Committee on the Promotion of Racial Harmony

Notes of the meeting on 24 October 2018

**Present**

**Home Affairs Department (HAD)**

Miss Janice Tse Director of Home Affairs

Miss Vega Wong (Chairperson) Deputy Director of Home Affairs

Mr Howard Yam Assistant Director of Home Affairs

Mr K Y Cheng Chief Executive Officer

Mr Alfred Shum (Secretary) Senior Executive Officer

**Official Members**

Ms Judy Chung Principal Assistant Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (5),

Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau

Ms Teresa Chan Principal Assistant Secretary for Education (Education Commission and Planning), Education Bureau

Mr Charles Hui Acting Deputy Commissioner for Labour, Labour Department

Ms Priscilla Yip Senior Information Officer (Campaign) 1, Information Services Department

**Non-official Members**

Mr Mohamed Ibramsa Sikkander Batcha

Ms Ping Somporn Bevan

Ms Cheung Yee May, Mimi

Dr Theresa Cunanan

Mr Syed Ekram Elahi

Ms Rita Gurung

Mr Vijay Harilela

Mr Hung Chiu Wah, Derek

Mr Akil Khan

Mrs Poonam Vijayprakash Mehta

Ms Rigam Rai

For Agenda Item (2)

Mr Matthew Cheung Chief Secretary for Administration

Ms Angelina Kwan Head, Human Resources Planning and Poverty Co-ordination Unit (HRPPCU), Chief Secretary for Administration’s Private Office (CSPO)

Ms Emily Mo Deputy Head, HRPPCU, CSPO

**Absent with apologies**

Mr Avinash Chandiram Hotchadani

Mr Hafiz Mohammad

Dr Chura Bahadur Thapa

1. Introduction
   1. The Chairperson welcomed Members to the meeting, including two new Members, namely Mr Syed Ekram Elahi and Ms Rita Gurung, who had been appointed to the Committee since 1 June 2018. Two other newly appointed Members, Mr Avinash Chandiram Hotchadani and Dr Chura Bahadur Thapa, were unable to attend the meeting due to prior commitment. She also expressed gratitude to two special guests, Mr Matthew Cheung, Chief Secretary for Administration (CS), and Miss Janice Tse, Director of Home Affairs.
2. Confirmation of the notes of discussion on 13 March 2018
   1. The notes of the last meeting held on 13 March 2018 were confirmed.
3. 2018 Policy Address Initiatives on Strengthening Support for Ethnic Minorities
   1. CS introduced a package of measures announced in the 2018 Policy Address to enhance the services provided to ethnic minorities (EMs) in Hong Kong. He said that the Government’s objective was to build a truly caring, inclusive and fair society. He told the meeting that a high-level Steering Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs (the Steering Committee), chaired by himself, was set up to take a critical view of the support services for EMs in Hong Kong. After rounds of meetings with EM groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) serving EMs in the past few months, a package of measures costing over $500 million had been drawn up to enhance support for EMs in four main areas, namely education, employment support, access to social welfare services and social integration. These support measures included –

* strengthening services of support service centres, including enhancing the interpretation and translation services provided by the CHEER Centre;
* organising more district-based activities to encourage interaction between EM and local communities;
* enhancing the subsidy for kindergartens joining the Kindergarten Education Scheme based on the number of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students admitted;
* introducing a new grant for public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools admitting NCS students with special educational needs;
* commissioning post-secondary institutions to provide school-based support services for schools on Chinese language learning and teaching of NCS students;
* enhancing manpower support to the Labour Department to launch a pilot programme in conjunction with NGOs to provide employment services for EM job seekers through a case management approach;
* expanding the range of dedicated training courses for EMs by the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) and relax the enrolment requirements for certain of its courses;
* strengthening outreaching efforts to EMs in need with the support from NGOs in districts having a large concentration of EMs to connect them to mainstream welfare services ;
* improving the Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality for application to all Government bureaux and departments providing services to EMs;
* enhancing training and instilling a sense of cultural sensitivity within the civil service; and
* launching a short-term internship programme in the civil service for EM university students.
  1. After the introduction by CS, Members raised some comments and suggestions on the Government’s initiatives to enhance support for EMs, as summarised below –
* There were concerns about the sustainability of the new measures as the $500 million funding would only last for the tenure of current-term Government.
* It would be important to monitor the performance of these key initiatives.
* It was noted that the number of subsidised post-secondary education places was limited and self-funded programmes had steep tuition fees. It was therefore suggested that financial assistance should be provided to NCS students from low-income families to assist them in their pursuit of further education.
* Consideration should be given to enhance the subsidies for kindergartens and schools admitting a large number of EM students by adding extra tiers to the subsidy schemes.
* More flexibility should be introduced to the timing and duration of courses dedicated for EMs offered by the ERB to cater for the practices and schedules of different groups.
* The Government should make reference to the best practice in the private sector when it engaged EM youths to join the civil service.
* It was expressed that some investors might be willing to pay for the conversion costs of the property to meet the shortage of elderly homes for EMs if the Government could offer suitable premises.
* There should be a hotline to deal with domestic violence cases in Hindi, Urdu and English.
* Many Asian families considered it a stigma to receive financial assistance, such as the Working Family Allowance, from the Government.
* Workshops could be organised for social workers in schools admitting NCS students to familiarise them with various assistance and service programmes for EMs.
* The introduction of interpretation service in Vietnamese was considered helpful to EMs.
* Since the demand for interpretation service in public hospitals and social services had greatly increased in recent years, the ERB might consider offering tailor-made courses to train interpreters in major EM languages.
* The Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO) should equally apply to the Government.
  1. CS said the Steering Committee would continue to engage with stakeholders, closely monitor the progress of implementation of the new measures, and brief the Legislative Council at appropriate junctures. If the measures were proved to be effective, consideration would be given to turning them into regular, recurrent programmes.
  2. On education, CS said there were various subsidy schemes, including grants and loans, for students. Ms Teresa Chan added that for University Grants Committee-funded programmes, the number of NCS students admitted through the Joint University Programme Admissions System had increased significantly over the past few years, and for self-financing post-secondary programmes, NCS students were admitted on equal footing and enjoyed the same student financial assistance as their Chinese-speaking counterparts.
  3. On employees’ training, CS said that the ERB was a lot more flexible in terms of providing support to EM communities and there would be an expansion of quota for courses in industries common in the society. Mr Charles Hui added that apart from full-time placement-tied courses, the ERB also provided flexibility by offering courses in half-day or evening class mode. Under a special scheme of ERB, trainees may apply for a certificate bearing a qualification equivalent to a designated full-time course upon successful completion of a number of specified half-day or evening courses.
  4. On support services, CS said that the Social Welfare Department (SWD) operated a 24-hour hotline on domestic violence for all, including EMs, with interpretation service accessible to EM callers. For interpretation in public hospitals, he pointed out that while it might not be practicable to have an on-site interpreter around-the-clock, consideration would be given to arranging for interpreters to stand by to respond to emergency calls. The Chairperson supplemented that the CHEER Centre would provide instant telephone interpretation service which served as a link to public service providers. In addition, the SWD would enhance its prevention and support services for EMs in combating domestic and sexual violence.
  5. On the application of the RDO to the Government, Ms Judy Chung advised that the RDO binds the Government and makes it unlawful for the Government to discriminate against a person on the ground of race in areas prescribed in the RDO like employment, education, provision of goods and services, etc. Individuals are also protected from racially discriminatory acts of the Government under the Basic Law and the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance, and an aggrieved person may seek relief by bringing a public law challenge by way of judicial review.
  6. CS solicited Members’ assistance in promoting these new measures as well as the Working Family Allowance Scheme to the EM communities. He added that the Government was aware of the need to reduce stigma towards people receiving assistance and had established the Working Family Allowance Office, which was a separate setup from the SWD. On the other hand, he encouraged EMs who were interested in serving on Government boards and committees to submit their personal particulars to the Central Personality Index database maintained by the Home Affairs Bureau.
  7. The Chairperson thanked CS, Ms Kwan and Ms Mo for attending the meeting.

1. Any Other Business
   1. Lifesaving Training Incentive Programme for Ethnic Minority Youths
      1. Mr Howard Yam reported that the Lifesaving Training Incentive Programme for Ethnic Minority Youths was conducted between January and September 2018. After months of training in swimming, lifesaving skills and first-aid knowledge, 18 EM youths passed the examination and successfully obtained the Lifesaving Bronze Medallion. Members were invited to join the presentation ceremony to be held on 1 November 2018.
   2. Appearance of EMs in Government publicity materials
      1. The Chairperson said that there were comments that EMs should be given more exposure in Government publicity materials so as to recognise their involvement and contribution to the society. She said that the Government had taken the advice. In this connection, HAD’s EM Publicity Officers produced short videos which reminded the Chinese and EM communities to take precautionary measures before Typhoon Mangkhut hit Hong Kong last month. The videos were shown to Members.
      2. The Chairperson said that, on the other hand, certain EM groups did not wish to be featured in photos, videos and other publicity materials. She sought Members’ views on this. A Member replied that from the religious point of view, some people did not want to show their faces, especially Muslim ladies. Another Member advised that it was desirable to ask the people in the photos whether they would allow the photos to be published. Other Members suggested that the participants should be informed in advance if photos were to be taken during an event, or they might be asked to complete a consent form to indicate permission for their photos to be published.
   3. Frequency of meetings and suggested discussion topics
      1. A Member suggested that meetings be held more frequently, say three meetings a year. Mr Yam suggested that it could be a meeting or site visits so that Members could see the service in action. A Member concurred that the frequency of meeting should depend on the agenda to discuss and there were other channels through which Members could reflect their views, i.e. at district levels or other meetings with Government officials.
      2. A Member was concerned about the media’s practice of reporting the ethnicity of criminal suspects, which would project a very poor image on EMs in Hong Kong. She asked if the Meeting could look into the issue. The Chairperson replied that malpractices on the part of the media could be reported to the Communications Authority. Otherwise, it might not be appropriate for the Government to interfere. Mr Raymond Ho added that severe threats to or radical views on the EM community might amount to racial vilification, which could be reported to the Equal Opportunities Commission for follow up.
   4. The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

**Home Affairs Department**

**November 2018**