

/\$12m defence plan for the Colony

HONGKONG would only have to spend \$12 million on defence expenditure if it employed just one battalion of 700 Gurkha soldiers to protect the Governor and the expatriates.

This was stated by the Opposition Committee for the Sake of a Good, Honest and Beautiful Hongkong yesterday during an attack on the stationing of British troops in Hongkong.

The committee also accused British Defence Minister William Rodgers, of very "bad-manners" for having failed to give a reply to their invitation, and for not attending their public forum on defence costs yesterday.

The secretary of the committee, Mr Ma Man-fai, said that the battalion of Gurkha soldiers, being financed by Hongkong, should serve the people here only and not elsewhere.

"Since their role here is to protect the Governor and the expatriates, all they need are some light weapons. It is not necessary to have training programmes for new soldiers who are so inefficient that they pose a great risk to the local people," he said.

The committee also demanded that the British army should return their land to Hongkong without receiving any compensation. "Our former Governor was stupid enough to pay \$11 million to buy back a part of the Whampoa dockyard in 1958. No such thing should happen again," said Mr Ma.

The committee criticised the Governor and the Unofficials for neglecting their duties when they failed to warn the public of possible high defence costs when they spoke in the Legislative Council debate recently.

"It's no use trying to pretend that they don't know about the defence expenditure. They are just irresponsible and disregard public opinion," he said.

Four members of the Revolutionary Marxist League handed a protest letter to the Governor



yesterday morning charging the local government and Mr Rodgers with plotting against the people of Hongkong.

The group said that the stationing of British troops here was merely to protect the minority capitalists and to symbolise that Hongkong is still a colony of Britain.

It demanded the immediate withdrawal of all British troops from Hongkong, and denounced any negotiation to make Hongkong pay more for defence.

One member, Mr Kong Yiu-chung said that they would continue to distribute protest pamphlets and put up posters in the coming week. "Our protest will go on until all troops have left Hongkong," he said.

A mass rally has been planned for next Sunday at Victoria Park.