**Meeting of the Ethnic Minorities Forum**

**21 September 2012 at 10:30 a.m.**

**30/F Conference Room, Southorn Centre, Wan Chai**

**Present**

**Home Affairs Department (HAD)**

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| Deputy Director of Home Affairs (2) | Mr Jack Chan (Chairman) |
| Assistant Director of Home Affairs (3) | Miss Dora Fu |
| Chief Executive Officer (3) | Mr K Y Cheng |
| Senior Programme Officer (Race Relations Unit) | Ms Shirley Chan (Secretary) |

**Government representatives**

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| Assistant Secretary, Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau | Miss Li Wan-in |
| Chief Inspector of Police, Support Wing | Mr Felix Chan Yun-kam |
| Woman Chief Inspector of Police (Ag), Complaints Against Police Office | Ms Kelly Choi Sau-kuen |
| Senior Inspector of Police, Support Wing | Mr Lawrence Ko Cheuk-hang |

**Representatives of public authority**

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| Senior Manager (Support Services Development) Hospital Authority | Mr Benjamin Lee |
| Manager (Support Services Development), Hospital Authority | Ms Barbara Hsui |

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| **Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs)** | |
| Caritas Youth and Community Service | Mr Lay Yan Piau, Bill |
| Christian Action | Ms Sharong Lee |
| Equal Opportunities Commission | Mr Kelvin Mak |
| Federation of Muslim Association in Hong Kong | Mr Khan Muhammad Malik, MH |
| Hong Kong Christian Service | Mr Si Sze Ming, Kyle |
| Hong Kong Integrated Nepalese Society | Mr Buddhi Bahadur Thapa, MH |
| Hong Kong SKH Lady MacLehose Centre | Mr Chan Ching Wa |
| Hong Kong SKH Lady MacLehose Centre | Mr Lo Kai Chung |
| Hong Kong Nepalese Federation | Mr Deep Thapa |
| Hong Kong Unison Ltd. | Ms Fermi Wong |
| Hong Kong Unison Ltd. | Ms Holing Yip |
| International Human Rights Forum Ltd. | Mr Syed Muhammad Naeem Asim |
| International Human Rights Forum Ltd. | Mr Khan |
| International Social Service – Hong Kong Branch | Ms Adrielle M Panares, MH |
| Project Manager, Ambassador Scheme | Ms Emily Wong |
| Worker, Ambassador Scheme | Ms Samantha Ale |
| Worker, Ambassador Scheme | Ms Deepika Gupta |
| Worker, Ambassador Scheme | Ms Sobia Khan |
| Worker, Ambassador Scheme | Ms Bashna Limbu |
| Worker, Ambassador Scheme | Mr Fanjang Limbu |
| Magar Association Hong Kong | Mr M B Thapa |
| The Mission for Migrant Workers | Ms Cynthia C Abdon-Tellez |
| New Home Association | Mr Chan Yee Fei |
| The Hong Kong Council of Social Service | Ms Lynn Law |
| The Pakistan Association of Hong Kong Ltd. | Mr Zaman Minhas Qamar |
| Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service | Ms Winnie Chan |

1. **Interpretation Service at Public Hospitals/Clinics by Hospital Authority**

1.1 At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Lee (HA) gave a presentation on the interpretation service that was available in public hospitals and clinics under the management of Hospital Authority (HA). He mentioned that the interpretation service provided by the service contractor covered 16 languages (including Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, Bengali, German, French, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Nepali, Punjabi, Sinhala, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Urdu and Vietnamese). The service was provided on the site (from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm) or through telephone (from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm for 16 languages and 24 hours for 8 languages) depending on the needs in each case.

1.2 Issues raised by members and the discussions were set out below:

1. **Access to interpretation service**

1.2.1 In response to an enquiry about the adequacy of the interpretation service in public hospitals, Mr Lee confirmed that HA was committed to providing interpretation service for all medical appointments and visits at the public hospitals and clinics to ensure that language was not a barrier to access medical services.

1.2.2 Some members expressed concern that some frontline medical staff were not aware of the HA’s policy in providing interpretation service for EM patients. Mr Lee explained that the frontline staff were reminded on a regular basis of the proper procedure in handling patients who might require interpretation service.

1.2.3. Some members opined that the service could be enhanced if the requests of service were made by patients instead of being referred by the hospital staff. Mr Lee clarified that EM patients could request the hospital/clinic/health centre concerned to arrange for interpretation service while the medical officers would make the clinical judgment in the best interest of the patients.

1.2.4 A member suggested that the HA should collect and report basic service level data, including number of patients requiring interpretation services, number of patients using the services, length of service appointment and number of unfilled interpretation requests, to identify the service needs and improvement options. Mr Lee agreed to reflect the suggestion to relevant department for consideration.

1. **Promotion of interpretation service**

1.2.5 A member proposed that a variety of approaches should be adopted to inform and educate EM patients about available service, such as a poster or a video clip showing the steps for seeking language assistance should be shown at the receptions or lift lobbies of hospitals. Mr Lee remarked that poster and video to convey the message on the availability of interpretation service in HA were currently in place in hospital/clinics. Mr Lee noted the suggestions and sought members’ assistance in promoting the interpretation service to members of their communities.

1.2.6 A member requested that, when a patient registered for treatment, the front-line staff should establish the practice to identify the patient’s preferred language of communication and to promote the availability of interpretation service to the patients.

1.2.7 The Chairman supplemented that the HAD’s service guidebook, which was published in English and six EM languages, contained a brief description of the interpretation service provided by the HA. The guidebooks were widely distributed to the newly arrived EMs at the Hong Kong International Airport.

1. **Interpreters**

1.2.8 Some members were concerned that part-time interpreters could not satisfy the additional demand during busy hours. They suggested that HA should consider employment of full time interpreters to render in-house interpretation service for a few common EM languages in hospitals with high concentration of EM patients.

1.2.9 A member said that it was not acceptable for HA’s staff to rely upon close relatives and friends of the EM patients who were inadequately trained to render the interpretation service and to protect confidentiality of patients. Mr Lee said that EM patients could request the hospital/clinic/health centre concerned to arrange for interpretation service. HA would update the respective hospitals/clinics, including the frontline/public enquiry counter staff to reinforce the established HA policy and workflow in this regard.

1. **Training on cultural sensitivity**

1.2.10 Some members asked whether the front line staff of HA had received training on cultural sensitivity. Mr Lee said communication training was regularly provided to frontline staff by HA Head Office and individual hospitals. Multi-cultural awareness was included in the communication training to recognize the importance of communication with EM patients in a clinical setting. He assured that efforts would be made to remind medical staff to show empathy for minority patients.

1.2.11 The Chairman thanked members for their suggestions on enhancing interpretation service at public hospitals and invited Mr Lee to explore the feasibility of suggestions raised.

**2. Enhanced Liaison Services for Ethnic Minorities by Police**

* 1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Chan (Police) briefed members on the various measures and services developed by the Police to enhance communication and liaison with non-ethnic Chinese (NEC).
  2. Issues raised by members and the discussions were set out below:

1. **Handling of EMs**
   * 1. A member said that racist remarks made by some police officers in their use of stop and search power undermined police efforts to engage NEC communities. Another member asked whether the Code of Practice was in place to prevent the attitude problems encountered by NEC in their contacts with the Police. Mr Chan replied that the police officers were trained to be fair and impartial in carrying out their duties and in dealing with members of the communities, irrespective of their ethnic origin. The Police Headquarters Order was issued to ensure that all officers compiled with the Race Discrimination Ordinance. He would refer the suggestion about the Code of Practice in dealing with NCE to the Force for consideration.
     2. A member was concerned that some NEC were held overnight at police station because there was no interpreter to assist the Police in taking statements. Another member suggested that the Police should consider employment of full time interpreters to provide interpretation services for Police Districts with a larger NEC population. Mr Chan replied that the Police provided interpretation service by part-time interpreters registered with the Court Language Section of the Judiciary Administration to ensure the statements taken were admissible in court. Since the time required by interpreters to arrive at the scene depended on various circumstantial factors, the Police had not demanded a pre-set arrival time for interpreters.
2. **Police appointments**
   * 1. Some members said that the Police should lower the Chinese writing proficiency requirements for recruitment of NEC police officers. Other members requested the Police to consider employing a certain proportion of full-time NEC police officers for assisting the Police in investigations and liaison work. Mr Chan said that the Chinese language proficiency requirement for the police appointments was to meet operational needs. The use of the Chinese language was very important in the communication between the Police and the public. The Police understood the concern about the impact of the requirement on the appointment of EMs to the Police. On this basis, the Force had adopted various measures to engage the NEC community for appointments. One of the measures was to award additional scores to Police Constable candidates with foreign language skills such as Urdu, Tagalog etc.
3. **Proactive engagement with EMs**

2.2.4 A member asked if the Police had developed network with NEC communities to enhance investigation of cases involving NEC and service delivery to them. Mr Chan responded that the Police had maintained communication with different NEC communities to enhance their awareness on crime prevention. Different types of activities were organised in partnership with NEC organisations to fight crime.

1. **Complaint against police officers**

* + 1. A member said that the Police should explore measures to promote racial equality in the current police complaint mechanism given that the number of substantiated cases lodged by NEC complainants was relatively low. Ms Choi (Police) explained that procedure of filing a complaint against a police officer was more or less the same as that for filing a crime report. The complainants could approach any police station, any police officers, the Complaints Against Police Reporting Centre or Complaints Hotline. Upon receipt of complaints, Complaint Against Police Office (CAPO) was committed to resolving grievances filed by all complainants, irrespective of their ethnicities.
    2. Some member opined that the police officers of CAPO were deliberately slow in providing interpretation service or refused to disclose the warrant card number of the police officer concerned with intent to deter NEC from lodging formal complaints. Ms Choi explained that CAPO provided interpretation service for NEC not conversant with the English or Chinese language. NEC complainants could use the language identifier provided by CAPO to indicate their languages and requested for appropriate interpreters. Without prejudicing operational efficiency, police officers exercising statutory powers should disclose adequate personal information to identify themselves upon request.

**3. Ambassador Scheme for Ethnic Minorities**

3.1 At the invitation of the Chairman, Miss Fu (HAD) took members through the information paper on the Ambassador Scheme for Ethnic Minorities. Ms Panares (ISS) provided a PowerPoint presentation on the progress of the Scheme.

3.2 Issues raised by members and the discussions were set out below:

3.2.1 Upon a member’s enquiry about the operational difficulties encountered by the Ambassadors, Ms Ale said that some EM targets disallowed ambassadors into their home and would rather conduct the interviews in parks or public venues. On some occasions, respondents considered the questionnaires used to assess service needs of support services were considerably long.

3.2.2. Some members regarded the questionnaire survey conducted by the Ambassadors during the household visits would be valuable feedback from EMs regarding their profile, service needs and barrier to support services. They asked if the survey results, after analyzing the data collected, would be accessible to NGOs or members of the public. The Chairman said that the operator would keep the Forum informed of the implementation progress and consider the most suitable way to publish the survey results.

3.2.3 In response to a question on strategy to recruit ambassadors, Ms Panares said that, under the Ambassador Scheme, EMs were engaged as ambassadors or volunteers to introduce to members of their own communities available services, provide neighbourly support and make referrals to Government departments for specific follow-up. In this connection, multilingual staff had been recruited through advertisements, words of mouth and referral from EM organisations.

3.2.4 Some members complimented the worthiness of the Scheme. Noting that EMs had encountered language barriers and cultural difference to use mainstream social service provided by Social Welfare Department and its subvented welfare non-governmental organisations, they suggested that HAD should share the initiative with Social Welfare Department and encourage them to use the skills and talents of EM staff to serve people with similar background and experience. In view of the interests of the Forum, the Chairman would consider inviting representative of the Social Welfare Department at future meetings to discuss the mainstreaming social services for EMs.

**4.**  **Any other business:**

1. **Applications of EMs for HKSAR passports**

4.1 A member mentioned that some EM permanent residents were unable to obtain SAR passports, even though they met all the criteria and, in some cases, the applicants had even renounced their own nationalities. The Chairman proposed the member to provide information on specific cases for HAD to refer the cases to the Immigration Department.

1. **Post-secondary education for EM students**

A member said that some post-secondary institutions accepted alternative Chinese qualification for EM students to admit Associate Degree and Higher Diploma Programmes, but refused to grant exemption for Advance Chinese Language courses. Most EM students could not complete the programmes due to their low Chinese proficiency if they were admitted. The member requested HAD to invite representative of Education Bureau at future meetings to explore the possibility of exemption arrangements for EM students taking the compulsory Chinese courses for sub-degree programmes. The Chairman agreed to refer the request to Education Bureau for consideration.

*[Post-meeting note: According to the information provided by post-secondary institutions to the Education Bureau, the majority of the institutions have arrangements to facilitate non-Chinese speaking students, including providing modified or adapted Chinese courses for non-Chinese speaking students if Chinese course is a compulsory requirement, or allowing those students to take other languages or general education courses instead of the Chinese language.]*

Home Affairs Department

June 2013