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/\$750m to build up Kaitak facilities

CIVIL Aviation Department will spend \$750 million over the next few years to augment existing facilities at Kaitak Airport.

With plans for the Cheklapkok replacement airport shelved indefinitely, the department is now speeding up plans aimed at increasing the passenger handling capacity of the Kaitak Airport from 10 million a year to 18 million by 1987.

The plans call for a larger terminal building, modifications on the tarmac as well as upgrading of the radar system.

Last month the government abandoned plans for a new airport after spending \$185 million on feasibility studies.

Lack of financial resources was cited for scuttling the project. Estimated cost for the Cheklapkok airport, including infrastructure, is \$37 billion.

But it is widely believed that the project was grounded in view of Hongkong's uncertain future.

A spokesman for the Civil Aviation Department said yesterday: "It is necessary to ensure that the Kaitak Airport will have the capacity to accommodate the expected traffic during the next 10 years."

Detailed design work on the expansion of existing airport facilities is expected to be completed at the end of the month, when the project will be upgraded in the public works priority list.

Expansion plans already drawn up for the terminal building under Stage V include a two-level extension to the east incorporating new departure check-in facilities on the first floor and arrival and group handling areas on the ground floor.

On the first-floor departures level, the elevated road access will be extended to serve the entire frontage of the extended building.

Two new check-in islands will be spaced further away from the existing islands so that a simplified departures baggage handling system can be incorporated on the ground level of the new building. Currently, departures baggage is processed in the basement of the existing terminal which has already become congested.

The departures level extension will also provide space for new shops, seating areas, toilets and offices.

Expansion of outwards immigration facilities is planned to cater for the increased passenger flow, and the airside lounge area adjacent to the aircraft gates will be increased.

The spokesman said that no additional inner-bay aircraft parking positions served by aerobridges can be accommodated due to lack of space. But new holding areas/bus docks for access to and from aircraft parked on the outer bays will be provided.

In the ground-floor arrivals area, more baggage reclaim loops will be provided, in addition to

expanded immigration and customs checking facilities.

The existing group handling and coach loading area will be relocated further to the east as a result of this expansion, and substantially improved.

Land area available at Kaitak is severely limited and to accommodate the scale of developments required, several existing buildings and facilities will have to be removed and relocated.

Three electricity sub-stations, several stores buildings and a staff canteen have already been identified for relocation.

Car parking capacity next to the terminal has been doubled with the opening of the west multi-storey car park on March 3.

This will enable the construction of a public transport terminus on the site of the existing western open-air car park, which will no longer be required for car parking purposes.

The terminus will provide arrival passengers with ready access to taxis, hire cars and airport coaches and relieve the pressures on the existing congested arrivals kerb.

The single runway sets a limit on the number of aircraft movements (arrivals and departures) that can be handled in any period of time, and it is most unlikely that any significant improvement can be made in this area, the Civil Aviation spokesman said.

The number of aircraft movements has stabilised recently as more airlines have replaced smaller aircraft with larger ones. However, runway movement rates will begin to grow again when the extent of this introduction of larger aircraft has itself stabilised.

The existing terminal building was designed to handle 10 million passengers per year, a figure which is expected to be reached in 1984.

Although it will not be possible to have the Stage V development completed by that time, it is proposed that ad hoc modifications to the existing building be undertaken to extend its life until the new facilities are available, the spokesman said.

In addition to the landside improvements and terminal building expansion, other airport facilities will also be expanded to cope with increased traffic.

Cargo, long-term and maintenance aircraft parking expansion is provided by the availability of the former RAF land at Kaitak, and incremental apron expansion into this area can be undertaken when necessary, the spokesman said.

Further passenger aircraft parking apron space can be provided to the south of the existing apron. It is envisaged that three new parking positions will be constructed there by 1987.

Additionally, major civil engineering works to rejuvenate taxiway and apron pavements will be required over the next decade although programmes for these works have not yet been established, the spokesman said.