**Committee on the Promotion of Racial Harmony**

**Notes of the meeting on 5 December 2013**

**Attendance:**

**Home Affairs Department (HAD)**

Mr Jack Chan (Chairman) Deputy Director

Mr K Y Cheng Chief Executive Officer

Ms Shirley Chan (Secretary) Senior Programme Officer (Race Relations Unit)

**Official Members**

Mr Michael Yau Assistant Secretary

 Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau

Mr Leung Kwok Yan Senior Education Officer (Placement & Support) Education Bureau

Miss Book Wai Man, Winty Labour Officer (Employment Services)

 Labour Department

**Non-official Members**

Mr Dewan Saiful Alam

Mr Brian Chau

Mrs Cheung-Ang Siew Mei, JP

Mr Kul Prasad Gurung

Dr Sharmila Gurung

Ms Ho Wai-yee, Lucilla

Mr Hameed Jalal

Ms Rosalia Kamariah Kesuma

Mr Mohammad Liaqat

Ms Daisy Catherine Mandap

Mr Amirali Bakirali Nasir, JP

Dr Rizwan Ullah

Mr Yeung Chuen Chow, Thomas

**In Attendance:**

Miss Chan Wing-han, Grace Senior Labour Officer (Employment Services, Policy) Labour Department

Ms Sue Wong Senior Manager (Course Development)

 Employees Retraining Board

Mr Sam Ho Senior Corporate Communications Officer

 Equal Opportunities Commission

Ms Devi Novianti Corporate Communications Officer

 Equal Opportunities Commission

**Absence with apologies:**

Ms Bungon Tamasorn

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting.

**2. Confirmation of the notes of the meeting on 20 June 2013**

2.1 The notes of the last meeting held on 20 June 2013 were confirmed.

**3. Matters arising from the meeting on 20 June 2013**

3.1 The Chairman briefed Members that following discussions at the last meeting, the Secretariat had organised visits to the HOME Support Service Centre for Ethnic Minorities (EMs) in Yau Tsim Mong and the TOUCH Support Service Sub-centre for EMs in Tung Chung on 17 September 2013. Six Members and 17 attendees of the EM Forum joined the visits.

3.2 In response to a Member’s enquiry about entry for residence as dependant raised before the meeting, the Immigration Department had provided relevant information which was set out in the information paper no. 02/2013. The paper was issued to Members on 4 December 2013.

**4. Employment Services for Ethnic Minorities provided by the Labour Department**

4.1 At the invitation of the Chairman, Miss Chan of the Labour Department (LD) briefed Members on LD’s dedicated employment services for EMs and measures to enhance the employment opportunities of EMs with the aid of PowerPoint presentation.

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

1. **Information on job vacancies**

4.2.1 Some members raised concerns that job advertisements on the LD’s website were not always bilingual. Miss Chan (LD) responded that the LD handled around 4,000 to 5,000 advertisements every working day and the advertisements provided by employers were mostly in Chinese only. Given the substantial number of job advertisements to be handled, it would be practically impossible for the LD to provide full translation of all job advertisements into English without affecting the overall efficiency in posting up the vacancies for application by the job-seeking public.

4.2.2 Miss Chan (LD) added that the LD had ensured that the essential information of vacancy orders which required job applicants to be able to read or write Chinese, would be available and displayed in both English and Chinese on LD’s Interactive Employment Service website and the vacancy search terminals installed in Job Centres and various locations throughout the territory. Any EM job seekers who were interested in a particular vacancy order were welcome to approach the staff of the Job Centres or call the Telephone Employment Service Hotline to obtain more information about the vacancy order. As for the vacancy orders that did not require the ability to read or write Chinese, all vacancy information was displayed in both Chinese and English.

1. **Statistics of EM job seekers**

4.2.3 In response to some members’ enquiries about the numbers of EMs who had registered with the LD for employment services and, among them, the number of those who had secured employment, Miss Chan (LD) said that, in 2012, 981 EMs had registered with the LD for employment services, and these EM registrants might be placed into employment either through the referral services of the LD or by direct application to employers who advertised their vacancies through the LD. Currently, over 90% of the vacancies advertised through the LD were open for direct application by job seekers. Those who had secured employment through direct applications were not required to report their placements to the LD. As such, the LD had only kept the statistics on the placements secured through the LD’s referral services. In 2012, 61 placements were secured for EM job seekers through the LD’s referral services.

4.2.4 Miss Chan (LD) further said that the LD had periodically conducted survey on the employment situation of the EM job seekers registering with the LD. In the last survey conducted in October 2013 covering the period from July to September 2013, amongst some 100 EM registrants who could be reached during the survey, half of them had secured employment through various channels, including the LD.

1. **Promotion of employment services**

4.2.5 Some members suggested that the LD should promote their employment services to EMs, particularly newly arrived EMs, through Consulates General of South Asian countries and local minority newspapers. Miss Chan (LD) welcomed the suggestions and supplemented that the LD had sought the assistance of HAD’s Mobile Information Service in distributing leaflets in EM languages to newly arrived EMs at the Hong Kong International Airport. In addition, relevant leaflets were made available for EMs when they applied for Hong Kong Identity Cards at the Registration of Persons Offices of the Immigration Department. Other channels used by the LD to promote the employment services included the non-governmental organisations providing services to EMs, the community network of the Police Community Relations Office of the Hong Kong Police Force, the HAD’s Ambassador Scheme and five radio programmes in EM languages funded by the HAD.

1. **LD’s staff serving the EMs**

4.2.6 A member enquired on the number of staff employed by the LD to serve the EM community. Miss Chan (LD) responded that there were Employment Advisors in each Job Centre to assist job seekers to find work. The Employment Advisor assigned to handle EM cases were at the Assistant Labour Officer level and were university graduates who could communicate well with EMs in English. Where necessary, Job Centre could arrange interpretation service for EM job seekers who could speak neither English nor Chinese to ensure effective communication with EMs.

1. **Job fairs**

4.2.7 While noting that some EMs encountered difficulties in finding job vacancies suitable for them in job fairs, a member proposed the LD to organise dedicated job fairs dedicated for EMs. Miss Chan (LD) explained that the LD’s job fairs normally served all job seekers irrespective of their ethnic origins. To further enhance the employment opportunities of EM job seekers, the LD had canvassed suitable vacancies, such as those not requiring the ability to read or write Chinese, for EMs and organised dedicated job fairs for them. Three such dedicated job fairs were organised at Job Centres in 2013 and a large-scale job fair for EMs was planned for March 2014 in Macperson Stadium in Mong Kok.

4.2.8 A member suggested that the LD should collaborate with EM business community to provide employment opportunities for EMs at the job fairs. Miss Chan (LD) welcomed the suggestion.

1. **Population Policy**

4.2.9 A member cited the consultation document released by the Steering Committee on Population Policy (SCPP) in October 2013 and asked what role the local EM community could play in the employment market in light of the projected decline of the Hong Kong labour force in the coming 20 to 30 years. Miss Chan (LD) said that the SCPP was conducting a public engagement exercise to invite views of the public in tackling the demographic challenges and views on unleashing the potentials of the existing population, including the EM community, were welcome.

**5. Training for Ethnic Minorities provided by the Employees Retraining Board**

5.1 At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms Wong of the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) gave a PowerPoint presentation on a wide range of training and employment support services for EMs provided by ERB and its training bodies.

5.2 Issues raised by Members and the discussions were summarised below:

5.2.1 A member opined that the ERB should strengthen publicity efforts to inform EMs of the training courses available to them. Ms Wong (ERB) responded that ERB had issued a series of promotional materials, including prospectus, posters and leaflets in English and six EM languages for distribution to EM groups via different channels. The ERB also sponsored training bodies to organise district-based promotional activities targeting the EMs and the employers. Ms Wong agreed that the ERB would continue to explore more channels to reach out to the EMs and collaborate with EM organisations to foster awareness of the EMs to the available training opportunities.

**6. The Work of Equal Opportunities Commission on the Promotion of Racial Equality**

6.1At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms Novianti of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)briefed Members about the work of EOC and the highlight of its public education and publicity programmes in a PowerPoint presentation.

6.2 Issues raised by Members and the discussions were summarised below:

1. **Protection for foreign domestic helpers**

6.2.1 A member pointed out that while foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) whose disputes on premature terminations were being adjudicated by the Labour Tribunal, they were denied access to public health care. She questioned if these cases constituted race discrimination. Ms Novianti (EOC) explained that the cases were outside jurisdiction of EOC, owing to the exception clause on immigration policy under the Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO).

6.2.2 A member raised that if a contract was terminated prematurely by either the employer or the FDH, the FDH was permitted to stay for two weeks or for the remainder of the period endorsed in his/her passport, whichever is the shorter period. She asked whether these FDHs would be given enough time to raise a complaint against their discriminators. Ms Novianti (EOC) said where justified, Immigration Department would exercise flexibility to extend the FDH’s stay as a visitor to enable him or her to wait for the conclusion of the conciliation or adjudication process. Ms Novianti (EOC) added that the absence of the complainant would not deprive the complainant of his or her right to lodge a complaint or pursue a legal claim in the matter. If the complainant was required to testify at court, the EOC might ask him or her to return to Hong Kong.

1. **Education for the Filipino community**

6.2.3 A member queried follow-up action on issues related to education facing by the Filipino community in Hong Kong arising from the meeting between the Deputy Consul General of the Philippines in Hong Kong and the Chairperson of the EOC on 13 November 2013. Ms Novianti (EOC) responded that the Commission had been urging the Government to provide systematic and holistic support for EM children, including language and cultural programmes starting from pre-primary level and an alternative Chinese curriculum. The Commission would consider conducting a formal investigation if the Government did not address the concerns in the coming Policy Address.

6.2.4 The Chairman supplemented that the Commission on Poverty had set up the “Special Needs Groups Task Force”. The Task Force would advise the Government of proposals to help EMs and other disadvantaged groups in their education, employment and integration. Many members of the Task Force had accorded high priority to provide comprehensive support for EM students in learning the Chinese language.

1. **Legal assistance**

6.2.5 A member asked the number of cases had led to prosecution due to race discrimination since the RDO came into operation in 2009. Ms Novianti (EOC) replied that the EOC had received complaints on race discrimination and some cases had reached settlement. No prosecution under the RDO had been initiated so far.

(d) **Public education**

6.2.6 In response to a Member’s enquiry on the public education for the mainstream community to enhance understanding of the Race Discrimination Ordinance, Ms Novianti (EOC) said that the EOC had prepared various publications and organised a wide range of events and activities, including media campaigns, programmes for schools and employers, community outreach activities and public education initiatives to foster equal opportunities values and increase public awareness about race discrimination issues in Hong Kong.

**7. Any Other Business**

7.1On the occasion of Secretary for Home Affairs’ Commendations awarded to Ms Bungon Tamasorn and Dr Rizwan Ullah in September 2013 and Chief Executive’s Commendations awarded to Mr Dewan Saiful Alam and Mr Hameed Jalal in October 2013, the Chairman expressed on behalf of the Committee a sincere gratitude for their dedicated and outstanding services to the EMs.

Home Affairs Department

July 2014