

Kong residents reported that they had lost contact with their families in Thailand.

"Within three days of the disaster, we had 160 officers in Bangkok, Phuket and nearby sites," said Ms So. The teams also visited the rescue centres in Krabi, where the injured from Phi Phi Island were sent, while another 40 police officers went to the major resort of Khao Lak, the hardest hit by the tsunami, in search for missing Hong Kong residents.

As at January 17, there remained 34 cases in which callers were able to provide personal details of missing residents: 31 cases in Thailand and three in Indonesia. Some 12 deaths of Hong Kong residents had been reported.

Hong Kong follow-up

Back in Hong Kong HAB and HAD have been offering help to those waiting anxiously for news of missing family members. District Officers contacted informants to the ImmD's hotline and by January 18 they had contacted and offered help to 200 families. HAD and SWD had also set up a help desk at Hong Kong International Airport as a referral service for Hong Kong residents returning from the tsunami stricken areas. SWD also set up a special hotline manned by clinical psychologists and by

January 12, when it ceased operations, had received 118 calls. The Education and Manpower Bureau had also issued a circular to schools requesting them to report on the number of staff or pupils who might be absent due to the tsunami.

Deep pockets

Meanwhile, Hong Kong people joined the world raising funds for the stricken countries. The Hong Kong Government made an immediate contribution of \$30 million; the HAD organised a fund raising concert at the Hong Kong

Stadium, and SCS appealed to all civil servants to give generously.

By January 5, just 10 days after the disaster, Hong Kong had privately raised \$400 million, representing \$55 for every man, woman and child, leading the world on donations on a per capita basis. And more was to come. Radio Television Hong Kong's Operation Santa Claus 2004 was extended to raise funds for relief efforts. And at its close on January 18, it had raised an additional \$16.85 million for 12 beneficiaries in Hong Kong (\$7.27 million) and UNICEF (\$9.58 million).



Led by the Chief Executive, senior Government officials join hands with legislators and other community leaders in a major fund raising campaign for the tsunami-torn south Asian countries and victims.

Equality in the civil service

Civil Service Newsletter Editorial Board

SITTING atop the Legislative Council building in Central is a statue of the blindfolded Lady of Justice, a remnant of the days when the building was Hong Kong's Supreme Court. With a sword in one hand and a set of scales in the other, she represents fairness. The scales are balanced, symbolising equality.



And so it is in Hong Kong where the laws have been designed to ensure that everyone is treated on an equal footing, regardless of sex, creed, nationality or physical and mental ability.

The broad perception of equality conjures up the Battle of the Sexes; her against him (or should it be him against her!) to secure an equal footing on the promotion ladder. Indeed, male domination of the upper levels of the workforce was the case until perhaps the past couple of decades. The Government was no exception, but that was to change.

The move for women's rights

Former Chief Secretary for the Administration, Anson Chan Fang On-sang joined the civil service in 1962 when male and female civil servants did not receive equal remuneration. In the early 1970s, when she was a Senior Administrative Officer she helped establish the Association of Female Senior Government Officers to fight for better rights

for women civil servants. In 1980 she was appointed Director of Social Welfare and from 1987 to 1993 was Secretary for Economic Services, the first Secretary post to be held by a woman. Then she went one better: in 1993 she was appointed Chief Secretary responsible for the day-to-day running of the Government. She was the first woman to hold the number two post in the Government's hierarchy.



Others followed: Mrs Regina Ip Lau Suk-yea became Secretary for Security (1998 – 2003), Miss Elsie Leung Oi-si has the post of Secretary for Justice, and Dr Sarah Liao Sau-tung is Secretary for Environment, Transport and Works.

Also, the number of women holding directorate posts in the civil service has more than doubled in the last decade: from 138 in 1994 to more than 300 at the end of 2004, representing about 26% of the entire directorate.

Government policy

According to a Legislative Council (LegCo) brief on race relations, the Government's policy is to:

- eliminate and combat all forms of racial discriminations;
- promote racial equality and communal harmony; and
- encourage ethnic minorities settled in Hong Kong to integrate into the wider society, while retaining their cultural identity.

In 1998, the Home Affairs Bureau published a Code of Practice against discrimination in employment on the grounds of race to facilitate self-regulation on the part

of employers and employees in eliminating discriminatory practices in employment.

Government promotes equal opportunities

As Hong Kong's largest employer, the Government is committed to eliminating discrimination in employment, said Secretary for the Civil Service, Joseph Wong Wing-ping, at a recent meeting of the LegCo, adding that the Government seeks to promote equal opportunities employment in the community among persons of all races.

"Appointment to the civil service is based on the principle of open and fair competition. Civil Service vacancies are filled through a competitive selection process on the basis of the merit of eligible candidates," said Mr Wong.

He added that appointment to the civil service was based on service need, citing, as an example, "where there is a need to recruit persons with a special language ability for delivery of public service, as an equal opportunities employer, we would specify the language requirement in the recruitment rather than confine the eligibility to candidates of a particular ethnic origin."

Basic Law provisions

Mr Wong said that whilst Article 99 provides that new recruits to the civil service, save for certain specific exceptions, must be permanent residents of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), ethnic origin was never a consideration in civil service appointments.

Article 101 goes on to say that foreign nationals may also be appointed from outside the HKSAR as advisors to fill technical and professional posts in government departments.

Racial Discrimination Bill

The public consultation exercise in 2004 on proposed legislation against racial discrimination came to a close in early February and a bill is

expected to be introduced to the LegCo before the end of the current session.

The Bill defines racial discrimination as discrimination based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin and covers direct and indirect racial discrimination, racial harassment and vilification, and discrimination on the basis of the race of the spouse or relative as well as by way of victimisation. Areas covered under the Bill include:

- employment;
- education;
- goods, facilities, services and premises;
- advisory and statutory bodies; and
- pupillage and tenancy in barristers' chambers.

It is expected that the proposed legislation will have very little impact on the Government. The LegCo brief noted that the existing anti-discrimination laws had not significantly affected Government operations and that "since the Government is already subject to the anti-discrimination provisions in the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance, an anti-racial discrimination law applying to both the public and private sectors is unlikely to add to the Government's obligations."

Equal opportunities for the disabled

The next issue of the Civil Service Newsletter issue No.63 will address equal opportunities for the disabled in the civil service and will include experiences of some civil servants on how they have overcome their difficulties.

