

**Replies to initial written questions raised by Finance Committee Members in
examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2005-06**

Controlling Officer: Director, Beijing Office

Session No. : 13

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Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2005-06
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

BJO001

Head : 35 Government Secretariat: Beijing Office

Question Serial No.

Subhead (No. & title) : 000 Operational expenses

0438

Programme : (1) Liaison

Controlling Officer : Director, Beijing Office

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Constitutional Affairs

Question :

What is the reason for the sharp increase by nearly 50% in the Beijing Office's 2005-06 estimate for "disturbance allowance"? How is the allowance calculated?

Asked by : Hon. SIN Chung-kai

Reply :

Disturbance allowance is paid to a civil servant when he/she is posted outside Hong Kong and returns to Hong Kong on completion of an external posting. The purpose of the allowance is to compensate the officer for incidental expenses that may arise from an external posting and changes in living environment. It is a one-off allowance payable when the officer is posted outside or returns to Hong Kong.

Under the current arrangement, the rate of disturbance allowance payable to a married officer accompanied by his/her family is 60% of the top point of the Master Pay Scale or 100% of his/her substantive monthly salary, whichever is the greater. A single or unaccompanied married officer will receive 50% of this rate.

The expenditure on disturbance allowance is contingent on the number of officers posted to or out of an office outside Hong Kong, the ranking of the officer concerned and whether the officer is accompanied by family members, etc. In 2005-06, we expect that six officers of the Beijing Office will complete their tour of external posting. It is therefore anticipated that 12 officers will be eligible for the disturbance allowance in 2005-06, and the estimated total expenditure is about \$991,000.

Signature Signed on Chinese Version

Name in block letters BOWEN LEUNG

Post Title Director, Beijing Office

Date 7.4.2005

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2005-06
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

BJO002

Head : 35 Government Secretariat: Beijing Office

Question Serial No.

Subhead (No. & title) : 000 Operational expenses

0439

Programme : (1) Liaison

Controlling Officer : Director, Beijing Office

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Constitutional Affairs

Question :

Regarding the Beijing Office's 2005-06 estimates of \$4.3 million to be spent on "publicity", what are the specific publicity activities? What are the expenses involved in the individual items?

Asked by : Hon. SIN Chung-kai

Reply :

On the one hand, the theme of Beijing Office's promotion activities is focused on economy and trade to promote and publicise the "Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement" between the Mainland and Hong Kong, to publicise Hong Kong's unique advantages, to strengthen our role as a regional hub, and to help Hong Kong businesses open up new markets. On the other, we also publicise the successful implementation of the "One Country, Two Systems" principle in Hong Kong so as to help the Mainland authorities and general public to better understand Hong Kong's various systems and latest developments. Our promotion activities include exhibitions, seminars on various professional services, visits and exchanges, as well as establishing contacts with local government and business sectors.

This year, our office will further enhance cooperation with the Mainland media in producing television/radio programmes to increase the depth and breadth of Mainland residents' knowledge of Hong Kong. In addition, we will organise visits to Hong Kong for Mainland journalists, including the electronic and print media, with a view to publishing serial reports when they return home.

The expenditure required is estimated at \$4.3 million, of which \$3 million will be for general publicity (e.g. large and small-scale exhibitions, radio and television programmes, media visits to Hong Kong, etc.) and \$1.3 million for two to three promotion events (e.g. seminars, study tours, etc.).

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Post Title Director, Beijing Office

Date 7.4.2005

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2005-06
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

BJO003

Head : 35 Government Secretariat: Beijing Office

Question Serial No.

Subhead (No. & title) : 000 Operational expenses

0440

Programme : (1) Liaison

Controlling Officer : Director, Beijing Office

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Constitutional Affairs

Question :

In 2005-06, the Beijing Office's estimate for "general departmental expenses" is about \$10 million -

- (a) what specific items are included in the Beijing Office's "general departmental expenses", and what are the 2005-06 estimates for these individual items?
- (b) what is the cause for the sharp increase in the 2004-05 revised estimate and the 2005-06 estimate by more than 60% over that of 2003-04?
- (c) why is it that the level of the Beijing Office's "general departmental expenses" is similar to those of the other 11 Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices established in places like Europe and America where price levels are high?

Asked by : Hon. SIN Chung-kai

Reply :

(a) In 2005-06, the estimated expenditure for "general departmental expenses" is as follows —

	(\$'000)
(i) Daily operating expenses	3,031
(ii) General office expenses (e.g. rent, management fee, cleansing, electricity charges etc.)	4,189
(iii) Passages and allowances arising from duty visits, and entertainment fee	1,650
(iv) Maintenance of plant and equipment	400

(v)	Petrol, maintenance of vehicles and other travelling expenses	422
(vi)	Other miscellaneous charges and contingency	1,500
	Total	<u>11,192</u>

(b) The Beijing Office has all along been following the principle adopted by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSARG) in achieving efficiency savings and better use of existing resources. We had spent less for “general departmental expenses” in 2003-04 than the estimate. However, in 2004-05 and 2005-06, activities between the HKSAR and the Mainland have been increasing. Apart from providing more logistics support for exchanges and visits, we have also stepped up efforts in organising large-scale promotional activities in various provinces and cities in the Mainland in support of the Government’s plan to capitalise on the opportunities provided by “the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement” and “Cooperation in the Pan-Pearl River Delta Region”.

(c) The Beijing Office is the representative office of HKSARG in Beijing. Its work covers the whole Mainland. Apart from liaising with the Central People’s Government and other provincial governments on economic and trade issues, and collecting and transmitting the latest information, the Beijing Office’s scope of duties also includes politics, sports, culture, science and technology, education and finance. In addition, it also provides practical assistance to Hong Kong residents in distress in the Mainland and processes applications for entry to Hong Kong submitted by Mainland residents for duty visits and by foreigners. In the circumstances, compared with the other 11 Hong Kong Economic and Trades Offices (ETO), the scale of responsibilities and establishment of the Beijing Office have been more extensive. Despite these, owing to the Beijing Office’s adherence to the principle of using resources prudently, there has not been a big difference in the level of expenditure for “general departmental expenses” when compared with the other ETOs.

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Name in block letters BOWEN LEUNG

Post Title Director, Beijing Office

Date 7.4.2005

INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION

Head : 35 Government Secretariat: Beijing Office

Question Serial No.

Subhead (No. & title) : 000 Operational expenses

0660

Programme : (1) Liaison

Controlling Officer : Director, Beijing Office

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Constitutional Affairs

Question :

What is the progress of the project to provide permanent accommodation for the Beijing Office? Please advise us of the concrete plans for financial provision and the details of the expenditure, if any.

Asked by : Hon. WONG Ting-kwong

Reply :

Upon Finance Committee's approval for the Beijing Office to acquire a site for construction of office premises, we have identified a piece of suitable land, and proceeded with site clearance and construction works, etc. Construction of the building is anticipated to be completed in mid-2005.

The estimated breakdown of the project is as follows-

	(\$'000)
Land acquisition	34,206
Construction works, internal fitting-out and related costs	36,937
Taxes, fees and charges payable to Beijing Municipal Government	6,770
Professional services and legal fees	2,225
Contingency	7,162
Total	<u>87,300</u>

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Name in block letters BOWEN LEUNG

Post Title Director, Beijing Office

Date 7.4.2005

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2005-06
CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO

Reply Serial No.

BJO005

INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION

Head : 35 Government Secretariat: Beijing Office

Question Serial No.

Subhead (No. & title) : 000 Operational expenses

1200

Programme : (1) Liaison

Controlling Officer : Director, Beijing Office

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Constitutional Affairs

Question :

Please provide a breakdown of the requests for assistance handled by the Beijing Office under this programme for the past three years, the reasons for these requests and the number of requests made. What procedure does the Beijing Office follow in handling and following up these requests? What were the success rates of handling such requests in the past three years?

Asked by : Hon. LAU Chin-shek

Reply :

The breakdown of the requests for assistance that the Beijing Office handled and followed up in the past three years, by the reasons for these requests, is -

Reason for the request	Number of requests		
	2002	2003	2004
Business and trade disputes	78 cases	64 cases	42 cases
Complaints relating to real property in the Mainland	82 cases	50 cases	35 cases
Complaints against administrative, law enforcement and judicial agencies in the Mainland	150 cases	139 cases	93 cases
Other cases	83 cases	68 cases	44 cases
Total	393 cases	321 cases	214 cases

The Beijing Office process and follow up the cases on the basis of their nature and position, and requests of the assistance seekers, including -

- (a) making referrals to the relevant Mainland authorities and asking them to contact the person in need of assistance directly. Under the principle of "One Country, Two Systems", the person seeking assistance should resolve his/ her problems in accordance with the legal provisions in the Mainland. The Beijing Office also cannot and should not interfere into the Mainland administrative and legal procedures. Nonetheless, where

appropriate, we will provide to the person requesting assistance the contacts of local legal bodies so that they can seek professional legal advice for the protection of his/ her legal rights;

- (b) making referrals to the relevant authorities in the HKSAR, and asking them to give a substantial reply directly, or through the Beijing Office to the person requesting assistance;
- (c) making referrals to the relevant non-official bodies in the HKSAR and asking them to contact the person requesting assistance directly; and
- (d) mediating and following up the case directly with the relevant authorities in the Mainland and HKSAR.

Owing to the diversity of the nature of these cases, it is difficult for the Beijing Office to set down in general terms a definition on the success rate of the cases. Nonetheless, according to our observation and experience, generally the number of replies from the Mainland authorities to our referred cases has increased, and progress has been achieved in many cases. For example, some relevant authorities provide to the Beijing Office the background and latest position of the cases, some authorities reply directly to the persons seeking assistance, and some of our referrals have facilitated the setup of meetings among the persons/authorities involved for mediation.

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