

Legislative Council Bills Committee on Race Discrimination Bill

Measures taken to assist new arrivals’ integration to the local society

Purpose

This paper presents information on publicity and public education programmes held in past years to assist new arrivals to integrate to local society as requested by Members at the meetings held on 23 April and 15 May 2007, that the Administration –

“to provide information on its publicity and public education work launched to eliminate discriminatory attitude towards new arrivals from the Mainland, including the amount of resources devoted for such work as well as the effect achieved and the evaluation methods used.”

Measures taken by the Administration

2. The Government attaches importance to the smooth integration of new arrivals from the Mainland into the local community. A Steering Committee on New Arrival Services, chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs and comprising representatives from Government departments involved in the provision of services for the new arrivals from the Mainland, meets regularly to monitor and coordinate such services for the new arrivals provided by the Government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

3. The Home Affairs Department (HAD) implemented various measures to facilitate the integration of new arrivals from the Mainland. Since 1996, the HAD has published a *Service Handbook for New Arrivals* to enable them to be better informed about the range of public services available. The Handbook contains the latest information on education, welfare and employment services provided by relevant Government bureaux and departments and is updated regularly. The latest version of the Handbook was published in March 2007.

4. In 2004-05, the HAD launched a weekly phone-in radio programme on the Putonghua channel of RTHK to provide a platform for exchange and experience sharing amongst new arrivals from the Mainland. Two carnivals were held in Discover Park and Plaza Hollywood respectively during the same period as part of the community education programme. Various Government departments and NGOs were invited to participate in the carnivals to promote mutual respect and acceptance between the new arrivals and local residents.

5. For 2007-08, HAD has earmarked around \$1.5 million to carry out programmes aiming at facilitating the early integration of and combating discrimination against new arrivals from the Mainland into the community. These include the update of the Handbook and the organisation of community education programmes and territory-wide publicity campaigns to promote a harmonious community.

6. At the district level, the 18 District Offices maintain a close dialogue with NGOs to coordinate public services and convene the District Coordinating Committee meetings on new arrival services to ensure that needs of new arrivals from the Mainland are promptly met. A wide range of community education programme and territory-wide publicity campaigns are organised by NGOs and local organisations. For example, a total of \$1.1 million was spent in 2006-07 on organising social inclusion programmes in the 18 districts to facilitate the early integration of the new arrivals in the local community.

7. Various Government departments are also involved in offering services to new arrivals from the Mainland:-

- (a) The Social Welfare Department and subvented NGOs operate 61 Integrated Family Service Centres and two Integrated Services Centres to provide a continuum of preventive, supportive and therapeutic services to individuals and families, including new arrivals from the Mainland. Extended hour services are available to facilitate users to access services after regular office hours. Since its establishment in 2002, the Community Inclusion and Investment Fund (CIIF), has been encouraging community-driven initiatives that apply social capital building strategies to weave mutual help network and develop

cross-sectoral partnership to enhance the social integration of new arrival families into their local communities. As of September 2007, the CIIF has funded 140 projects, with over 340 neighbourhood mutual-help networks and over 20 work co-operatives being established. About 70% of them involve new arrivals and their families.

- (b) The Education Bureau (EDB) runs a School-Based Support Scheme Grant to assist newly arrived students to adapt to the learning environment in local schools. These students may also attend the six-month full-time initiation programme prior to joining the mainstream schools. EDB also provides subsidies for the NGOs to run a 60-hour Induction Programme covering personal development, social adaptation as well as basic learning skills for the new arrival students.
- (c) The Labour Department (LD) provides comprehensive employment assistance and guidance to new arrivals from the Mainland through its 12 Job Centres and employment programmes such as the Job Matching Programme, Employment Programme for the Middle-aged and Work Trial Scheme. The Job Centres of the LD conduct regular employment briefings tailor-made for the needs of new arrivals to facilitate their better understanding of the local job market.
- (d) The healthcare services provided by DH are accessible to all. Meanwhile, the Community Liaison Division works closely with District Councils and community organisations in supporting health educational activities which tie in with local functions and activities targeting at new arrivals. New arrivals in need of accommodation can also apply for public rental housing flats under the Housing Authority if they meet the relevant eligibility criteria.

8. These various promotion programmes and support measures have all been taken to facilitate integration of the new arrivals into the local community and to promote mutual respect and acceptance between new arrivals and local residents. They are on-going efforts.

Departments involved would continue to monitor their implementation and consider adjustments, as appropriate, to meet the needs of the new arrivals.

Presentation

9. This paper has been prepared in response to item (c) of the “List of issues raised by members at the meeting of 16 January 2007”, and item (3) under section III, “Application to new arrivals from the Mainland” of the “List of issues raised by members” (LC Paper No. CB(2)2576/06-07(01)). It is presented for Members’ information.

Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
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