

Press Releases

LCQ14: Employment of the ethnic minorities

Following is the question by the Hon James To Kun-sun and a written reply by the Secretary for Economic Development and Labour, Mr Stephen Ip, in the Legislative Council today (May 9):

Question

Regarding the employment of the ethnic minorities, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) whether it has allocated or established funds for assisting the ethnic minorities in seeking employment; if it has, of the amount of funds used every year;
- (b) of the current numbers of social worker teams, community centres and non-governmental organisations that offer employment assistance to the South Asians living in Western Kowloon;
- (c) whether it will request the Employees Retraining Board to offer training courses on language and vocational skills specially for South Asians; and to provide them with job allowances, in order to enhance their employability; and
- (d) whether financial incentives will be provided to employers to encourage them to employ South Asians?

Reply

Madam President,

(a) The Administration has made every effort to promote employment. Various measures have been put in place to help job-seekers, including the ethnic minorities, find jobs. Through a network of 12 job centres, the Labour Department (LD) provides a comprehensive range of employment assistance and counselling services for job-seekers. Job-seekers may make use of the Interactive Employment Service website to register for employment services and browse information on employment and vacancies. Job referrals can also be secured through the Telephone Employment Service hotline. Various employment programmes including the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged, the Work Trial Scheme, the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme and the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme are open to the ethnic minorities.

Besides, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has commissioned non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to launch the Intensive Employment Assistance Projects (IEAPs) since October 2003. The projects aim at providing tailor-made employment services to help the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients with working abilities and the needy unemployed persons, including the unemployed ethnic minorities to find jobs and become self-reliant.

Other than IEAPs, the Administration commissioned NGOs to run two trial employment programmes in October 2006. These include three District Employment Assistance Trial Projects launched in Tin Shui Wai, Tsuen Wan/Kwai Tsing and Tung Chung districts in assisting the long-term CSSA recipients to rejoin the workforce, and two projects under the Special Training and Enhancement Programme (My STEP) to help and motivate the unemployed young CSSA recipients aged 15 to 24 living in Tin Shui Wai district in returning to work and moving towards self-reliance. The ethnic minorities are also the target participants of these two trial

programmes.

As the above services and programmes are open to all eligible persons irrespective of their race, we cannot provide the amount of funds solely applicable to the ethnic minorities.

Moreover, the Administration funds about 10 projects (including two in West Kowloon) under the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund to help improve the employability of ethnic minorities through building up their capabilities and social network as well as partnering with the business sector for job opportunities. Under the Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme, five projects have also been approved to help enhance the employability of ethnic minorities by raising their employment skills and capabilities. These projects also provide job opportunities for them.

(b) Currently, there are a total of 20 IEAPs run by 15 NGOs in the Kowloon West region (including Sham Shui Po, Kowloon City and Yau Tsim Mong districts). Tailor-made employment services are provided to the target participants including South Asians. Language training courses will also be arranged for the unemployed South Asians on a need basis so as to help them integrate into the community.

Based on district needs, the Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) of SWD will organise various groups and programmes to increase ethnic minorities' understanding of the community, enhance their social participation and provide more opportunities for their social integration. Where appropriate, IFSCs may refer their ethnic minority clients in need of employment assistance to LD for support.

LD has set up a job centre in the Kowloon West region. The job centre provides a wide range of employment services to the residents including ethnic minorities in the district. It is also equipped with a resource corner to provide information in English on the labour market and job-seeking skills. Some reference materials like the leaflet on "Easy-to-use Employment Services of the Labour Department" are translated into Tagalog, Indonesian, Thai, Hindi, Urdu and Nepali. Employment briefings in English and tailor-made for the needs of ethnic minorities are regularly conducted at the Job Centre to facilitate their understanding of the local job market and job-seeking skills.

(c) The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) plans to offer courses on security and property management as well as domestic help in English for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) adults on a pilot basis.

Two such courses will commence in the middle of this year depending on the enrolment situation. Other types of retraining courses will also be considered for NCS adults subject to market needs. Retraining allowance amounting to about \$150 per day will be payable to retrainees who achieve an attendance rate of 80% or more in ERB's full-time placement-tied courses lasting for more than one week, including the two planned courses for NCS adults.

To meet the demands of NCS students, the Vocational Training Council (VTC) plans to organise 13 dedicated programmes for NCS youths and adults offering about 300 places in the current academic year. These dedicated programmes are conducted in English and cover courses ranging from part-time trade licensing test preparatory course for in-service personnel to full-time Foundation Diploma courses for Secondary 5 leavers in the areas of business, information technology, hospitality, electrical and welding industries etc. VTC also plans to offer short vocational Chinese modules for NCS groups on a pilot basis.

Since 2000, the Home Affairs Bureau has been funding NGOs to provide progressive courses in practical Cantonese and English for

the ethnic minorities. The Bureau sponsored three NGOs to organise 70 classes (20 English and 50 Cantonese) in 2006-07 and has earmarked funding for organising 75 classes under this programme in 2007-08.

(d) The Administration promotes racial equality through public education and fosters a culture of mutual respect and social harmony. We also encourage employers to provide equal opportunities in employment. LD has launched the Employment Programme for the middle-aged to encourage employers, through the provision of training allowance, to take on the middle-aged including South Asians as full-time employees and provide them with on-the-job training. For each eligible job-seeker engaged, the employer will receive a training allowance of \$1,500 per month for up to three months. Ethnic minorities with special difficulties in finding employment may also join the Work Trial Scheme. On completion of the one-month work trial, the participant will be paid an allowance of \$5,000, of which \$500 is contributed by the participating organisation.

LD also runs the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme which aims to enhance the employability of young people, including South Asian youths, aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment below degree level by providing them with on-the-job training of 6 to 12 months. Employers providing on-the-job training places will receive a monthly training subsidy of \$2,000 for each trainee employed during the training period as well as full-package support services from LD.

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