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19 February 2014

Ms Anita SIT
Clerk to Panel on Public Service
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Ms SIT,

Panel on Public Service
Follow-up to Panel meeting held on 20 January 2014

At the Panel meeting held on 20 January 2014, the Administration was asked to provide information on the measures adopted by the Hospital Authority to address the language problem encountered by ethnic minority patients in the public hospitals. We have accordingly consulted the Food and Health Bureau and its response is set out at Annex.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Wendy Chan'.

(Ms Wendy CHAN)
for Secretary for the Civil Service

**Information on the measures adopted by the Hospital Authority
to address the language problem encountered by
ethnic minority patients in the public hospitals**

The Hospital Authority (HA) has already introduced a number of measures to facilitate ethnic minorities (EM) to access healthcare information and the necessary public healthcare services by minimizing possible restraints caused by language barrier.

In respect of health education and provision of healthcare information, apart from publishing healthcare information in both the Chinese and English versions, HA has translated the salient points of such healthcare information into different languages, including Hindi, Nepali, Urdu, Bahasa Indonesia, Thai, Tagalog, and so on, so as to facilitate the understanding of various healthcare information by those who know neither the Chinese nor English language. Such pamphlets will be distributed free of charge to members of the public and needy patients in all public hospitals and clinics. Such healthcare information spans across an extensive range of subjects, including the prevention of infectious diseases, personal hygiene, healthcare of children, healthcare of women, and so on.

Interpretation services for EM patients are available in 17 languages¹ in public hospitals and clinics under HA to facilitate the attendance of needy EM, and the interpretation services are provided free of charge. When booking appointments, the EM concerned can request the relevant hospital or clinic to arrange for the necessary interpretation service in advance. Regarding non-prescheduled appointments, such as emergencies, the staff at the hospital would make appropriate arrangements for interpretation services immediately as necessary. Posters providing information in various EM languages on the application procedure for the interpretation services are displayed at prominent places of public hospitals and clinics.

In day-to-day enquiry or hospitalization settings, the frontline staff of HA will also use cue cards, patient information sheets and consent forms in 18 languages² to communicate with EM patients, offer health information and arrange various medical services for them.

¹ The service contractor of HA provides interpretation services in 17 languages, namely Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi (these 3 are used in India and Pakistan), Nepali, Bahasa Indonesia, Thai, Tagalog (used in the Philippines), Vietnamese, Korean, Bengali, Japanese, German, French, Sinhala, Spanish, Arabic and Malay.

² Include the 16 EM languages covered by service contractor of HA (i.e. the EM languages minus Sinhala, which is used in Sri Lanka), plus Russian and Portuguese.