

23 June 1990

## \$4b required to keep flooding under control

By MURIEL LAU

MORE than \$4 billion is needed to improve drainage in the New Territories where about 120,000 people are vulnerable to serious flooding during the rainy season, according to a recent study.

The Government commission study identified 197 black spots in the area.

The worst were Yuen Long and Northern District which accounted for 32 per cent and 28 per cent of Hongkong's floods.

The Government has been spending \$30 million every year to keep floods under control and has spent \$400 million since 1987 on improvement works.

"But with the money spent so far, we haven't won the battle yet," said Mr Donald Mudd, the Acting Assistant Director of the Drainage Services Department.

The study has suggested that extensive construction

of drainage channels, river improvement and flood protection works will help reduce the frequency of floods. The works are estimated to cost \$4.26 billion.

An additional \$380 million is recommended for the rehabilitation of streams and rivers which may cause problems in future.

"It is the Government's intention to carry out the necessary works in stages, subject to the availability of funds," Mr Mudd said.

He added that property owners would have to be discouraged from aggravating the flooding problem.

In particular, the filling up of fishponds and farmland to construct container storage sites had resulted in an increase in flood water runoff and depletion of flood storage.

"Between 1982 and 1988, we lost about 10 per cent of the flood-planes and

fishponds to spontaneous developments," he said.

Mr Mudd also cited blockage of the natural drainage system by rubbish and agricultural waste, indiscriminate land filling and lack of comprehensive drainage maintenance as other human factors involved.

He said a new drainage ordinance under consideration would give the Government more control of watercourses on private land.

The new laws, expected to become effective some time next year, would empower the Drainage Services Department to request adequate drainage in filled-in fishponds, Mr Mudd said.

Some other non-structural measures recommended included drainage approval for development control, flood warnings, public information and emergency planning.