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~~Aid plan to industry~~ will be expanded

THE Government is stepping up its efforts to give aid to industry, Commissioner of Industry and Customs Bill Dorward said here yesterday.

Mr Dorward told delegates attending a daylong seminar that his department will undertake an expanded programme of external industrial investment promotion.

He said the Government would establish "in the not too distant future" permanent offices overseas to attract foreign technology to Hongkong.

The seminar was sponsored by the Hongkong General Chamber of Commerce and the Japan External Trade Organisation (Jetro).

Other speakers included Hongkong Productivity Centre Dr John Wright, Chartered Bank chief manager Bill Brown, Japan National Institute for Research Advancement vice president S. Otsuka, Mabuchi Industries general

manager Y. Ota, and Outboard Marine Asia vice president Henry Richards.

In a speech, Mr Dorward said Hongkong is well-placed to provide new industrial floorspace with 3.7 million square metres becoming available between now and 1980.

This will increase the industrial floorspace by 50 per cent, he said, and rents would remain stable.

The Government is also providing land for special industries by private treaty and in industrial estates, he said, and an experimental programme of land sales with special lease conditions to provide factors for heavier type industries seemed to be going well.

Mr Dorward revealed that, in a reorganisation of his department, a separate Department of Industry will soon be created, recognising the importance of industrial development and investment to Hongkong's economy.

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He reiterated government policy towards foreign investment in Hongkong which "represents some of the most advanced technology in our industries and which has brought high quality marketing and management techniques to Hongkong as well."

"In industrial terms, what is needed (for the investor) is an indigenous industry, a good workforce, a commercial infrastructure and government policies providing the environment in which new technology can be absorbed and developed," he said.

"Hongkong has that environment," he added.

Seminar participants agreed that Japanese technology can play a vital role in Hongkong's future development, despite certain problem areas.

Dr Wright said there are dangers for territories such as Hongkong in attracting inappropriate technology.

He said some industrialised countries have been unpleasantly surprised by side effects of some technology transfers from other more advanced countries.

Mr Otsuka outlined Japan's recent history of industrial development with particular emphasis on Japan's pattern of technology transfers to other countries.

He said Japanese exports of industrial property had exceeded 1972.

Mr Otsuka stressed however that Japan still depends heavily on imported technology. Japan's direct investments in foreign business and industry at March 1978 amounted to US\$22 billion behind the United States (\$149 billion), Britain (\$35 billion) and Germany (\$26 billion).