

For information on
15 March 2016

Legislative Council Panel on Manpower

Employment Support Services for Ethnic Minorities

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the measures adopted by the Government to support ethnic minorities (EMs), particularly those of South Asian origins, in employment.

Employment Situation of Ethnic Minorities of South Asian Origins

2. According to the 2011 Population Census conducted by the Census and Statistics Department, there were about 60 000 EMs of South Asian origins in Hong Kong excluding foreign domestic helpers. Most of them were Indians (around 26 000), Pakistanis (around 18 000) and Nepalese (around 16 000). In 2011, the labour force participation rates (LFPRs¹) of EM males were generally higher than the overall male average (68.0%) while the rates in respect of females of different ethnic groups showed variations. The LFPRs of Indian, Nepalese and Pakistani males were 84.0%, 86.1% and 69.7% respectively. Compared with the overall female average (50.7%), the LFPR of Nepalese females (63.4%) was higher while those of Indian (40.6%) and Pakistani (12.1%) females were lower.

3. The Government has all along been very concerned about the employment situation of EMs, especially those of South Asian origins. The Labour Department (LD), Employees Retraining Board (ERB), Vocational Training Council (VTC) and Construction Industry Council (CIC) have been actively providing employment support services and appropriate job-related training for EMs with a view to enhancing their skills and employability.

¹ LFPR is the proportion of the labour force in the population aged 15 and over.

Employment Services by Labour Department

4. LD provides comprehensive and free employment services to all job seekers (including EMs) through a network of 13 job centres, three industry-based recruitment centres, a telephone employment service hotline, the Interactive Employment Service (iES) website and its mobile application, and numerous vacancy search terminals installed at various locations across the territory. In addition to the general employment services, LD provides the following dedicated services that cater to the needs of EM job seekers:

- (a) Special counters and resource corners are set up in all job centres to provide job referral services and employment information for EM job seekers;
- (b) Tailor-made employment briefings are organised regularly to help EM job seekers better understand the latest labour market situation and improve their job search skills;
- (c) EM job seekers may also meet employment officers to obtain personalised job search advice, information on job market, training/retraining courses, and to receive career aptitude assessment, etc. in accordance with their individual needs;
- (d) All job centres provide bilingual services in Chinese and English to facilitate EMs to make use of the facilities and obtain the required services. Interpretation services are also arranged for job seekers who are not proficient in Chinese and English; and
- (e) Key information of all job vacancies (e.g. job title, industry, working hours, salary, workplace, educational requirements and application procedures) is translated and displayed bilingually in the iES website, its mobile application and vacancy search terminals to facilitate EMs to browse vacancy information. LD is also progressively devising pre-translated sample duty lists of different posts to facilitate employers to provide the relevant information in Chinese and English simultaneously when submitting vacancy orders through the iES website.

5. To acquaint more EM job seekers with the above-mentioned employment services, the relevant promotional leaflets have been translated into English and six EM languages², and distributed through various channels such as the Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities of the Home Affairs Department (HAD), Registration of Persons Offices of the Immigration Department, NGOs serving EMs, religious bodies and the community network of the Police Community Relations Office of the Hong Kong Police Force. The e-versions of these publications have also been uploaded to the Multi-Language Platform of the Gov.HK website and the dedicated webpage for EM job seekers of the iES website to facilitate members of the public to browse the information. Moreover, LD has proactively reached out to EMs at their popular gathering spots such as mosques, district-based organisations, grocery stores, food establishments, etc. and distributes the promotional leaflets.

6. Further, LD meets with various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) serving EMs through the network of Hong Kong Social Services Council on a regular basis. The channels for on-going dialogue have been established for LD to meet and exchange views with these organisations. At the district level, job centres have also liaised with EM bodies, NGOs serving EMs, religious bodies, schools, etc. in their locality and have been disseminating updated employment information to them regularly. These organisations are also encouraged to refer EMs with employment needs to LD for services.

7. In tandem, LD proactively promotes the working abilities of EMs among employers and reminds them to consider the genuine occupational qualifications of the posts when specifying the language requirement. To help employers better understand the cultures of EMs and acquire the skills to communicate with them, experience sharing sessions are organised regularly for employers. NGOs serving EMs are invited to participate in these sessions.

8. LD has also been making continuous efforts to canvass and disseminate vacancies suitable for EMs to enhance their employment opportunities. In 2014 and 2015, LD organised respectively in each year two large-scale and 11 district-based inclusive job fairs at which job seekers (including EMs) could submit job applications and attended interviews with employers on the spot. In recruiting employers to join these job fairs, special efforts were made to encourage employers to provide vacancies suitable for EMs and to relax the language requirement as far as possible so as to enable

² The six EM languages are Hindi, Indonesian, Nepali, Tagalog, Thai and Urdu

more EMs to apply for the vacancies. To facilitate EMs to reinforce their work skills, training bodies and social services organisations were also invited to join these inclusive job fairs to provide information on training courses and support services for EMs. In addition, LD, in collaboration with NGOs serving EMs, were arranged on-site interpretation service for EM job seekers at these job fairs. LD plans to organise a similar number of large-scale and district-based inclusive job fairs targeting EMs in 2016.

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. On one hand, employment services ambassadors help LD enhance its employment services to job seekers, in particular EMs. On the other hand, the programme enriches the working experience and qualifications of the engaged EM trainees, thereby enhancing their employability in the open market. LD also arranged Chinese language courses for these trainees during their training. The response to the pilot programme has been positive. LD has so far engaged a total of 63 trainees as employment services ambassadors, with the latest batch of 15 trainees commencing employment on 1 March 2016.

Services by Employees Retraining Board

10. With a view to improving the employability of EMs and facilitating their integration into the community, ERB provides dedicated training courses delivered in English to suit EMs’ aspirations and training needs. In 2015-16, ERB reserved 800 training places to offer a total of 31 dedicated training courses for EMs, including 11 full-time placement-tied training courses and 20 half-day or evening Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus and generic skills training courses. In addition, ERB offered training courses targeting non-engaged EM youths aged 15 to 20 under its Youth Training Programme. EMs on completion of placement-tied training courses are provided with a six-month placement follow-up service to help them land on jobs. In 2016-17, ERB plans to reserve 800 training places to provide dedicated training courses for EMs and will subsidise training bodies on a pilot basis to provide supplementary training materials and support measures to facilitate the attendance of EMs who can comprehend Cantonese in training courses other than the dedicated courses, thereby enhancing the training options for EMs.

³ 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 level or below.

11. In 2015-16, ERB collaborated with HAD to offer courses at its Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities on a pilot basis. EMs can also make use of an array of training and employment support services, including employment seminars, workshops, group activities and training consultancy service, at the three ERB Service Centres.

12. Furthermore, ERB sponsors training bodies to organise district-based activities, including district guided tours, course and industry exhibitions as well as job fairs to disseminate training and employment information to members of the public, including EMs, to enhance their employment opportunities. To promote the training courses and services suitable for EMs, ERB issues promotional leaflets in English and six EM languages as well as its course prospectus in English.

Vocational and Professional Education and Training

Services by Vocational Training Council

13. VTC offers a wide range of vocational and professional education and training (VPET) programmes. All applicants, irrespective of their race or ethnic origin, who are able to meet the admission requirements, may be enrolled into such programmes. The bachelor's degree programmes of the Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong; and higher diploma programmes of the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education, Hong Kong Design Institute and International Culinary Institute of VTC mainly use English as the medium of instruction. For non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students who do not possess HKDSE Chinese Language qualifications, alternative qualifications such as those of GCSE/ IGCSE/ GCE in Chinese Language or HKDSE Other Language subjects will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

14. The Youth College (Yeo Chei Man) was set up under VTC in the 2012/13 academic year to provide diversified study opportunities for students, including dedicated VPET programmes for NCS students with dedicated support services.

15. VTC offers dedicated VPET programmes to NCS youth and adults to meet their multifarious training needs. These programmes include diploma courses in business, design, and hotel and tourism for secondary school leavers, Applied Learning courses for senior secondary students, Vocational Development Programmes for non-engaged youth, short courses on basic vocational Chinese and other trades. The information of these dedicated

programmes can be found at the VTC website (<http://www.vtc.edu.hk/ncs>). In the 2014/15 and 2015/16 academic years, VTC offered about 20 dedicated full-time and part-time programmes for NCS students each year to cater for their different learning needs. About 900 NCS students were enrolled into these programmes in the 2014/15 academic year. In the 2015/16 academic year, the estimated number of NCS students enrolled into these programmes is at the same level as in the preceding academic year.

16. NCS students of pre-employment programmes are provided with various support services to help them better cope with study and adapt to campus life. These services include academic and learning support, advisory and counselling support for articulation and career development. VTC also actively promotes inclusive extra-curricular activities to foster integration with local students and community.

Services by Construction Industry Council

17. CIC provides various types of subsidised training courses to construction workers and new entrants to the construction industry. All applicants, irrespective of their race or ethnic origin, who are able to meet the admission requirements, may be enrolled into such courses.

18. With a view to organising dedicated training courses to EMs who have got registered general worker status, CIC approached EM organisations involving Nepalese, Pakistanis and Indians, and specifically consulted them on proposed training courses to enhance the skills of concerned general workers up to semi-skilled worker level. In December 2015, CIC rolled out the “Ethnic Minorities Skills Enhancement Courses – Pilot Scheme” to provide 60 training places. CIC will evaluate the effectiveness of the scheme to explore how to further continue with the scheme.

Advice Sought

19. Members are invited to note and provide comments on this paper.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
Labour Department
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