Committee on the Promotion of Racial Harmony

Notes of the meeting on 5 December 2014

**Present**

**Home Affairs Department (HAD)**

Mr Jack Chan (Chairman) Deputy Director

Miss Dora Fu Assistant Director

Mr K Y Cheng Chief Executive Officer

Mr Alfred Shum (Secretary) Senior Executive Officer

**Official Members**

Mr D C Cheung Principal Assistant Secretary

 Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau

Miss Yik Wai King Principal Information Officer (Local Promotion) Information Services Department

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

Ms Lau Hang Yee, Jessica 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, MH

Ms Ho Wai-yee, Lucilla

Ms Rosalia Kamariah Kesuma

Mr Hameed Jalal

Ms Daisy Catherine L Mandap

Mr Amirali Bakirali Nasir, JP

Dr Rizwan Ullah

Mr Yeung Chuen Chow, Thomas

**In Attendance**

Mr Samson Lok Senior Housing Manager (Applications), Housing Department

Ms Kitty Lam Senior Policy and Research Officer,
Equal Opportunities Commission

Professor Leung Cho-bun, Joe President, Board of Directors, Hong Kong Community Network (HKCN)

Ms Yue Mui-ying Chairman, Executive Committee, HKCN

Mr So Man-yum Chief Executive and Director, HKCN

Mr Aero Fong Project Manager, New Home Association

**Absent with apologies**

Mr Mohammad Liaqat

Ms Bungon Tamasorn

1. Introduction
	1. The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting.
2. Confirmation of the notes of discussion on 11 July 2014
	1. Mr Rizwan Ullah proposed that the phrase “in addition to designated schools” in paragraph 4.2.6 of the notes of the last meeting held on 11 July 2014 be removed. The Committee confirmed the notes of the last meeting with the amendment proposed.
3. Matters arising from the meeting on 11 July 2014
	1. There was no matter arising from the meeting on 11 July 2014.
4. Support for ethnic minority public rental housing applicants by Housing Department
	1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Samson Lok of the Housing Department (HD) briefed Members on the support services for the public rental housing (PRH) application from the Ethnic Minority (EM) with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation.
	2. Issues raised by Members and the discussions were summarised below:

## Provision of information for EM public rental housing applicants

* + 1. A Member asked whether the information covered in the presentation was available on the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HKHA) website. Mr Lok replied that essential information was available in six EM languages while other information was available in the official languages of English and Chinese.
		2. A Member said that some EMs had difficulty understanding the rules and eligibility criteria. Mr Lok said that to facilitate applicants to make a PRH application, there was an application guide with detailed information, including a sample application form to guide applicants filling in the application forms and a checklist to ascertain whether all necessary documents had been included. He added that apart from a video highlighting the salient points in submission of PRH application, there was an “eligibility checker” on the HKHA website through which a potential applicant could perform an initial assessment by answering simple questions on age, income, number of persons in the household, etc. Content on the information pertaining to PRH application and language support services for the EM in six EM languages had been updated and uploaded onto the HKHA website. In addition, applicants might call the hotline or visit the Housing Authority Customer Services Centre at Lok Fu for further assistance.
		3. A Member commented that EM families were concerned about the waiting time for allocation of public rental housing. Mr Lok replied that applicants could check the general progress of PRH by referring to the monthly updates published on the HKHA website and in relevant newspapers.

## Compassionate rehousing

* + 1. A Member said that she had come across some applications for Compassionate Rehousing (CR) and would like to know more about the relevant policy. Mr Lok explained that CR was to provide PRH for individuals or families who have pressing housing needs on social or medical grounds. Under CR, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) recommended cases to HD and HD would immediately arrange for PRH allocation after completion of the vetting procedures if suitable PRH resource was available.

## Hyperlinks to websites

* + 1. To facilitate easy access of information by EMs, the Chairman suggested that the HKHA website should include hyperlinks to the support services centres for EMs. The HAD website should also include a link to the PRH application information in EM languages in the HKHA website. Mr Lok agreed to consider.
	1. The Chairman thanked for the presentation made by Mr Lok.
1. Enhanced support services for ethnic minorities
	1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Miss Dora Fu (HAD) gave an overview of the four new initiatives undertaken by HAD to enhance community support for EMs, namely, support services centre for EMs in Kwai Tsing district, youth units in all centres and sub-centres, ambassador schemes for EM youths and strengthened manpower support in HAD.

# Support services centre in Kwai Tsing district

* 1. The Chairman welcomed Prof Joe Leung, Ms Yue Mui-ying and Mr So Man-yum from Hong Kong Community Network to the meeting. At the invitation of the Chairman, Prof Leung and his colleagues briefed members on the services provided by LINK Centre.
	2. Issues raised by Members and the discussions were summarised below:
		1. A Member enquired whether there was any plan to open more support services centres in other districts. The Chairman replied that there were already six centres and two sub-centres covering areas where the EM population was high. He explained that most part of the territory had already been provided with a centre, except northeast New Territories where EMs were less concentrated. It might be difficult to justify setting up a centre in these areas.
		2. A Member asked how the centres would reach out to the intended beneficiaries. Prof Leung and a EM staff of LINK Centre said that they were reaching out by partnering with schools, business organisation and religious bodies, visiting places where EM youths gathered and using the social media on the Internet. Some Members also shared how their centres reached out to the community.
		3. The Chairman said that outreaching is an important part of support services for ethnic minorities. For instance, HAD had ambassador schemes to reach out to households and EM youths. Miss Fu added that HAD had employed EM staff to liaise with schools, religious organisations and EM organisations. She said that there was also a plan to make YouTube videos to promote EM services. At district level, she suggested that EM staff in support services centres could also help building up local networks.
		4. A Member asked how LINK Centre reached out to schools. Prof Leung replied that they had directly approached schools in Kwai Fong where there was a high concentration of Pakistanis and received positive response.
		5. A Member suggested setting up a “buddy system” to foster integration between local and EM youth. This would enable EMs to build up Cantonese skills and learn Chinese culture from young age. Mr So replied that they had a “Big Brother Scheme” which matched EM children with local youth. Prof Leung added that they had also engaged corporate partners to recruit volunteers as mentors for EM members in the centre.
		6. A Member suggested that EM youths could be invited to talk about their success stories on radio programmes to promote positive thinking. Another Member suggested that radio programmes need not restrict to one language. Speakers of different languages can interact in the same programme. The Bahasa-Cantonese programme currently sponsored by HAD was a good example. Members also suggested putting in more music and changing the airtime to attract more youth audiences.
		7. The Chairman thanked for the presentation made by Prof Leung and his colleagues from LINK Centre.
		8. The Chairman said that there were rumours on the social network accusing that the support services centres were propaganda machines and discouraging EMs to use the services of these centres. He explained that the sole objective of the centres was to help EM friends integrate into the society and invited Members to spread the truth among their communities.

# Ambassador schemes for EM youths

* 1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mrs Cheung-Ang Siew Mei of Hong Kong Christian Action and Mr Aero Fong of New Home Association briefed members on the implementation of the Ambassador Schemes for EM Youths in the Urban Areas and in the New Territories respectively.
	2. Issues raised by Members and the discussions were summarised below:
		1. A Member enquired about the coverage of various ambassador schemes. The Chairman said that there were in total three ambassador schemes for EMs supported by HAD. International Social Services Hong Kong Branch was running an ambassador scheme for EMs in general. Two new service contracts were recently awarded to Hong Kong Christian Action and the New Home Association to operate the ambassador schemes for EM youths in the urban areas and in the New Territories respectively.
		2. The Chairman thanked for the presentations made by Mrs Cheung and Mr Fong.
1. Any Other Business
	1. A Member was concerned that the community was polarised and people refused to compromise. He commented that too much emphasis on individual freedom could have led to this phenomenon. He suggested that the traditional eastern culture about family values should be promoted and integrated in all our programmes.
	2. A Member noted that the proportion of EM prisoners was exceptionally high. He suggested that relevant departments should look into the situation of EMs in prison and the possible reasons that lead to crimes committed by EMs.
	3. The Chairman informed Members that the Secretariat would arrange visits to see the LINK Centre and ambassador schemes in action in January/February 2015.
	4. For the date of next meeting, Members would be duly informed nearer the time.

Home Affairs Department

December 2014