

HKSAR Government strengthens support services for ethnic minorities (with photos)

To facilitate ethnic minorities' early integration into the community, the Government will allocate additional resources in the next financial year to strengthen relevant support services, the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, said during a visit to a support service centre for ethnic minorities today (January 13).

Mr Tsang visited the HOPE Centre in Wan Chai, and with the Lunar New Year approaching he brought some traditional Lunar New Year food to share the joy of the traditional festive season with ethnic minority members. A group of children were attending an art class at the centre, and Mr Tsang said he hoped they would have no difficulties integrating into the local living environment and culture.

The HOPE Centre is one of four support service centres for ethnic minorities subsidised by the Home Affairs Department (HAD). Established by the International Social Service Hong Kong Branch, it has been offering support services for ethnic minorities living in Hong Kong since 2009. The organisation's Chairman, Mr Ho Chang-pong and Executive Director, Mr Stephen Yau, briefed Mr Tsang this afternoon on various services provided by the centre, including language training classes for enhancement of ethnic minorities' proficiency in both Chinese and English, computer classes and job counselling classes.

Mr Tsang encouraged members of the ethnic minorities to join more activities and services at the centre as this would help enhance their language proficiency and understanding of local culture as well as expand their social networks for early integration into the community.

While at the Centre, Mr Tsang chatted with ethnic minority students attending a computer class and spent some time watching children learning to write spring couplets in an art class. He then joined an orientation seminar for new arrivals, where participants are briefed on the services provided by the Government and non-governmental organisations, ranging from support programmes under the Community Care Fund to services on health care, education, job placement and legal assistance.

In addition to this centre in Wan Chai, the HAD also directly subsidises non-governmental organisations to operate support service centres for ethnic minorities in Kwun Tong, Yuen Long and Tuen Mun.

"In 2012-13, the HAD plans to strengthen support services in districts where more ethnic minorities live. It is planned that one more centre in Yau Tsim Mong and two sub-centres in Sham Shui Po and Tung Chung will be set up to provide diversified services," Mr Tsang said.

Mr Tsang said that apart from support service centres, the HAD has also formed a dedicated team to reinforce the work on helping ethnic minorities integrate into the community. The team has introduced district-based integration programmes in districts with higher service demands and will launch the Ambassador Scheme early this year to reach out to the ethnic minorities and introduce them to suitable services.

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