

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

THB(T)270

(Question Serial No. 5267)

Head: (60) Highways Department
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified
Programme: (-) Not Specified
Controlling Officer: Director of Highways (K K LAU)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question (Member Question No. 43):

What is the estimated expenditure for duty visits or exchanges to the Mainland by the Highways Department (HyD) in 2014-15? Please advise this Committee of the themes of the scheduled duty visits or exchanges to the Mainland in 2014-15? How can the authorities concerned prevent activities un-related to duty visits from occurring? Moreover, how can the authorities concerned prevent the requirement of application for changing destinations of visit from becoming merely a formality?

Asked by: Hon. WONG Yuk-man

Reply:

In 2014-15, officers of the HyD will undertake official duty visits outside Hong Kong, including the Mainland, on the basis of operational need. Such operational need includes observing and exploring experience on construction and maintenance of highways works; carrying out quality assurance inspections at the contractors' plants; and assessing specialist contractors' capability in meeting the technical requirements for inclusion in the approved list of specialist contractors. The exact plan is not yet confirmed.

All expenses of duty visits funded by the Government are subject to control under relevant regulations and guidelines to ensure effective monitoring and proper use of public funds. There is control on different aspects, such as duty visits should only be conducted when there are strong operational reasons; prior approval for duty visits should be obtained; and non-official activities should be avoided. An officer should provide all necessary information in respect of the proposed visit when submitting an application. If there are any subsequent changes to the visit arrangements, the officer concerned should inform the approving officer as soon as possible; and the approving officer should then assess whether it is necessary to re-consider the application.