

**Volume 80  
No. 18**



**Tuesday  
14th February, 2006**

# **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES SINGAPORE OFFICIAL REPORT CONTENTS**

**Permission to Members to be Absent (Col. 2400)**

**Oral Answers to Questions (Cols. 2400-2424)**

- 1. Academic staff in local universities (Cols. 2400-2402)  
(Recruitment)**
- 2. Sabbatical leave in the universities (Cols. 2402-2405)  
(Rationale)**
- 3. Privacy of personal information (Cols. 2405-2409)  
(Safeguards to protect)**
- 4. IMF and World Bank Group meetings in Singapore (Cols. 2409-2412)  
(Use of green vehicles)**
- 5. Aerosol party spray (Cols. 2412-2413)  
(Ban on use)**
- 6. Traffic accidents (Cols. 2413-2415)  
(New drivers)**
- 7. Community Chest (Cols. 2416-2418)  
(Review of role and functions)**

**8. Singapore Mass Rapid Transit (SMRT) (Cols. 2418-2420)**

**(Fare hikes)**

**9. Temasek Holdings (Cols. 2420-2422)**

**(Shareholders' return)**

**10. A\*STAR (Cols. 2422-2424)**

**(PhD scholars)**

**Casino Control Bill (Cols. 2424-2458)**

**Read a Second time; considered in Committee; reported without amendment;  
read a Third time**

**Residential Property (Amendment) Bill (Cols. 2458-2469)**

**Read a Second time; considered in Committee; reported without amendment;  
read a Third time**

**Accountants (Amendment) Bill (Cols. 2469-2478)**

**Read a Second time; considered in Committee; reported without amendment;  
read a Third time**

**Adjournment (Col. 2478)**

**Written Answers to Questions (Cols. 2479-2482)**

**1. Scholars in public sector (Cols. 2479-2480)**

**2. Overseas universities in Singapore (Cols. 2479-2482)**

**(Establishment and withdrawal)**

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES SINGAPORE

## OFFICIAL REPORT

### TENTH PARLIAMENT

---

#### PART II OF SECOND SESSION

#### VOLUME 80

---

*Tuesday, 14th February, 2006*

*The House met at 1.30 pm*

PRESENT:

Mr SPEAKER (Mr Abdullah Tarmugi (East Coast)).

Mr Ahmad Khalis Bin Abdul Ghani (Hong Kah).

Dr Ahmad Mohd Magad (Pasir Ris-Punggol).

Mr Ang Mong Seng (Hong Kah).

Mr Alexander Chan Meng Wah (Nominated Member).

Mr Chan Soo Sen (Joo Chiat), Minister of State, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Mr Chay Wai Chuen (Tanjong Pagar).

Dr John Chen Seow Phun (Hong Kah).

Mr Chew Heng Ching (East Coast), Deputy Speaker.

Mr Steve Chia Kiah Hong (Non-Constituency Member).

Mr Chiam See Tong (Potong Pasir).

Assoc. Prof. Chin Tet Yung (Sembawang).

Mr Charles Chong (Pasir Ris-Punggol).

Mr Davinder Singh (Bishan-Toa Payoh).

Mr Arthur Fong (West Coast).

Mr Gan Kim Yong (Holland-Bukit Panjang), Minister of State, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Manpower.

Mr Andy Gan Lai Chiang (Marine Parade).

Dr Geh Min (Nominated Member).

Mr Goh Chok Tong (Marine Parade), Senior Minister, Prime Minister's Office.

Mr Hawazi Daipi (Sembawang), Senior Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education and Minister for Manpower.

Mr Heng Chee How (Jalan Besar), Minister of State, Ministry of National Development.

Mdm Ho Geok Choo (West Coast).

Assoc. Prof. Ho Peng Kee (Nee Soon East), Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Law and Ministry of Home Affairs.

Mr Inderjit Singh (Ang Mo Kio), Deputy Government Whip.

Ms Indranee Rajah (Tanjong Pagar).

Mr Khaw Boon Wan (Tanjong Pagar), Minister for Health.

Dr Amy Khor Lean Suan (Hong Kah).

Assoc. Prof. Koo Tsai Kee (Tanjong Pagar), Senior Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence and Minister for the Environment and Water Resources.

Dr Lee Boon Yang (Jalan Besar), Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts and Government Whip.

Mr Lee Hsien Loong (Ang Mo Kio), Prime Minister and Minister for Finance.

Dr Warren Lee (Sembawang).

Mr Lee Yock Suan (East Coast).

Mr Leong Horn Kee (Bishan-Toa Payoh).

Mr Lawrence Leow Chin Hin (Nominated Member).

Mr Lim Boon Heng (Jurong), Minister, Prime Minister's Office.

Mrs Lim Hwee Hua (Marine Parade), Minister of State, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Transport.

Mr Raymond Lim Siang Keat (East Coast), Minister, Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for Finance and Second Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Mr Lim Swee Say (Holland-Bukit Panjang), Minister, Prime Minister's Office and Deputy Government Whip.

Mr Loh Meng See (Jalan Besar).

Miss Penny Low (Pasir Ris-Punggol).

Assoc. Prof. Low Seow Chay (Chua Chu Kang).

Mr Low Thia Khiang (Hougang).

Mr Mah Bow Tan (Tampines), Minister for National Development and Deputy Leader of the House.

Mr Matthias Yao Chih (MacPherson).

Encik Mohamad Maidin B P M (Marine Parade), Senior Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Home Affairs.

Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman (Sembawang), Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports and Minister for National Development.

Dr Lily Neo (Jalan Besar).

Dr Ng Eng Hen (Bishan-Toa Payoh), Minister for Manpower and Second Minister for Defence.

Ms Irene Ng Phek Hoong (Tampines).

Ms Eunice Elizabeth Olsen (Nominated Member).

Mr Ong Ah Heng (Nee Soon Central).

Dr Ong Chit Chung (Jurong).

Mr Ong Kian Min (Tampines).

Assoc. Prof. Ong Soh Khim (Nominated Member).

Mr Othman Haron Eusofe (Marine Parade).

Mdm Cynthia Phua (Aljunied).

Prof. Ivan Png Paak Liang (Nominated Member).

Mr R Ravindran (Marine Parade).

Mr Seng Han Thong (Ang Mo Kio).

Mr Sin Boon Ann (Tampines).

Dr Tan Boon Wan (Ang Mo Kio).

Dr Tan Cheng Bock (Ayer Rajah).

Dr Tan Sze Wee (Nominated Member).

Mr Teo Chee Hean (Pasir Ris-Punggol), Minister for Defence.

Dr Teo Ho Pin (Holland-Bukit Panjang).

Mr Teo Yock Ngee (Nominated Member).

Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam (Jurong), Minister for Education.

Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam (Sembawang).

Dr Vivian Balakrishnan (Holland-Bukit Panjang), Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports and Second Minister for Trade and Industry.

Dr Wang Kai Yuen (Bukit Timah).

Mr Wee Siew Kim (Ang Mo Kio).

Mr Wong Kan Seng (Bishan-Toa Payoh), Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Home Affairs and Leader of the House.

Assoc. Prof. Dr Yaacob Ibrahim (Jalan Besar), Minister for the Environment and Water Resources and Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs.

Encik Yatiman Yusof (Tampines), Senior Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts.

*Oral Answers to Questions*

[Mr CHAN SOO SEN]

Perhaps, that can affect my promotion prospect. That is one possibility.

**Mr Speaker:** Prof. Ong, one last question.

**Assoc. Prof. Ong Soh Khim:** Sir, a clarification. My question is to have the Minister of State's views on whether it should be optional or compulsory, and not something else. A lot of reasons for going for sabbatical, like what the Minister of State said, would be to get fresh ideas and to be exposed to somewhere. If a person is already making contribution, making significant research invention, having fresh ideas, and so forth, would he still be made to go for sabbatical leave in order to get some fresh ideas?

**Mr Chan Soo Sen:** From the way I answered the question, it would be quite clear that if you apply for sabbatical, the university would then consider it. You may receive some friendly advice from your colleagues or from the human resource department that it is good that you go for sabbatical. But if you really feel very secure that you are already making very good contribution and the sabbatical is not necessary, I am sure they will listen to your perspective and excuse you from sabbatical.

### PRIVACY OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

#### (Safeguards to protect)

3. **Prof. Ivan Png Paak Liang** asked the Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts whether his Ministry will introduce legislation to safeguard privacy of personal information and, if so, when.

**The Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts (Dr Lee Boon Yang):** Mr Speaker, Sir, Prof. Png asked whether my Ministry will introduce legislation to safeguard privacy of personal information. The Government recognises the increasing importance and

impact of personal information or personal data protection in Singapore. We also recognise the need to protect personal data and prevent the possibility of misuse of personal information or even identity theft. This is especially critical when infocomm technologies can be misused to obtain and distribute personal data, with potentially adverse impact on the individuals concerned. Currently, we have in place strict provisions in our sectoral laws, such as our Banking Act and codes for medical professionals, to protect sensitive financial and health information.

However, MICA appreciates the need to take a wider perspective on data protection. We recognise that an effective data protection regime will be an important pillar to develop Singapore's position as a trusted IT-hub. It will also be a critical factor in building trust between consumers and businesses for the adoption of new technologies and services (such as electronic transactions, biometrics and Radio Frequency Identification). MICA, together with IDA, started examining this issue in November 2004. On 26th October 2005, MICA convened an inter-ministry sub-committee under the National Infocomm Security Committee to review Singapore's data protection regime and assess the suitability of various data protection regulatory models. A total of 16 Government agencies, including MTI, MOF, MOH, MHA, MAS and AGC, are represented on this committee. The committee aims to submit its recommendations by the middle of this year.

**Assoc. Prof. Ong Soh Khim:** Sir, with respect to safeguarding the privacy of personal information like, for example, RFID technology, as the Minister has said, there is a rising trend of manufacturers and businesses using the RFID technique and incorporating such tags into our daily consumer products, and this could be potentially exploited to track and identify an individual. So I would like to ask the Minister if the Government has any plans to introduce legislation in the very near

*Oral Answers to Questions*

future to protect the information and privacy of consumers in this regard.

**Dr Lee Boon Yang:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not going into great details at this juncture. But as I said, we are aware of the potential for abuse and also the beneficial use that technology such as RFID can be applied to. Our committee looking at data protection will certainly study the various aspects and possibilities. In coming out with its recommendations, it would address all these concerns.

**Prof. Ivan Png Paak Liang (Nominated Member):** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister four supplementary questions:

First, does Singapore currently comply with the European Union data protection directive?

Second, if we do not comply with this directive, to what extent does this non-compliance affect the future development of call centre and data centre businesses in Singapore?

Third, the Minister mentioned the inter-ministerial sub-committee. May I ask the Minister whether this sub-committee is charged with recommending legislation or just providing guidance and some principles that will not be binding?

Finally, may I ask the Minister if he is aware of the tremendous public concern over the privacy of ICs and IC numbers, as was shown in the considerable number of letters to the *Straits Times* last year and, if so, how does the Ministry plan to address these concerns?

**Dr Lee Boon Yang:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, we do not have a formal mechanism or formal legislative framework specifically for the protection of privacy of personal information. Whether we comply with the European

Union standards or not should be viewed in the context of our laws. I think one study showed that about 100 different Acts already have some provisions dealing with the protection of personal information or data. I would say that, as of now, we have not experienced any difficulty with regard to outsourcing or call centre business purely as a result of our lack of a specific law to deal with protection of personal information.

On whether this inter-ministerial sub-committee on data protection's terms of reference would include recommending legislation, I would say, yes, that is one of the specific areas that they are looking into. In fact, just last month, members of the inter-ministerial sub-committee on data protection visited two countries. They went to Australia and Canada to study their legislative model, how they implement legal protection for personal information and how it impacts on the economy and the various organisations in the public, private and people sectors. So, it shows you how seriously we are studying this issue and that we will address all the concerns, including the need to have a specific piece of legislation for protection of personal information.

Last but not least, is the hon. Member's point on the public's concern with the publication of NRIC numbers. Arising from various expressions of concern on the publication of full NRIC numbers, we have conveyed this concern to the media and reiterated to them that they should, as responsible organisations, play their part to ensure that personal information would not be abused. I understand that the media have generally been very cooperative and they have not published the full NRIC numbers. They have only published a part of it, maybe the first three or four digits, just to facilitate identification. So, it shows that our media in Singapore are generally very responsive. If there is in fact a real problem, they will certainly initiate the

*Oral Answers to Questions*

[Dr LEE BOON YANG]

measures to address this concern. Even though there is no specific law at the moment that will compel them to do so, they have shown to be helpful in many ways.

**Prof. Ivan Png Paak Liang:** Mr Speaker, Sir, to follow up on the Minister's response, I do agree. Yes, the media have been most forward-looking in agreeing to not to publish full NRIC numbers. As far as I can see, the only non-complying body now is the Official Assignee, who still insists on publishing a huge number of people's full names and NRIC numbers. Would the Minister please work with the Minister for Law to have that corrected?

Secondly, would the Minister agree that, going forward, when we look at the regulatory framework for privacy and even legislation for privacy, we should be neutral and make no distinction between on-line and off-line dissemination and use of information? So, there should be the same robust protection for off-line information as well as on-line information.

**Dr Lee Boon Yang:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we will certainly convey the hon. Member's sentiments to the Official Assignee, and I am sure the Official Assignee will take into consideration the concerns about protection of personal information.

With regard to the regulatory framework, we will certainly look at various options. It is quite consistent with our approach in terms of regulating such matters to adopt a technology-neutral approach.

#### IMF AND WORLD BANK GROUP MEETINGS IN SINGAPORE

##### (Use of green vehicles)

4. **Dr Geh Min** asked the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, in view

of reports that an estimated 1,200 cars are needed for the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group meetings in Singapore, (a) why are the organisers only considering luxury cars with high energy consumption rather than more energy efficient green vehicles; and (b) with dealers having to import cars which will subsequently be resold, whether this will be a good opportunity to promote the use of more green vehicles in Singapore.

**The Minister of State for Finance (Mrs Lim Hwee Hua) (for the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance):** Sir, let me, in reply to Dr Geh Min, begin by stating that the Government supports the adoption of green cars. In fact, we have recently enhanced the green car rebate from 20% of the ARF to 40% ARF.

In the case of S2006, we want to clarify that the organiser did not specifically rule out green cars. Instead, we invited car companies to submit their proposals to sponsor cars for heads of delegation. The evaluation of the proposal concluded that BMW had made the best offer. They agreed to sponsor the full cost of using their cars and allow the Government to fully discharge its obligation to provide vehicles for each official delegation.

Had we received a good offer of green cars for the S2006 meeting, we would have welcomed it. But it would have been unreasonable for us to impose additional costs on car companies to require them to provide only green cars, as they need to be able to have some assurance of being able to sell these cars after the event.

With the deal awarded to BMW for its 400 cars, the Organising Committee has secured enough vehicles for all official transportation requirements. Apart from these, all delegates will be provided local transport from the airport to the hotels and from the hotels to the meetings.

*Oral Answers to Questions*

[Assoc. Prof. Ho PENG KEE]

During the recent New Year countdown parties, police arrested the culprits in six out of the seven reported molest cases. Of these six, only one involved the use of aerosol party spray and, in that particular case, it involved a foreign worker.

Sir, in addition to deploying marshals for crowd control, police normally provides advisories to the organisers of major events on the pre-emptive measures that can be taken against law and order incidents. At the recent parties, besides advising organisers not to permit the sale of such aerosol party sprays by their own vendors, police worked with relevant agencies to take strict enforcement action against illegal hawkers peddling aerosol party sprays. A total of 84 summonses for illegal hawking were issued on Christmas Eve, and another 43 on New Year's Eve.

Even if aerosol party sprays were banned, molest or other crimes at countdown parties may still occur. In extremely crowded places, criminals will look for opportunities to commit molest and other crimes. Party-goers should, therefore, stay close to friends and remain vigilant.

### TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

#### (New drivers)

6. Prof. Ivan Png Paak Liang asked the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs what was the annual rate of accidents (minor and serious) per thousand drivers in the three years before and after the implementation of the requirement for new drivers to mark their vehicles with a reflective triangle.

Assoc. Prof. Ho Peng Kee (for the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs): Sir, since 1st September

1994, every new motorist of a Class 2B or a Class 3 motor vehicle is required to display a "P" plate when he rides or drives for a period of one year after obtaining his driving licence.

For the one-year period prior to the implementation of this requirement, ie, 1st September 1993 to 31st August 1994, the rate of fatal and injury accidents per thousand drivers was 5.5. Comparable statistics prior to 1993 are not available. The rate of fatal and injury accidents per thousand drivers after the implementation for the three-year period after 1st September 1994 was 4.9, 5.2 and 5.1 respectively.

Traffic Police does not keep records of non-injury accidents.

Prof. Ivan Png Paak Liang: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the Minister for the reply. It seems that the decrement in the accident rate has been from 5.5 per thousand to anywhere from 4.9 to 5.2 per thousand, which is not that much of a decrement, especially if we think of 5.2 and we do not know the data after 1997 and the data beforehand was for only one year. It could well have been a spike year. So, in that light, and also in the light that one of these devices costs about \$11 and maybe we need several tens of thousands of them a year, is it not worth considering removing this requirement now?

Assoc. Prof. Ho Peng Kee: Sir, this is part of the entire matrix of measures that we have taken to improve road safety. The figures given are general statistics, not pertaining only to accidents involving "P" plate holders. So, whilst the numbers have come down, showing some improvement, in fact, we cannot conclude therefore that it is the scheme that has made it such. But the point is that, from feedback from drivers and from what we have done in general, we can see that the "P" plate has served its function, because



it has caused other drivers to be more mindful that this person is new and, therefore, they take greater care when their own vehicles are near these drivers. Also, for newer drivers, it probably gives them greater confidence that whilst they are working-in, post getting the licence for one year, others are aware that they are new. So, let us keep this scheme.

**Mr Speaker:** Last question, Prof. Png.

**Prof. Ivan Png Paak Liang:** Sir, would the Minister agree that, in Singapore, we are very much driven by evidence-based policies and, in this case, it seems that the evidence is very weak and we do know that this costs about \$200,000 a year to new drivers? So, it is time we relooked at this policy since the evidence against is \$200,000 a year, and some of the arguments, such as the Minister has put forward, that putting on the triangle makes other drivers drive more carefully, then that would be an argument for having every car put on the triangle so that every other driver will drive more carefully.

**Assoc. Prof. Ho Peng Kee:** First, I would say that the numbers I have given are not really indicative. It is not evidence as such, because it talks about the general accident rates, not just pertaining to "P" plate drivers.

Second, they are a vulnerable group. It is the same approach that we take with other vulnerable groups, whether it is motorcyclists as a group or senior citizens and young pedestrians as a group. I think for "P" plate drivers who are new, whether they are motorists or motorcyclists, they are a vulnerable group. Therefore, we should help them become better drivers in the process.

Third, I think \$11 for a "P" plate is not too much to ask, for the gain that can be secured from the scheme.

## COMMUNITY CHEST

### (Review of role and functions)

7. **Mdm Ho Geok Choo** asked the Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports (a) if the Ministry will review the role and functions of the Community Chest to make it more effective in the management and coordination of the voluntary social services sector; and (b) how many voluntary organisations are there which carry out annual fund raising activities but are not affiliated to the Community Chest.

**The Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports (Dr Vivian Balakrishnan):** The Community Chest, or ComChest for short, is the fund-raising arm of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS). Its basic mission is to help the social service sector raise funds for critical programmes. It currently helps to raise funds for around 150 programmes run by more than 50 voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) each year. This has allowed the VWOs concerned to focus on delivering services to their beneficiaries rather than fund-raising per se. Through the generosity of individuals and organisations, the Community Chest has consistently raised over \$40 million annually over the past few years.

NCSS has a membership of more than 250 voluntary welfare organisations within the social service sector alone. Most, if not all of these VWOs do carry out some form of fund-raising for programmes which are not directly funded by the Community Chest. ComChest does not fund all the programmes offered by the VWOs as its role has evolved over time.

When the Community Chest was first started, the objective was to relieve the VWOs from the burden of fund-raising by providing an option for centralised fund-raising. Over the years, however, many