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GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT ON INCENTIVES AND MEASURES TO SUPPORT THE NEW POPULATION POLICY

The government has decided to encourage a three-child family norm and to adopt a new population policy of "Have three, and more if you can afford it". To support this policy, the following package of incentives and measures will be introduced:

1) To help parents take care of their child care problems, the government will encourage the provision of more quality child care centres. With effect from 1 Apr 87, the subsidies for children attending Ministry of Community Development approved child care centres will be revised to a flat rate of $100 per month regardless of the parents' income. Privately operated centres that meet the standards established by the Ministry will also qualify for equivalent subsidies so as to reduce the fees that will be charged.

2) With effect from this year's registration exercise for admission into the 1988 Pre-Primary and Primary 1 classes, should the number of applications exceed the number of vacancies in any phase, priority will be given to children from three-child families in that phase. Furthermore, the Phase 2C presently applicable to children from one- or two-child families will be extended to children from three-child families.

3) To promote a more balanced attitude towards work, marriage and family formation, the government will encourage employers to adopt a more understanding and sympathetic attitude towards working women with young children, to promote

part-time and flexi-time employment and encourage the provision of extended no-pay maternity leave and the retraining of women who rejoin the labour force. A separate announcement will be made later by the government regarding measures to assist working mothers in the Civil Service.

4) To reduce the financial burden of having a third child, a Special Tax Rebate will be granted. This will be announced by the Minister for Finance in his coming Budget Speech.

5) With immediate effect from 1 Mar 87, Medisave can be used for the hospital and delivery charges incurred in the birth of the third baby. This will apply to deliveries in both government and private hospitals regardless of the mother's educational qualifications. However, no overdraft of the Medisave account would be allowed.

6) There will be no change in the accouchement fee for the first, second and third order births. The accouchement fee for the fourth order birth will be increased to $1,000 for all ward classes and for the fifth and higher order births, $1,300. The increase will take effect from 1 Jan 88. The delivery and hospital expenses for fourth order births, subject to a maximum of $3,000 each, can be offset against the parents' earned income.

7) Priority in housing allocation will be given to families who own three-room or larger HDB flats and who wish to upgrade their flats upon the birth of the third child. Details will be released separately by the Housing and Development Board.

8) To discourage abortions of convenience, compulsory pre- and post-abortion counselling will be introduced. Pre-sterilisation counselling to women with less than three children will also be introduced.

9) To facilitate the singles to have more opportunities to interact socially, more activities and programmes will be organised by the Social Development Unit (SDU) and the Social Development Section (SDS). The infrastructure of the SDU and SDS will be strengthened.

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