

For information on  
20 January 2014

## **Legislative Council Panel on Public Service**

### **Employment of Ethnic Minorities in the Civil Service**

#### **Purpose**

This paper sets out the measures to facilitate the employment of ethnic minorities in the Civil Service, including an update on the new initiatives being planned/implemented.

#### **Overview**

2. Appointments to the Civil Service are based on the principle of open and fair competition. All candidates in an open recruitment exercise are assessed on the basis of their ability, performance and character, and having regard to the stipulated entry requirements (including language proficiency) set according to the job requirements of the grade concerned. Race is not a relevant consideration in the selection process.

3. In response to the rising public expectation of the quality of public services, the Government's contact and communication with the public has become closer and more frequent. It is the Government's policy to maintain a fully biliterate (English and Chinese) and tri-lingual (English, Cantonese and Putonghua) Civil Service to ensure effective communication with the general public.

4. As a general rule, all written materials and announcements meant for the public, including reports, forms, pamphlets, booklets, posters, notices, signs, rules and regulations, and Internet home pages of the Government are in both Chinese and English. Verbal announcements

for the general public (such as radio and television advertisements) are bilingual. In addition, bureaux and departments (B/Ds) reply to correspondence or answer oral enquiries from members of the public in either Chinese or English, depending on the language used in the incoming correspondence or enquiries. Given the importance of maintaining effective bilingual communications, it is necessary to specify appropriate English and Chinese language proficiency requirements (LPRs) for appointments to different grades in the Civil Service.

## **Implementation of LPRs and other relevant measures**

### *Setting of LPRs*

5. In setting the LPRs for recruitment to the Civil Service, the job nature and operational requirements of the grade concerned are the prime considerations. Under the prevailing guidelines, individual civil service grade management should ensure that the LPRs specified are relevant to and commensurate with the satisfactory performance of the duties of the grades concerned. This arrangement is in line with the guidance of the Equal Opportunities Commission as set out in the Code of Practice on Employment under the Race Discrimination Ordinance (the “Code of Practice”), which provides that an employer must ensure that any language requirement for a job is relevant to and should be commensurate with the satisfactory performance of a job. Generally speaking, for civil service grades that have prescribed academic qualification requirements, the LPRs are aligned with the academic qualifications and set having regard to the following guidelines –

- (a) *degree / professional grades*: the LPRs are set at either Level 2 or Level 1 in the two language papers (viz. Use of Chinese and Use of English) in the Common Recruitment Examination (CRE)<sup>1</sup>, or equivalent, having regard to the job requirements of the concerned grades;
- (b) *non-degree grades with academic qualification requirements at the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSEE) / Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination*

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<sup>1</sup> CRE is conducted by the Civil Service Examinations Unit of the Civil Service Bureau (CSB). The Use of Chinese and Use of English papers in CRE are set at graduate level by language academics. Results in these two language papers are classified as Level 2, Level 1 or Fail, with Level 2 being the highest. Different levels may be set for the English and Chinese LPRs of a grade respectively, having regard to the operational needs of the grade concerned.

*(HKCEE) level or above:* the LPRs are at Level 2 in the English Language and Chinese Language subjects in the HKDSEE/HKCEE, or equivalent; and

- (c) *non-degree grades with academic qualification requirements lower than the HKDSEE/HKCEE level:* the LPRs should at least be aligned with the minimum academic qualification prescribed for the concerned grades.

For grades that have not set any academic qualification requirements, the LPRs should be set at a level commensurate with the job requirements of the grades concerned.

6. To facilitate non-ethnic Chinese (NEC) candidates in applying for civil service jobs, the Administration accepts Chinese language results of specified non-local public examinations in addition to local qualifications as meeting the LPRs. Specifically, Chinese language results in the United Kingdom International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE)/ General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)/ General Certificate of Education (GCE) ‘Ordinary’ (‘O’) Level as well as GCE ‘Advanced’/ ‘Advanced Subsidiary’ (‘A’/ ‘AS’) Levels, which are qualifications popular amongst students learning Chinese as a second language, are accepted for the purpose of appointments to the Civil Service. CSB has promulgated guidelines to B/Ds with a view to ensuring consistent application of the aforementioned acceptance arrangements in all recruitment exercises.

7. The heads of department/grade (HoDs/HoGs) are responsible for stipulating the LPRs for their respective grades and reviewing the LPRs from time to time taking into account the changing operational needs. The guidelines set out in paragraph 5 above serve as a general framework only. HoDs/HoGs are advised to make suitable adjustments to the LPRs where operational needs of the grades justify.

8. To ensure that HoDs/HoGs make continuous efforts in reviewing and where appropriate, adjusting the LPRs, CSB conducts, in consultation with B/Ds, reviews of LPRs of all civil service grades from time to time. Since 2010, there are a total of 20 grades which have relaxed the Chinese LPRs upon review, including five grades which have relaxed the Chinese LPRs since our last report to the Panel on 15 April 2013. Some grades have made suitable adjustments to the LPRs in view that their operational needs do not necessitate the same level of proficiency in English and Chinese. For example, the Veterinary Officer grade of the Agriculture,

Fisheries and Conservation Department has lowered the Chinese LPRs from Level 1 in CRE Use of Chinese paper to Level 2 in Chinese Language in the HKDSEE/HKCEE or equivalent; the Air Crewman Officer grade of the Government Flying Service (GFS) has adjusted the LPRs from “Level 2 in English Language and Chinese Language in the HKDSEE/HKCEE or equivalent” to “Level 2 in English Language in the HKDSEE/HKCEE and Form 3 standard for Chinese, or equivalent”; the Pilot grade of GFS has removed the Chinese LPRs while maintaining only the English LPRs; and the Workman grade has adjusted the written language proficiency to “able to write simple Chinese or simple English”, instead of requiring written proficiency in both languages. The Administration will continue with the efforts in reviewing and where appropriate, adjusting the Chinese LPRs of civil service grades going forward.

9. Some grades have identified certain posts which could adopt English LPRs only without compromising satisfactory performance of the duties of the posts concerned. For example, the Flight Operations Inspectorate stream in the Operations Officer grade of the Civil Aviation Department has removed the Chinese LPRs and adopted only the English LPRs of “strong command of written and spoken English”. Specific posts of the Government Counsel grade of the Department of Justice have been identified for which proficiency in English language only (instead of both languages) is required.

### *Selection process*

10. Some departments have made suitable adjustments to their recruitment selection process, particularly the part concerning tests of communication ability. For example, applicants of Police Constable who meet the basic academic qualifications and prescribed English language proficiency standard but do not meet the required Chinese LPRs would be arranged to sit for the Government Standard Examination<sup>2</sup>. At the Group Interview stage, applicants will be arranged to participate in a job-related “Practical Incident Handling Test”, under which candidates are required to give a simple account of the incidents as shown in the videos to them in written English and Chinese respectively. This has replaced the previous requirement for candidates to answer questions in

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<sup>2</sup> The Government Standard Examination is conducted by the Civil Service Examinations Unit of CSB and is set at a level equivalent to Level 2 in Chinese Language in the HKDSEE/HKCEE.

Chinese. In addition, applicants who possess foreign language skills are awarded extra marks in the selection process. As regards Assistant Officer II of the Correctional Services Department (CSD), a Group Interview has replaced the previous Chinese written test.

11. The relevant statistics regarding the recruitment of Police Constable and Assistant Officer II from 2010 to 2013 are set out at Annex A. It is noted that since the implementation of the aforementioned adjustments, there has been an increase in the number of applications from NECs<sup>3</sup> generally. Also, the average success rate of NECs has been higher than that of other applicants.

### *Career advancement*

12. Promotion of civil servants from a lower rank to a higher rank of the same grade in the Civil Service is based on merit and prescribed criteria including ability, attainment of prescribed qualifications (if any), experience and character. This is in line with the guidance set out in the Code of Practice, which stipulates that employees are promoted on merit and the criteria adopted are not discriminatory on the ground of race.

13. In addition, some special in-service advancement schemes, under which civil servants of a lower-ranking grade meeting prescribed assessment criteria are selected to advance to a different higher-ranking grade, are in place. Relevant HoDs/HoGs may make suitable adjustments to the selection process for the advancement schemes where appropriate to ensure equal opportunities for all eligible candidates. In this regard, CSD has done away the Chinese language written test for serving staff of the Assistant Officer grade to be considered for appointment to the Officer grade under the “Potential Officer Scheme” and “Special Appointment Scheme”<sup>4</sup> since December 2010. Candidates are allowed to answer oral questions in either English or Chinese (Putonghua or Cantonese) during the selection process. In the two

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<sup>3</sup> Applicants are not required to declare their ethnic origins in the recruitment selection process. The number of NEC applicants quoted is based on the information available to the relevant departments through such means as face-to-face contacts with candidates during interviews.

<sup>4</sup> “Potential Officer Scheme” and “Special Appointment Scheme” are special in-service advancement schemes which enable meritorious Assistant Officers nominated by their supervisors to advance to the Officer rank without having to meet the academic qualifications necessary for direct entry to the Officer grade.

rounds of exercise conducted with the revised process, a total of 21 staff in the Assistant Officer grade who were NECs participated in these schemes and three of them were appointed to the Officer grade. A new round of exercise is being conducted.

### ***Employment initiatives***

14. Where appropriate, departments have employed NECs to meet operational needs. For example, the Education Bureau has employed NECs as teaching staff in government schools with NEC students. The Police Force launched, on a trial basis, a scheme to hire NECs as Police Community Liaison Assistants on non-civil service contract terms in five selected Police Districts in September 2010. The scheme has subsequently been extended to cover 14 Districts with a total of 15 positions.

15. The Social Welfare Department is planning to launch a trial scheme to hire NECs on non-civil service contract terms and part-time basis in the Integrated Family Service Centres in certain districts. Detailed arrangements are being worked out.

16. To ensure that recruitment information on government jobs would be disseminated to the ethnic minority community effectively, CSB has encouraged B/Ds to place recruitment advertisements, where appropriate, with the Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities run by the Home Affairs Department. B/Ds will follow up in this regard.

### ***Other supporting measures***

17. To encourage potential candidates including those from the ethnic minority community to apply for government jobs, departments such as the Police Force have carried out outreach work, e.g. conducting career talks in secondary schools with NEC students. The Police Force has also organised engagement projects in certain Police Districts, such as visits to Police Units and sharing by police officers on work experience and job interview skills with NECs interested in joining the Police Force.

18. As a new initiative, CSB plans to organise, on a trial basis, Chinese language training tailored for the vocational needs of government NEC staff to facilitate their effective performance of duties and career advancement.

## Survey on the racial profile of the Civil Service

19. The Administration has taken steps to gauge the composition of the Civil Service by racial groups. At the Panel meeting held on 20 June 2011, the Administration briefed Members on the findings of the first survey on the racial profile of the Civil Service vide LC Paper No. CB(1)2436/10-11(02). To obtain up-to-date information, CSB conducted the second survey in the second quarter of 2013. Apart from collecting information on ethnicity and salary band as in the first survey, we have expanded the scope of the survey to cover information on the respondents' education level and length of service in the Civil Service. As in the first survey, the 2013 survey, conducted on a voluntary and anonymous basis, sought to reflect the overall racial profile of the Civil Service through compilation of consolidated information. All civil servants serving on 31 March 2013 were invited to take part in the survey by completing a questionnaire. Findings are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

### *Findings*

20. A total of 24 690 civil servants (or 15.4% of the 160 441 civil servants serving on 31 March 2013) responded by close of the survey period. Of the respondents, 24 220 (or 98.1%) were of Chinese ethnicity whereas 470 (or 1.9%) were of non-Chinese ethnicities (hereafter referred to as "NEC"). The five largest NEC groups, in descending order of their size, were Mixed, White, Indian, Pakistani, and Other Asian. A breakdown of the respondents by ethnic groups is at **Annex B**.

21. According to the 2011 Population Census, the number of working NECs who are permanent residents (PR)<sup>5</sup> in Hong Kong was 64 183, constituting 2.02% of the whole PR working population. The distribution of individual NEC groups in the 2013 survey and that in 2011 Population Census were broadly comparable, with the three largest NEC groups of Mixed, White and Indian coming among the top five NEC groups of the 2011 Population Census.

22. We have drawn comparison of the monthly income of respondents in the 2013 survey with the monthly income from main

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<sup>5</sup> As a substantial proportion of NEC working population in Hong Kong are foreign domestic helpers from Philippines and Indonesia, figures of the PR working population in the 2011 Population Census are used here for more meaningful comparison.

employment of the PR working population in the 2011 Population Census. Respondents were classified into three salary groups, namely (a) below \$17,835; (b) \$17,835 - \$54,665; and (c) above \$54,665<sup>6</sup>. Detailed findings are presented at **Annex C** and summarised as follows –

		<b>Below \$17,835</b>	<b>\$17,835 - \$54,665</b>	<b>Above \$54,665</b>
<b>2013 Survey</b>	<b>NEC respondents</b>	25.7%	56.6%	17.7%
	<b>All respondents</b>	11.4%	76.3%	12.3%
<b>2011 Population Census</b>		67.5%	27.7%	4.8%

As revealed in the 2013 survey, the respective proportion of NEC respondents among the three salary groups was broadly comparable to that for all respondents. The respective proportion of NEC respondents in the 2013 survey belonging to the high and middle salary groups was higher than that of the 2011 Population Census.

23. The 2013 survey asked respondents to indicate their education attainment<sup>7</sup> when they joined the Civil Service according to four groups, namely (a) primary and below; (b) lower secondary; (c) upper secondary/sixth form; and (d) post-secondary. The findings are as follows –

		<b>Primary and below</b>	<b>Lower secondary</b>	<b>Upper secondary/ sixth form</b>	<b>Post- secondary</b>
<b>2013 Survey</b>	<b>NEC respondents</b>	6.4%	14.0%	43.6%	36.0%
	<b>All respondents</b>	3.2%	11.0%	51.0%	34.9%
<b>2011 Population Census</b>		11.7%	16.9%	34.9%	36.6%

Generally speaking, the respective proportion of NEC respondents among the four groups of education attainment was broadly comparable to that for all respondents and the distribution of the 2011 Population Census.

<sup>6</sup> The salary groups correspond to the pay points in the civil service pay structure as follows: (a) below \$17,835 (i.e. below Master Pay Scale (MPS) Point 10 or equivalent); (b) \$17,835 - \$54,665 (i.e. MPS Point 10-33, or equivalent); and (c) above \$54,665 (i.e. above MPS 33 or equivalent).

<sup>7</sup> Education attainment refers to the highest level of education ever attained by a person in an education institution, regardless of whether he completed the course.



24. The 2013 survey also asked respondents to indicate their length of service by the following groups, namely (a) less than 3 years; (b) 3 years to less than 10 years, (c) 10 years to less than 20 years, and (d) 20 years and above. The findings are as follows –

	<b>Less than 3 years</b>	<b>3 years to less than 10 years</b>	<b>10 years to less than 20 years</b>	<b>20 years and above</b>
<b>NEC respondents</b>	13.4%	8.3%	27.9%	50.4%
<b>All respondents</b>	12.1%	15.8%	27.8%	44.4%

The distribution of NEC respondents in the 2013 survey into the four groups of length of service was broadly comparable to the overall distribution of all respondents.

25. The 2013 survey has provided a useful basis for the Administration to obtain an update on the racial profile of the Civil Service and monitor the implementation of equal opportunities policies and good employment procedures as well as practices, as set out in the Code of Practice. The Administration will continue to keep in view the situation.

### **Advice sought**

26. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

**Civil Service Bureau**  
**January 2014**