

**For Information on
10 April 2017**

Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities

Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities

PURPOSE

The Home Affairs Department (“HAD”) provides support services to help ethnic minorities (“EMs”) integrate into the community, including commissioning non-profit-making organisations to operate six support service centres and two sub-centres for EMs (“centres”). This paper briefs Members on the services provided by the centres.

BACKGROUND

2. According to the Census and Statistics Department’s 2016 Population By-census, Hong Kong has 584 383 residents of non-Chinese ethnicity, constituting 8.0% of the Hong Kong Resident Population of 7 336 585. Among them, 80 028¹ belong to three of the South Asian ethnic groups (Indian, Nepalese and Pakistani), representing an increase of 26.7% from 63 176 in 2011.

3. The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (“Government”) pays much attention to the needs of EMs. Various bureaux and departments provide services and support for EMs according to their respective policy purview. For example, the Education Bureau provides education support for EM students, the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Labour Department provide employment training and support for EM job seekers, the Social Welfare Department provides social welfare services for EM families in need, etc. The Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau issued the Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality to provide guidance to the relevant bureaux and departments and other statutory bodies, and to assist them in the promotion of racial equality and equal opportunities in public services under their respective policy purview.

¹ Including 36 462 Indians, 25 472 Nepalese and 18 094 Pakistanis.

4. Through the district networks of the District Offices, and collaboration with local organisations and non-profit-making organisations, the HAD provides support services to EMs in need to help them integrate into the community. Details of these support services are set out at the Annex for reference.

SUPPORT SERVICE CENTRES FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES

5. In view of the difficulties faced by some EMs in integrating into the community due to cultural differences and language barrier, the Government established four support service centres for EMs in 2009 to provide support services to EMs in need. Subsequently, the Government established another two centres and two sub-centres in 2012 and 2014 to meet the service needs. At present, there are altogether six centres and two sub-centres providing territory-wide services to EMs in need :

- (a) HOPE Centre : established in Wan Chai in 2009;
- (b) CHEER Centre : established in Kwun Tong in 2009;
- (c) SHINE Centre : established in Tuen Mun in 2009;
- (d) YLTH Centre : established in Yuen Long in 2009;
- (e) HOME Centre and Sub-centre : established in Yau Ma Tei and Sham Shui Po respectively in 2012;
- (f) TOUCH Sub-centre : established in Tung Chung in 2012; and
- (g) LINK Centre : established in Kwai Chung in 2014.

6. At present, the centres employ 55 full-time EM staff and 49 full-time Chinese staff as well as many EM and Chinese part-time staff. In the 2015-16 project year, the centres had provided services to over 95 000 service recipients, of which a large proportion of 57.8% were females. Regarding ethnicity, Pakistanis and Nepalese constituted the majority of service recipients at 46.0% and 23.0% respectively. All centres are running smoothly. Feedback from service recipients has been very positive and they think that the services can meet their special needs. The major services of the centres are appended below :

Language Classes

7. All centres organise Cantonese and English classes for EMs to meet their daily social needs and help their early integration into the community. The classes are provided at different levels to serve students with different language proficiency. The curriculum, which covers mainly listening and speaking skills, and supplemented with reading and writing of simple words, is taught by tutors possessing Bachelor's degrees or equivalent. Besides classroom learning, there are outside-classroom activities to allow the participants to practise the languages in real life and also enhance their understanding of the local community.

8. In the 2015-16 project year, the centres had organised 120 Cantonese classes and 90 English classes in total with 2 153 and 1 650 participants respectively. Each class had around 15 participants of various ethnicities. The course duration ranged from 30 to 50 hours depending on the course arrangement. Feedback from participants was very positive. The language classes were particularly helpful to those South Asian women whose primary social network was limited due to cultural and language differences. These classes enhanced their communication skills and assisted them to establish a mutual help network.

9. In addition, individual centres collaborate with the training bodies of the Employees Retraining Board to organise designated language courses and other skill training courses for EMs in the centres with due regard to the specific employment training needs of EMs.

Integration Programmes

10. All centres offer a comprehensive range of integration programmes to facilitate EMs' adaptation to the life in the Hong Kong community. Major activities include :

- Seminars and exhibitions — collaborate with different government departments to organise seminars and exhibitions to introduce various public services to EMs, such as seminars on placement mechanisms of primary and secondary schools with the Education Bureau and schools, health seminars with the Department of Health, employment exhibitions with the Labour Department, etc. In addition, the centres also collaborate with other organisations to organise seminars and exhibitions on practical day-to-day issues, such as personal finance, healthy diet, etc.

- Training classes — organise computer classes which enable EMs to acquire basic knowledge in using computers. In addition, individual centres collaborate with the Hong Kong Police Force and the Correctional Services Department to organise training courses on physical fitness, interview skills and leadership for EMs who are interested in joining the disciplinary forces.
- Interest classes — organise various interest classes, including cooking, handicraft, sewing, yoga, tai chi, aerobic for the elderly, etc. Apart from developing EMs' interests and hobbies, these interest classes also provide a social platform which allows them to establish a mutual help network and share their experience in integrating into the community.
- Youth Units — provide trainings for EM youths in sports activities, band performance, leadership and volunteering as well as other interest classes to direct them to spend their leisure time constructively by exploring their interests and hobbies. Individual centres have even established soccer teams, cricket teams, basketball teams, band groups, dancing groups, etc. and participated in competitions and performances from time to time. These activities successfully direct youths to participate in healthy activities and also enhance their interpersonal skills.
- Special programmes — all centres organise annual mass events, such as multi-cultural carnivals, talent competitions, outings, etc. These activities are very popular among EM families.

11. In the 2015-16 project year, all centres had organised 4 001 integration programmes in total with 81 066 service recipients. Participants' demand for integration programmes was high as they thought these activities had helped them to have a better understanding of the local community and public services, expand their social network, and enhance their confidence and ability to integrate into the community.

After School Tutorial Classes

12. After school tutorial classes are organised mainly for primary and junior secondary EM students to assist them in their homework, especially Chinese and Mathematics. In addition, individual centres also provide supplementary Chinese lessons to enhance students' reading and writing abilities.

13. In the 2015-16 project year, all centres had organised 163 tutorial classes in total with 2 057 students. The tutorial classes were organised at different levels, each with around 12 students of different ethnicities, and had three to five sessions of one and a half to two hours per week. Tutors were at least students at local tertiary institutions and the centres also recruited EM helpers to assist in classes.

Enquiry, Counselling and Referral Services

14. Besides general enquiry services, all centres also provide counselling services to assist EMs to cope with difficulties in their daily life. In addition, the centres form separate mutual support groups for women, the elderly and parents, and hold regular gatherings in the centres to discuss issues of concern and share their problem-solving experience. The centres would refer cases to relevant government departments and non-profit-making organisations for follow-up if necessary.

15. In the 2015-16 project year, all centres had provided enquiry, counselling and referral services on 3 197 occasions.

Interpretation and Translation Services

16. In addition to its basic services, CHEER Centre deploys part of its government grant to provide general interpretation and translation services of 7 EM languages (Hindi, Nepali, Punjabi, Urdu, Bahasa Indonesia, Tagalog and Thai), though interpretation and translation services of specific context are not within its scope. Interpretation services are mainly provided over the phone. Depending on the availability of resources, on-site (escort) interpretation service and simultaneous interpretation service can also be arranged. Government departments and public service providers will be charged for using some of the services. The following interpretation and translation services are provided by CHEER Centre:

- Telephone Interpretation and Enquiry Service — provide telephone hotline for EMs, government departments and public service providers to conduct 3-way telephone conference with CHEER Centre's interpreters. Operation hour of the hotline is Monday to Sunday (except public holidays) from 8:00am to 10:00pm. This service is free of charge.

- On-site (Escort) Interpretation Service — provide on-site interpretation service for government departments and public service providers. Departments and public service providers must make a booking for the service at least three working days in advance. Fee is charged at \$60 per hour (during office hours) or \$100 per hour (for non-office hours).
- Simultaneous Interpretation Service — provide simultaneous interpretation service for government departments and public service providers at workshops and seminars. Departments and public service providers must make a booking at least 21 working days in advance. Fee is charged at \$150 per hour per EM language.
- Translation Service — translate documents in English with no specialised terminologies to seven EM languages for government departments and public service providers. Fee is charged at \$1.5 per English word to one EM language (minimum charge is \$300 per job).
- On-sight Interpretation Service — provide verbal interpretation of documents in English into one of the seven EM languages for EMs. The documents are mainly government letters and school notices. EMs can bring along the documents to CHEER Centre for the service which is free of charge.

17. In 2015-16, CHEER Centre had provided 4 232² interpretation and translation services.

ADVICE SOUGHT

18. Members are invited to note and comment on the content of this paper.

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² Including 3 206 Telephone Interpretation and Enquiry Service, 701 On-site (Escort) Interpretation Service, 26 Simultaneous Interpretation Service, 66 Translation Service and 233 On-sight Interpretation Service.

Home Affairs Department's Support Services for Ethnic Minorities

- Major support services for EMs provided by HAD :
 - Support Service Centres for EMs: Commission non-profit-making organisations to operate six support service centres in Wan Chai, Kwun Tong, Yau Ma Tei, Tuen Mun, Yuen Long and Kwai Chung, and two sub-centres in Sham Shui Po and Tung Chung to provide language classes, integration programmes, after school tutorial classes, as well as enquiry, counselling and referral services. The centre in Kwun Tong also provides interpretation and translation services.
 - Community Support Teams: Sponsor the Pakistani and Nepalese Community Support Teams to provide dedicated services for the EM groups through their own communities.
 - District-based Integration Programmes: Facilitate early integration of EMs through adaptation courses, mutual help networks and community visits at district level.
 - Ambassador Schemes: The schemes arrange ambassadors with similar background and experience to proactively contact EMs and make referrals where necessary.
 - Radio Programmes: Sponsor radio programmes in five EM languages (i.e. Bahasa Indonesia, Hindi, Nepali, Thai and Urdu) to help EMs understand the latest local affairs and services provided by the Government.
 - Social Enterprises: Provide funding for development of social enterprises, so that EMs can benefit from some projects that specifically provide trainings and employment opportunities to them, such as Hong Kong TransLingual Services and Bread Bunch.
 - Language Courses and Cross-cultural Learning Youth Programmes: Provide opportunities of language and cross-cultural learning for EMs.

- Harmony Scholarship Scheme: Provide scholarship to students with outstanding performance in schools and community service (in particular in activities promoting racial harmony).
- Service Guidebooks and Website: Publish guidebooks in English and six EM languages (Bahasa Indonesia, Indian, Nepali, Tagalog, Thai and Urdu) and operate a dedicated website (<http://www.had.gov.hk/rru/>) in six EM languages to keep EMs informed of public services available to them.
- Mobile Information Service: Distribute information kits to newly arrived EMs and handle enquiries at the airport.