

~~\$28m tax bill~~ for expat plan

THE government's plan to let expatriate civil servants switch from overseas to local employment terms is set to cost taxpayers nearly \$28 million.

The Legislative Council's finance committee approved the expenditure yesterday.

The \$27.7 million will be spread over four financial years, including the current one. About \$10.7 million of it will be paid out in 1996-97.

The total sum will not cover "insignificant" expenditure on housing and passage benefits.

The additional cash is needed because under the government's localisation scheme, expatriate officers on overseas terms who wish to switch to local terms must step down one rank, but they keep the same salary as their current position.

Expatriate civil servants have repeatedly threatened to sue to block the scheme.