

# Another top civil servant to resign

By SA NI HARTE

ANOTHER senior locally-appointed government official is expected to leave the Civil Service for private enterprise by the end of the year.

It is understood that the Assistant Registrar General (Land Office), Mr Shum Lap-shing will join a top Hongkong property company.

But his prospective departure from the service has been kept a closely-guarded secret.

Officials told the *Sunday Morning Post* that, in the wake of the recent spate of officers resigning to take up offers in the private sector, the administration would not like to be seen as the victim of the current labour shortage.

News of Mr Shum's departure comes after the Deputy Secretary for Trade and Industry, Mr Nicky Lo Kar-chun tendered his resignation last week.

In addition, the Deputy Commission for Securities, Mr Derek Murphy, also has announced his departure from the Civil Service to join Wardley Investment Services.

Mr Murphy is one of the four staff members from the Securities Commission who have resigned from the bureau in the past two years.

It is believed the departure of two local officers in Mr Shum and Mr Lo could force the administration to seriously examine whether its localisation policy is able to prevent more talent from leaving the Government.

Mr Shum joined the civil service in 1967 as a legal assistant and became a solicitor two years later.

He was the senior solicitor of the department in 1973 and

worked through the ranks to his present position.

It was expected that Mr Shum eventually would become Registrar General under the Government's localisation program.

Yesterday, the Registrar General, Mr Noel Gleeson, declined to comment on a likely successor to Mr Shum.

Asked whether one had been named, Mr Gleeson said: "I am afraid I cannot comment on this, you have to ask him."

Mr Shum could not be reached for comment.

Although officials were tight lipped over Mr Shum's resignation, a few of his colleagues confirmed his resignation.

One said: "I don't know where he is going. All that anyone knows is that he is leaving sometime in December."

Mr Shum, 50, who is regarded as a higher-flyer in the administration, should be very much in demand because of his knowledge and expertise, the official said.

In his career with the Civil Service the Assistant Registrar General has so far headed the official receivers' office, the commercial division and is now holding the top post in the department's land office.

Another colleague of Mr Shum said: "For a person who works in the land office now, presumably he will be a really interesting person for a property company to have working for."

"Everybody has known for a long time that Mr Shum is considered to be deputy head and it was expected that he would become the Registrar General."

Officers from the Registrar General's Department are engaged in various responsibilities which include handling of liqui-

dation in bankruptcy and insurance company cases.

Because of this experience, officers from the department are in high demand.

It is understood that in the past a number of these officers have left the Government and joined either the banking or property sectors.

A recent report by the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy warned that a flight of business executives from Hongkong could arise as 1997 approached, leading to a dangerous lack of middle to upper-level management.

Local head hunters had complained of the difficulty of recruiting professional talent.

They said many of the professionals had sought migration to Australia, Canada and the United States in the past few years, leaving a big vacuum in the business and commercial sectors.

The report, which predicted a dearth of white-collar workers was likely to increase during the next 10 years, said: "This is not an economic phenomenon, but a political one, and as such, the normal market forces of supply and demand do not come into play as much."

Official statistics show that, for the first time since 1986, the number of local officers in top government positions outnumbered that of expatriates.

Last financial year saw an almost 50-50 split in the 939 posts under the directorate pay scale with 463 held by expatriates and 476 by locals.

At the end of this financial year, the number of local officers has grown to 521 in the pool of 997.

Continued Page 2

## Another top civil servant to resign

From Page 1

Despite the increase, senior local officers accused the Government for not applying the localisation policy stringently.

They have demanded that the policy be extended from recruitment to promotion.

A member of the Senior Non-Expatriate Officers Association said that although expatriates claimed that many of them were being "localised out", it was only those officers in the middle-management level or professional grades, not those at the upper echelon.

"Some of our local officers are tired of waiting for promotion and have expressed the desire to leave the service if the opportunity arises," he said.

The Governor, Sir David Wilson, has personally ordered a crackdown on senior civil servants who join the private sector.

He was so concerned about the growing trend among retired civil servants taking up second careers in the private sector that he has authorised the setting up of a special committee to advise whether such jobs will result in a conflict of interest.

The move reflects the alarm within the administration that such transfers might lead to sensitive information being imparted to private sector employers, giving them unfair advantage over competitors.

A period of three months notice is currently required by heads of departments and only heads or assistant heads need special permission to join the private sector.