

**For information on
17 November 2015**

**Legislative Council Subcommittee on Poverty
Poverty Problems of Ethnic Minorities**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the progress of the Survey on Households with School Children of South Asian Ethnicities undertaken by the Commission on Poverty (CoP), and provides an update on the Government's support for ethnic minorities (EMs) relating to learning the Chinese language, employment and integration into the community.

Background

2. According to the 2011 Population Census conducted by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), there were about 60 000 ethnic minorities of South Asian origins in Hong Kong. Most of them were Indians, Nepalese and Pakistanis. They have settled down or taken roots in Hong Kong for generations and become part of the Hong Kong population. South Asians have their unique demographic and social characteristics as compared to that for the whole population. The characteristics include:

- (a) The population growth of South Asian ethnic groups is significantly faster than that of the whole population. The average annual growth rate of South Asian ethnic groups is 4.1%, while that of the whole population is 0.4%;
- (b) The South Asian population in Hong Kong is relatively younger. Among them, over 30% are children, while the corresponding percentage for the whole population is 16%;
- (c) There is a notable difference among various South Asian ethnic groups in educational attainment. For example, about 63% of Indians have attained post-secondary education, while the corresponding percentages of Pakistanis and Nepalese are 18% and 17% respectively. For the whole population, the percentage is 33%;

- (d) The average household size for the whole population is 2.8, while that for South Asian households is 3.3. Pakistani and Nepalese households are mostly large in size. Among them, households with five or more members are of a significant proportion (47% and 20% respectively);
- (e) The proportion of households with children is 32% for the whole population, while the proportion of South Asian households with children is 53%. In particular, 72% of Pakistani households have children. Among these households, 35 % even have three or more children;
- (f) The proportion of households living in public rental housing is around 31% for the whole population, while the proportion of South Asian households living in public rental housing is 20%. Among these South Asian households, Pakistani households have the highest proportion of 43%; and
- (g) Among the South Asians in Hong Kong, Pakistanis and Nepalese are mostly engaged in lower-skilled jobs. The median monthly household income of Indians, Pakistani and Nepalese are \$43,000, \$12,600 and \$21,500 respectively.

3. It is evident from the above characteristics that South Asian households are mostly large in size and have a higher proportion of children. This, coupled with the fact that most of the household heads concerned are engaged in lower-skilled jobs, has made these households more vulnerable to poverty. In this connection, the Survey on Households with School Children of South Asian Ethnicities was conducted by the C&SD last year to help us better understand the poverty situation of those households with children of South Asian ethnicities which have higher poverty risks. The survey, which covers households with children of South Asian ethnicities who are attending primary or secondary schools in the public sector or under the Direct Subsidy Scheme, has been completed. The Economic Analysis and Business Facilitation Unit made a detailed analysis of the data collected and the initial analysis was submitted to the Special Needs Groups Task Force of the CoP for consideration in early November. The survey report is expected to be released in around December this year subject to the approval of the CoP. We are happy to report to the Subcommittee on the findings at an appropriate time.

Latest Development in Support Measures for Ethnic Minorities

4. The Government is committed to facilitating integration of EMs into the community. With an increasing number of EMs especially the younger generation taking in Hong Kong as their home, the Government would continue to step up the support for EMs by implementing a series of measures in education, employment and community outreach announced in the 2014 Policy Address.

Education

5. Education nurtures talent and is the key to facilitate upward social mobility of needy EM students. The Education Bureau (EDB) ensures equal opportunities in school admission for all eligible EM children as their local counterparts in public sector schools. In tandem, EDB appreciates their difficulties in learning Chinese. Starting from the 2014/15 school year, primary and secondary schools have implemented the “Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework” (“Learning Framework”) which was developed from the perspective of second language learners. It aims to enhance the learning effectiveness of non-Chinese speaking (NCS)¹ students by adopting a “small-step” learning approach with a view to enabling them to bridge over to mainstream Chinese Language classes. In this regard, \$200 million has been allocated per year to increase resources for schools to facilitate their implementation of the “Learning Framework” and creation of an inclusive learning environment in schools. Progressively advanced professional development programmes and complementary packages to enhance teachers’ professional capabilities in teaching Chinese as a second language as well as diversified modes of school-based professional support services will continue to be provided to enhance the effectiveness of NCS students’ learning of Chinese.

6. Noting that some current NCS students at senior secondary levels may not be able to fully benefit from the “Learning Framework, EDB has provided them with an additional channel to acquire alternative Chinese qualifications² to facilitate their academic and career pursuits in future.

¹ For the planning of education support measures, students whose spoken language at home is not Chinese are broadly categorised as non-Chinese speaking students.

² Other recognised alternative Chinese qualifications include those under the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and General Certificate of Education (GCE) etc. which are accepted in applications to local universities and post-secondary institutions as well as appointment to basic ranks in the civil service.

Starting from the 2014/15 school year, Applied Learning Chinese (for NCS students) courses have been implemented by phases at senior secondary levels, with contents pegged at the Qualifications Framework (QF) Levels 1 to 3. Regarding NCS school leavers, EDB, in collaboration with the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research, has been working on the “Vocational Chinese Language Programme for NCS School Leavers” to help them acquire qualifications recognised by the Government and relevant sectors. The first course is expected to be launched in early 2016. On successful completion of the courses, attendants will obtain qualifications recognised as QF Level 1 / Level 2, which would enhance their employability.

Job training and employment support

7. The Labour Department (LD) provides a full range of employment services free of charge to all job seekers, including the EMs. In addition to LD’s general employment services and facilities, special counters are set up in all LD job centres to provide EM job seekers with job referral services. Resource corners are set up in the job centres and tailor-made employment briefings are organised for EMs regularly. EM job seekers may also meet the employment advisors in job centres to obtain labour market information and job search advice. All LD job centres offer employment services in both Chinese and English. Interpretation services will be arranged for job seekers who do not speak Chinese and English.

8. LD continues to actively canvass suitable vacancies for EM job seekers and promotes their working abilities to employers. For the whole year of 2015, LD will organize a total of two large-scale and 11 districts based inclusive job fairs to enhance the employment opportunities of EMs. Employers participating in these job fairs are encouraged to employ EMs and are advised to consider the genuine occupational qualifications of the posts when specifying the language requirement and to relax, as far as possible, the language requirement of these vacancies so as to enable more EMs to submit applications. LD, in collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) serving EMs, will continue to arrange on-site interpretation service for EM job seekers at these job fairs.

9. In September 2014, LD piloted an “Employment Services Ambassador Programme for Ethnic Minorities”, employing 15 trainees of

the Youth Employment and Training Programme³ who could communicate in EM language as employment services ambassadors for six months to serve job seekers in job centres and job fairs while undergoing on-the-job training themselves. The initial response to the pilot project was positive. LD further employed a total of 33 trainees as the second and third batch of the EM employment services ambassadors in March and September 2015.

10. Besides, the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) offers full-time placement-tied courses and part-time “Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus” (SUS Plus) and generic skills training courses dedicated for EMs to meet their employment needs. These dedicated training courses are conducted in English. Placement follow-up services are provided by the training bodies of the ERB to EM trainees who have completed full-time placement-tied courses. The training bodies of ERB organise district-based activities, including district guided tours, course and industry exhibitions as well as job fairs to disseminate training and employment information and provide services to members of the public, including EMs, to enhance their employment opportunities. Eligible EMs can also make use of an array of training and employment support services, including personalised training consultancy service, at the three ERB Service Centres.

11. In 2015-16, the ERB offers 15 full-time placement-tied courses dedicated for EMs, including four courses under the Youth Training Programme which target non-engaged EM youths aged 15-20. The ERB also offers 20 part-time SUS Plus and generic skills training courses dedicated for EMs, including six training courses on Cantonese as well as Chinese reading and writing.

Government Job Opportunities

12. The Government, being an equal opportunities employer, has been implementing suitable measures to ensure that EMs, like other applicants, will have equal access to job opportunities in the Government. Such measures include reviewing and adjusting the Chinese language proficiency requirements (LPRs) and recruitment formats of relevant Government jobs on the basis that the adjusted requirements/formats will continue to allow the satisfactory performance of duties concerned. The

³ The Youth Employment and Training Programme launched by LD provides one-stop pre-employment and on-the-job training for young school leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree or below.

Civil Service Bureau has issued relevant guidelines to bureaux and departments in this regard.

13. The recruitment test for Police Constables has been modified to require candidates to write English in addition to Chinese for situations simulating police operations. Extra marks will be awarded to candidates who possess foreign/ethnic language skills. EMs are being engaged as Police Community Liaison Assistants to enhance liaison with EM communities. To date, there are 15 Police Community Liaison Assistant positions in 14 Police Districts. In the recruitment of Assistant Officer II and Immigration Assistants, the Correctional Services Department and Immigration Department have respectively replaced the Chinese written test and the aptitude written test in the selection process with group interviews, so as to test the candidates' logical thinking and communication skills with a view to facilitating effective recruitment of suitable staff, including EMs, for the relevant duties. Other disciplined services such as the Government Flying Service and Fire Service Department have taken measures to adjust their Chinese language proficiency requirements or recruitment formats.

Integration into the community

14. Home Affairs Department (HAD) provides support services for EMs to facilitate their early integration into the community. The major services are as follows:

- (a) Support Service Centres for EMs: Commissions non-profit-making organisations to operate six support service centres for EMs at Wan Chai, Kwun Tong, Yau Ma Tei, Tuen Mun, Yuen Long and Kwai Tsing, and two sub-centres at Sham Shui Po and Tung Chung to provide a series of support services, including various tailor-made learning classes, after-school tutorial classes, integration programmes and referral services. Youth Units in these centres and sub-centres provide tailor-made programmes and activities for EM youth. Furthermore, the centre at Kwun Tong provides telephone interpretation and translation services to assist EMs in their use of public services;
- (b) Community Support Teams: Sponsors the Pakistani and Nepalese Community Support Teams to provide tailor-made services for members of their ethnic groups;
- (c) District-based Integration Programmes: In six districts where the service demand is strong, adaptation programmes, mutual aid

network and familiarisation visits, etc. are provided to facilitate EMs' early integration into the community;

- (d) Ambassador Scheme: The Scheme aims to call upon EMs of similar background and experience to act as ambassadors who will reach out to other EMs and make referrals where necessary;
- (e) Ambassador Schemes for EM Youths: Recruits and trains ambassadors, who have background and experience similar to those of EM youths, to proactively reach out to those with service needs, share their experience and make referrals where necessary;
- (f) Radio programmes: Sponsors five radio programmes in EM languages (Nepali, Urdu, Hindi, Thai and Bahasa Indonesia) to update EMs on the city's latest information and the services provided by the Government;
- (g) Social enterprises: Sponsors the development of social enterprises to provide job opportunities and training to EMs. Programmes include Hong Kong TransLingual Service and Bread Bunch;
- (h) Language and Cross-Cultural Learning Programmes: Provides programmes to facilitate language learning and cultural exchange for EMs;
- (i) Harmony Scholarships Scheme: Provides scholarships to participating schools to recognise students' outstanding performance in school and community services (particularly activities promoting racial harmony);
- (j) Service guidebooks and website: Publishes guidebooks in English and six EM languages (Bahasa Indonesia, Hindi, Nepali, Tagalog, Thai and Urdu), and sets up a dedicated website (<http://www.had.gov.hk/rru/>) in six EM languages to introduce public services; and
- (k) Mobile Information Service: Distributes information kits to and answer enquiries from newly arrived EMs at the airport.

15. HAD endeavors to collaborate with different government departments, recent examples include:

- (a) Partnered with the Hong Kong Police Force to implement the “Project Go Front” in a support service centre for EMs. About 20 EM youths who aspired to join the Police Force were recruited and received systematic training including physical fitness, leadership skills, interviewing techniques, facilities visits, etc.; and
- (b) Partnered with the ERB to organise designated courses for EMs at support service centres for EMs as trial.

16. Besides, HAD promotes the public services provided by relevant government departments available to EMs through HAD’s different support services to facilitate their early integration into the community.

Secretariat of the Commission on Poverty
Education Bureau
Home Affairs Department
Labour and Welfare Bureau
Labour Department
Civil Service Bureau
Security Bureau

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