

Minorities apply jointly for citizenship

Five members of *ethnic* minorities who call Hong Kong their home collectively applied for Chinese citizenship at the Immigration Tower yesterday, fearing they would be pressured to drop their applications if they went alone.

Their fear stemmed from past experiences of applicants who were told not to bother as they had no chance of success.

“*Ethnic* minorities often tell us that officers try to dissuade them from applying, such as by saying they need to have Chinese relatives to get citizenship, which just isn’t true,” said Fermi Wong, *minority*-rights group Hong Kong Unison’s executive director and the organiser of the joint application.

“We thought if we went as a group, they’d be less likely to try those deterrent tactics.”

Hong Kong-born social worker Jeffrey Andrews, 28, said when he tried to apply in 2007, an officer told him if he had “no Chinese in my blood”, he had no chance.

“[But] I contribute to society, I speak Cantonese, and I have lived in Hong Kong all my life,” said Andrews, an *ethnic* Indian.

Dr Shekhar Madhukar Kumta, also Indian, was turned down for Chinese citizenship in 2010 despite 23 years’ residence in Hong Kong and extensive contributions to the city’s medical and academic fields.

“With my credentials, I’d be accepted anywhere else ... I’ve lived in Hong Kong for 25 years and have been given no reason why my application was rejected,” he said.

Wong said the Immigration Department lacked a transparent procedure for those who wished to become Chinese nationals.

“Since Hong Kong was handed over to China, there’s been more of the idea that Hong Kong is for Chinese people only. The government needs to think about the consequences of rejecting *ethnic* diversity,” she said.

Thasbeeh Mohamed, 19, a University of Science and Technology student who has lived in Hong Kong for most of his life, said he would face trouble pursuing his dream career if he were denied a Chinese passport. “I want to be an accountant and that would require a lot of travelling on the mainland,” he said.

Under the Nationality Law, anyone may apply for naturalisation if they have settled in China, if they have near

relatives who are Chinese nationals, or have other legitimate reasons, an Immigration Department spokesman said.

IMMIGRATION

Minorities apply jointly for citizenship

The non-Chinese residents hope the move will help them successfully submit their applications



Joanna Chiu
joanna.chiu@scmp.com

Five members of ethnic minorities who call Hong Kong their home collectively applied for Chinese citizenship at the Immigration Tower yesterday, fearing they would be pressured to drop their applications if they went alone.

Their fear stemmed from past experiences of applicants who were told not to bother as they had no chance of success.

"Ethnic minorities often tell us that officers try to dissuade them from applying, such as by saying they need to have Chinese relatives to get citizenship, which just isn't true," said Ferni Wong, minority-rights group Hong Kong Unison's executive director and the organiser of the joint application.

"We thought if we went as a group, they'd be less likely to try those deterrent tactics."

Hong Kong-born social worker Jeffrey Andrews, 28, said when he tried to apply in 2007, an officer told him if he had "no Chinese in my blood", he had no chance.

"[But] I contribute to society, I speak Cantonese, and I have lived in Hong Kong all my life," said Andrews, an ethnic Indian.

Dr Shekhar Madhukar Kunta, also Indian, was turned down for Chinese citizenship in 2010 despite 23 years' residence in Hong Kong and extensive contributions to the city's medical and academic fields.

"With my credentials, I'd be accepted anywhere else ... I've lived in Hong Kong for 25 years and have been given no reason why my application was rejected," he said.

Wong said the Immigration Department lacked a transparent procedure for those who wished to become Chinese nationals.

"Since Hong Kong was handed over to China, there's been more of the idea that Hong Kong is for Chinese people only. The government needs to think about the consequences of rejecting ethnic diversity," she said.

Thasbeeh Mohamed, 19, a University of Science and Technology student who has lived in Hong Kong for most of his life, said he would face trouble pursuing his dream career if he were denied a Chinese passport. "I want to be an accountant and that would require a lot of travelling on the mainland," he said.

Under the Nationality Law, anyone may apply for naturalisation if they have settled in China, if they have near relatives who are Chinese nationals, or have other legitimate reasons, an Immigration Department spokesman said.

Ethnic minority residents speak to the press before heading to the Immigration Tower as a group yesterday. Photo: Felix Wong

DOCUMENT ID: 201304300270034

Source: Wisers electronic service. This content, the trademarks and logos belong to Wisers, the relevant organizations or copyright owners. All rights reserved. Any content provided by user is the responsibility of the user and Wisers is not responsible for such content, copyright clearance or any damage/loss suffered as a result.

----- 1 -----

Wisers Information Limited Enquiry: (852) 2948 3888 Email: sales@wisers.com Web site: http://www.wisers.com Copyright (c)2013Wisers Information Limited. All Rights Reserved.