

\$3m legal advice increase

THE Finance Committee approved last night the spending of an additional \$3 million on the Law Society's legal advice and duty lawyer schemes to ensure the standard of legal services available to the public.

That would raise lawyers' fees by 26 per cent from the current \$2,500 per day and \$1,250 per half day to \$3,150 per day and \$1,575 per half day.

The fees were last revised four years ago, and inflation had reduced their value to the extent that it was now increasingly difficult to obtain the services of suitably experienced lawyers under the scheme.

The fee increase would be provided on top of the \$12.6 million included in the 1987-88 Budget.

The new payment scale would be effective from April 1.

The Law Society legal advice and duty lawyer schemes were set up in 1978 to provide legal aid to people charged with certain offences in magistrates' courts.

In addition, the Finance Committee agreed to spend \$5 million more in the coming financial year on housing allowances for civil servants.

The basic rates of private tenancy allowances provided for overseas officers and some local officers would be raised by six to 13 per cent starting next month to catch up with market rises in rentals.

College has good future

THE Hongkong Baptist College will continue to mature as a distinguished academic community serving the interests of Hongkong through higher education, Mr Wong Po-yan said.

Tabling the college's annual report for 1985-86, Mr Wong said it had made many positive developments during the year.

As chairman of the board of governors and council, Mr Wong said the college had gained approval to offer two bachelor degree courses in combined sciences and social work after these courses were given high marks by academic validation teams from the UK Council for National Academic Awards.

33pc fee rise

THE council approved an increase of 33 per cent in fees payable to counsel and solicitors assigned by the Director of Legal Aid to conduct criminal cases effective from April 1. The last rise was made in January 1982.

An amendment to delete the provision of caveats in the Partition (Amendment) Bill 1987 was passed.