

Another govt rent scandal surfaces

A NEW government rent scandal involving hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money has come to light.

It involves two floors of the Wing On Centre which the Government has rented but has not yet occupied.

The offices carry a rent of \$114,620 per month and the Government started paying rent on the 17th of last month.

And Public Works Department spokesman Ross Clarke said yesterday the offices would not be occupied for another 10 weeks although rent would continue to be paid.

This means about \$380,000 will have been paid in rent before the offices are used.

Yesterday the Standard reported that the Government had rented three lots of offices covering about seven floors in the Tai Sang Commercial Building in Wanchai but the offices have yet to be occupied.

One lot carries a rent of \$60,000 per month which the Government began to pay since August 28. It will, however, remain unoccupied for yet another nine weeks.

The same goes for the second lot which was rented at \$43,000 per month since September 8.

The third lot in the Tai Sang building carries a rent of \$34,500 which also started being paid on September 8. These offices will be occupied in about four weeks.

The delay in moving in to all these offices, including those at the Wing On Centre, is because the contractor for the Public Works is swamped with work.

Tenders had, therefore, to be called to get in outside contractors.

The Wing On offices have been set aside for the training section of the Civil Service Branch which is now in the Lee Gardens Hotel.

Mr Clarke explained that negotiations started with Wing On in July for the premises but the Government was told fitting out work could not start until late October or early November. - Michael Chugani