is entitled to employ based on the value of projects or contracts awarded by developers or owners. Main contractors can allocate their MYE to sub-contractors involved in the same project.

¹⁰ Since 1 January 2017, all companies in the construction sector must have a minimum 10% of higher skilled (or R1) work permit holders before they are allowed to hire new basic skilled (or R2) workers.

[Back to Contents](#)

REGULATION OF LIVING CONDITIONS AND PROTECTION OF RIGHTS OF FOREIGN DOMESTIC WORKERS AFTER ARRIVAL AND BEFORE EMPLOYMENT

51 **Assoc Prof Daniel Goh Pei Siong** asked the Minister for Manpower (a) whether the Ministry regulates the living conditions and protection of rights of foreign domestic workers after they have arrived in Singapore and before employment; and (b) how regularly does the Ministry inspect the boarding houses and interview the workers.

Mrs Josephine Teo: Employment Agencies (EAs) that bring in Foreign Domestic Workers (FDWs) are required, under their licence, to upkeep and maintain the FDWs prior to their deployment to their employers' households. This includes the provision of food, medical treatment and proper accommodation at the agencies' cost.

EAs have to comply with the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and Housing & Development Board (HDB) occupancy load criteria. EAs must also ensure that the FDWs have privacy and hygienic living conditions. The places of accommodation used by EAs must be registered with MOM.

MOM regularly inspects the places of accommodation and may interview the occupants as part of the process. Over 100 premises are inspected every year. The majority of the EAs have been found to be compliant. Violations were detected for 33 EAs out of 131 EAs whose premises were inspected in the past 12 months, but most were also relatively minor. These EAs are likely to receive a warning or composition fine, as well as demerit points. EAs with severe violations will be prosecuted and may be fined up to \$5,000 and/or jailed up to 6 months. They may also have their licences revoked.

[Back to Contents](#)

EMPLOYERS NOTIFYING MOM OF DOWNWARD REVISION TO SALARY TERMS FOR WORK PERMIT HOLDERS

52 **Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang** asked the Minister for Manpower in each of the past three years (a) how many employers have informed the Ministry in writing of modifications to the salary terms for a Work Permit holder to less favourable terms than declared and stated in their in-principle approval letter; (b) how many employers have been fined for not having done so; (c) how many notices of salary reduction have been issued to workers; and (d) on what grounds does the Ministry determine whether a salary reduction can be allowed.

Mrs Josephine Teo: When applying for Work Permits (WPs), employers are required to declare key salary terms, including the basic and fixed monthly salary, offered to prospective Work Permit Holders (WPHs). Since 2011, these terms have been reflected in the In-Principle Approval (IPA) letter, which is available in the WPHs' native languages, and must be sent by the employer to the worker in his home country prior to the worker's departure to Singapore. This ensures that the worker is fully aware and accepts the terms of conditions before leaving his home country.

In some cases, employers may discover that the WPH's performance falls below what is expected, and thus cannot justify paying the agreed salary. Instead of terminating the WPH's contract, MOM allows employers to revise the salary downwards, provided they have obtained the worker's written agreement and have notified MOM of the revision. In the past three years, MOM was notified of salary reductions affecting less than 2 percent of non-domestic WPHs per year.

We have taken action against employers who reduced salaries without informing MOM or obtaining the WPH's written consent. In the first half of 2018, a total of \$105,000 in Administrative Financial Penalties were imposed on 17 errant employers.

Notwithstanding these safeguards, we have been monitoring salary disputes involving IPA salary reduction. The proportion of WPH salary claims which involve IPA salary reductions was stable at about 7% over the last 3 years, but increased to about 11% in the second half of last year.

Since February 2018, when mediating salary disputes, the Tripartite Alliance for Dispute Management (TADM) has insisted that employers provide documented evidence that the worker has consented to any salary reduction. TADM no longer allows for arguments from employers that the worker had provided tacit or verbal consent. In addition, MOM is considering the possibility of disallowing downward salary revisions altogether. While this will provide workers with more certainty of their wage for the entire duration of their stay in Singapore, it could also lead to possible early termination of employment even when the worker is willing to accept a lower wage. We will thus consult with relevant stakeholders to determine the best step forward.

[Back to Contents](#)

CUSTODY OF CHILDREN IN DIVORCE CASES

53 **Mr Seah Kian Peng** asked the Minister for Social and Family Development in the last three years, what has been the number of divorce cases where custody of the children has been accorded to (i) mothers only (ii) fathers only and (iii) both parents respectively.

Mr Desmond Lee: The breakdown of custody orders for divorces from 2014 to 2016

is as follows:

Table 1: Orders Made for Custody for Divorces Granted/ Registered in 2014-2016

Year in which Divorce is Granted/ Registered¹¹	2014	2015	2016
Total number of divorces with custody orders made	3,878 (100.0%)	3,945 (100.0%)	3,957 (100.0%)
• Joint custody – Both Parents	2,736 (70.6%)	2,834 (71.8%)	2,940 (74.3%)
• Sole custody - Mother	843 (21.7%)	827 (21.0%)	764 (19.3%)
• Sole custody - Father	241 (6.2%)	221 (5.6%)	191 (4.8%)
• Split custody ¹²	44 (1.1%)	43 (1.1%)	28 (0.7%)
• Others ¹³ (involving relatives, non-relatives, State)	14 (0.4%)	20 (0.5%)	34 (0.9%)

Source: Family Justice Courts, Syariah Courts.

¹¹ Figures are by the year of final judgment granted (under the Women's Charter) and year of divorce registered (under the Administration of Muslim Law Act).

¹² Refers to cases where the custody of all children is awarded to parents only, but the orders differ for each child (e.g. joint custody for the first child, sole custody to the Mother for the second child).

¹³ Refers to cases where custody of at least one child involves a relative, non-relative (e.g. guardian) or the State.

[Back to Contents](#)

SELF-HARM CASES INVOLVING CHILDREN AGED 14 AND BELOW

54 **Assoc Prof Daniel Goh Pei Siong** asked the Minister for Social and Family Development (a) whether there has been an increase in the number of children aged 14 and below involved in self-harm cases; (b) how these cases came to be reported; and (c) what assistance was rendered to the children and their families.

Mr Desmond Lee: Self-harm typically occurs in private. The child's injury may come to the attention of others when there are observable scars or medical attention is required.

In school, students are taught healthy ways of coping with stress and personal difficulties, and are encouraged to seek help from trusted adults. They are also taught to look out for and support one another and to alert their teacher or school counsellor if their friends encounter difficulties. Students who self-harm would be referred to school counsellors for help. For complex cases, school counsellors would refer them for further assessment and intervention by medical doctors, clinical psychologists, or other relevant specialists. The number of students aged 14 and below who have been referred for school counselling over the past three years has been small with no significant increase.

Self-harm cases may also present at hospitals for treatment of physical injuries. Over the past three years, the number of hospital admissions for self-inflicted injuries among children aged 14 years and below was 42 in 2015, 37 in 2016 and 30 in 2017. These children would be treated for their physical injuries and provided with counselling and psychological support to empower them with other forms of coping techniques.

Mental well-being is important in enabling our children to manage stress well. As the causes of self-harm are often complex and multi-faceted, we take a holistic approach to support children with self-harming behaviour, as well as their families. Families and

children with psycho-social issues are referred directly to professionals, or community touch points such as Family Service Centres (FSCs) so that they can receive appropriate help to deal with the issues and achieve greater resilience. MSF's Social Service Offices help FSCs to coordinate with various government agencies to ensure appropriate support for clients and work through the potential stressors on the family.

[Back to Contents](#)

**COUNSELLING SERVICES FOR CHILDREN OR YOUNG PERSONS
INVOLVED IN STATUTORY RAPE AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT CASES
CARRIED OUT BY PERSONS KNOWN TO VICTIMS**

55 **Miss Cheng Li Hui** asked the Minister for Social and Family Development (a) whether current services and programmes are sufficient to deal with cases of statutory rape and sexual misconduct involving children or young persons that are carried out by persons known to the victims; and (b) whether mandatory counselling services will be extended to families where children or young persons are victims of sexual misconduct involving family members, kin and persons known to the victims.

Mr Desmond Lee: Keeping children safe from sexual abuse requires a whole-of-society effort. There are established inter-agency protocols, services, and programmes to support victims and their families, and to bring perpetrators to justice.

When children experience or are suspected of having experienced sexual abuse, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and the Singapore Police Force (SPF) will step in. Children who are not safe at home may be placed temporarily with relatives, a foster family, or a children's home. These children and their families are also supported with a range of community services, and may be referred to MSF psychologists to help them recover from the trauma of abuse. Each child is affected differently by the abuse, and the intervention will be tailored according to the different risks and needs of the child

and the family. MSF is constantly looking at ways to improve the assessment and evidence-based intervention for our clients, in line with international practices.

Concurrently, suspected perpetrators will be investigated by the SPF. The child plays an important role in the investigation. To reduce the trauma faced by child victims from having to travel to different locations and recounting the incident to different professionals, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and MSF will be piloting a one-stop, multi-disciplinary approach at KK Women's and Children's Hospital.

Perpetrators of child abuse may be charged under the Penal Code, or the Children and Young Persons Act. At the same time, their longer term rehabilitation is needed to prevent the abuse from recurring. The Court can order the perpetrator, who may be a parent or guardian, to undergo counselling, assessments, treatments, or other programmes.

Upstream prevention of child abuse and self-protection is equally important. Children are taught about personal safety in schools. They are taught to recognise sexual abuse and harassment, acquire skills to protect themselves both in real life and online, and understand the laws that protect them in Singapore. They also learn to seek help from trusted adults, such as their parents, teachers and school counsellors when there is risk of their personal safety being compromised.

Beyond the existing multi-agency network of help, members of the public can also play their part. Noticing child abuse and bringing it to attention is the first step that enables the range of support services to kick in. Anyone who is aware of a child being or at risk of being abused, can help by alerting a community-based Child Protection Specialist Centre, MSF's Child Protective Service, the ComCare Hotline 1800- 222-0000 or their nearest Family Service Centre. Where a life is in danger, the public should immediately call the Police.

[Back to Contents](#)

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