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# \$175 m agreed to start new camp

By SIMON MACKLIN

THE Government yesterday backed down from its initial request for \$364 million from the Legislative Council's Finance Committee to build and operate a new detention centre to house Vietnamese boat people.

Instead it asked for, and was granted, \$175.6 million as preliminary funds for the capital cost of building the first stage of a new detention centre at Whitehead in Sha Tin.

The Government said it would seek more funds in October. Several Legislative Councillors had expressed concern at the large sum the Government wanted, saying the need for more accommodation should be established

before the money was approved.

Security Branch officials will today decide on a further site to be developed as an emergency holding centre, with construction to be completed within the next three weeks to contain the rising number of Vietnamese boat people arriving in the territory.

Chief Secretary Sir David Ford said Government estimates of the number of arrivals had been too conservative and there was an urgent need for further sites on which to build more accommodation.

The Finance Committee yesterday heard of several proposals.

These are:

- The Government will immediately begin building the first stage of the new de-

tention centre in Sha Tin to house 4,800 Vietnamese boat people.

- The Executive Council will be told within the next few weeks whether the Government intends to proceed with a second stage of development at Whitehead to house a further 4,800 boat people.

- A decision will be made today on a new emergency site to house upwards of 5,000 boat people before the Whitehead site is completed.

Sir David said there was little spare room within the existing centres to house the anticipated continuing influx, and the Government had to proceed with plans for developing new sites to keep pace with the arrivals.

Based on the present rate of arrivals the already stretched centres would be over capacity within a matter of days, he said.

Another 175 Vietnamese boat people sailed into Hongkong yesterday bringing the number to have arrived since the Government introduced its new policy on June 16 to 8,765.

It is understood several previously undeveloped sites are being considered for the construction of an emergency centre which could be completed within the next few weeks.

Funding for this site is expected to be between \$6 million and \$10 million and Financial Secretary Piers Jacobs will be asked to approve an advance.

The site is expected to

cover more than five hectares and to be in the New Territories away from residential areas.

Security Branch officials are looking at several emergency and prefabricated construction techniques in order to be able to build on the site as soon as possible.

The Government had initially requested approval for the recurrent expenditure for the operation of the Whitehead centre at a cost of \$188.4 million.

The development of the first stage of the Sha Tin centre would be finished by the end of February and Sir David said a decision on the second stage would be required in mid-September.

Councillor Andrew Wong Wang-fat asked for his reservations over the allocation of the \$175.6 million to be noted.

Mr Wong, who represents the New Territories East constituency, including the area where the Whitehead detention site is to be built, said the detention centres holding Vietnamese boat people should be spread around the territory.

Most other councillors at the meeting voiced their reservations but conceded the Government's need to go ahead with the development.

In another development, a Norwegian Government delegation is visiting Hongkong to select 120 Vietnamese refugees for resettlement.

The delegation will interview potential candidates from among the long-stayer refugee population.