

A new role for Sir Murray

The elevation of the Governor, Sir Murray MacLehose, to the peerage will enable him to continue to play some part for Hongkong in future if necessary, he said yesterday.

Speaking to reporters on the Chinese side of the Man Kam To checkpoint after his visit to Shumchun, he said: "I am of course honoured and very pleased, but I am particularly pleased because it will enable me — after I leave Hongkong — to continue working on appropriate occasions for Hongkong."

When asked how he is going to do this, Sir Murray said: "The House of Lords is part of the legislative machine of the United Kingdom."

"So if you are a member of the House, you can play some part in the formation of policy."

Sir Murray's New Year honour was warmly welcomed by Hongkong's other peer, Lord Kadoorie of Kowloon.

"I was delighted to hear of it and I feel it is very much in the interests of Hongkong," he said.

"The people of Hongkong are fortunate to have Lord MacLehose representing them in the House of Lords."

"I will be delighted to see him there and if I can assist him in anyway I would be very pleased to do so."

Others in Hongkong also warmly greeted the news of Sir Murray's award and were confident it brought good tidings for the Colony.

Mr Jimmy McGregor, of the General Chamber of Commerce and the Hongkong Association, commented: "I do believe that Hongkong has not been adequately represented in Parliament despite the many friends we have as MPs, some of whom were born here or were, at one time or another, in business or Government here."

"Even so, they have to represent the interests of their constituencies and these are sometimes at variance with Hongkong's own perceived interests."

"With the increasing importance to Hongkong of

good relations in Whitehall and Westminster, the experience and presence of Sir Murray could be of considerable help to Hongkong.

"No one in Britain will have had more experience of our problems and our aspirations and he is certainly a strong advocate for those issues which concern us most."

The chairman of the Reform Club, Mr Brook Bernacchi, said: "It is a very well-deserved honour."

"Whether it helps Hongkong depends on whether he will take his place actively in the House of Lords or not."

"If he does it is a positive thing for us because he will then have a say in the English Parliament and the House of Lords."

"It depends on him whether he will do that or whether he prefers in effect to completely retire."

The chairman of the Hongkong Belongers, Mr Kenneth Mok, commented: "It is long overdue and well-deserved for a man of his calibre who has done so much for Hongkong and its people."

"If he takes an active part in the Lords he can speak out for us, so we will have our two men in London, which is a step in the right direction."

The chairman of the Hongkong Observers, Dr Joseph Cheng, said he could only comment as an individual lecturer at the Chinese University's Department of Government.

He too believed Sir Murray could greatly promote Hongkong's interests if he chose, as Dr Cheng believed he would do, to be active on the Colony's behalf.

Dr Cheng listed Sir Murray's assets as "his own ability, his knowledge and experience of Hongkong — within the British administration he can claim he knows Hongkong best — and also his ties and connections with various Whitehall officials, MPs, ministers, party leaders and others during his 10 years' governorship."