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# Anger as civil service cuts help pay for new airport

By Mary Luk

MORE than 180 posts requested by two major legal departments have been rejected by the Government to save money for the mammoth new airport project.

The Legal Department had 110 proposed posts, and provisional positions cut last October, it was disclosed yesterday.

Likewise, the Registrar General's Department had 70 posts dropped between last December and this month.


Officers working in these departments said the substantial cuts had not only aggravated the already low morale problem within the civil service, but could also affect the efficiency of its service to the public.

The chairman of the Hongkong Civil Servants General Union, Mr Peter Mok, called for an im-

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— Civil servants' union spokesman Peter Mok



mediate policy review to stop the decline in morale.

He described current policies on civil servants as backward.

“As applications for recruitment are being rejected and the workload of civil servants continues to increase, there will be bad side-effects in the end,” Mr Mok said.

“If the Government plans to go ahead with a big project, it should first consider its resources. Shrinking the size of the civil service would not help much.

“The money to be saved from this policy of cutting staff is minimal compared to the huge airport project,” he said.

Mr Mok said the Government was already having little success in getting its vacancies filled because of unattractive pay.

“As a result many civil servants are shouldering extra work for the unfilled vacancies,” he said.

Earlier, the Government announced it was prepared to cut 9,000 outstanding civil service vacancies to save \$170 million.

The substantial cut is in line with Government policy of imposing a two percent ceiling on civil service growth this year.

A spokesman for the Legal Department said the ceiling for 1989-90 was 845 posts, including lawyers and supporting staff, but last October it was lowered to 735.

One area affected by the cut is the unit responsible

for drafting and translating laws into Chinese.

Senior assistant law draftsman at the Attorney-General's chambers, Mr Eric Au, said that to cope with Government's policy of producing a Chinese version of the statute law of Hongkong, the department had proposed to recruit eight more Chinese-speaking lawyers and nine more law translators. But due to the airport project the Government had cut the proposal to three Chinese-speaking lawyers and three translators.

The Lay Court Prosecutors' Association was also told by the Attorney-General, Mr Jeremy Mathews, that because of the airport project it was difficult to satisfy all its demands in creating more posts and increasing the pay scale.