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1990 emigration may top 50,000

By SONDRA WUDUNN
EMIGRATION is poised to increase with 50,000 people expected to leave Hongkong next year, according to a revised Government forecast, although political and economic researchers put the figure much higher.

Mr Mike Rowse, the head of the Government's task force on the brain drain problem, said yesterday: "It is more likely that an increasing interest in emigration will lead to a slightly higher spread over a number of years and could reach 50,000 by 1990.

"My original thinking was that there would be a levelling off between 42,000 and 46,000, but recent events have put pressure on these figures."

It is the first official estimate on emigration made by the Government since China's suppression of the pro-democracy movement earlier this month.

But Dr Paul Kirkbride, the director of research of

the Institute for Personnel Management, said: "I think the Government is underplaying the figures. With the recent events in China, it's more likely to be 60,000."

Those leaving are likely to be the less-qualified, middle to lower level employees rather than the professional, high-level managers who have made up the bulk of those joining the brain drain in recent years.

Dr Kirkbride estimated that 50,000 Hongkong people would leave the territory this year alone, compared to 45,000 last year.

The managing director of Political and Economic Risk Consultancy Ltd, Robert Broadfoot, also forecast the number of emigrants could swell to 60,000 by 1990.

He said about 50,000 people would emigrate to the most popular destinations while about 10,000 would seek to live in more exotic countries such as Paraguay, the Dominican Republic and Portugal.