

Committee on the Promotion of Racial Harmony
Notes of the meeting on 6 December 2024

Present

Home Affairs Department (HAD)

Mr TE Chi-wang (Chairperson)	Deputy Director of Home Affairs(2)
Mr Wilson KWONG	Assistant Director of Home Affairs (3)
Ms Rebecca CHAN	Chief Executive Officer (3)
Miss Angie LAI (Secretary)	Senior Executive Officer (Race Relations Unit)

Official Members

Miss Winnie YEUNG	Assistant Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (5A), Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
Mr Sunny LO	Education Officer (Non-Chinese Speaking Student Support) 11, Education Bureau
Ms Kitnacy WONG	Principal Information Officer (Local Promotions), Information Services Department
Ms Kitty LUN	Labour Officer (Employment Services) (Racial Diversity Employment), Labour Department

Non-official Members

Miss KONG Man-wai, Vivian
Mr Vishal MELWANI
Mr Syed Mohammed MOHIUDDIN

Mr Zaman Minhas QAMAR
Ms Lamia Sreya RAHMAN
Mrs Marina RAI
Ms Tika RANA
Mr Baljinder SINGH
Mr WONG Ka-chun
Mr WONG Man-ho, Matthew
Mr YUON Fuk-lung Eric

In Attendance

Mr Raymond HO	Senior Equal Opportunities Officer Ethnic Minorities Unit Equal Opportunities Commission
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For Agenda Item (3)

Miss Tori CHAN	Principal Assistant Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs (Youth Affairs)1, Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (HYAB)
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For Agenda Item (4)

Ms Blaire TSANG	Centre-in-charge, HOME Centre
Mr LEE Sai-lai	Team leader, Ethnic Minority Care Team of HOME (YTM) Centre
Mr Ahmed AHSAN	Team Leader, Ethnic Minority Care Team of HOME (SSP) Sub-centre

Absent with apologies

Mr Mohammad ILYAS
Ms Himeshika SAMARADIVAKARA
Ms TSUI Hang-on, Yvonne
Mr Deep Singh VINNER
Mr YEUNG Tsz-hei

1. Introduction

1.1 The Chairperson welcomed Members to the meeting, including the newly appointed members Mr Syed Mohammed MOHIUDDIN, Mrs Marina RAI and Mr Baljinder SINGH. The Chairperson also took the opportunity to congratulate Mr Vishal MELWANI who received the Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs' Commendation in March 2024 and Miss KONG Man-wai, Vivian on winning a gold medal in the individual women's Épée at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games.

1.2 The Chairperson said that HAD attached great importance to providing support for ethnic minorities and assisting them in integrating into the community. He reported that HAD had implemented the initiatives announced in the 2023 Policy Address, namely (a) set up two additional support service centres for ethnic minorities (EM centres), one in Kowloon City and the other in Shatin, bringing the total number of EM centres to 10; (b) set up one Ethnic Minority Care Team (EM Care Team) in each of the 10 EM centres; (c) regularised the enhanced services for ethnic minority youths and new arrivals; and (d) regularised the District-based Programmes for Racial Harmony. To further facilitate the integration of ethnic minorities into the community, the Chief Executive announced in the 2024 Policy Address that, in addition to CHEER Centre, HAD would engage one more existing support service centre, to provide interpretation and translation services for ethnic minorities in 2025.

2. Confirmation of the notes of discussion on 29 November 2023

2.1 The notes of the last meeting held on 29 November 2023 were confirmed.

3. Matters arising from the meeting on 29 November 2023

- 3.1 A member enquired about the progress of the matters discussed in the last meeting such as Chinese learning assistance tools, language barrier in reporting the data of students with special education needs to EDB, and the removal of Urdu language examination from the list of Category C subjects of Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education. The Chairperson noted that relevant bureaux and departments would provide updates to members in due course.

[Post-meeting notes: The Secretariat sent Education Bureau's reply regarding Chinese learning assistance tools, "Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education" in different language versions, special education training for teachers in English and the resumption of Urdu language examination to the members on 19.12.2024.]

4. Youth Development Blueprint

- 4.1 At the invitation of the Chairperson, Miss Tori CHAN briefed Members on the Youth Development Blueprint, which was released in late 2022, and the pertinent youth-related measures. Miss CHAN advised that the vision of the Government was to nurture a new generation of Hong Kong youth equipped with global perspective, aspiring and positive thinking mindset, and affection for our city and country. To respond to the evolving needs of young people in a timely manner, HYAB and other policy bureaux further introduced about 60 new youth-related measures last year. With reference to the development stages of young people, HYAB organised actions and measures into four chapters in the Blueprint, namely "Exploration", "Hope", "Empowerment" and "Contribution". Miss CHAN highlighted some of the major initiatives that HYAB had been taking forward, including Youth Development Summit and the various Mainland and overseas

exchange and internship programmes. Members appreciated the effort paid by HYAB.

- 4.2 One member enquired about the number of ethnic minority youths participating in the YDC Youth Ambassadors Programme. Miss Tori CHAN explained that recruitment for the Programme was conducted via nominations and noted that there were around two to three ethnic minority youths joining the Programme this year.
- 4.3 Regarding ethnic minorities' participation in exchange and internship programmes, one member asked about the percentage of ethnic minority youth participating in the Mainland exchange programmes and whether they could meet the language requirements for these exchanges. Miss CHAN responded that there was no separate statistics on ethnic minority participants. She said that some of the ethnic minority youths might encounter language barriers or entry permit difficulties when participating in the Mainland exchange programmes, and the participation rate of ethnic minority youths in overseas exchange and internship programmes should be higher. Another member offered to assist HYAB in disseminating information about its funding schemes to ethnic minority communities. Miss CHAN thanked the members for their support to youth development and advised that she would pass the information to the Secretariat and appealed for members' support to various funding schemes.

[Post-meeting notes: The Secretariat assisted HYAB to disseminate information of "Funding Scheme for Youth Exchange in the Mainland" and "Funding Scheme for International Youth Exchange" to members on 11.12.2024. HYAB would follow up directly with interested members.]

- 4.4 The Chairperson asked whether business owners faced any challenges in hiring non-Chinese speaking employees in a professional setting. One member responded that as many Hong Kong companies had close business relationship with Mainland

business sector, employees' Chinese language proficiency was crucial. However, if the majority of the workforce could read and speak Chinese, the company should be able to accommodate a minority who could not. He also reiterated that non-Chinese speaking employees in the organisation could foster a multicultural workplace, emphasising that Chinese language skills were not always a prerequisite.

- 4.5 One member shared that ethnic minority graduates often faced significant challenges in finding jobs because even positions such as security guards required proficiency in Chinese to communicate with customers. He also said that in universities, while lecture notes and PowerPoints were in English, most lecturers taught in Chinese, creating difficulties for non-Chinese speaking students.
- 4.6 Mr Raymond HO appealed for positive action to support inclusivity, yet language requirements could be considered as essential for certain jobs. Another member suggested that companies could fulfil their social responsibility by offering internships to ethnic minorities, noting that such short-term commitments should not have significant impact on the company's operations.

5. Ethnic Minorities Care Teams

- 5.1 At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms Blaire TSANG, Mr LEE Sai-lai and Mr Ahmed AHSAN briefed Members on the services provided by EM Care Teams. These teams mainly constituted by ethnic minorities had been set up in the EM centres to strengthen the support for ethnic minorities since July 2024. Through the networks in the ethnic minority communities as well as referrals from District Services and Community Care Teams, the EM Care Teams would visit ethnic minority households, establish connections, disseminate important government information to them. Ms TSANG shared with members several cases handled by the EM Care Team under HOME Centre. In one case, a Pakistani lady who had only been in Hong Kong for one year was due to give

birth in five weeks. She encountered problems such as language barrier and lack of care from relatives and friends, and developed symptoms of depression and anxiety. The EM Care Team established contact with her and proactively cared for her needs. They donated essential materials to her and referred her case to a professional social worker for follow-up. In another case, the EM Care Team visited the typhoon shelter in Yau Tsim Mong District during Typhoon Yagi to provide assistance to ethnic minority service users.

- 5.2 The Chairperson added that the District Services and Community Care Teams were established in 2022, but these teams were mainly composed of Chinese-speaking members and might not be fully acquainted with cultural differences when serving ethnic minorities. To address this gap, the EM Care Teams had been set up in the EM centres to provide support in English and other ethnic minority languages in 2024. The Chairperson highlighted the importance of these teams' assistance during emergencies, such as evacuation under inclement weather conditions, where language and cultural understanding were crucial to ensuring effective communication and support for ethnic minority communities. Members expressed appreciation for the services.
- 5.3 One member inquired whether the EM Care Teams would support ethnic minorities in learning Cantonese. The Chairperson responded that the EM Centres, instead of EM Care Teams, regularly offered Cantonese classes, which were very popular among service users. Ms TSANG added that the HOME Centre conducted Cantonese classes almost daily. As for ethnic minority students, the HOME Centre had been offering after-school tutorials, which were consistently fully enrolled. The member would like to know the statistics on the number of these classes and the number of participants. The Chairperson noted that the statistics would be provided after the meeting.

[Post-meeting notes: The Secretariat provided the statistics on Cantonese classes and after-school tutorials offered by the EM centres to members on 13.1.2025.]

- 5.4 One member enquired if the Pakistani lady mentioned in the presentation was unable to access medical service due to cultural preferences. Ms TSANG explained that the Pakistani lady felt uncomfortable with the medical services provided by Chinese hospital staff. The EM Care Team therefore sent a female member who spoke the same language to accompany the lady. The EM Care Team not only provided interpretation but also emotional support, helping the lady feel more comfortable in receiving the services.
- 5.5 One member inquired whether this issue arose because the lady was unable to use the Hospital Authority's (HA) interpretation service. He explained that, if interpretation service was required and booked in advance, it should be available for this case. Another member pointed out that while interpretation services could be booked in advance, there should be someone available on-site or a hotline service to provide immediate assistance in case of emergencies. One member asked about the monitoring and competence of interpreters in the HA.
- 5.6 Mr Raymond HO responded that the HA had engaged the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Lady MacLehose Centre to provide interpretation services. Interpreters received 40 hours of training specifically on medical terminology, and there was a system in place for consistent monitoring of their quality. However, Mr HO acknowledged that in accident and emergency situations, interpretation services might not readily be available, but once the patient's condition stabilised, explanations would be provided to the patients and their relatives.
- 5.7 The member noted that translation services could not be pre-booked for all medical services and suggested alternative solutions

to address this limitation. He proposed the development of cue cards with common medical questions and answers to facilitate basic communication, as well as creating a list of interpreters who could be contacted for emergency situations.

- 5.8 The Chairperson acknowledged the challenges and noted some technology solutions, such as real-time translation applications or digital tools, that could enhance accessibility and efficiency when interpreters were not immediately available. The Chairperson also requested the Secretariat to convey members' suggestions to the HA and to invite the HA to attend meetings in the future to answer members' questions directly.

[Post-meeting notes: The Secretariat conveyed members' suggestions and the Chairperson's invitation to HA on 18.12.2024. Reply by HA was sent to members on 3.1.2025.]

- 5.9 One member expressed concern regarding the composition and preparedness of volunteers in emergencies such as typhoons, fires, or other urgent situations. She asked whether the volunteers were trained to handle such scenarios effectively. Ms TSANG explained that each EM Care Team had about 10 volunteers from diverse backgrounds, including nurses, teachers, and other professionals. Before performing their duties, volunteers would receive training, which included assessing the condition of individuals and collecting background information. A programme worker would lead the volunteers to provide interpretation and other caring services. She emphasised that safety of EM Care Team members was the first priority.

- 5.10 The Chairperson noted that the EM Care Teams were not intended to provide emergency services which should be taken up by the police, ambulancemen or firefighters. Instead, their role was to provide caring services before and/or after emergencies. The teams would focus on disseminating important information such as pre-cautionary measures to the community. They would visit

affected individuals to understand their needs and offer assistance after emergencies.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 One member suggested that in the next meeting, members should discuss mental health support to ethnic minorities. The Chairperson agreed. Based on the discussion at this meeting, the next meeting would invite representatives to present on ethnic minority mental health and interpretation services provided by the HA respectively.

6.2 A member shared that the Hong Kong Council of Social Service's Gerontech and Innovation Expo cum Summit, which was an Expo for the general public to understand the latest development of support provided to elderly. Regarding the service gap for ethnic minority elderly, she mentioned that Hong Kong Christian Service had a project called "Support to Ethnic Elderly" which could be used as a reference to address the needs of ethnic minority elderly.

6.3 One member expressed concerns about refugees in Hong Kong. He highlighted that refugees were not allowed to work in Hong Kong, although their children could study in schools. All social services for refugees were outsourced by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) to the International Social Service Hong Kong Branch (ISS-HK). He shared a case of domestic violence where a refugee child needed to be placed in a shelter, but the shelter at ISS-HK was full. While matters related to refugees fall outside the purview of HAD, the Chairperson appreciated the difficulties encountered by refugees in Hong Kong. He asked the Secretariat to convey the member's concerns to SWD accordingly.

[Post-meeting notes: The Secretariat conveyed the member's concern to SWD on 27.12.2024. The Secretariat passed SWD's response on existing measures and support mechanisms to address such situation on 6.1.2025.]

6.4 The Chairperson thanked members for joining the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Home Affairs Department
February 2025