

## ~~\$~~8.4m offer to prevent strike

By STELLA LEE

AN \$8.4 million payout was offered by the Government yesterday to prevent strike action by lecturers from technical institutes.

Officials denied the payment offered to the academics was in response to the threatened industrial action but said the offer followed a study of their claim.

The teachers had sent an ultimatum threatening to escalate their industrial action starting this Saturday by refusing to do evening classes, administrative work and interviewing students during the admission period if there was no news by tomorrow.

They had already staged two sit-ins and a 100-minute strike.

Compensation for the 60 graduate lecturers, affected by the drop in entry requirements to three years work experience from six years, is estimated to amount to \$8.4 million.

The disgruntled lecturers said it was unfair colleagues with less experience could be paid the same as those with more experience following the policy change.

President of the 600-strong Technical Institutes Teachers' Association Chan Wai-keung welcomed the approval of funds.

"We are glad we do not need to enter into the second phase of industrial action," Mr Chan said.

The \$8.4 million includes \$4.1 million in back pay for lecturers from April 1993, when the first lecturer was appointed under the new criteria, and the end of this month.

The remaining \$4.3 million should compensate the affected lecturers until the 1998-99 academic year when all of them will have reached the grade's maximum point wage of \$34,690. Each will get a few thousand dollars more per month.