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PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY BRIG-GEN (RES) LEE HSIEN LOONG, MINISTER FOR
TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND SECOND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
(SERVICES), AT THE SEMINAR ON "THE NATIONAL AGENDA,
POPULATION TRENDS AND THE SINGAPORE ECONOMY" AT HOTEL
TAI-PAN RAMADA ON SUNDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 1987 AT 9.15 AM

1986 Population Report

When 1DPM announced the New Population Policy in February, his basis was the 1985 population statistics. Total Fertility Rate (TFR) was 1.62, below replacement level of 2.10 (Table 1).

The 1986 figures are now available. They are even worse - TFR 1.44 (Table 1).

This is one of the lowest TFRs in the world - cf Japan (1.8), West Germany (1.3), and Switzerland (1.5). Furthermore, our TFR decline has been the most precipitous of all (Chart 1).

Most of the decline is because of the Chinese population. Malay TFR has stabilised since 1980 at around replacement level (1985 2.10, 1986 2.05). But Chinese TFR has continued to drop (1985 1.47, 1986 1.26) and is now probably the lowest in the world (Chart 2).

At this rate, if we do nothing, our population will go into steep decline within one generation (Chart 3). The consequences for the economy, for defence, and for the survival of Singapore are all calamitous.

The birth shortfall is large - 15,000 last year. Immigration cannot make up this number - last year only 3,893 immigrants received their citizenship, and most of them are older people.

Reasons for decline:

- Lower per cent of females married for each educational group (Secondary - 25 per cent unmarried), and higher per cent of females educated (Chart 4). This accounts for about 20 per cent of the shortfall.
- Fewer children per married woman.
- The year of the Tiger. Certainly it affected marriages (Chart 5).

Some rebound this year - 1,000 more live births in first half of 1987. But even then TFR only 1.55, and Chinese TFR only 1.38. We cannot depend on the Years of the Rabbit and Dragon.

We are not going to sit passively watching ourselves become extinct. The New Population Policy is in place. The measures will take some time to work. They will be effective only when people understand the problem and change their private choices. Attitudes must change - towards marriage, having children, making careers. Ways to combine careers and family life must be found.

The Ministry of Health will soon be launching an extensive programme to influence attitudes of Singaporeans. Social pressure matters. When the two-child family was the norm, women with three children were highly conscious of this fact. This social pressure must be redirected to encourage more women who can afford it to have more children.

TABLE 1
TOTAL FERTILITY RATES BY ETHNIC GROUP

	TOTAL	CHINESE	MALAYS	INDIANS
1970	3.07	3.00	3.45	3.15
1980	1.73	1.66	2.04	1.93
1985	1.62	1.47	2.10	1.93

1986	1.44	1.26	2.05	1.89
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CHART 1
TOTAL FERTILITY RATES FOR SELECTED COUNTRIES

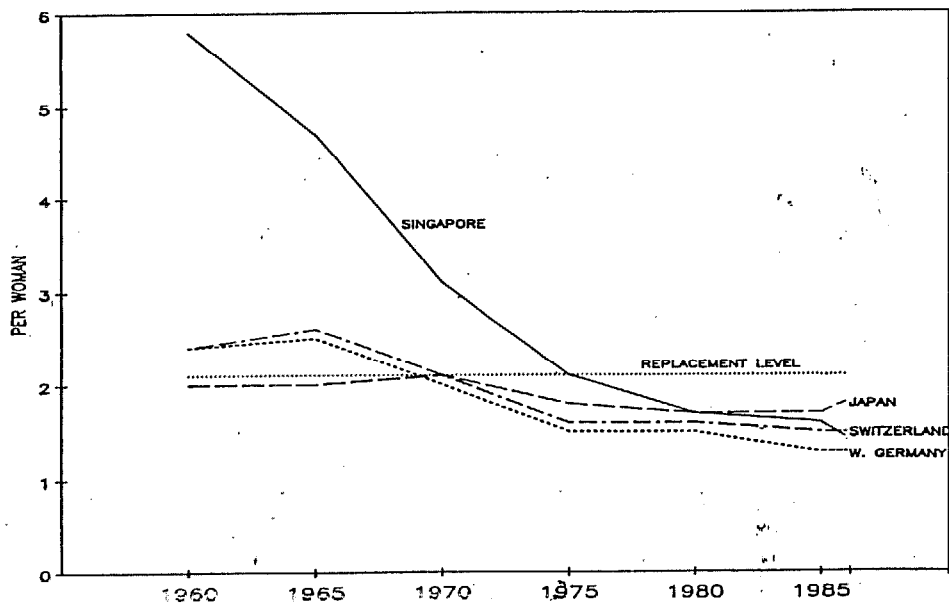


CHART 2
TOTAL FERTILITY RATES BY ETHNIC GROUP

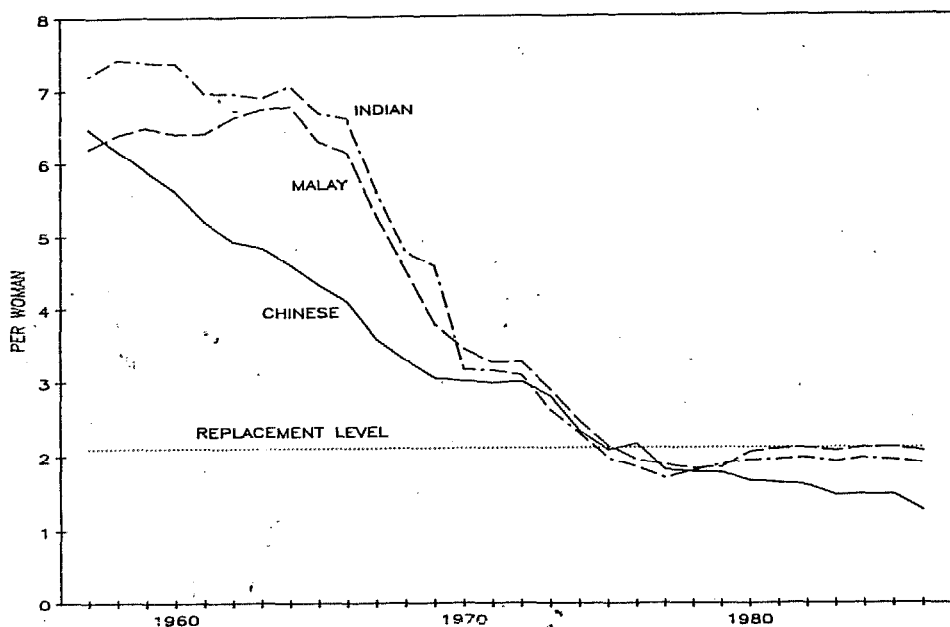


CHART 3
PROJECTED POPULATION

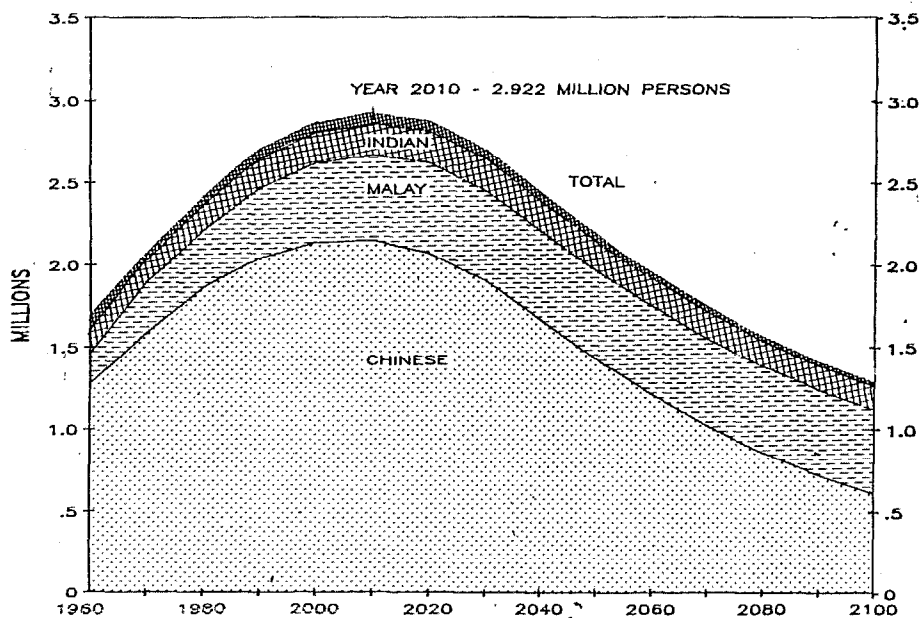


CHART 4A
% UNMARRIED, RESIDENT FEMALES AGED 30-34

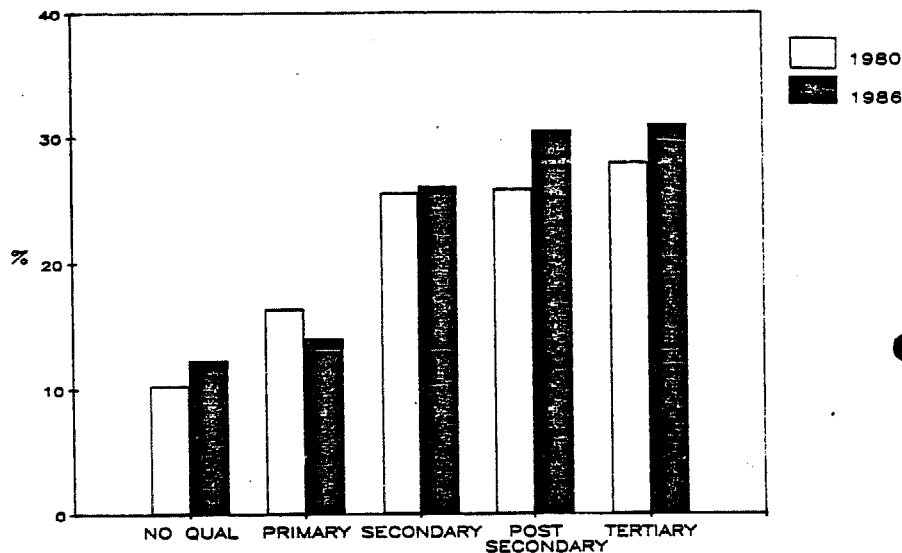


CHART 4B
EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION, RESIDENT FEMALES AGED 30-34

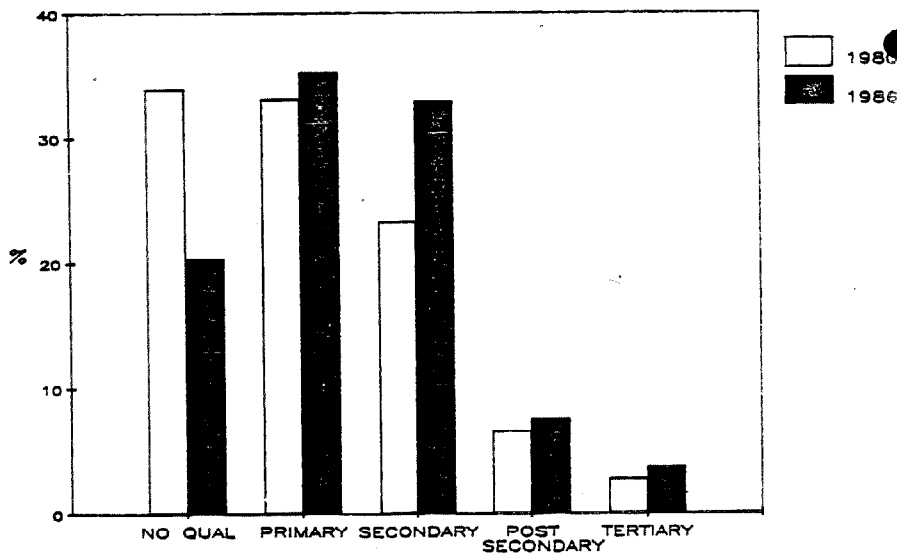


CHART 5A
CHINESE MARRIAGES

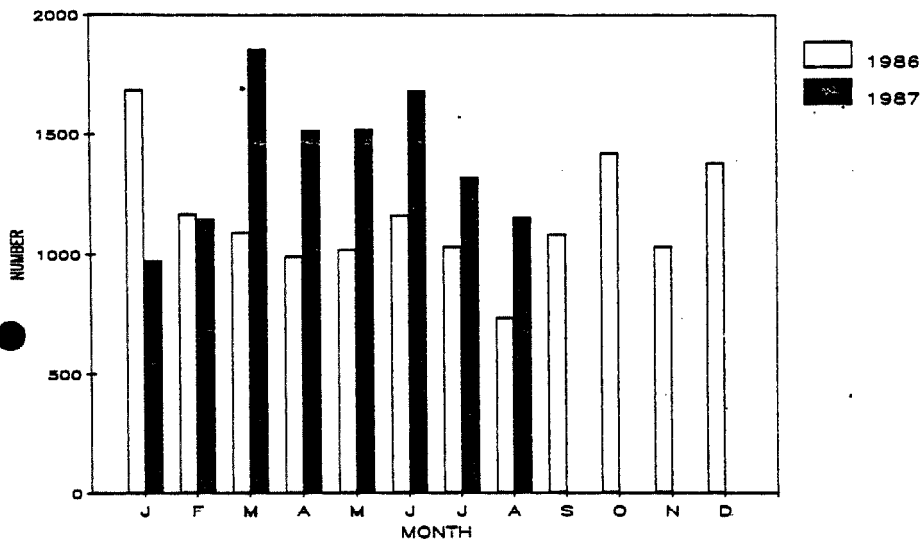


CHART 5B
MALAY MARRIAGES

