

INFORMATION NOTE

Support measures for ethnic minorities and new arrivals from the Mainland

1. Background

1.1 In his 2011-2012 Policy Address, the Chief Executive ("CE") stated that the Government would step up the support services for ethnic minorities ("EMs") and new arrivals from the Mainland ("NAs") to facilitate their integration into the community and foster mutual understanding and respect within the community.

1.2 This information note provides background information on the Government's support measures for EMs and NAs, and summarizes the concerns and views of members on the subject.

2. Support measures

2.1 To help EMs and NAs adapt to the life in Hong Kong, the Administration has provided a range of support measures through various bureaux and departments. The support measures so provided in the areas of community services, education, vocational training and retraining, social welfare services, employment, public housing and public healthcare are summarized in **Appendix I**.

2.2 According to the Home Affairs Department ("HAD"), it is responsible for, among others, monitoring and assessing the provision of Government support services for EMs and NAs to enable them to integrate into the local community as quickly as possible. In the 2010-2011 Policy Address, CE announced that the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs would lead a dedicated team to step up and co-ordinate efforts in the provision of Government support services to new arrivals and EMs. As such, the team would closely monitor the service needs of new arrivals during the adaptation period and the difficulties faced by EMs in daily life, so as to ensure that the support services could meet their needs. The team would also enhance collaboration with non-government organizations ("NGOs") and district organizations to facilitate the early integration of new arrivals and EMs into the local community.

2.3 At its meeting on 14 October 2011, the Panel on Home Affairs received a policy briefing from the Administration and noted that HAD would implement the following new initiatives for support services for EMs in 2012-2013 –

- (a) in addition to the four support service centres for EMs¹ currently operating in Wan Chai, Kwun Tong, Yuen Long and Tuen Mun respectively, which provide a series of targeted services for EMs, one more support service centre for EMs in Yau Tsim Mong District and two sub-centres in Sham Shui Po and Tung Chung will be set up; and
- (b) in addition to the three radio programmes currently aired in Bahasa Indonesia, Nepali and Urdu to keep EMs informed of the important government notices and local news as well as provide them with other information and entertainment, two more radio programmes in Hindi and Thai will be introduced.

3. Members' views and concerns

3.1 Issues relating to the support measures for EMs and NAs were discussed by various Panels and committees, including the Panel on Constitutional Affairs, the Panel on Education, the Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to Mainland-HKSAR Families and the Bills Committee on Race Discrimination Bill in the past few years. Members' views and concerns are highlighted in the ensuing paragraphs. A list of the relevant papers available on the Legislative Council's website is in **Appendix II**.

¹ The four support service centres for ethnic minorities are directly subsidized by HAD and operated by NGOs. They have commenced operation since 2009, providing language training and support services for ethnic minorities.

Interpretation services

3.2 At the meetings of the Bills Committee on Race Discrimination Bill on 16 January 2007 and 5 February 2007, some members expressed grave concern over the language barrier encountered by EMs in gaining access to essential public services. According to the Administration, an effective way to address the barrier was to arrange interpretation services at various front-line units, including hospitals and welfare service units. For instance, the Hospital Authority had provided interpretation services in its hospitals and clinics through a service contractor.² Moreover, free centralized telephone interpretation services³ had been provided at one of the four support service centres for EMs to handle enquiries concerning services of government departments and other public organizations, which covered seven EM languages.

3.3 An enquiry about the adequacy of the aforesaid interpretation services was raised at the meeting of the Panel on Constitutional Affairs on 17 November 2008, when members discussed issues relating to the support service centres for EMs. The Administration explained that the data of EM population in Hong Kong available from the Census and Statistics Department's thematic report on EMs under the 2006 Population By-census had been taken into account in identifying the seven major EM languages required to be supported by the centralized telephone interpretation service at the support service centre.

After-school language classes

3.4 At the meeting of the Panel on Education on 14 March 2011, there was a concern about the adequacy of after-school remedial classes for helping non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") students (including EM students) learn the Chinese Language, as most parents of these students were not able to offer support to their children in this regard. Members called on the Administration to consider engaging different organizations to provide the after-school classes in various locations so that NCS students could select a venue that best suited them. At the meeting of the Panel on Constitutional Affairs on 19 April 2010, members raised a similar view regarding the availability of more venue options for NCS students to attend Chinese Language classes.

² The services are available either on-site or over the telephone, covering 12 languages, namely Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Nepali, Bahasa Indonesia, Vietnamese, Thai, Korean, Bengali, Japanese, Tagalog and German.

³ The services are provided through three-way conference calls, involving an interpreter in the support service centre, a government official or NGO representative, and an ethnic minority person.

3.5 According to the Administration, NCS students were free to choose after-school Chinese Language programmes offered by their own schools or by the service provider commissioned by the Education Bureau ("EDB") (i.e. the Chinese Language Learning Support Centre operated by the University of Hong Kong), which delivered the programmes at various venues. In addition, NCS students might attend the after-school Chinese Language courses offered by the four support service centres for EMs. In order to help NCS parents and students understand the local school system, major education policies and education services, the Administration had prepared the Non-Chinese Speaking Parent Information Package in major EM languages, and distributed it to NCS parents through schools, Maternal and Child Health Centres, NGOs and relevant bureaux and departments.

Employment opportunities for ethnic minorities

3.6 Some members of the Panel of Education suggested at its meeting on 8 January 2007 that the Administration should consider accepting lower or alternative Chinese language proficiency requirements for appointment to certain civil service posts, such as the Chinese Language qualifications under the General Certificate of Secondary Education ("GCSE"), General Certificate in Education ("GCE") and International General Certificate of Secondary Education ("IGCSE"), with a view to enhancing the opportunities for EMs to join the civil service. According to the Administration, the qualifications in Chinese Language under GCSE, GCE and IGCSE had been accepted for the purpose of civil service appointment. As such, the Civil Service Bureau had issued a circular to advise bureaux and departments on the acceptance of a Grade D or above attained in the Chinese Language paper of GCSE, CGE or IGCSE as equivalent to a Grade E or Level 2 in HKCEE for appointment to civil service posts. NCS applicants would be considered for the relevant civil service appointment as other applicants on a competitive basis.

Support service centres

3.7 At the meeting of the Panel on Constitutional Affairs on 19 April 2010, some members expressed concern about the operating expenses and mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of the support service centres for EMs.

Operating expenses

3.8 As the number of NCS students (including EM students) taking after-school tutorial classes (including language classes) in the four support service centres were low as compared with the EM population, concern was raised on whether the operational funding from the Administration (i.e. up to HK\$700,000 for the 2009-2010 school year and up to HK\$1.4 million for the 2010-2011 school year for after-school tutorial classes) was adequate. The Administration clarified that the total government spending on education for NCS children far exceeded these estimates, which only covered the additional provision for after-school tutorial classes provided by the support service centres. Other bureaux, such as EDB, had already earmarked sufficient provision to cater for the educational needs of NCS students. The Administration had also provided various support services to EMs by sponsoring NGOs in different districts.

Performance monitoring and evaluation

3.9 Concern was also raised about whether the Administration had assessed the adequacy of the services provided to EMs, and how the effectiveness of the language classes and integration programmes provided by the support service centres would be evaluated. According to the Administration, the operation and performance of the four centres would be monitored through collecting feedback from the community and other monitoring mechanisms such as reports and user evaluation of the activities of the centres. While the four support service centres had commenced service for only a short period of time, they had been operating smoothly. Feedback from service users and EM communities had been positive. The Administration would keep under review the support services, and consider necessary adjustment in the light of the operational experience and the needs of EM communities, before deciding on the need to open more centres.

Integrated Family Service Centres

3.10 At the meeting of the Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to Mainland-HKSAR Families on 22 February 2010, some members expressed concern that the Integrated Family Service Centres ("IFSCs")⁴, which provided a range of preventive, supportive and remedial services for new arrivals from the Mainland, among others, could not address their specific needs adequately. They urged the Administration to consider stipulating in the Funding and Service Agreements (FSAs) of IFSCs the requirements of providing support services for such new arrivals. The Administration advised that individual IFSCs sought to provide a range of services with regard to the specific needs of the communities they served. It would not be appropriate to require all IFSCs to provide services for such new arrivals, since some districts might have a low concentration of these new arrivals. Nonetheless, the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") commissioned a consultant team from the University of Hong Kong in October 2008 to conduct "the Review on the Implementation of the Integrated Family Service Centre Service Mode" ("the Review"), which included, among others, the examination of the effectiveness of the IFSC services in serving specific target groups, including new arrivals.

3.11 The Review report issued in February 2010 recommended that while IFSCs should continue to function as community-based integrated service centres focusing on supporting and strengthening families, IFSCs needed to observe the specific and changing characteristics of the respective communities they served and adjust their service priorities accordingly. In the light of this recommendation, the Administration had planned to set up a working group comprising administrators, supervisors and frontline staff of IFSCs to review the FSAs for IFSCs, with a view to updating and adjusting the performance indicators and encouraging IFSCs to develop service initiatives beyond the FSA requirements.

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⁴ There is a network of 61 IFSCs in Hong Kong operated by the Social Welfare Department and NGOs.

Appendix I

Major government support measures to facilitate the integration of ethnic minorities and new arrivals from the Mainland into the community

	New arrivals from the Mainland	Ethnic minorities
Community services	<p>(a) publishing and regularly updating the "Service Handbook for New Arrivals" in both traditional and simplified Chinese to apprise the new arrivals of the basic information about living in Hong Kong, e.g. road safety, public transportation and useful telephone numbers;</p> <p>(b) providing a range of services and activities, such as familiarization courses, employment seminars, language classes and experience sharing, via District Offices, and in partnership with subsidized NGOs; and</p> <p>(c) conducting quarterly surveys to identify the service needs of new arrivals.</p>	<p>(a) sponsoring NGOs to organize a number of programmes at district level, such as language courses, community support teams⁽¹⁾ and cross-cultural programmes;</p> <p>(b) producing a guide to services in Hong Kong in seven major EM languages, namely Indonesian, Tagalog, Thai, Sinhalese, Hindi, Nepali and Urdu;</p> <p>(c) cooperating with the Radio Television Hong Kong to launch three weekly radio programmes in Nepali, Urdu (the Pakistani language) and Bahasa Indonesian, with two more radio programmes in Hindi and Thai being proposed;</p> <p>(d) sponsoring NGOs to operate four support service centres for EMs in Wan Chai, Kwun Tong, Yuen Long and Tuen Mun respectively to provide language training and support services for EMs on a territory-wide basis, with an additional support service centre in Yau Tsim Mong District and two sub-centres in Sham Shui Po and Tung Chung being planned; and</p> <p>(e) providing free centralized telephone interpretation service to enhance the access of EMs to public services at one of the four support service centres for EMs.</p>

Note: (1) The community support teams are established and operated by the EM community groups or in partnership with NGOs to offer a range of services for members of their respective communities in their own languages and in a culturally sensitive manner.

Appendix I (cont'd)

Major government support measures to facilitate the integration of ethnic minorities and new arrivals from the Mainland into the community

	New arrivals from the Mainland	Ethnic minorities
Education	(a) providing 12-year free education in public sector schools, up to secondary six under the new senior secondary education structure; and (b) providing placement assistance to get a school place. ⁽²⁾	
	<u>Services for newly-arrived children (irrespective of their racial or ethnic origin)</u> (a) "School-Based Support Scheme Grant", a block grant that assists public sector schools to offer timely support to newly-arrived children at the commencement of the school term. The current rates of the Grant are HK\$3,046 per child at the primary level and HK\$4,515 at the secondary level; (b) "Induction Programme", a 60-hour programme that aims to help those children aged between six and 18, who have lived in Hong Kong or have studied in local schools for less than one year, adapt to the local school environment. The induction classes are conducted in small group by NGOs; and (c) "Initiation Programme", a six-month full-time integrated programme that newly-arrived children can choose to attend prior to joining mainstream schools, covering English and Chinese languages, learning and study skills, personal development and social adaptation.	

Note: (2) Children aged between six and 15 could be provided with a public school place by the Education Bureau, if they are holders of (a) Hong Kong Birth Certificate; (b) Hong Kong Identity Card; or (c) Permit to Remain in Hong Kong with appropriate endorsements.

Appendix I (cont'd)

Major government support measures to facilitate the integration of ethnic minorities and new arrivals from the Mainland into the community

	New arrivals from the Mainland	Ethnic minorities
Vocational training and retraining	<p>(a) legally employable persons aged 15 or above, and with education attainment of sub-degree or below, can enrol in career-oriented training programmes and retraining courses funded by the Employees Retraining Board ("ERB") and delivered through 128 training bodies; and</p> <p>(b) a special programme known as "Employment Set Sail Scheme" is available for both EMs (in English) and NAs to enhance their employability and understanding of the local job market.</p>	
Social welfare services	<p>(a) operating 61 integrated family service centres and two integrated services centres to provide a range of preventive, supportive and remedial services for individuals or families in need, such as family education, parent-child activities, counselling service and mutual support groups;</p> <p>(b) operating 136 Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres for providing support services for both EMs and newly arrived children and adolescents to facilitate their integration into the community and enhance their knowledge of their respective districts;</p> <p>(c) connecting the hotline of Social Welfare Department ("SWD") with the New Arrival Hotline set up by the International Social Service Hong Kong Branch ("HKISS"). Any newly arrived individuals in need may contact the social workers of HKISS through SWD's hotline for assistance and appropriate services; and</p> <p>(d) funding HKISS to conduct cross-boundary casework services to help individuals and families cope with problems arising from geographical separation.</p>	

Appendix I (cont'd)

Major government support measures to facilitate the integration of ethnic minorities and new arrivals from the Mainland into the community

	New arrivals from the Mainland	Ethnic minorities
Employment	<p>Services are primarily provided by the Labour Department ("LD"), including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) offering free employment assistance and guidance to job seekers through LD's 12 job centres, telephone employment service and interactive employment service website; (b) conducting tailor-made employment briefing sessions on the local job market regularly; and (c) organizing various employment programmes to meet different needs of job seekers, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) "Job Matching Programme": providing unemployed persons with comprehensive employment services comprising in-depth interview, career counselling, active job matching and referral to tailor-made retraining; (ii) "Employment Programme for the Middle-aged": providing training allowance to employers with the aim to encourage the employers to engage job seekers aged 40 or above and have an unemployment period of not less than one month within one year prior to the commencement date of employment, and provide these job seekers with on-the-job training; (iii) "Work Trial Scheme": providing job seekers who have difficulties in finding jobs or wish to change the field of work with a one-month trial of real jobs offered by the participating organizations; (iv) "Youth Pre-employment Training Programme": providing school leavers aged between 15 and 19 with skill-based training, workplace attachment and career counselling to enhance their employability; and (v) "Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme": providing on-the-job training for young people aged between 15 and 24 to enhance their work skills and experience and hence their employment prospects. 	

Appendix I (cont'd)

Major government support measures to facilitate the integration of ethnic minorities and new arrivals from the Mainland into the community

	New arrivals from the Mainland	Ethnic minorities
Public housing	<p>(a) any persons meeting the relevant eligibility criteria may apply for public rental flats under the Housing Authority.</p> <p><u>Specific measures for new arrivals (irrespective of their racial or ethnic origin)</u></p> <p>(a) new arrivals having family members living in public rental housing ("PRH") may apply for inclusion into PRH tenancy through the Addition Policy for Harmonious Families of the Housing Authority;</p> <p>(b) new arrivals meeting requirements such as income and asset limits may apply for PRH together with their family members through the Waiting List; and</p> <p>(c) families with new arrivals who fail to meet the seven-year residence requirement but have pressing housing needs may apply for PRH through the Compassionate Rehousing scheme.⁽³⁾</p>	

Note: (3) Compassionate rehousing is a form of housing assistance, which aims at providing assistance to individuals and families who have genuine and imminent housing problems which cannot be solved by themselves.

Appendix I (cont'd)

Major government support measures to facilitate the integration of ethnic minorities and new arrivals from the Mainland into the community

	New arrivals from the Mainland	Ethnic minorities
Public healthcare	<p>(a) the public healthcare services provided by the Department of Health ("DH") and the Hospital Authority ("HA") are available to all eligible persons at subsidized rates; and</p> <p>(b) DH produces patient and public education materials in both English and Chinese as well as a number of EM languages on selected health topics, such as home safety, childcare and parenting.</p>	
	Not applicable.	<p><u>Specific measures for ethnic minorities</u></p> <p>(a) interpretation services, either on-site or over the telephone, are provided in public hospitals and clinics under the management of HA. These services are primarily provided by a service contractor and cover 12 languages (Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Nepali, Bahasa Indonesia, Vietnamese, Thai, Korean, Bengali, Japanese, Tagalog and German); and</p> <p>(b) HA adopts measures to improve the communication between its staff and EMs, such as arranging suitable training for staff on cultural sensitivity issues, and providing the frontline staff with response cue cards, patient information sheets and consent forms in a number of EM languages.</p>

Appendix II

**Relevant papers on
support measures for ethnic minorities and
new arrivals from the Mainland**

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Bills Committee on Race Discrimination Bill	n/a	Letter dated 7 July 2008 from the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs on support measures for ethnic minorities and new arrivals
Bills Committee on Race Discrimination Bill	16.01.2007	Minutes
Panel on Education	08.01.2007 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
Bills Committee on Race Discrimination Bill	05.02.2007	Minutes
Bills Committee on Race Discrimination Bill	08.10.2007 (Item II)	Agenda CB(2)2753/06-07(03)
Panel on Education	12.06.2008 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Constitutional Affairs	17.11.2008 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Education	12.01.2009 (Item V)	Agenda

Appendix II (cont'd)

**Relevant papers on
support measures for ethnic minorities and
new arrivals from the Mainland**

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Constitutional Affairs	10.02.2010 (Item VI)	Agenda CB(2)889/09-10(12)
Subcommittee to study issues relating to Mainland-HKSAR families	22.02.2010 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes CB(2)870/08-09(01)
Panel on Constitutional Affairs	19.04.2010 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes CB(2)1289/09-10(05)
Panel on Welfare Services	14.06.2010 (Item III)	Agenda CB(2)1619/09-10(01) CB(2)1747/09-10(03)
Panel on Education	14.03.2011 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Home Affairs	14.10.2011 (Item III)	Agenda CB(2)54/11-12(03)