

For information on
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Legislative Council
Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities

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

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

actively providing employment support services and appropriate job-related training for EMs with a view to enhancing their skills and employability.

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 for EM job seekers are set up at all job centres to provide them with job referral services and employment information;
- (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 at job centres to obtain personalised employment advisory service. Employment officers familiar with local employment market and proficient in English will provide EM job seekers with job search advice, information on job market, training/ retraining courses, and to conduct career aptitude assessment, etc. in accordance with their individual needs and preferences, and match them to suitable jobs;
- (d) All job centres provide employment services in both Chinese and English to facilitate EMs to make use of the facilities and obtain the required services. LD has also made arrangements with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide interpretation services for EM job seekers who speak neither Chinese nor 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 on 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 and Home Affairs Enquiry Centres of the Home Affairs Department (HAD), Registration of Persons Offices of the Immigration Department, ERB Service Centres of ERB, 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 proactively reaches 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 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

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

employment information to them regularly. These organisations are also encouraged to refer EMs with employment needs to LD for services.

7. At the same time, 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 vacancies suitable for EMs via its vast employer network to enhance their employment opportunities. In 2015 and 2016, LD organised four large-scale inclusive job fairs and 23 district-based inclusive job fairs at which job seekers (including EMs) could submit job applications and attend 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 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, arranged on-site interpretation service for EM job seekers at these job fairs. LD plans to organise a comparable number of large-scale and district-based inclusive job fairs targeted at EMs in 2017.

9. Since September 2014, LD has implemented the Employment Services Ambassador (ESA) Programme for Ethnic Minorities to employ trainees of the Youth Employment and Training Programme³ who can communicate in EM language as ESAs at job centres, industry-based recruitment centres and job fairs for six months. On one hand, ESAs help LD

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.

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, which will facilitate their subsequent job search in the open market. LD also arranges Chinese language courses for these trainees in the course of their on-the-job training to enhance their employability. LD has so far employed 78 ESAs under the programme.

10. With the collaboration of ESAs conversant with EM languages and cultures, LD will continue to provide a wide array of dedicated employment services for EM job seekers in various districts through its existing job centres and extensive employer network. LD will review operation of its services from time to time and adjustments or enhancement measures will be carried out in a timely manner.

Services by Employees Retraining Board

11. 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 2016-17, ERB reserved 800 training places to offer a total of 38 dedicated training courses for EMs, including 12 full-time placement-tied training courses and 26 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. ERB also subsidises training bodies to develop supplementary training materials and provide learning support services to facilitate EMs who can speak and comprehend Cantonese to attend some 500 training courses available to the general public. In 2017-18, ERB plans to reserve 800 training places to provide dedicated training courses for EMs.

12. In 2016-17, ERB continues to collaborate with HAD to offer training courses at its “Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities”. EMs can also make use of an array of training and employment support services, including enquiry and enrolment services for training courses, industry seminars and taster courses, workshops and training consultancy service, at the three ERB Service Centres and the ten ERB Service Spots set up in Kwai Tsing and Tsuen Wan.

13. 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. ERB organises “Career Talks for School” for upper secondary EM students with a view to assisting them in formulating future learning and career plans. Employer representatives of various industries are invited to share industry prospects, entry requirements and interviewing skills with students. 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

14. 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 eligible non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students who do not possess Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) Chinese Language qualifications, alternative qualifications such as those of General Certificate

of Secondary Education (GCSE)/ International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE)/ General Certificate of Education (GCE) in Chinese Language or HKDSE Applied Learning Chinese (for NCS students) will be considered.

15. 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.

16. 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 2015/16 academic year, VTC offered about 20 dedicated full-time and part-time programmes for NCS students to cater for their different learning needs. About 800 NCS students were enrolled into these programmes in that academic year.

17. 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

18. 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.

19. In the past two years, CIC from time to time approached EM organisations involving Nepalese, Pakistanis and Indians, and sought their views on training of EM construction workers. In line with the views of these organisations and industry stakeholders, CIC rolled out the “Ethnic Minorities Skills Enhancement Courses – Pilot Scheme” in December 2015. As the pilot scheme is found effective, CIC has decided to offer “Ethnic Minorities Skills Enhancement Courses” for EM construction workers in 2017.

Advice Sought

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

Labour and Welfare Bureau
Labour Department
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