

Police give extra points for foreign languages

Applicants for jobs as constables to get higher marks if they can speak and write in various tongues, in a push by the force to reach out to ethnic communities

New applicants for jobs as police constables will get extra marks for using foreign languages other than English in a move seen as part of efforts by the force to engage ethnic minorities after the fatal shooting of a Nepali street sleeper two years ago.

Points will be given to candidates who demonstrate speaking and writing skills in Hindi, Urdu, Nepali, Tagalog, French, German, Japanese or Korean in tests. Other languages may be added if resources allow.

"Our target is to enhance our service by finding more suitable talent through this review," chief inspector Francis Cheung Kwok-wai, of the police's recruitment division, said.

"From previous large-scale activities, like the Olympic equestrian events and World Trade Organisation meeting, we can see that the ability to use foreign languages will help the force greatly."

A support group fighting for minorities to be allowed to join the force welcomed the move, but said it had not heard of any South Asians being hired since the handover in 1997.

"It is a symbolic step that the police have finally agreed that they need ethnic minorities," Fermi Wong Wai-fun, director of Hong Kong Unison, said.

"I am very happy that they now appreciate the language talent of these people."

Wong said the force had shown a growing awareness of the need to engage minorities, noting that it had recently hired five South Asian community liaison officers.

But even with the revised recruitment procedure very few were likely to be able to join the police because they could not pass the Chinese language requirement, Wong said.

In a further change, candidates who fail the HKCEE Chinese examination are allowed to take a more practical government standard examination in the language.

Candidates will also be asked to write reports after watching English and Chinese video clips showing the public asking police for help.

Cheung rejected suggestions that the review, effective this month, had anything to do with an increasing number of crimes involving South Asians. The police also refused to say how many applicants were from minorities or how many were working in the force now.

Nepali Dil Bahadur Limbu was shot dead by police constable Hui Ka-ki on a Ho Man Tin hillside in March 2009. A 76-day inquest found that Limbu was lawfully killed and it did not make any recommendations to prevent similar fatalities.

Wong said the case was pivotal because police had taken many initiatives to engage minorities groups since then, including holding meetings with ethnic community leaders and engaging minority youths.

A recruitment talk and preliminary selection will be held at the police cadet school in Wong Chuk Hang next Saturday.

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COMMUNITY

POLICE GIVE EXTRA POINTS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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