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\$1 billion allocation to cover boat people

A TOTAL of \$1.02 billion is earmarked for the upkeep of the Vietnamese refugees and boat people in the next financial year because the Government is expecting the same arrival rate as last year.

Hongkong will have to foot \$580 million of the bill, while Britain has agreed to contribute \$130 million, mainly to build a detention centre on Tai A Chau.

The Secretary for Security, Mr Alistair Asprey, said the remaining \$300 million would be reimbursed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Legislator Mr Martin Lee Chau-ming criticised the arrangement as being too le-

nient on London by forcing Hongkong to take the lion's share.

But the Chief Secretary, Sir David Ford, rejected Mr Lee's accusation, stressing that the Government would continue to press Britain to increase its contribution.

"We are not particularly kind to them in our dealing. There is effort to create new resources, such as from the United States," Sir David said.

The UNHCR was expected to reimburse Hongkong \$160 million last year but managed to pay only \$50 million.

"We expect the outstanding amount to be repaid by the UNHCR, which is launching a major interna-

tional campaign to raise money. We will make sure that the fund will be paid to Hongkong," Sir David added.

However, the deputy convenor of the Omelco security panel, Mrs Rita Fan Hsu Lai-tai, noted that previous UNHCR appeals had been unsuccessful.

"We can only keep pressing them to obtain donation through ourselves and the British Government," Mr Asprey said.

He said the total Vietnamese-related expenditure, including contributions from Britain and the UNHCR, added up to \$1.07 billion for the current financial year.