

LCQ16: Provision of support and services for the ethnic minorities

Following is a question by the Hon Claudia Mo and a written reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Patrick Nip, in the Legislative Council today (July 4):

Question:

The Government announced in this year's Budget that it would set up a steering committee to take charge of the co-ordination, review and monitoring of the work of supporting ethnic minorities (EMs). Also, the Government would earmark \$500 million to strengthen the support for EMs. Regarding the provision of support and services for EMs, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is learnt that the authorities held a sharing session earlier to collect views on the work of the aforesaid steering committee, of the details of the views collected and the list of organisations and individuals who attended the sharing session; whether interpretation services are among the items for which support will be strengthened; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that the authorities promulgated the Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality (the Guidelines) in as early as 2010, but it is learnt that only 23 government departments have currently formulated relevant measures in accordance with the requirements of the Guidelines, whether the authorities will encourage more government departments to adopt the Guidelines; if so, of the details and timetables of the work; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) of the number of occasions in each of the past three years on which the relevant policy bureaux/government departments (B/Ds) arranged interpretation services for EMs in accordance with the requirements of the Guidelines, and the names of the organisations which provided the interpretation services, with a breakdown of the relevant information by B/D;

(4) of the number of occasions in each of the past three years on which each B/D engaged the interpretation services provided by the Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents operated by the Hong Kong Christian Service, with a breakdown by (i) category of services (i.e. telephone interpretation service, on-sight interpretation service, on-site (escort) interpretation service, simultaneous interpretation service, translation service and proofreading service) and (ii) EM language;

(5) given that from the 2014-2015 school year onwards, the Education Bureau (EDB) has introduced the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework (Learning Framework) to further address the need for learning Chinese by non-Chinese speaking students, and has undertaken to review the

Learning Framework at a three-year interval, of the progress of the relevant review; whether there is any review that has yet to be conducted; the expected time for EDB to report the review results to this Council;

(6) given that some civic organisations have advocated the formulation of an Independent Curriculum on Learning Chinese as a Second Language by EDB to replace the Learning Framework, whether EDB will consider launching that curriculum in primary schools in the form of a pilot project; if EDB will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(7) whether the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) will consider implementing the following proposals: (i) to extend in phases the "Employment Services Ambassador Programme for Ethnic Minorities" to cover more job centres, (ii) to study the launching of a trial scheme on EM job centres for the provision of one-stop employment support services, and (iii) to consolidate the resources of LWB and the Labour Department for the establishment of an EM employment division to take charge of the formulation of strategies that are effective in assisting EMs in seeking employment; if LWB will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government attaches great importance to efforts for supporting the ethnic minorities (EMs). We have all along been taking measures to provide them with equal opportunities and facilitate their integration into our community. Some of the EMs have encountered difficulties in adaptation and social integration due to language barriers and cultural differences. The Government has earmarked \$500 million in the 2018-19 Budget to strengthen the relevant support services.

After consulting the relevant responsible departments, the consolidated reply to the question raised by Hon Claudia Mo is as follows:

(1) To enhance collaboration within the Government on support for EMs, the Chief Secretary for Administration chairs a cross-bureau steering committee to coordinate, review and monitor the work in this area.

Two focus group meetings were held on May 26 and June 4, 2018 to gather views on the enhancement of services for EMs from EM representatives and service providers. The Chief Secretary for Administration personally chaired the meetings. The organisations which attended the meetings and made written submissions are set out in Annex 1.

The views gathered at the focus group meetings cover various areas and the major views are set out at Annex 2.

(2) In 2010, the HKSAR Government issued the Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality (the Guidelines) to provide general guidance to relevant Government bureaux and departments and public authorities (hereafter referred to as "relevant authorities") to promote racial equality and ensure

equal access by EMs to public services in key areas concerned, and to take this into account in their formulation, implementation and review of relevant policies and measures. The Guidelines cover the key public service areas which are particularly relevant to meeting the needs of EMs and facilitating their integration into the community, namely, medical, education, vocational training, employment and major community services, etc. The Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau has all along been actively coordinating with various Government bureaux and departments to adopt and implement the Guidelines. The number of departments that have adopted the Guidelines has extended from 14 to 23 (note 1). The Government will continue to review the public service areas and departments covered by the Guidelines.

(3) Relevant authorities have been providing services to meet the needs of EMs under their respective policy areas, with a view to facilitating the EMs integrate into the society. Relevant authorities will provide suitable assistance to the EM service users according to these users' practical needs, including interpretation services, thereby ensuring their equal access to public services. Since the interpretation needs of EMs vary depending on what public services they are accessing to, relevant authorities will consider the actual situation and adopt appropriate procedures to provide interpretation services to EMs in need. The number of interpretation services arranged by the relevant authorities for EMs over the past three years and the related service providers are set out in Annex 3.

(4) The CHEER Support Service Centre for Ethnic Minorities (CHEER Centre) is operated by the Hong Kong Christian Service commissioned by the Home Affairs Department. In addition to its basic services (note 2), the CHEER Centre also provides interpretation and translation services between English and seven other EM languages (note 3) in non-specialised areas, which may be used by bureaux/departments and EMs. Interpretation services include mainly telephone interpretation and enquiry services. Depending on the availability of resources, other interpretation and translation services can also be arranged.

The breakdown of the use of the CHEER Centre's interpretation and translation services by bureaux/departments and EMs as well as by EM languages in the past three years are set out in Annex 4 and Annex 5 respectively.

(5) The Education Bureau (EDB) has, starting from the 2014/15 school year, allocated about \$200 million per year to step up the education support for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students in learning the Chinese language through, among others, the implementation of the "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework" (Learning Framework) in primary and secondary schools. The EDB has been reviewing the implementation of the "Learning Framework" and further enhancing the related teaching strategies, assessment tools and supporting resources for schools as appropriate in a timely manner in the light of the views of various stakeholders and school practices on learning and teaching. With respect to the curriculum, we will review the entire "Learning Framework" and fine-tune the learning objectives and details of each Key Stage (i.e. Primary 1-3, Primary 4-6 and Secondary 1-3) having due regard to the overall performance of students where appropriate at an

interval of three years. We are now in the active process of analysing data regarding learning, teaching and assessment since the implementation of the "Learning Framework" to inform the enhancement of the "Learning Framework", the "Chinese Language Assessment Tools for NCS Students" and the supporting resources accordingly. The findings will be reported to the Legislative Council upon completion of the related work.

(6) In view of the diversified linguistic backgrounds and years of learning Chinese among NCS students (notably EM students), distinct differences exist in the starting points of learning Chinese and their learning progress. If a uniformed standard of second language curriculum with structured learning objectives by stages is required of all NCS students in Hong Kong, it will not only fail to address the realistic learning circumstances of NCS students, but will also be ineffective in catering for their learning diversity. The flexibility of the "Learning Framework" allows teachers to set specific learning targets, learning progress and expected learning outcomes, as well as adapt and develop teaching materials for their NCS students with different starting points in learning Chinese and varying abilities to help NCS students with diversified learning needs learn Chinese progressively.

It involves a complex professional decision for embarking on which curriculum mode in facilitating NCS students' effective learning of Chinese. The "Learning Framework" has been implemented for only three years and the first cohort of NCS students that started learning Chinese Language under the "Learning Framework" in Primary 1 are now studying Primary 4. The support measures need time to take root and create a sustainable impact on the NCS students. The EDB will collect more data for in-depth analysis according to NCS students' learning pace and refine the "Learning Framework" as necessary. We have no plan to introduce other policies or projects in addition to the current policy.

(7) The Employment Services Division (ESD) of the Labour Department (LD) has all along been providing comprehensive and dedicated employment services for EM job seekers at each of its 13 job centres across the territory to facilitate the use of free employment services by EMs living in various districts. EM job seekers may receive job referral service and employment information through special counters and resource corners at any job centre and attend tailor-made employment briefings to better understand the latest labour market situation and improve their job search skills. EM job seekers may also meet employment officers 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 employment information in accordance with their individual needs and preferences, and match them to suitable jobs. ESD has also made arrangements with non-governmental organisations to provide interpretation services for EM job seekers who speak neither Chinese nor English. Moreover, since May 2017, ESD has engaged two employment assistants proficient in EM languages 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).

Since September 2014, LD has implemented the Employment Services Ambassador (ESA) Programme for Ethnic Minorities, under which trainees of the Youth Employment and Training Programme who can communicate in EM languages are employed as ESAs at job centres, recruitment centres and job fairs to help EM job seekers make use of various job search facilities and services. There is no pre-set quota on the number of ESAs for EMs, and LD will continue to engage them to work at job centres, recruitment centres and job fairs subject to the recruitment situation and service demand.

ESD will continue to provide employment services suited to the needs of EM job seekers and keep its strategies in view from time to time for enhancing the relevant services. We consider strengthening the dedicated employment support to EM job seekers provided through the existing job centres in different districts under the coordination of ESD will be more efficient and convenient to users than setting up a designated division or job centre(s) for them.

Note 1: The 23 B/Ds and public authorities are the Education Bureau, Social Welfare Department, Labour Department, Home Affairs Department, Employees Retraining Board, Vocational Training Council, Food and Health Bureau, Department of Health, Hospital Authority, Construction Industry Council, Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, Innovation and Technology Commission, Office of the Communications Authority, Housing Department, Hong Kong Observatory, Hongkong Post, Legal Aid Department, Hong Kong Police Force, Correctional Services Department, Customs and Excise Department, Immigration Department, Fire Services Department and Registration and Electoral Office.

Note 2: The CHEER Centre's basic services include Cantonese and English classes, dedicated learning classes, counselling service and other integration programmes.

Note 3: The seven EM languages are Bahasa Indonesia, Hindi, Nepali, Punjabi, Tagalog, Thai and Urdu.