

立法會 *Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(2)1089/17-18(02)

Ref : CB2/HS/2/16

Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities

Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 27 March 2018

Issues relating to the employment of ethnic minorities

Purpose

This paper summarizes the major views and concerns expressed at meetings of relevant committees of the Legislative Council ("LegCo") on issues relating to the employment of ethnic minorities ("EMs").

Background

Employment situation of ethnic minorities

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 ("LFPRs")¹ of EM males were generally higher than the male average of the overall population (68%) while the rates in respect of females of different ethnic groups showed variations. The LFPRs of Indian, Nepalese and Pakistani males were 84%, 86.1% and 69.7% respectively. Compared with the female average of the overall population (50.7%), the LFPR of Nepalese females (63.4%) was higher while those of Indian (40.6%) and Pakistani (12.1%) females were lower.²

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

² According to the Hong Kong 2011 Population Census Thematic Report: Ethnic Minorities published by the Census and Statistics Department, the female LFPR of some ethnic groups such as Indians and Pakistanis contrasted sharply with their male counterparts. This might be due to the fact that these female EMs were mostly housewives or it might be related to the traditional custom of their ethnicities. Besides, variations in industries among males and females of the same ethnic group were also noted. For Nepalese and Pakistanis, the proportions of the male working population in the "Construction" sector (23.2% and 18.9% respectively) were substantially larger than their female counterparts (1.7% and 1.8% respectively).

3. Also, according to the "Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report on Ethnic Minorities 2014", the population of South Asian households with children had an unemployment rate of 4.9%. Of these South Asian households, the unemployment rates of Indians, Nepalese and Pakistanis were 3.2%, 3.4% and 8.3% respectively.

Employment support services

4. The Labour Department ("LD") provides a wide range of free employment 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 organized 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 ("iES") website as well as the various vacancy search terminals located throughout the territory.

Past discussions by Members

5. Members have expressed concerns on the subject at various meetings the Panel on Manpower, the Panel on Constitutional Affairs ("CA Panel"), the former Subcommittee on Poverty and the Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities. Major concerns and views expressed by Members and deputations on issues relating to the employment of EMs are summarized below.

Employment difficulties encountered by EMs

6. At the meeting of the former Subcommittee on Poverty on 15 March 2016, members shared deputations' view that in relation to employment, language barrier remained the major difficulty for EM job seekers. Concern was also raised that EMs of some origins, e.g. Nepalese, had a high LFPR but they were facing the problems of long working hours and low income.

7. At the meeting of the CA Panel on 16 November 2015 when members discussed "An outline of the topics in the third report of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination", some deputations pointed out that some EMs with high academic qualifications were only engaged in low-skilled jobs because in addition to language barriers, their academic qualifications obtained in their home countries were not recognized in Hong Kong. Some deputations suggested that LD should monitor whether the language requirements in job advertisements posted by employers were justifiable and were based on genuine job requirements. Some other deputations suggested that the Administration

should introduce support measures for the young EM generation (e.g. provision of student financial assistance and learning resources, and waiver of examination fees etc.) so that they could pursue further studies and secure employment.

8. At the meetings of the Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities on 13 February 2017 and 10 July 2017, some deputations suggested that employers should make arrangements to tackle the problem of language barrier encountered by EM employees. For example, employers of the catering industry could cater for their EM recruits who could not read/write Chinese by assigning numbers to food menu items, and bus companies could make arrangements to translate their internal notices into English to facilitate their EM staff's perusal of relevant notices. Some other deputations pointed out that some EM women wanted to work but they had to look after their children, and suggested that the Administration should improve child care/after-school care services and provide training and retraining services to EM women so as to help them join the workforce.

Employment services by Labour Department

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

10. 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 might also meet the employment advisors in job centres face-to-face to obtain advice and customized employment services. Tailor-made employment briefings were also organized 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 iES 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 on-site interpretation services would be arranged for job seekers who did not speak Chinese and English. To help employers better understand the cultures of EMs and acquire the skills to communicate with them, experience sharing sessions were organized regularly for employers. Non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") serving EMs were invited to participate in these sessions.

11. The Administration further advised that in 2015 and 2016, LD organized a total of four large-scale and 23 district-based inclusive job fairs to enhance the employment opportunities of EMs. Employers participating in these job fairs

were encouraged 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 ("CIC") had launched promotional activities and collaborated with the construction industry to stage job fairs to attract new EM entrants. The Administration would continue to arrange on-site interpretation service for EM job seekers at these job fairs.

12. Members raised concern that many EM job seekers still faced difficulties in making use of LD's employment support services and securing employment due to language barrier. In particular, the frontline staff at LD job centres could not communicate effectively with EM job seekers. Some EM job seekers not proficient in Chinese had been advised by LD staff to contact the employers direct. Besides, most of the employment information (including job vacancies) in LD job centres was displayed in Chinese only and interpretation service would be arranged for EM job seekers only upon request.

13. The Administration advised that posters on the provision of interpretation services were displayed in all LD job centres. In addition, promotional leaflets on LD's employment services had been translated into English and six EM languages. According to the Administration, from January to May 2017, the staff of LD introduced the interpretation service to 1 072 EM job seekers and, in the light of their needs, arranged simultaneous interpretation service on 11 occasions. As regards employment information, the Administration advised that all job vacancy information displayed by LD was in both Chinese and English, unless the job vacancy concerned required applicants to be able to read and/or write Chinese as a prerequisite and in such cases the key information of the job vacancy would still be displayed in both Chinese and English. As of February 2017, more than 700 job vacancies in different sectors displayed by LD did not have any Chinese language proficiency requirement ("LPR") and around 1 400 job vacancies only required basic Cantonese-speaking ability. According to the Administration, in 2016, 1 043 EM job seekers registered for LD's employment services, and among them, 82 placements were secured through LD's referral services.³

14. Some Members and deputations were of the view that frontline staff of LD job centres should proactively arrange interpretation services for EM job seekers, and training should be provided to LD staff to enhance their understanding and sensitivity of the specific needs of EMs. Some Members

³ According to the Administration, job seekers (including EMs) may be placed into employment either through the referral services of LD or by direct application to employers. At present, an overwhelming majority of the vacancies advertised through LD are open for direct application by job seekers. Job seekers (including EMs) who have found work through direct application are not required to report their employment status to LD. Therefore, LD does not have the placement rate of EM job seekers.

suggested that LD should keep comprehensive records on the use of interpretation services (e.g. information on the waiting time) for evaluation purpose, and the interpretation service provided over the telephone should be replaced by video conferencing. The Administration was urged to provide dedicated employment support for EM job seekers, and to consider hiring EM employment officers to serve EMs.

15. According to the Administration, LD invited NGOs serving EMs to deliver talks from time to time on different cultural and religious customs as well as skills in communicating with EMs. Moreover, LD had enlisted the assistance of the Equal Opportunities Commission ("EOC") in providing training on equal opportunities and multi-culture for staff of job/recruitment centres. As regards the waiting time for interpretation services, the Administration advised that from January to May 2017, the average waiting time was less than five minutes.

16. The Administration further advised that LD had since May 2017 engaged two employment assistants proficient in EM languages at the Kowloon West Job Centre and the Employment in One-stop on a pilot basis to strengthen employment support for EM job seekers. Some Members took the view that the Administration should engage more EM staff to station at each of LD's job centres to provide employment services for EM job seekers. At the meeting on 13 February 2017, the Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities passed a motion urging the Government to establish an EM Employment Division in LD to coordinate an effective employment strategy for EMs and provide appropriate employment support services for non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") people. The Administration responded that it would continue to strengthen its employment services for EM job seekers. However, at present, it had no plan to establish an EM Employment Division in LD.

17. The Administration advised that LD launched in September 2014 the "Employment Services Ambassador Programme for Ethnic Minorities" ("the Programme"), employing trainees of the Youth Employment and Training Programme⁴ ("YETP") who could communicate in EM language as employment services ambassadors ("ESAs") to help EM job seekers make use of various job search facilities and services at job centres, industry-based recruitment centres and job fairs. According to the Administration, 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. As of January 2017, 78 ESAs had been employed under the Programme. Some Members considered that ESAs, who lacked work experience or knowledge of the job market, might not be able to

⁴ YETP 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.

offer any useful employment assistance to EM job seekers. The Administration advised that the employment officers were the ones who provided job matching and employment advisory services, whereas ESAs helped facilitate communication between staff and EM job seekers.

Employment of EMs for civil service posts

18. Members were 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. Some Members, however, queried the basis for requiring EMs to meet the Chinese LPR in order to secure employment in the civil service. Some Members further suggested that LPRs for EM for civil service posts and the requirement for written Chinese proficiency for disciplined service posts should be relaxed. There was also a suggestion that the Administration should set a recruitment ratio for NCS permanent residents for civil service posts to enhance EMs' employment opportunities.

19. According to the Administration, in setting LPRs for recruitment to the civil service, the job nature and operational requirements of the grade concerned were the primary considerations. Under the prevailing guidelines, individual civil service grades should ensure that LPRs specified were relevant to and commensurate with the satisfactory performance of the duties of the grades concerned. The Civil Service Bureau ("CSB") had issued guidelines to bureaux and departments reminding them to review and, where appropriate, adjust LPRs of civil service grades from time to time, taking into account any changing operational needs. Since 2010, there had been a total of 20 grades which had relaxed the Chinese LPRs upon review. In addition, as a new initiative, CSB had organized Chinese language training tailored for the vocational needs of serving non-ethnic Chinese staff in the Government to facilitate their effective performance of duties and career advancement. Disciplined services departments would continue to explore the feasibility of modifying their recruitment format/requirements to facilitate EMs' applications for jobs. Members may wish to note that, as announced in the 2017 Policy Address, the Administration would systematically review the requirement on written Chinese proficiency for various grades of the civil service, with a view to increasing government job opportunities for EMs.

Retraining services and vocational training for EMs

20. Some Members and deputations suggested that the Education Bureau and the Employees Retraining Board ("ERB") should offer more recognized Chinese courses to EMs so as to enhance their Chinese proficiency, and vocational training courses in more subject areas should be provided by the Vocational Training Council ("VTC") and ERB in English so as to facilitate skills enhancement of EMs. According to the Administration, ERB offered

full-time placement-tied courses and part-time "Skills Upgrading Scheme 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 personalized 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 continued to collaborate with the Home Affairs Department to offer training courses at its Support Service Centres for EMs in 2016-2017. In 2017-2018, ERB planned to reserve 800 training places to provide dedicated training courses⁵ for EMs and would subsidize training bodies to provide supplementary training materials and provide learning support services to facilitate EMs who could speak and comprehend Cantonese to attend some 500 training courses available to the general public.

21. According to the Administration, VTC offered a wide range of vocational and professional education and training programmes. For eligible NCS students who did not possess Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") Chinese Language qualifications, alternative qualifications such as those of General Certificate of Secondary Education/ International General Certificate of Secondary Education/ General Certificate of Education in Chinese Language or HKDSE Applied Learning Chinese (for NCS students) would be considered in meeting the admission requirements on a case-by-case basis. Members were also advised that VTC offered different language courses to NCS youth and adults to meet their training needs. In 2015-2016 academic year, VTC offered eight Vocational Chinese Short Courses, which enrolled 362 participants. In the same academic year, VTC offered about 20 dedicated full-time and part-time programmes for NCS students to cater for their different training needs, and about 800 NCS students were enrolled into these programmes in that academic year.

22. Some deputations also expressed concern that vocational training organizations, such as CIC, offered very few training courses in English for EM to enhance their vocational skills. On the other hand, with respect to the "EMs Skills Enhancement Course – Pilot Scheme" rolled out by CIC in December 2015 providing 60 training places, some Members called on the Administration to work in collaboration with NGOs serving EMs to attract more EM new entrants into the construction industry. The Administration advised that it had all along been working in collaboration with Education Bureau, ERB, VTC as well as NGOs serving EMs to provide support to EMs to improve their employability. As the Pilot Scheme was found effective, CIC had decided to offer "EMs Skills Enhancement Courses" for EM construction workers in 2017.

⁵ ERB provides dedicated training courses delivered in English to suit EMs' aspirations and training needs.

Labour rights and occupational safety of EM employees

23. At the meetings of the Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities on 9 January and 13 February 2017, some Members and deputations expressed concern that the exploitation of EMs in employment was prevalent. For example, EM employees were often paid lower wages for the same job than their Chinese counterparts. Due to language barrier, some EM employees were asked to sign employment contracts without fully understanding the employment terms and were subject to manipulation by their employers. At the above meetings, some deputations also raised that a majority of the public educational information and training courses of the Occupational Safety and Health Council were provided in Chinese only. EM employees who were not conversant in Chinese were unable to comprehend such information. The Administration was requested to promote the awareness of EM employees/potential employees of occupational safety and the legal protection under the labour law.

24. The Administration advised that employers and employees, regardless of their ethnicity, had equal access to the free consultation and conciliation services provided by the Labour Relations Division of LD. LD also produced publications in major EM languages to promote major provisions of the Employment Ordinance and employees' statutory rights and protection. In case EM employees suspected that they were offered a lower pay for the same job than their Chinese counterparts because of their race, these cases should be followed up by EOC as racial discrimination might be involved. LD would not allow employers posting job vacancies with the department to offer different pay levels based on ethnicity. As for promoting occupational safety, the Administration advised that LD worked in partnership with other organizations, such as the Occupational Safety and Health Council and workers' unions, to promote occupational safety to EM workers. Relevant promotional leaflets were translated into six EM languages, and lunchtime briefing sessions had been conducted for workers in the construction industry, including workers of South Asian origins, since late 2013.

Relevant Legislative Council questions

25. At the Council meeting of 15 February 2017, Hon KWOK Wai-keung raised a written question on the protection of labour rights and interests of EMs. At the Council meeting of 22 February 2017, Hon SHIU Ka-chun raised a written question on the employment support services provided for EMs. The questions raised by Mr KWOK and Mr SHIU (including the Administration's replies) are in **Appendices I** and **II** respectively.

Latest development

26. The Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities will discuss issues relating to the employment of EMs at the next meeting on 27 March 2018.

Relevant papers

27. A list of the relevant papers on the LegCo website is in **Appendix III**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
23 March 2018

Appendix I

Press Releases

LCQ2: Protection of labour rights and interests of ethnic minorities

Following is a question by the Hon Kwok Wai-keung and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Stephen Sui, in the Legislative Council today (February 15):

Question:

Recently, some members of the ethnic minorities (EMs) have relayed to me that some employers, taking advantage of their weakness of being unfamiliar with labour rights and interests, have hired them on employment terms which are inferior to the statutory requirements. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) in the past five years, (i) of the respective numbers of enquiries and complaints received by the authorities from EMs about their employers' alleged failure to offer them the labour rights and interests as prescribed by the law, (ii) how the authorities had dealt with such cases, and (iii) the number of cases in which employers who had allegedly breached the law were prosecuted;

(2) of the measures taken by the authorities in the past five years to safeguard EMs of their labour rights and interests; and

(3) whether the authorities will consider stepping up the following measures so as to protect the labour rights and interests of EMs: (i) inspecting those work places with relatively more EMs employees in order to check if the terms of employment of such employees comply with the statutory requirements, (ii) promoting the knowledge of labour rights and interests as well as of occupational safety among EMs, and (iii) providing more convenient channels for EMs to report law-breaking employers, as well as widely publicising such channels among EMs?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the question raised by Hon Kwok Wai-keung is as follows:

(1) Members of the public, irrespective of their ethnicity, have access to the free enquiry services provided by the Labour Department (LD) in respect of legislation on employees' rights and benefits as well as occupational safety and health (OSH) and may lodge complaints against suspected offences. LD will promptly follow up and conduct investigation upon receipt of a complaint. If there is sufficient evidence, LD will initiate prosecution against those law-defying employers. LD does not keep a breakdown of enquiries/ complaints/ prosecution cases by the ethnicity of the enquirers/ complainants.

(2) LD has all along been adopting multi-pronged measures to protect the statutory rights and benefits of employees under labour laws. Through proactive workplace inspections, LD endeavours to safeguard employees' entitlements and minimise

hazards at workplaces. Investigation of suspected offences will be conducted and employers who violate the law will be prosecuted. LD also provides consultation service in relation to the Employment Ordinance, the Minimum Wage Ordinance and employment contracts, and renders voluntary conciliation service to assist employers and employees in establishments outside the government sector to resolve their employment claims and disputes. Criminal investigation will be conducted for breaches of labour legislation detected in the course of conciliation.

To ensure that statutory rights and benefits of ethnic minorities (EMs) will not be jeopardised by language barriers, LD will arrange translation and interpretation services for EMs who speak neither Chinese nor English when rendering consultation and conciliation services, or during complaint investigations and law enforcement actions.

(3) Labour Inspectors (LIs) of LD initiate surprise inspections to workplaces in various sectors to monitor employers' compliance with labour laws, in order to safeguard the rights and benefits of employees including EMs. Subject to operational exigencies, LIs interview EM workers during inspections to enquire about their employment terms and conditions, and explain to them the protection and rights which they are entitled to under the labour laws.

LD also produces a large number of publications in major EM languages to publicise major provisions of labour legislation, employees' statutory rights and protection and the channels for reporting on law-defiant employers. In addition to dissemination through various channels, the e-versions of these publications have been uploaded to the Multi-Language Platform of the Gov.HK website and LD's homepage to facilitate EMs to browse the information. Other promotional efforts include publicising on radio programmes for EMs, and advertising on public transport and in newspapers for EMs, etc.

In respect of publicity and promotion on OSH, LD produces simple and reader-friendly promotional leaflets and materials for EMs, organises regional roving exhibitions and site visits/ talks in collaboration with workers' unions/ organisations/ trade associations, and promulgates work safety messages in local weekly EM newspapers to enhance their safety awareness. A list of leaflets / pamphlets on labour legislation and related services published by LD in EM languages is at Annex.

Moreover, LD widely publicises its 24-hour Enquiry Hotline: 2717 1771 through its homepage, the Gov.HK website, various leaflets on labour laws and during promotional activities. The hotline, operated by 1823, answers enquiries on labour legislation and makes referral on complaints received. When EMs call the hotline, the Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents (CHEER), funded by the Home Affairs Department, provides prompt telephone interpretation service and conducts three-way conference call to help the callers obtain the necessary information.

Ends/Wednesday, February 15, 2017
Issued at HKT 14:28

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Leaflets / Pamphlets on Labour Legislation and Occupational Safety and Health Legislation with Related Services in Ethnic Minority Languages

	Titles of leaflets / pamphlets in ethnic minority languages
1.	Employment Ordinance at a Glance
2.	A Concise Guide to Paternity Leave under the Employment Ordinance
3.	A Concise Guide to the Employment (Amendment) Ordinance 2010
4.	Part-time Employment - Know More about Labour Legislation
5.	Statutory Minimum Wage : Latest Revision
6.	Concise Guide to Statutory Minimum Wage
7.	Concise Guide to Productivity Assessment for Employees with Disabilities under the Statutory Minimum Wage Regime
8.	A Concise Guide to the Employment of Children Regulations
9.	A Guide to the Employment of Child Entertainers
10.	A Concise Guide to the Employment of Young Persons (Industry) Regulations
11.	A Guide on Civil and Criminal Proceedings Related to the Employment Ordinance
12.	Fact Sheet on Employment Claims Investigation Division, Labour Department
13.	Important Information for Employers and Employees on Compensation for Work Injuries and Occupational Diseases
14.	How to Apply for Employees' Compensation for Death
15.	Notes for Construction Workers
16.	Industrial Safety (General Duties of Persons Employed)
17.	Safety at Work - A Guide to Personal Protective Equipment
18.	Falling a Few Feet Can Be Fatal Use Suitable Working Platform
19.	Common Unsafe Conditions When Working at Height on Construction Sites (1)
20.	Common Unsafe Conditions When Working at Height on Construction Sites (2)
21.	A Casebook of Fatal Accidents Related to Work-at-Height

	Titles of leaflets / pamphlets in ethnic minority languages
22.	Fatal Accidents Related to Work-at-height – Case 1
23.	Fatal Accidents Related to Work-at-height – Case 3
24.	Fatal Accidents Related to Work-at-height – Case 7
25.	Common Unsafe Electrical Facilities on Construction Sites – Exposed Live Conductors
26.	Common Unsafe Electrical Facilities on Construction Sites - Exposed Live Conductors on Switchboards
27.	They Hold a Family's Fortunes
28.	It Can Save a Life
29.	Never Mix Cleansing Agents Haphazardly
30.	3 Steps To Electrical Work Safety
31.	Protect your Hearing (High Noise Jobs can Cause Permanent Damage)
32.	Make Every Step Safe When Working at Heights
33.	Guard Your Eyes – Use Proper Eye Protection at Work
34.	Guidance Notes for the Safe Isolation of Electricity Source at Work
35.	Dangerous Parts of Machinery or Plant
36.	Operational Guide for Air Receivers
37.	Prevention Against Fall From Height
38.	To Play Safe, Lift Heavy Objects Properly
39.	Occupational Health Clinic (Poster)
40.	Prevent Heat Stroke When Working in a Hot Weather (Construction Worker) (Poster)
41.	Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work in a Hot Environment
42.	Work-related Neck and Back Pain
43.	Decompression Illness

Appendix II

Press Releases

LCQ5: Employment support services provided for ethnic minorities

Following is a question by the Hon Shiu Ka-chun and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Stephen Sui, in the Legislative Council today (February 22):

Question:

The responsible person of a welfare organisation providing services for the ethnic minorities (EMs) has relayed to me that the Labour Department (LD) has failed to provide tailor-made assistance for job seekers of South Asian descent and the employment support services currently provided by LD for EMs (e.g. "Employment Services Ambassador Programme for Ethnic Minorities" and the special counters and resource corners provided at job centres) are not effective at all. Regarding the employment support services provided by LD for EMs, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the details of the special counters, including (i) their set-up dates, (ii) their present locations, (iii) the special services provided at such counters, (iv) the staffing establishment for providing such services (with a breakdown by rank) and the relevant training received by them, and (v) the number of cases handled in the past three years with a breakdown by type of cases; whether it will consider increasing the number of such counters; if so, of the increase; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as some concern groups have relayed that only information such as leaflets on support service centres for EMs and information on other social resources, which is not related to employment, is provided at the resource corners, whether LD will make improvement in this respect; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) of the existing means or channels through which LD encourages employers to employ EM job seekers; whether it has assessed the effectiveness of the efforts made in this respect; if so, of the outcome;

(4) of the existing means or channels (other than during the period when LD recruits employers to join inclusive job fairs) through which LD encourages potential employers to set lower language proficiency requirements for job seekers as far as possible, so as to enable more EMs to apply for the vacancies concerned; whether it has assessed the effectiveness of the efforts made in this respect; if so, of the outcome; and

(5) given that the Panel on Manpower of this Council passed a motion at its meeting on March 15, 2016, requesting the Government to establish an Ethnic Minorities Employment Division in one of the job centres of LD, at which fluent English-speaking EM staff are employed to provide employment support services for non-Chinese-speaking people, whether LD has adopted any follow-up measures in this respect; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the Hon Shiu Ka-chun's question is as follows:

(1) Since July 2008, special counters have been set up at Labour Department (LD)'s job centres to provide ethnic minority (EM) job seekers with job referral services. The locations of the 13 job centres are at Annex. Special counters are manned by experienced employment officers who are university graduates and proficient in English. Apart from general job referral services, staff of the special counters also arrange personalised employment advisory service for individual EM job seekers and guide them on the use of facilities at the job centres, etc. in accordance with their needs. To raise the multi-cultural sensitivity of the employment officers, LD invites non-governmental organisations (NGOs) serving EMs to deliver talks from time to time on different cultural and religious customs as well as skills in communicating with EMs. LD also collaborates with the Equal Opportunities Commission on provision to staff of job/recruitment centres training on equal opportunities and multi-culture.

LD's job centres flexibly adjust manpower deployed to special counters and other counters from time to time based on the service demand among various groups of job seekers. LD does not keep statistics in respect of services provided to EM job seekers through the special counters. According to LD's continuous monitoring of the utilisation of the special counters, the current arrangements meet EM job seekers' demand for the service concerned.

(2) Resource corners for EM job seekers are set up at LD's job centres to provide them with employment information. Apart from the leaflets published by the Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities, resource corners are also equipped with a wide range of publications and practical guides on job search written in English, such as newspapers providing job vacancy information, books and magazines on job hunting tips, reference books on resume-writing, dictionaries in different EM languages, Chinese-English common vocabularies for job interviews (with Romanised Cantonese), information on training and retraining (including Chinese language courses), etc. LD will continue to identify suitable materials on job search which cater to the needs of EM job seekers to enrich the collection of the resource corners.

(3) and (4) To encourage employers to hire EMs, LD has been actively promoting the working abilities of EMs among employers through different channels, and reminding them to consider the genuine needs of the posts when specifying the language requirement.

To help employers better understand the cultures of EMs and to canvass vacancies suitable for EMs, LD organises experience sharing sessions regularly for employers. NGOs serving EMs are invited to participate in these sessions. LD publishes success employment cases of EMs in the newspapers to help the public and employers better understand EMs' working abilities. These cases are also published in promotional leaflets and uploaded to the employers' zone and dedicated webpage for EM job seekers on the Interactive Employment Service (iES) website, so as to encourage employers to employ EMs. Furthermore, LD organises large-scale and district-based inclusive job fairs to enhance the employment opportunities of EMs.

LD has been encouraging employers to relax their language requirement so as to enable more EMs to apply for their vacancies. When employers are filling in the Vacancy Order Form on the iES website, LD displays messages at different stages to remind them to specify the language requirement based on the genuine needs of the job, and suggest they could adopt a lower language requirement to attract more job seekers to apply for the vacancies. When providing personalised employment advisory service to EM job seekers, employment officers help them identify jobs which correspond with their individual circumstances. If necessary, employment officers proactively contact the employers to encourage them to adopt a more flexible language requirement.

Since March 2015, LD has added an option of "Ethnic minorities are welcome for the post" in its Vacancy Order Form for employers to choose from so as to facilitate employment officers in matching suitable jobs for EM job seekers and encourage EMs to apply for the posts. From March to December 2015, job vacancies with such indication amounted to 97 040, and further increased to 140 255 in the same period of 2016. In parallel, the number of job vacancies with little Chinese language requirement (including those not requiring the applicants to be able to read or write Chinese) has also increased from 69 537 in 2015 to 72 081 in 2016.

(5) LD has all along been providing dedicated services, such as the special counters, resource corners and employment briefings, etc to cater for the employment needs of EMs. LD operates 13 job centres across the territory to facilitate the use of employment services by job seekers (including EMs) living in various districts. LD has also made arrangements with NGOs to provide interpretation services for EM job seekers who speak neither Chinese nor English.

Since September 2014, LD has been implementing the Employment Services Ambassador Programme for Ethnic Minorities whereby trainees of the Youth Employment and Training Programme who can communicate in EM language are employed to serve as Employment Services Ambassadors (ESAs) to help EM job seekers make use of various job search facilities and services at job centres, recruitment centres and job fairs. EM job seekers may also meet employment officers at job centres to obtain personalised employment advisory service. Experienced employment officers, who are familiar with the local employment market and proficient in English, provide EM job seekers with job search advice and employment information in accordance with their individual needs and preferences, and match them with suitable jobs. At the same time, LD continues canvassing and disseminating vacancies suitable for EMs, and organising inclusive job fairs to enhance their employment opportunities.

In 2017, LD will, on a pilot basis, engage a total of two staff proficient in EM languages to partner with experienced employment officers at the Kowloon West Job Centre in Sham Shui Po and the Employment in One-stop in Tin Shui Wai to serve EM job seekers.

LD will continue to provide dedicated employment services suited to the needs of EM job seekers in different districts through its existing job centres, wide-ranging services, vast employer network, and EM ESAs. LD will continue engaging staff proficient in EM languages at the two selected job centres to strengthen the services provided to EM job seekers.

Ends/Wednesday, February 22, 2017
Issued at HKT 17:11

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Addresses of Labour Department's Job Centres

Hong Kong Island

Hong Kong East Job Centre	34/F, Revenue Tower, 5 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong.
Hong Kong West Job Centre	4/F, Western Magistracy Building, 2A Pokfulam Road, Sai Ying Pun, Hong Kong.
North Point Job Centre	12/F, North Point Government Offices, 333 Java Road, North Point, Hong Kong.

Kowloon

Kowloon East Job Centre	1/F, Trade and Industry Tower, 3 Concorde Road, Kowloon
Kowloon West Job Centre	9/F, Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices, 303 Cheung Sha Wan Road, Kowloon.
Kwun Tong Job Centre	10/F, Kowloon East Government Offices, 12 Lei Yue Mun Road, Kwun Tong. Kowloon.

New Territories

Shatin Job Centre	2/F, Shatin Government Offices, 1 Sheung Wo Che Road, Shatin, New Territories.
Tai Po Job Centre	3/F, Tai Po Government Offices, 1 Ting Kok Road, Tai Po, New Territories.
Sheung Shui Job Centre	Units 2001-2006, Level 20, Landmark North, 39 Lung Sum Avenue, Sheung Shui, New Territories
Tsuen Wan Job Centre	2/F, Tsuen Wan Government Offices, 38 Sai Lau Kok Road, Tsuen Wan, New Territories.
Tuen Mun Job Centre	G/F, Victory Building, 3 Tsing Min Path, Tuen Mun, New Territories.
Tung Chung Job Centre	Unit 211A, 2/F, Yat Tung Shopping Centre, Yat Tung Estate, Tung Chung, Lantau Island, New Territories.
Employment in One-stop	Unit 401, 4/F, Tin Ching Amenity and Community Building, Tin Ching Estate, Tin Shui Wai, New Territories

**Relevant documents on
Issues relating to the employment of ethnic minorities**

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Legislative Council	27.2.2013	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 68 – 71 (Written question)
	13.11.2013	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 126 – 130 (Written question)
Panel on Manpower	19.11.2013 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Finance Committee	3.4.2014	Agenda Minutes
Subcommittee on Poverty	25.4.2014	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Manpower	16.12.2014 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
	19.5.2015 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Constitutional Affairs	16.11.2015 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Subcommittee on Poverty	17.11.2015	Agenda Minutes
	15.3.2016	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Manpower	15.3.2016 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
House Committee	20.5.2016	Report of the Subcommittee on Poverty

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Legislative Council	9.11.2016	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 78 – 84 (Written question)
Panel on Manpower	15.11.2016 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities	9.1.2017	Agenda Minutes
	13.2.2017	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	15.2.2017	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 15 – 19 (Written question)
	22.2.2017	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 21 – 26 (Written question)
Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities	12.6.2017	Agenda Minutes
	10.7.2017	Agenda Minutes

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
23 March 2018