

\$76m sought for Kwai Chung tower

By Antoine So

THE Marine Department is seeking \$76 million from the government to build a control tower at Kwai Chung Container Terminal to handle the terminal's increasingly heavy traffic.

Harbour traffic in the northern fairway is expected to increase after the construction of Container Terminal 9, recently approved by the Chinese and British governments.

Assistant Director of Marine Sammy Tsang Man-ching said the department had already submitted an application for funds to the Finance Branch.

The project is estimated to cost \$76 million, with annual operating costs of \$10 million.

Similar to the new control tower at Ma Wan, the container terminal tower would help control vessels entering and leaving the Kwai Chung port.

The control tower is to be located at Container Terminal 8, but officers will

also be able to monitor CT9 traffic.

The proposal has been considered since early last year because of congestion caused by large ships at Stonecutters Island awaiting entry to Kwai Chung.

Many ships, anxious to enter the terminal, do not follow vessel traffic control instructions to stay out of Hong Kong waters, but jam around Stonecutters Island instead.

"This causes jamming and danger to other vessels. By having a control tower at the container terminals, we could smooth traffic in the northern fairway," Mr Tsang said.

If funding is approved, the control tower could be in use by early 1999 to cover the whole northern fairway at Kwai Chung.

The Chinese government gave the green light to the controversial CT9 project in September after years of negotiations with the British government.