

LCQ12: Support for ethnic minorities

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (September 1):

Question:

Regarding the support for the ethnic minorities (EMs), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Government indicated in the 2018 Policy Address that \$500 million had been earmarked for strengthening the support for EMs, of the current commitment (with a breakdown by the measures involved) and balance of the funding;

(2) given that schools are provided under the "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework" an additional funding based on the number of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students admitted by them, of the number of schools provided with such funding in each of the past three years;

(3) given that in order to enhance the professional capability of serving Chinese Language teachers in teaching Chinese to NCS students, the Education Bureau has implemented the "Professional Enhancement Grant Scheme for Chinese Language Teachers (Teaching Chinese as a Second Language)" to disburse subsidies to teachers who enrol in the relevant programmes, of the number of teachers who participated in the Scheme in each of the past three years;

(4) given that the Labour Department commissioned two non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in November last year to implement the "Racial Diversity Employment Programme", which provided EMs with one-stop employment services through a case management approach, of the number of job seekers participating in the Programme so far and, among them, the number of those who have successfully secured employment;

(5) given that the Employees Retraining Board implemented the "Love Upgrading Special Scheme 4" in July this year to help the unemployed or underemployed upgrade their skills for self-enhancement and joining the employment market, whether it has assessed if the types and numbers of courses provided to EMs under the Scheme are sufficient to meet the demand; and

(6) given that the Social Welfare Department has commissioned three NGOs to set up three outreaching teams for ethnic minorities (OTEMs) to proactively reach out to EMs and connect those in need with mainstream welfare services, of, in the past 12 months, (i) the manpower of each OTEM and (ii) the number of EMs reached out by OTEMs and, among them, the number of those who received services, with a breakdown by the type of the services involved?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to the well-being of ethnic minorities (EMs), and has always strived to ensure that Hong Kong citizens, irrespective of their race, have equal access to public services. With regard to the Member's question, having consulted the Human Resources Planning and Poverty Co-ordination Unit of the Chief Secretary for Administration's Private Office and the Education Bureau, I set out the reply as follows:

(1) For the effective deployment of the \$500 million earmarked in the 2018-19 Budget, the Government formulated a series of new measures covering education, employment, health, social welfare and social integration to enhance support for EMs. These measures were announced in the Chief Executive's Policy Address in 2018 and 2019, details of which can be found in the relevant leaflet (www.policyaddress.gov.hk/2018/eng/pdf/Leaflet_support.pdf) and Chapter 6 of the 2019 Policy Address Supplement (www.policyaddress.gov.hk/2019/eng/pdf/supplement_6.pdf). The two rounds of new measures have all been put to implementation. The estimated expenditure on these new measures in the four financial years from 2019-20 to 2022-23 is set out at Annex 1.

Resources for the implementation of the recurrent measures have been provided in the annual estimates of the responsible departments. Time-limited recurrent/non-recurrent measures generally last for three to five financial years. On the basis of the progress of implementation of these measures, all provisions will be used up upon the conclusion of these measures.

(2) Starting from the 2014/15 school year, the Education Bureau (EDB) has substantially increased the additional funding to schools with a view to facilitating schools to implement the "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework" and create an inclusive learning environment in schools to step up the education support for NCS students in learning the Chinese language. Starting from the 2014/15 school year, all public sector primary and secondary schools and Direct Subsidy Scheme primary and secondary schools offering the local curriculum and admitting 10 or more NCS students are provided with an additional funding ranging from \$800,000 to \$1.5 million per year depending on the number of NCS students admitted to adopt diversified intensive learning and teaching modes as appropriate with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of NCS students in learning Chinese. As regards primary and secondary schools admitting a relatively small number of NCS students (i.e. one to nine students), they might also apply for an additional funding of \$50,000 per year on a need basis to offer after-school Chinese language support programmes up to the 2019/20 school year. Starting from the 2020/21 school year, the EDB has provided a new funding mode for primary and secondary schools admitting one to nine NCS students, under which these schools are provided with an additional funding of \$150,000 or \$300,000 per year depending on the number of NCS students admitted. The number of primary and secondary schools provided with the above-mentioned funding from the 2018/19 to 2020/21 school years were 457, 466 and about 650 respectively.

(3) In order to enhance teachers' professional capacity, the EDB has been

providing diversified training opportunities to Chinese language teachers who teach NCS students. The Professional Enhancement Grant Scheme for Chinese Language Teachers (Teaching Chinese as a Second Language) (the Scheme) aims to subsidise serving primary and secondary Chinese language teachers to pursue designated master's degree or post-graduate certificate/diploma programmes so as to equip them with the pedagogical knowledge and skills to teach NCS students Chinese. Teachers who join the Scheme on a voluntary basis have to pursue the designated programmes after working hours and it usually takes about two years to complete. In the past three years (i.e. 2018/19 to 2020/21 school years), applications for the Scheme from a total of 30 teachers were approved. In addition, teacher education universities have organised relevant training for teachers, such as the "Certificate in Professional Development Programme on the Teaching of Chinese Language for Non-Chinese Speaking Students", which is a five-week course available for Chinese language teachers who teach NCS students in primary and secondary schools. The EDB also from time to time organises short term half-day sharing sessions, workshops as well as teacher professional development programmes on supporting NCS students in learning Chinese. These programmes cover curriculum planning, learning and teaching strategies and assessment. As these short-term courses are more flexible in nature, the number of participating teachers is higher.

(4) The Labour Department launched the Racial Diversity Employment Programme in November 2020. As at end July 2021, 453 EM job seekers have participated in the programme, with 144 successful placements, including 35 placed through the referral of the two non-governmental organisations (NGOs) commissioned under the programme.

(5) The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) holds regular focus group meetings to identify the training and employment needs of EMs, and to discuss the provision of courses and training places in need. It also reviews the relevant training courses and services from time to time, taking into consideration the findings of EM trainees' opinion surveys and the views of various stakeholders.

(6) The Social Welfare Department has commissioned NGOs to set up three outreaching teams with employment of EM staff on Hong Kong Island, in Kowloon and the New Territories, which have commenced service since March 2020. In 2020-21, the three outreaching teams have contacted 2 645 EMs. The SWD is compiling statistical figures on the types of welfare services required by the relevant cases. As a preliminary observation, most of the cases involved financial assistance, and other common types were employment assistance, emotional support, and housing assistance, etc.