

\$10m pay-out for overseas education

The Government has paid out \$4.4 million in overseas education allowances to public servants since April 1, 1973, and a further \$5.89 million in student passages between their school and Hongkong.

This was revealed in official figures issued to the South China Morning Post yesterday in response to questions.

Expenditure in earlier years, however, has not been collated and a Government official said that because of lack of time and manpower these figures could not be readily obtained.

However, it was revealed that a total of 740 civil servants had made use of overseas education allowances during the past five years.

It was pointed out that in the current financial year, 1974-75, a total of 508 children were involved compared with 408 children in 1973-4.

Expenditure in the 10 months to January 31, 1975 was \$1.9 million compared with \$2.5 million in 1973-4.

The official said that the allowance was available to both expatriate and local officers though not to married women officers and temporarily employed officers.

However, whereas the allowance was made available to expatriate officers in respect of children pursuing an approved course of studies in overseas countries, in the case

of local officers the children had to be studying in the United Kingdom.

The allowance rates varied depending on the country of study and from time to time, he said.

As at September 1, 1974, the allowance rates for the United Kingdom was first child: £576 (HK\$6,336) a year; second child £576 a year; third child £687 (HK\$7,557) a year and fourth child £714 (HK\$7,854) a year.

There was a maximum of four children for each officer and at present 80 per cent of the students receiving the allowance were studying in the United Kingdom.

The amount of the allowance represents roughly half the costs of a British public school boarder's fees, but it was pointed out that the type of schooling chosen by the parents and the fees charged varied a good deal.

While some children were at boarding schools, others were at grant-in-aid schools while others were living with relatives and attending school nearby.

The allowance does not include provision for travel, the official said, but two return tickets were allowed per year per child under 19 and one return ticket is allowed per year for students between 19 and 21.

These students were provided with an economy class student's return ticket.