

SCMP

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AG calls for more 'legal aid'

THE need to boost the number of locally-trained lawyers should take high priority in the allocation of public funds, Attorney-General Michael Thomas said.

In a written reply to Dr Conrad Lam's questions, Mr Thomas said the best way to combat the shortage of lawyers practising in Hongkong is to enable more talented, bilingual students to take up law as a career.

"As Hongkong develops, I foresee the need to foster wider access to professional legal assistance, to maintain a strong and independent Bar and in particular, to encourage local lawyers to enter Government service."

He said it is hoped the number of places available on the Hongkong University bachelor of law course could be increased from the present 115 to 150 by 1988-89.

Expansion of the university's post-graduate course for holders of law degrees, the PCLL, would be the quickest way to increase the number of new lawyers, he said.

"The current annual intake will need to be expanded substantially if Hongkong is both to increase the overall number of lawyers and reduce its dependence on overseas lawyers."

Mr Thomas said the number of barristers in Hongkong was about 33 per 100,000 of the population.