

MY HOME IN



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SECONDS

HIGHER CPF GRANT IF PARENTS IN FLAT

➤ SINGLES aged 35 and above will get a higher CPF housing grant of \$20,000 from April 1, the HDB announced yesterday.

But the applicant must commit to living with his or her parents in the resale flat for at least five years, during which the father or mother cannot own another HDB flat or invest in a private property.

MORE DEADLY VIRUS CAUSING HFMD

➤ MOST of the recent number of Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease cases between mid-February and last Saturday were caused by Enterovirus 71 (EV71), a more deadly form of the virus that caused the condition. This emerged from a Health Ministry's surveillance after an increase in the number of cases this year.

ANUGERAH FINALIST ON STABBING RAP

➤ KASSREEAL Alfi Kaswan, 18, a finalist in MediaCorp channel Suria's Anugerah singing contest was charged yesterday with stabbing another teen on Feb 27 outside the ITE College in Bishan Street 14, with four accomplices.

my paper 叻報

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SINGAPORE

Chinese language popular with expatriate kids

Parents see it as useful to understand culture, and an asset, given China's rising importance

MARCEL LEE PEREIRA

DON'T be surprised to be greeted by a friendly "ni hao ma?" coming from expatriate students from the Avondale Grammar School.

Eight in 10 students at this international school in Toa Payoh, which opened officially this month, take Chinese as a core subject.

The language is growing in popularity among expatriates here, especially for those whose children have a choice of languages to study.

Many international schools already make the subject compulsory at certain levels.

The increased demand is due partly to China's growing importance in the world, say several international schools *my paper* contacted.

Avondale, which started taking in students last July, now has over 100 pupils aged five to 11. Most of them are from Australia.

Australian housewife Tracy Maclean sends two of her children - Joshua, seven, and Amy, five - to Avondale to learn Chinese.

Mrs Maclean, 33, and her husband David, 38, a product manager for an electricity metering company, plan to live in Singapore for at least three years.

"We felt that it was important while we're here that the children experience and be part of the culture.

"That involves learning an important language of the region," said Mrs Maclean.

"At the moment, the children are trying to teach me to count. They have really enjoyed the challenge of learning something different."

At the Rosemount Kindergarten in Siglap, about 70 of its 130 students study basic Mandarin, a number which has increased by as much as 40 per cent over the last two to three years, said principal Carrie Gojali-Ilbrey.

Chinese is incorporated into concerts, plays and assemblies as well, and children are even given Chinese names.

Said Mrs Gojali-Ilbrey, who is British: "Most of our parents are often travelling and working in China. They want their children to be able to speak, read and write Chinese."

The ISS International School Singapore, with campuses in Preston and Paterson roads, said the number of foreign students studying Chinese there has gone up by as much as 25 per cent over the past two years.

About 350 students take Chinese, with two to three classes per grade, starting from Grade 1. The school has 12 grades for students aged between six and 18.

And at the eight EtonHouse

pre-schools and the EtonHouse International School, the overall growth in expat students learning Chinese is 40 per cent over the last two years.

Meanwhile, the Canadian International School (Singapore) makes Chinese compulsory. All students aged 4 to 14 - about 1,150 of them - study Chinese at its four campuses.

Said head principal Glenn Odland: "As we are a school in Singapore, we felt that it was important for one of our foreign languages to be Chinese, since that is one of Singapore's official languages."

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HELPDESK 我的字典

➤ **Expatriate:** 外来专才
wài lái zhuān cái

➤ **Incorporated:**
具备 jù bèi

➤ **Compulsory:** 义务 yì wù



TRAGEDY: Jolene (left) survived the accident (right) which killed her parents, grandmother and brother in Malaysia. (PHOTO: THE STAR)

Baby girl sole survivor in horrific car crash

A TWO-MONTH-OLD Singaporean baby girl was the sole survivor of a car crash which killed her parents, grandmother and brother on the North-South Highway in Malaysia yesterday morning.

Baby Jolene was found near her mother's body - flung about 36m from the wreckage.

Nurses at the Tangkak Hospital's maternity ward, who attended to the baby, said she had "barely a scratch on her".

They have called her a "miracle baby". The nurses have been feeding her milk from a bottle.

The Bong family - little Jolene, her grandmother Pang Chee Seng, 68, brother Justin Bong, 2, mother Kor Yee Lin, 36 and father Bong Kwang Hong, 37 - were travelling in a seven-seater Mitsubishi MPV and were headed north from Singapore when the car skidded along the 150-km mark of the expressway, The Star reported.

Muar Traffic Police investigator Kamilah Mohd Nasir said the driver of the Mitsubishi Grandis, Mr Bong, appeared to have lost control of his vehicle at about 7.30am.

The MPV careened off the highway and mowed down a tree before coming to a stop at a second tree. The impact snapped the tree trunk in half and it came crashing down onto the car.

The two women and Justin

died on the spot, while Mr Bong succumbed to his injuries shortly after arriving at the Tangkak hospital, near Muar.

Last night, Jolene's father's two younger brothers arrived at the hospital in Tangkak to claim her from the hospital.

The two men will also claim the four bodies at the hospital's mortuary this morning.

➤ SEE PAGE B8 IN THE CHINESE SECTION