

# A.I.M. Group

*Awaz. Insaf. Mazdoor.*

*(Voice. Justice. Labour.)*

The Home Affairs Department (HAD) is currently funding 6 centres serving ethnic minorities on mild and minimal basis, for instance, integration activities, job-matching and interpretation services, which overlook the roots of genuine, major needs of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong.

Poverty lies greatly on the base of employment. Though today we see the unemployment rate has reached its lowest in 16 years, however, for ethnic minorities getting a job is still an undertaking. Having no support other than peers, ethnic minorities face only two choices: unemployment or employed as a low-skilled workers with no alternatives and risk being exploited. Recent reports also reflected the plight of ethnic minorities in the labour market: near half of the employed ethnic minorities worked in elementary industries<sup>1</sup> and over 60% employed ethnic minorities are employed poor<sup>2</sup>.

The pathetic 6.2% job-matching success rate<sup>3</sup> of the Labour Department (LD) for ethnic minorities is totally unacceptable. As the LD does little for ethnic minority job-seekers, few alternatives are available and ethnic minority workers are prone to exploitation. Even the LD itself set up barriers which kept ethnic minorities job seekers from vast information that could have saved them from poverty: low-usage of interpretation services (140 telephone and 18 on-site)<sup>4</sup> in the past three years by the LD and lack of English-translated job postings are the very first barriers for ethnic minorities to access to LD's services. The recently-added special desks in job-centers offer no extra language or information support for ethnic minorities. Even under this dire situation, Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, stated that no plans to establish a placement division for ethnic minorities.

Ethnic minorities also face difficult situations working in construction sites. The Construction

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<sup>1</sup> 2014, Shadow Poverty Situation Research Report on the Hong Kong South Asian Ethnic Minorities Families, Hong Kong Catholic Commission for Labour Affairs and Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong Diocesan Pastoral Centre for Workers (Kowloon).

<sup>2</sup> 2013, Poverty Situation of South and Southeast Asian Ethnic Minorities in Hong Kong, Hong Kong Council of Social Service; 2014, Shadow Poverty Situation Research Report on the Hong Kong South Asian Ethnic Minorities Families, Hong Kong Catholic Commission for Labour Affairs and Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong Diocesan Pastoral Centre for Workers (Kowloon).

<sup>3</sup> 2013, LCQ18: Employment services for the ethnic minorities, <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201311/13/P201311130454.htm>

<sup>4</sup> 2014, Home Affairs Department,

Industry Council (CIC) only offers professional courses in Chinese but only metal scaffolding. Practical exams are also mostly in Chinese which barred ethnic minority construction workers from professionalism. Such obstacles kept them from higher salaries and opportunities to escape poverty.

To tackle the employment problem and ultimately poverty among ethnic minorities, it is not enough only involving the Home Affairs Department, the Labour and Welfare Bureau should play an active role in safeguarding ethnic minorities' equal access to employment.

We, the A.I.M. Group, hereby demands:

1. The LD to establish an Ethnic Minorities Placement Division, hiring ethnic minority staffs serving job-seekers with different ethnic origins at designed time intervals and centres;
2. The LD to provide extra training to frontline staff to enhance sensitivity to service-user of different ethnic origins;
3. The CIC to provide bilingual or multilingual training courses and practical exams to open ladders for ethnic minorities;
4. The CIC to take measures for employers in the construction industry to review and lower requirements of Chinese proficiency in construction job-vacancies
5. Establish the Ethnic Minority Commission, a constant platform letting ethnic minorities to voice out their needs and suggestions to the Government;
6. Review the Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO) and to include punitive measures regulating discriminatory or equal-access-jeopardizing administrative procedures, behaviours and languages from public bodies and Government departments.