

PARLIAMENT

■ MAKE CHILD-CENTRIC POLICIES TO HELP SINGLE MOTHERS: GRACE FU

The Government should move towards child-centric policies, given the rising number of single-parent families here, said Ms Grace Fu, Senior Minister of State for Information, Communications and the Arts, and the Environment and Water Resources, yesterday.

Touching on various issues concerning women in Singapore during the motion to thank the President for his speech, Ms Fu noted that single mothers here are caught by Singapore's pro-family policies.

With them having to fork out market rent each month — since they are not entitled to subsidised housing — there is little left for food and medical needs for their children. Thus, they are often caught in a poverty trap.

"... We should help them as one of our own, in a stable environment," she said.

Ms Fu also urged more employers to help women with older children to transit into full-time work better and also introduce flexible work arrangements for women juggling with various family commitments.

Meanwhile, Marine Parade GRC MP Tin Pei Ling, in her maiden parliamentary speech, urged the Government to consider providing free basic healthcare to elderly Singaporeans.

She said many of them did not always understand the different schemes and help available to them.

Ms Tin suggested offering financial counselling and advisory on payment options to help the elderly make a more informed decision. On youth, Ms Tin said that robust debate or even disagreement on issues showed that young people here were genuinely concerned about Singapore's future.

"We should let things take their natural course. Young people will gradually figure out for themselves the way forward, by trying out new ideas and working out which sacred cows can be slayed, and ultimately pushing the boundaries of what Singapore can achieve." CAROLYN QUEK

"I achieved an aggregate of 273 with 4 A*s for my PSLE and topped the mainstream cohort in my school!"

"MindChamps has helped me to study efficiently and significantly reduced my revision time, allowing me to enjoy my PSLE preparation."

"Thank you, MindChamps, for being an extraordinary learning centre and for making me believe that I can be a Champion for Life!"

- Nicole Neo, MindChamps Graduate

Is Your P5 Child still not improving after 5 years of Primary School and Tuition?

This problem is unlikely to go away by their PSLE. Time is running out.



"I achieved an aggregate of 273 with 4 A*s for my PSLE and topped the mainstream cohort in my school!"

"MindChamps has helped me to study efficiently and significantly reduced my revision time, allowing me to enjoy my PSLE preparation."

"Thank you, MindChamps, for being an extraordinary learning centre and for making me believe that I can be a Champion for Life!"

- Nicole Neo, MindChamps Graduate

With MindChamps' PSLE SUCCESS, your child will fill in all the missing gaps in their curriculum in the past 3 to 4 years and be fully equipped for the PSLE.

Bring your Primary 5 child to attend our COMPLIMENTARY workshop and learn:

- ✓ What do successful PSLE champs know that your child does not know
- ✓ How T-score affects your child's choice of secondary schools
- ✓ How T-scores are computed

PSLE Workshops

23 Oct (Sun) 1.30pm - 3pm	29 Oct (Sat) 1.30pm - 3pm	06 Nov (Sun) 2pm - 5pm	12 Nov (Sat) 1.30pm - 4.30pm
------------------------------	------------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------------

To register for our workshop (limited to 50 seats per session), call/SMS your name, contact number, child's name and preferred workshop date to:

9880 1555 / 9799 6478

Or visit <http://peterho.mymindchamps.com> to register!



Over 12 Years of Research and Development
Over 40,000 Graduates
Consistent Delivery of Results
Multi Award-Winning Trusted Brand
Ranked in the top 3% of Singapore SMEs

MindChamps
Discover the Champion in You

New measures to curb gambling

CAROLYN QUEK

carolynquek@mediacorp.com.sg

SINGAPORE — Working with employers of foreign workers to encourage them to apply for self-exclusion orders even before they enter Singapore and monitoring casino advertisements to ensure they do not glamorise gambling.

These were some of the new measures that the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) had adopted to curb problem gambling and deter would-be gamblers, Major-General (NS) Chan Chun Sing said yesterday.

The Acting Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports also told Parliament that more individuals and families were coming forward to seek help for gambling-related problems.

The Tanjong Pagar Family Service Centre and the National Addictions Management Service, which provide counselling and treatment services for such problems, have seen 568 cases between January and August. The figure was higher than the 304 cases seen in 2008, said MG (NS) Chan in response to questions by Member of Parliament Christopher de Souza (Holland-Bukit Timah GRC) on casino gambling addiction and casino-related gambling debts.

MG (NS) Chan noted that even before the local casinos opened, demand for casino gambling existed — a 2008 gambling participation survey conducted by the ministry had shown that one in 10 respondents reported participating in casino gambling overseas.

That survey, along with an earlier one in 2005, had also indicated that both probable pathological and problem gambling rates among Singapore residents were between 1 and 2 per cent.

As of last month, there were 750 family-exclusion orders, 28,600 third-party exclusions and 29,000 self-exclusions in force.

MG (NS) Chan added that the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) had also engaged other legal operators — such as those running jackpot rooms and the Telebet accounts of Singapore Pools and Singapore Turf Club — to implement exclusions.

MG (NS) Chan said his ministry was expanding on efforts to get those at risk to apply for self-exclusion. This includes working with employers to apply for self-exclusion before they enter Singapore — when they apply for work permits. As of Sept 30, there were 22,700 self-exclusions by foreigners.

An NCPG spokesperson told TODAY: "The National Council on Problem Gambling has been working with the Ministry of Manpower since November last year to extend employer facilitated self-exclusion to foreign workers. This facilitation is open to all employers."

MG (NS) Chan also noted that all advertisements linked to gambling were now under the ministry's purview, thus allowing the MCYS to have a more direct influence on them. In a separate reply to a question about the Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIC), MG (NS) Chan said that more centres would be opened. Existing centres will be expanded and staff numbers will be increased. The ministry is also looking into working with private service providers.

These measures will add 700 places to the EIPIC by April and shorten the waiting list for these schools from six months to three.

The number of pre-school children diagnosed with disabilities and developmental delays almost doubled in the past five years — from 1,300 in 2005 to 2,500 last year.

MPs ask if more can be done to fight illegal moneylending

ESTHER NG

estherng@mediacorp.com.sg

SINGAPORE — Despite assurances of existing safeguards to curb illegal moneylending, Members of Parliament wondered if more could be done to fight the scourge.

Mr Christopher de Souza (Holland-Bukit Timah GRC) brought up a pressing concern — illegal moneylenders using school children as their runners.

Mr Low Thia Kiang (Aljunied GRC) wanted to know if borrowing from loan sharks was linked to the two casinos and whether licensed moneylenders were transferring some of their debt to illegal moneylenders.

In response, Second Minister for Home Affairs S Iswaran said that there were "fairly comprehensive" efforts undertaken by the police, schools and the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports to communicate to school children on the dangers of abetting moneylenders even if it is distributing flyers and namecards.

The offence for recruiting runners is a prison term of up to seven years and a fine of between \$30,000 and \$300,000. While he did not think a "causative link" between the casinos and Singaporeans borrowing from loan sharks could be established, Mr Iswaran said the Government was "tracking" this nexus "closely".

Reports on unlicensed moneylending and harassment in the first nine months of this year stood at 10,439 — 24 per cent lower compared to the same period last year. Due to enhanced enforcement measures, the number of persons arrested this year rose by 24 per cent, to 1,492 persons.

Responding to Mr David Ong (Jurong GRC), who wanted to know whether more could be done to help families of those who take on multiple loans from moneylenders, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Law Sim Ann said the Government would review practices in the moneylending industry so as to "strike a balance between protecting the interest of borrowers and maintaining reasonable access to credit".