

LCQ11: Support provided for the ethnic minorities

Following is a question by the Hon Kwong Chun-yu and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (June 19):

Question:

The Government has commissioned non-governmental organisations to run six support service centres for the ethnic minorities (EMs) and two sub-centres (support centres). The services provided by the support centres include organising language classes for EMs. One of these centres, namely the CHEER Centre operated by the Hong Kong Christian Service, also provides interpretation and translation services for EMs using public services. Regarding the support provided for EMs, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of occasions in each of the past three years on which the various policy bureaux/government departments (B/Ds) arranged interpretation and translation services for EMs using public services, with a breakdown by (i) B/D, (ii) name of service provider, and (iii) EM language;

(2) of the number of occasions in each of the past three years on which the various B/Ds engaged the interpretation and translation services provided by the CHEER Centre, with a breakdown by (i) service category (i.e. telephone interpretation service, on-sight interpretation service, on-site (escort) interpretation service, simultaneous interpretation service, written translation service and proofreading service) and (ii) EM language;

(3) of the following details of the Cantonese classes and English classes offered by each support centre in each of the past three years: (i) number of classes offered, (ii) medium of instruction, and (iii) number of students enrolled (with a breakdown by ethnicity); and

(4) of the current population of EM who are aged 65 or above, and the number of those who are receiving the various types of allowances under the Social Security Allowance Scheme, with a breakdown by (i) type of allowances and (ii) ethnicity?

Reply:

President,

In 2010, the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau issued the "Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality" (Guidelines) to provide guidance to relevant bureaux and departments to promote racial equality and ensure equal access by ethnic minorities (EMs) to public

services in the key areas concerned, and to take this into account in the formulation, implementation and review of relevant policies and measures.

After consulting the relevant bureaux and departments, the consolidated reply to the question raised is as follows:

(1) Various bureaux and departments will provide interpretation services for EMs in need to ensure their equal access to public services. The Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau is conducting a review on the Guidelines. To enhance the provision of interpretation services by bureaux and departments, the Bureau is exploring the feasibility of including guidance on the provision of interpretation services in the Guidelines.

The number of interpretation services for EMs arranged by bureaux, departments and public organisations under the scope of application of the Guidelines in the past three years and names of service providers are shown in Annex 1. The above bodies have not provided the breakdown of the number of interpretation services by EM languages.

(2) The Home Affairs Department provides support services for EMs to help them integrate into the community. Major services include the provision of language learning classes and integration programmes through six support service centres for EMs and two sub-centres. One of these centres, namely the CHEER Centre operated by the Hong Kong Christian Service, also provides interpretation and translation services in seven EM languages (Note) for non-specialised areas. Bureaux and departments and EMs are welcome to make use of these services. Interpretation services include mainly instant telephone interpretation services. Subject to the availability of resources, on-site or simultaneous interpretation services can also be arranged. From 2019-20 onwards, the Home Affairs Department will enhance the interpretation services provided by the CHEER Centre, including the introduction of interpretation services in Vietnamese.

The usage of CHEER Centre's interpretation and translation services with breakdowns by bureaux, departments, public organisations and EMs as well as by EM languages in the past three years are shown in Annexes 2 and 3 respectively.

(3) The support service centres for EMs and sub-centres of the Home Affairs Department provide Cantonese classes and English classes with the aim to help EMs meet the needs in their daily social lives and strengthen their capability and confidence to integrate into the community. The languages of instruction for Cantonese classes in the centres are mainly English and Cantonese, while English is the primary language of instruction for English classes. The centres will, depending on the situation, arrange EM teaching assistants to assist the teachers.

The number of Cantonese classes and English classes organised in the centres and the number of participants by ethnicities in the past three project years are shown in Annex 4.

(4) According to the information of the 2016 Population By-census by the

Census and Statistics Department, there are 20 124 EMs (excluding foreign domestic helpers) who are aged 65 or above in Hong Kong, including 2 838 Indian, 713 Nepalese, 633 Pakistani, 1 256 Filipino, 1 400 Indonesian and 1 011 Thai. The total population of EMs who are aged 65 or above for the above-mentioned six ethnicities is 7 851. The Social Welfare Department does not collect information on the ethnicity of the recipients of the Social Security Allowance Scheme.

Note: The seven EM languages are Bahasa Indonesia, Hindi, Nepali, Punjabi, Tagalog, Thai and Urdu.