

**Meeting of the Ethnic Minorities Forum**  
**1 December 2023 at 3:00 p.m.**  
**at 30/F, Conference Room, Southorn Centre**

**Present**

**Government representatives**

Assistant Director of Home Affairs (3)	Mr Wilson Kwong (Chairperson)
Principal Assistant Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (5)	Mr Niki Kwok
Chief Executive Officer (3), Home Affairs Department	Ms Rebecca Chan

**Representatives of public bodies**

Senior Equal Opportunities Officer, Equal Opportunities Commission	Mr Raymond Ho
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**Representatives of non-government organisations**

Hong Kong Christian Service	Ms Grace Chung
Hong Kong Community Network Limited	Mr Fan Kwok Fai
HKSKH Lady MacLehose Centre	Mr Jonathan Chan
Hong Kong Unison	Dr Tse Wing Ling John
Hope Federation Union	Dr Halima Ismail
Indian Businessmen's Association	Mr Gul. T. Mirpuri
International Social Service Hong Kong Branch	Mr James Suen
Justice Centre Hong Kong	Mr Preston Cheung
Khalsa Diwan Hong Kong (Sikh Temple)	Mr Bhagt Singh
Nigerian Community Hong Kong	Mr P C Clement
The Hong Kong Council of Social Service	Ms Qubie Tang
The Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong	Mr Muddassar Iqbal
The Neighbourhood Advice-Action Council	Ms Connie Wong
The Lok Sin Tong Benevolent Society, Kowloon	Ms IP Kit Ying
United Muslim Association of Hong Kong	Ms Hina Butt
Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service	Ms Yim Yan Lok

Yuen Long Town Hall

Ms Lam Man Ying

**Other attendees**

*For Agenda Item 2*

Centre-in-charge, CHEER Centre  
Chief Interpreter/Translator,  
CHEER Centre  
Team Leader (interpreter/Translator),  
CHEER Centre  
Centre-in-charge, LINK Centre  
Programme Worker, LINK Centre

Ms Carmen Lee  
Mr Chirag Rai Dewan  
  
Mr Ernest Wong  
  
Ms Ann Tam  
Ms Naseem Farrah

*For Agenda Item 3*

Director (District Health Centre)

Ms Victoria Chan

**Secretary**

Senior Executive Officer (RRU),  
Home Affairs Department

Mr Clarence Ching

## **1 Introduction**

1.1 The Chairperson welcomed attendees to the meeting.

## **2 New Policy Address Initiatives for Ethnic Minorities**

2.1 The Chairperson said that in the 2023 Policy Address, a series of new initiatives were introduced to assist ethnic minorities (EMs) in integrating into the community. The initiatives included (i) setting up two additional support service centres for ethnic minorities (EM centres), bringing the total number of EM centres to 10; (ii) setting up Ethnic Minority Care Teams (EM Care Teams) in each of the 10 EM centres; (iii) continuing to strengthen services for EM youths and new arrivals; and (iv) regularising the District-based Programmes for Racial Harmony. The Chairperson said that the initiatives would benefit EM communities and invited the Secretary to give an overview of these initiatives to the meeting.

## **3 Interpretation and Support Services for EMs provided by EM Centres**

3.1 The Chairperson invited Ms Carmen Lee and Mr Chirag Rai Dewan to introduce the interpretation and translation services provided by the CHEER Centre to the meeting. With the additional funding provided by Home Affairs Department from April 2019, the interpretation and translation services of CHEER Centre had been enhanced. The usage of telephone interpretation services increased from 3 891 in 2018-19 to 6 674 in 2022-23. The number of hotlines also increased from 3 to 8, and interpretation service in Vietnamese had been added. The sight interpretation service using WhatsApp had also been introduced since then. Attendees were impressed by the full range of interpretation and translation services provided by the CHEER Centre.

3.2 The Chairperson stated that apart from providing general translation and interpretation services between English and eight EM languages, the CHEER Centre also provide general support services such as integration programmes, tutorial classes, interest classes etc. for EMs.

3.3 Issues raised by attendees and the discussions were summarised below:

3.3.1 One attendee suggested clearly stating on CHEER Centre's leaflets that the interpretation and translation services were provided to NGOs and schools free of charge in order to encourage them to use the services. In addition, the Education Bureau was recommended to issue a memo to the principals of all primary and secondary schools, informing them of the interpretation services provided by CHEER Centre. The Chairperson noted that the leaflet had already contained information about the fees exemption for subsidised schools and NGOs. He suggested that the CHEER Centre could consider presenting the information more clearly on the leaflet.

*(Post-meeting notes: The opinion was sent to the Education Bureau for consideration on 15 December 2023.)*

3.3.2 The Chairperson enquired about the reason for the relatively low utilization of CHEER Centre's interpretation services by the Police. Mr Dewan explained that the Police had their own EM language court interpreters and they would use their services first, hence the usage of interpretation services of the CHEER Centre by Police was not high.

3.3.3 Another attendee said there was an African community in Hong Kong and most of them spoke French rather than English. He hoped that the CHEER Centre could provide interpretation services in African language. The Chairperson responded that Home Affairs Department (HAD) would review from time to time whether it was necessary to include new EM language in the interpretation service based on service needs and the Government's financial situation.

3.3.4 Another attendee said that, in view of the population of EMs in Hong Kong, the usage rate of the CHEER Centre's interpretation services was not very high. He hoped that the CHEER Centre could do more publicity. For example, they could go to the Sikh Temple to introduce their interpretation services and distribute promotional materials at the temple. Mr Dewan advised that staff of the CHEER Centre had promoted their interpretation services through outreach services and they would consider visiting the temple as suggested.

*(Post-meeting notes: The CHEER Centre arranged an outreach activity at the Sikh Temple on 7 January 2024.)*

- 3.4 At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms Ann Tam and Ms Naseem Farrah also briefed Members on the support services provided by the LINK Centre. To help EMs integrate into the local community, LINK Centre organised a series of programmes including Chinese and English language programmes, orientation and familiarisation programmes, integration programmes, dedicated programmes for EM youths, after-school tutorials and innovative programmes. LINK Centre also organised social inclusion programmes that allowed EMs and Chinese to interact, as well as volunteer projects to engage EM youths. Ms Farrah also highlighted some innovative programmes like “Dialogue with a Stranger”, “Cantonese Competition for EMs”, “Hong Kong in my Eyes”, sports programmes and “Cantonese Debate Competition for EMs”. Attendees were impressed by the variety of the programmes organised by the LINK Centre
- 3.5 Issues raised by attendees and the discussions were summarised below:
- 3.5.1 An attendee introduced the legal and emotional support services provided by her and her organisation for the Pakistani women who wanted to divorce their husband. She said that she had been working for Pakistani women and girls for many years and would like to bring the needs of this community to the attention of the Government. The Chairperson thanked her for her contribution to the EM community and said that the Government was aware of the problems encountered by EMs, especially the need of emotional support. In the 2023 Policy Address, the Health Bureau would collaborate with an NGO to set up a service centre on a trial basis to provide emotional support and counselling services for EMs. He hoped that this new initiative could better address the mental health needs of people from EM community.
- 3.5.2 Another attendee introduced the legal education and training modules of Justice Centre Hong Kong which were provided to different communities in Hong Kong. He would like to seek funding for his programme and to involve Government departments in his programme. The Chairperson thanked him for his work and explained that HAD and the EM centres were providing support services to EMs to help them

integrate into the community. The attendee may seek funding from other Government departments for providing legal education and training.

- 3.5.3 Another attendee asked if the Steering Committee on EM Affairs chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration would resume cross-departmental discussions on EM affairs. Mr Niki Kwok replied that two meetings were held in July and August 2023 to discuss how to consolidate and coordinate a series of measures for EMs which was announced in the 2023 Policy Address.
- 3.5.4 The attendee suggested that the Government should work with NGOs and provide them with information, like the number of schools with EM students and the number of EM students admitted to universities, etc. He also echoed that the Government should do more publicity for the interpretation and support services for EMs so that more EMs could join and use these services.
- 3.5.5 The Chairperson responded that the Government had publicized the support services for EMs in different ways. For example, the Race Relations Unit had been providing information about public services through its website, which is available in different EM languages. HAD also sponsored radio programmes to disseminate information in five EM languages. HAD also introduced the new initiatives of setting up an EM Care Team in each EM centre. One of the objectives was to reach out to EM households proactively and disseminate the Government information and the services provided by EM centres to them. Through the outreaching services, EM Care team could reach out to those who would not use the social media. The Chairperson said that the Government was committed to promoting equal opportunities for people of different races. The Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau had issued guidelines to all the Government departments to ensure that they would help promote equal access to public services for people of diverse race. Mr Kwok added that in accordance with the requirement of the guidelines, Government departments would gradually provide service information on their websites in different EM languages.
- 3.5.6 An attendee said that some African asylum seekers were well-educated and some were even professionals. Under the current policy, they were not allowed to work in Hong Kong. He hoped that the Government

could use their talents and allow them to work in Hong Kong temporarily. Another attendee also said that these asylum seekers might stay in Hong Kong for several years. If they could not work, it would be a waste of life. The Chairperson agreed that many asylum seekers were well-educated but they should also abide by the conditions of stay imposed by the Immigration Department of Hong Kong.

3.5.7 The attendee continued to report that his friend was asked to show his passport when opening a bank account. He was confused as to why the bank had to check his passport. Another attendee said that his friend who graduated from the Chinese University of Hong Kong could not find a job in Hong Kong. He called on the Government to help them integrate into the community. The Chairperson said that the EM centres had organised some job fairs to help EMs in finding jobs in Hong Kong. Mr Raymond Ho added that if they encountered any suspected case of discrimination, whether in opening a bank account or looking for a job, they should report it to the Equal Opportunity Commission for follow up actions.

3.5.8 An attendee asked whether the language courses provided by EM centres included any pre-test and post-test so as to assess the effectiveness of the courses. Ms Tam replied that the language classes in LINK Centre was designed for adults, with curriculum and qualified teachers. The teaching materials were designed with the purpose of teaching EMs with daily conversations and facilitating their integration into the community.

#### **4 Primary Healthcare Blueprint and District Health Centres**

4.1 Upon the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms Victoria Chan introduced to the meeting the Primary Health Blueprint which aimed to formulate the development direction and strategies for strengthening Hong Kong's primary healthcare system to cope with the challenges brought by an ageing population and the increasing prevalence of chronic disease; and the services of the District Health Centres (DHC). Ms Chan also highlighted that currently there were seven DHCs established in Kwai Tsing, Tsuen Wan, Tuen Mun, Yuen Long, Sham Shui Po, Wong Tai Sin and Southern districts. DHCs in other districts would be established progressively. In some DHCs located in the districts with higher EM populations, such as Kwai Tsing and Sham Shui Po Districts, dedicated

services targeting at EMs were launched to promote health message among the EM community. Ms Chan reported that as at 30 September 2023, there were around 2 200 EM DHC members.

4.2 Issues raised by attendees and the discussions were summarised below:

4.2.1 One attendee asked about the distribution of 2 200 EM DHC members and invited the Primary Healthcare Office to strengthen publicity to EM communities. Ms Chan replied that she did not have distribution figures at hand but believed that many EM DHC members came from Sham Shui Po and Kwai Tsing districts as these two DHCs had been operated for quite a while, especially the one at Kwai Tsing which had been operating for nearly 3 years. These two DHCs had built up a community base for EMs and the dedicated services provided to EMs in Sham Shui Po and Kwai Tsing had successfully attracted the participation of EMs. Ms Chan added that they were consolidating the operation and engagement of the DHCs as well as other health care related programmes. As the DHCs were operated by different operators, she would convey the messages to other DHCs to strengthen support for EMs. She also invited attendees to encourage their communities to become DHC members so that the Government could get connect with them and better understand their needs.

4.2.2 Another attendee asked whether the number of EM members would be used as a key performance indicator for DHCs. Moreover, she noticed that many leaflets were in Chinese and even programmes organised by DHCs were conducted in Cantonese. She suggested preparing bilingual leaflets and organising English programmes so that EMs could join. In addition, she opined that there was a need for cultural sensitivity training for all DHC staff or engaging EM ambassadors to better serve the EM members of DHC.

4.2.3 Ms Chan responded that DHCs did not set a quota for registered members as they were trying to address the public health care needs of the entire Hong Kong population. They were trying to attract all Hong Kong people, including EMs, to register at DHCs. The most important thing was to match members with a family doctor who could support their health care needs in the long run. This system had existed in Western countries for a long time. She added that the operators of DHC had



good knowledge of the areas they served, so they would tailor promotional leaflets in different languages according to needs. Regarding cultural sensitivity training, she agreed to bring the messages back to Health Bureau for consideration.

- 4.2.4 An attendee noticed that in a recent survey, EM parents' willingness to seek medical help was very low. Only about 8-9% of them would seek help while the proportion of local Chinese was about 40%. He asked whether DHCs could promote a culture of medical-seeking and encourage EMs to seek help, particularly for mental health issues. Ms Chan responded that they were trying to change people's medical-seeking behaviour in a systematic way but changes took time. She also advised that mental health support would be set up on a trial basis in the DHCs.

## **5 Any Other Business**

- 5.1 An attendee asked if the meeting materials could be sent to them before the meeting so that they could follow up on matters discussed at the last meeting. The Chairperson said that the minutes of the EM Forum had been uploaded to the website of the Race Relations Unit of HAD. All attendees could check the minutes and refresh their memories of what were discussed at the last meeting.
- 5.2 The Chairperson thanked all attendees for attending the EM Forum and sharing their valuable opinions with us. As the 2023 District Council Ordinary Election would be held on 10 December 2023, the Chairperson encouraged everyone to vote on the election day so as to elect capable District Council members to serve the people.
- 5.3 There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:40 p.m.
- 5.4 For the date of next meeting, attendees would be duly informed nearer the time.