

Speech by CS at Inauguration Ceremony of Federation of Hong Kong Ethnic Communities (English only) (with photo/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, at the Inauguration Ceremony of the Federation of Hong Kong Ethnic Communities today (November 16):

Mr Vijay Harilela (Co-Founder, Federation of Hong Kong Ethnic Communities), Mr Mohan Chugani (Co-Founder, Federation of Hong Kong Ethnic Communities), Mrs Regina Ip (Member of the Legislative Council), Mr Tam Yiu-chung (Member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress), Consuls-General, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It is my honour to join you all at the Inauguration Ceremony of the Federation of Hong Kong Ethnic Communities.

Hong Kong is a cosmopolitan city with over 260 000 non-Chinese ethnic minorities of diverse backgrounds. The Indian, Pakistani and Nepalese communities have established roots in Hong Kong for more than a century. Generations of ethnic minorities have contributed greatly to the social, economic and cultural development of Hong Kong. However, owing to cultural difference and language barriers, they usually form separate community clusters, among which there is little interaction.

I am delighted to see that the Federation, which is the first of its kind, is formed to unite various ethnic minority communities in Hong Kong and pursue the common goal of contributing positively to the betterment of Hong Kong. I note that the Federation has members from the Indian, Pakistani, Nepalese and Bangladeshi communities and welcomes other ethnic minority communities with open arms.

The current-term Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government is committed to building an inclusive and caring society to bring together people from different backgrounds to live and work here. In view of the increasingly diverse needs of our ethnic minority communities, we have set up a Steering Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs, chaired by myself as the Chief Secretary, to enhance cross-bureau collaboration and will be spending over \$500 million starting from 2019-20 to strengthen support on all fronts for ethnic minorities.

We are committed to providing support services to help ethnic minorities integrate into the community. To facilitate barrier-free access to these services, the HKSAR Government will improve the Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality for application to all government bureaux and

departments as well as related public organisations providing services to ethnic minorities.

At present, the Home Affairs Department has commissioned non-government organisations to operate eight support service centres for ethnic minorities which provide a wide range of services, including language classes, integration programmes and counselling services. Over 96 000 people can benefit from these centres each year. Starting from 2019-20, the services of these centres will be further strengthened, particularly those services catering for ethnic minority new arrivals and youths.

One of these centres, the CHEER Centre, provides translation and interpretation services to connect ethnic minorities to public service providers. Additional funding has been earmarked to enhance its existing services for seven ethnic minority languages and introduce new services in Vietnamese.

To encourage interaction and exchange between the ethnic minority and local communities, we will engage all relevant stakeholders such as ethnic minority organisations and district organisations to organise more district-based activities. We wish that these activities can help break the ice between ethnic minority and Chinese residents.

We are also mindful of the needs of some ethnic minorities for support in seeking employment. Some of them may still grapple with challenges such as language barriers and cultural differences when finding jobs.

Over the past years, the Government has implemented various measures to promote employment for the ethnic minorities. The Labour Department (LD) seeks to provide employment support services which cater for the needs of ethnic minority job seekers. Dedicated services such as special counters, resource corners and tailor-made employment briefings are in place at all job centres. Experienced employment officers who are familiar with the local employment market can offer them personalised employment advisory services, such as job search advice and job matching services. Free interpretation services are also provided for job seekers who can neither speak Chinese nor English to facilitate their access to LD's employment services.

In parallel, riding on its employer network spanning different industries and occupations, LD actively canvasses suitable vacancies for them. It also organises inclusive job fairs targeting at ethnic minority job seekers to enhance their employment opportunities.

The LD has also implemented the Employment Services Ambassador Programme for Ethnic Minorities to encourage trainees of the Youth Employment and Training Programme who are proficient in ethnic minority languages to undergo six-month on-the-job training at job centres, industry-based recruitment centres and job fairs. The Programme aims to help the LD better serve ethnic minority job seekers while enhancing young trainees' work experience and benefiting their job search in the open market. The LD has so far employed 127 young trainees since the launch of the programme.

I must stress that the Government spares no effort in maintaining close connection with the ethnic minority communities and relevant service providers to explore new avenues to explore new opportunities for ethnic minorities. To further capitalise on the community network and experience in serving the ethnic minorities, LD will launch a pilot programme in conjunction with NGOs to provide one-stop employment services for ethnic minority job seekers through a case management approach to help remove hurdles to their employment and upgrade their skills.

To facilitate our non-Chinese speaking community's access to public services, we have published a leaflet on the support measures for ethnic minorities in English, Chinese and six ethnic minority languages.

To build a harmonious and inclusive society, Government's effort alone is not enough. We need the support of the community. We will launch the second phase of the Member Self-recommendation Scheme for Youth next month. I would like to take this opportunity to invite aspiring ethnic minority youths to actively participate in the Scheme and bring your voice into the Government.

On this note, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Federation of Hong Kong Ethnic Communities on its inauguration today. I wish the Federation every success in the years ahead, and every one of you good health, all happiness and every success. Thank you so much.

