

\$11m upgrade for airport security

By Bill Ko

ANTI-TERRORISM measures at Kai Tak airport will be strengthened next year to ensure that explosives cannot be sneaked on to planes leaving Hongkong.

The Director of Civil Aviation today will ask the Legislative Council Finance Committee to approve \$11 million to improve security at the Hongkong International Airport.

The move comes one month after a Lauda Air plane, originating from Hongkong, plunged into a Thai forest killing all 223 passengers and crew.

The dead included 52 Hongkong people, many of whom were on holiday tours to Thailand.

Although the cause of the crash has not been determined, the tragedy has heightened concern about airport security.

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— A Government paper

In a paper to be put before legislators today, the administration says existing hand-baggage X-ray checks at Kai Tak are obsolete given the new tactics adopted by terrorists.

The machines, installed in 1987 in accordance guidelines drawn up by the International Civil Aviation Organisation, were designed to detect metal objects.

They were considered adequate as hijacking was the main terrorist threat at that time.

“In the latter half of the 1980s, however, the pat-

tern of threat changed from hijacking to the destruction of aircraft in flight,” the paper says.

“The existing security X-ray machines at the airport ... do not have explosive detection capability and are therefore now outdated.”

Legislative Councillors will also be told that since 1987, four aircraft had been destroyed by bombs causing more than 650 deaths.

At least one of these incidents was proved to be caused by a bomb concealed in hand-baggage.

Reacting to this change,

the International Civil Aviation Organisation advised its members to upgrade security measures in 1989.

Apart from the hand-baggage X-ray checks, the existing walk-through metal detectors at Kai Tak have also been deemed inadequate.

Since 1987, passengers have been subjected to an extra body check with hand-held metal detectors.

“It is time-consuming and labour intensive and causes congestion and delay at the security search area,” the paper says.

After consulting the Airport Security Committee, the Airline Operators Committee and the police, the administration proposes spending \$7 million to upgrade the 21 sets of X-ray machines and \$1.6 million on installing 26 sets of new walk-through detectors.