

\$2.5b base in return for Tamar extension

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THE Hong Kong Government agreed to build a \$2.5 billion naval base on Stonecutters Island in exchange for approval to redevelop the HMS Tamar naval base, the agreement revealed.

Relocation of the base will make available this summer the eastern part of the Prince of Wales Barracks, in the heart of Central, for redevelopment.

However, the western part of the building, the Tamar headquarters, will only be ready for handover to the People's Liberation Army in June 1997 - one week prior to the sovereignty transfer.

Under the deal, the water area of the new basin on Stonecutters Island will be 400 metres by 400 metres, larger than the Tamar basin because of different sea conditions, officials from the two governments said.

Despite the increase in size, Chinese team leader Guo Fengmin said the berthing capacity of the new basin would be no bigger than at Tamar.

Vessels could berth either inside or outside the Tamar basin, but that was not the case at Stonecutters because of the water currents.

Aircraft carriers would not be able to berth because the basin was too shallow.

The two countries agreed on the scope of the development at the meeting yesterday. The design and construction would start once funding was approved.