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Panel on Manpower

**Background brief prepared by the
Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 15 March 2016**

Employment support services for ethnic minorities

Purpose

This paper summarises the past discussions by the Panel on Manpower ("the Panel") on employment support services for ethnic minorities ("EMs").

Background

2. According to the Administration, the Labour Department ("LD") provides a wide range of free employment and recruitment services to job seekers, including EMs through a network of 13 job centres throughout the territory, three recruitment centres for the catering, retail and construction industries, a Job Vacancy Processing Centre and a Telephone Employment Service Centre. Both large-scale and district-based job fairs are organised to facilitate job seekers to apply for jobs and attend interviews with employers on the spot. Apart from paying visits to job centres, job seekers may obtain the latest vacancy information through the Interactive Employment Service website as well as the various vacancy search terminals located throughout the territory.

3. To cater for the needs of different job seekers, LD administers various specialised employment programmes providing job seekers with tailor-made employment support services. These include the provision of work trials in actual working environment and on-the-job training.

Deliberations of the Panel

Employment services for EMs

4. Members expressed grave concern about the difficulties encountered by EMs in finding employment due to the language barrier and cultural difference, and enquired about the specific measures in place to address the employment difficulties of EM job seekers.

5. The Administration advised that in addition to LD's general employment services and facilities, special counters and resource corners were set up in all LD job centres to provide EM job seekers with job referral service and employment information. EM job seekers may also meet the employment advisors in job centres face-to-face to obtain advice and customised employment services. Tailor-made employment briefings are also organised regularly to help EMs understand the local employment market and improve job search skills. All LD job centres offered employment services in both Chinese and English. To help EMs keep abreast of the latest labour market situation and improve job search skills, the Interactive Employment Service website and vacancy search terminals of LD were equipped with both Chinese and English interfaces to facilitate access to job vacancy information by EMs. In addition, leaflets on LD's employment services for EMs were printed in various ethnic languages and interpretation services would be arranged for job seekers who did not speak Chinese and English.

6. The Administration further advised that in 2015, LD organised a total of two large-scale and 11 district-based inclusive job fairs to enhance the employment opportunities of EMs. Employers participating in these job fairs were encouraged to employ EMs and were advised to consider the genuine occupational qualifications of the posts when specifying the language requirement and to relax them as far as possible so as to enable more EMs to apply for the vacancies. Moreover, the Construction Industry Council had launched promotional activities and collaborated with the construction industry to stage job fairs to attract new EM entrants. The Administration assured members that LD, in collaboration with non-governmental organisations ("NGOs") serving EMs, would continue to arrange on-site interpretation service for EM job seekers at these job fairs.

7. Members were also advised that in addition to enhancing job opportunities for EMs in the private sector, the Administration implemented measures to ensure that EMs have equal access to job opportunities in the Government, especially disciplinary services. Such measures include reviewing and adjusting the Chinese language proficiency requirements and recruitment formats of relevant Government jobs on the

basis that the adjusted requirements or formats will continue to allow the satisfactory performance of duties.

8. As regards employment services for young EM job seekers, the Administration advised that LD launched in September 2014 a pilot "Employment Services Ambassador Programme for Ethnic Minorities" ("the Programme"), employing 15 trainees of the Youth Employment and Training Programme¹ ("YETP") who could communicate in EM language as employment services ambassadors for six months. These employment services ambassadors would work in LD job centres and job fairs to help LD enhance its employment services to job seekers, particularly EMs. The Programme would, on the other hand, enrich the working experience and qualifications of the engaged EM trainees, thereby enhancing their employability in the open market. According to the Administration, the initial response to the Programme was positive. LD further employed a total of 33 trainees for the second and third batch of the EM employment services ambassadors in March and September 2015 respectively. LD was reviewing the Programme in the light of the actual operating experience and would consider the way forward having regard to the review outcome.

9. Members were also particularly concerned about the employment assistance provided for EM job seekers living in remote areas. There was a view that the Administration should proactively reach out to the EM community to enhance their awareness of Tung Chung Job Centre, which was commissioned in October 2014. The Administration advised that since the commencement of the operation of the Tung Chung Job Centre, it had all along maintained close contact with NGOs providing services in the district for groups with special needs so as to attain a better understanding of the employment needs and situation of the groups concerned. To provide a more user-friendly service to job seekers of different districts, LD would continue to organise district-based job fairs at job centres to enable job seekers to participate in job interviews without having to travel long distance.

Retraining services for EMs

10. Some members expressed concern that only 6 650 training places were allocated by the Employees Retraining Board ("ERB") in 2013-2014 to courses for special service targets², which covered, among others, EMs,

¹ The Youth Employment and Training Programme launched by the Labour Department provides one-stop per-employment and on-the-job training for young school leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree level or below.

² The special service targets covered the youth, new arrivals, EMs, persons with disabilities and persons recovered from work injuries as well as rehabilitated ex-drug abusers and ex-offenders.

and queried whether it was adequate to meet the employment needs of EMs. The Administration explained that apart from those 6 650 training places, EM service users could also make applications for all the courses for the general public. The training bodies of ERB could also request more resources for the provision of additional places to meet the demand from special service targets if necessary.

11. According to the Administration, ERB offered 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. Eligible EMs could make use of the training and employment support services, including personalised training consultancy service, at the three ERB Service Centres. To assist EMs enter the employment market, ERB training bodies provided placement follow-up services for EM trainees who had completed full-time placement-tied courses. The Administration added that ERB collaborated with the Home Affairs Department to offer courses at its Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities on a pilot basis in 2015-2016.

Relevant papers

12. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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Appendix

Relevant papers on employment support services for ethnic minorities

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Legislative Council	13.11.2013	Official Record of Proceedings (Question 18)
Panel on Manpower	19.11.2013 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Finance Committee	3.4.2014	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Manpower	16.12.2014 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Manpower	19.5.2015 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes

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