

Speech by DPM Teo Chee Hean at the Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC Baby Singapore

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Residents of Pasir Ris-Punggol,

It is good to see some 50 families taking part in today's Baby Show, jointly organised by the Family Life Champions of Pasir Ris West, Punggol Central and Punggol West.

The Government has been supporting Singaporeans to fulfil their aspirations to marry and have children. Many of our families in Pasir Ris-Punggol have benefitted from the increased number of HDB flats built in recent years. We are very happy that nationally, there were about 24,000 marriages involving at least one Singaporean last year. This is a 10% increase from 2013, and the highest number in seventeen years (since 1997). We also saw 33,000 Singaporean babies born last year, about 2,000 more than in 2013. The resident Total Fertility Rate increased to 1.25, up from 1.19 in 2013.

This year, we have already presented more than 9,000 babies with the SG50 Baby Jubilee Gift to celebrate our citizen babies born in Singapore's Jubilee year. The Jubilee Gift has been well received by Singaporean families, generating much excitement and sparking ground-up initiatives to celebrate families. Online community groups have also been formed by parents of SG50 babies to share their special joy with one another.

Many more young couples have chosen to live in Pasir Ris-Punggol and are starting families. Punggol currently has the largest percentage of young children (aged 0-4 years) amongst all the neighbourhoods in Singapore. We will continue to support our young families, including providing more childcare places. In the past two years, we have added 17,000 childcare places in Singapore, and we are on track to add 20,000 places 200 new childcare centres by 2017. Some 2,400 childcare places were added in Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC alone. In the next three years, over 3,000 infant and childcare places will be added in Punggol, Sengkang and Pasir Ris.

I am especially encouraged to see many fathers caring for, and bonding with, their children. I hope fathers will take on more parental responsibilities and spend more time with your children, so that both fathers and mothers share the experience and joy of bringing up children. I am also happy to see many couples who have benefited from having your parents stay with or near you, and helping to take care of your young children.

Today is a good example. I am heartened to see multi-generational families coming together to participate in activities like taking a vintage-themed family portrait, or creating a family tree and artwork using thumbprints. These are joyful moments that strengthen family ties, and bring families closer together.

And this is what the joy of family life is about: Families spending more quality time together; couples having more children; closer intergenerational bonding; celebrating simple pleasures in life; and building stronger communities.

I would like to thank our Family Life Champions and Connectors in Pasir Ris West, Punggol Central and Punggol West, as well as community partners for jointly organising this event. I also wish everyone good health, and our children a happy and bright future. Happy Mother's Day in advance!