

For information on
27 March 2018

**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), including EM youths, in employment.

Employment Situation of Ethnic Minorities of South Asian Origins

2. According to the findings of the 2016 Population By-census conducted by the Census and Statistics Department, there were about 78 000 EMs of South Asian origins in Hong Kong excluding foreign domestic helpers. Most of them were Indians (around 32 000), Nepalese (around 24 600) and Pakistanis (around 17 600). In 2016, the labour force participation rates (LFPRs¹) of EM males were generally higher than the overall male average (69.7%). The LFPRs of Indian, Nepalese and Pakistani males were 82.3%, 86.7% and 70.9% respectively. The participation rates in respect of females of different ethnic groups showed variations. Compared with the overall female average (51.2%), the LFPR of Nepalese females (63.2%) was higher while those of Indian (44.1%) and Pakistani (19.0%) females were lower. It is worth noting that between 2011 and 2016, many ethnic groups posted higher LFPRs, particularly in the case of Pakistanis.

3. The Government has all along been very concerned about the employment situation of EMs, especially those of South Asian origins. The

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

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 (including EM youths) 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 by all job centres 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 all job centres to obtain personalised employment advisory service. Experienced employment officers who are familiar with the local employment market and proficient in English will provide EM job seekers with job search advice and information on the job market and training/retraining courses, support them in conducting 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 EM job seekers to make use of the facilities and obtain the required services. LD has also made arrangements with a non-governmental organisation (NGO), i.e., the Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents (CHEER), to provide free interpretation services for EM job seekers who speak neither Chinese nor English. Posters in major EM languages are displayed in conspicuous positions inside job centres and industry-based recruitment centres to promote the interpretation services provided by CHEER. Forms in these EM languages are also prepared to introduce the free interpretation services and each EM visitor is invited to sign on the form to ascertain whether or not such services are required. In 2017, staff of job centres and industry-based recruitment centres introduced interpretation services to 2 844 EM job seekers. In light of their needs, interpretation services were arranged on 20 occasions and the average waiting time for the interpretation services was less than five minutes; and

- (e) Key information of all job vacancies (e.g. job title, industry, working hours, salary, work district, educational requirements and application procedures) is translated and displayed bilingually on the iES website, its mobile application and vacancy search terminals to facilitate EM job seekers to browse vacancy information.

5. To acquaint more EM job seekers with the above-mentioned employment services, the relevant promotional leaflets are prepared in 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 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.

² The six EM languages are Hindi, Urdu, Nepali, Bahasa Indonesia, Tagalog and Thai.

Moreover, with the support of the Employment Services Ambassadors and Employment Assistants³ who are also members of the EM communities, LD proactively reaches out to EMs at their popular gathering spots such as mosques, district-based organisations, grocery stores, food establishments, activities targeted at EMs, etc. and distributes the promotional leaflets.

6. Furthermore, LD meets with various NGOs serving EMs through the network of The Hong Kong Council of Social Service. The channels for on-going dialogue have been established for LD to connect 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 actively promotes the working abilities of EMs among employers and constantly reminds them to consider the genuine occupational qualifications of the posts when specifying the language requirements. To help employers better understand the EM cultures and acquire the skills to communicate with them, experience sharing sessions are organised for employers. NGOs serving EMs are invited to participate in these sessions.

8. LD has also been making continuous efforts to canvass vacancies to enhance the employment opportunities of EMs. From 2015 to 2017, LD organised six large-scale inclusive job fairs and 35 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 and integration skills, training bodies and social services organisations were also enlisted to provide information on training courses and support services for EMs at the large-scale inclusive job fairs. In

³ Please refer to paragraphs 9, 19 and 20 below for details.

addition, LD, in collaboration with NGOs serving EMs, arranged on-site interpretation service for EM job seekers at these job fairs.

9. Moreover, LD will continue to implement the Employment Services Ambassador Programme for EMs⁴. Since May 2017, LD has engaged two Employment Assistants proficient in EM languages⁵ at the Kowloon West Job Centre in Sham Shui Po and the Employment in One-stop in Tin Shui Wai on a pilot basis to strengthen employment support for EM job seekers, especially those of South Asian origins. Apart from partnering with experienced employment officers in providing personalised employment services for EM job seekers, these Employment Assistants conversant with EM languages and cultures also help LD proactively reach out to EMs with employment needs and encourage them to make use of LD's employment services. LD will evaluate the effectiveness of this pilot initiative and examine its way forward after gathering more experience in employing these two Employment Assistants.

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' career aspirations and training needs. In 2017-18, 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 non placement-tied "Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus" and generic skills training courses. In addition, EMs who have completed the dedicated placement-tied training courses offered by ERB are provided with a longer period of six-month placement follow-up services in order to help them enter the job market. ERB also offers subsidies for training bodies to develop supplementary training materials and to provide learning support services to facilitate EMs who can speak and comprehend Cantonese to

⁴ For details, please refer to paragraphs 19 and 20 below.

⁵ One of the Employment Assistants employed can communicate in Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi. The other Employment Assistant is proficient in Urdu.

attend some 500 training courses available to members of the general public. The subsidy scheme will be enhanced in April 2018, including increasing the percentage of subsidy level, in order to encourage the participation of training bodies to actively cater for the needs of EMs. In 2018-19, ERB plans to reserve 800 training places to provide dedicated training courses for EMs.

11. In 2017-18, 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 specific seminars, taster courses, workshops and training consultancy service, etc., at the two ERB Service Centres and 22 ERB Service Spots set up in various districts.

12. Furthermore, ERB sponsors training bodies to organise district-based activities, including large-scale activities such as training courses and careers exhibitions, district guided tours, as well as course promotion booths, etc. 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 languages⁶ as well as its course prospectus in English, and places advertisements in newspapers in English, Urdu and Nepali.

Services by Construction Industry Council

13. To strengthen support to EMs, CIC has set up the Ethnic Minority Service Team and employed three EM staff members. By implementing various initiatives, CIC aims at attracting EMs to join the construction industry and enhancing the skill level of EM workers.

⁶ The six EM languages are Hindi, Urdu, Nepali, Bahasa Indonesia, Tagalog and Thai.

14. CIC provides various types of subsidised training courses which are open to construction workers who meet the admission requirements or persons who are interested to join the construction industry, irrespective of their gender, race or ethnic origin. CIC also provides placement services to the graduates of full-time courses. To meet the language needs of EMs, CIC is providing 23 training courses conducted in English, such as skill training in metal scaffolding, with more than 2 400 graduates in 2017. Furthermore, CIC provides English test papers for most of its trade tests and plant and machinery certification tests, as well as interpretation and translation services to trade test candidates and trainees.

15. From time to time, CIC approached EM organisations involving Nepalese, Pakistanis and Indians to understand their views on training of EM construction workers. Taking into consideration their views, CIC rolled out the “Ethnic Minorities Skills Enhancement Courses – Pilot Scheme” in December 2015 to uplift EM workers’ skills to semi-skilled level. As the pilot scheme was found effective, CIC started to offer “Ethnic Minorities Skills Enhancement Courses” in 2017. More than 120 EM trainees have been trained under these skill enhancement courses so far. Apart from the skill courses, CIC is preparing a 60-hour Vocational Cantonese course for construction workplace to facilitate EMs’ integration into the working environment and enhance safety awareness.

16. CIC has been arranging regular site visits to meet EM workers and approaching more EMs through social groups of EMs, labour unions and related NGOs to attract them to enrol in CIC’s training courses. Besides, CIC will conduct job fairs in various districts to provide job opportunities for EMs.

Employment Support for EM Youths

LD’s Employment Support for EM Youths

17. LD operates two youth employment resource centres named Youth Employment Start (Y.E.S.) to provide personalised advisory and support

services on employment and self-employment to young people aged between 15 and 29. The two Y.E.S. centres organise training courses in English regularly to assist young people (including EM youths) to enhance their employability.

18. In addition, LD implements the Youth Employment and Training Programme (YETP), a “through-train” programme to provide dedicated and comprehensive pre-employment and on-the-job training to young school leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree level or below.

19. To cater for the special needs of young EMs, YETP trainees who can communicate in EM languages are recruited by LD to serve as Employment Services Ambassadors at job centres, industry-based recruitment centres and job fairs for six months. This Employment Services Ambassador Programme helps LD better serve EM job seekers and enriches the EM trainees’ own working experience and resume, benefiting their job search in the open market. LD has so far employed 117 YETP EM trainees in eight batches since the launch of the programme in September 2014.

20. In the course of the on-the-job training, the EM trainees are offered personalised training and guidance by staff with relevant working experience appointed by LD. At the same time, LD arranges these trainees to attend Cantonese and vocational Chinese courses during working hours to enhance their employability. Furthermore, LD proactively renders support to the trainees in their job search and provides employment advisory services for them if necessary. LD also regularly follows up with their employment situation. As for the 94 EM trainees of the first six batches, apart from those who had no intention to seek employment for various personal reasons⁷, all trainees have successfully found a job.

⁷ The personal reasons were mainly related to health, departure from Hong Kong, further studies, family, etc.

Vocational and Professional Education and Training

Services by Vocational Training Council

21. 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) applicants 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 for admission.

22. 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.

23. VTC offers dedicated VPET programmes to NCS youths 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, 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 2016/17 academic year, VTC offered about 20 dedicated full-time and part-time programmes for NCS students to cater for their different learning needs. About 700 NCS students were enrolled into these programmes in that academic year.

24. To cater for the specific needs of the NCS students, VTC has organised different subvented VPET programmes including part-time vocational Chinese short courses and Workplace Chinese Communication Programme. These programmes help them develop their Chinese language ability and adapt to the local community.

25. 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.

26. Students of VTC are also given ample opportunities to acquire industry knowledge and skills through industrial attachment (a mandatory module of Higher Diploma programmes), workplace internships, student exchanges, collaborative projects and international competitions.

27. Apart from relevant professional knowledge and skills, VTC aims to help the youths acquire appropriate attitudes and values for lifelong learning and enhanced employability through various whole person development programmes. Moreover, students are offered with support services covering counselling, career advisory, physical education and other student support services. In particular, a series of career development programmes are conducted to help students explore their career interest, formulate their career plan, and enhance their job hunting and interviewing skills.

Other vocational training/ retraining services

28. In addition to the services of ERB and CIC set out in paragraphs 10 to 16 above, ERB offers training courses targeting non-engaged EM youths under its Youth Training Programme. Since April 2017, the entry age requirement of the Youth Training Programme has been extended from the age group of 15 - 20 to 15 - 24, in order to assist those more mature socially withdrawn youths to reintegrate into the society.

29. Moreover, to familiarise EM students with the construction industry and related craft skills, CIC organised a 3-day taster programme during the Christmas holidays in 2017. In 2018, CIC will continue to organise the taster programme and family days for EMs to enhance their understanding of the construction industry.

Advice Sought

30. Members are invited to note the content of this paper and provide their advice.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
Labour Department
March 2018