

\$790m welfare boost urged by liberals

By ADA YUEN

THE liberal faction of legislators has urged an immediate \$790 million increase in the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) scheme and the introduction of a central provident fund.

In a meeting with Governor Chris Patten yesterday, representatives from the United Democrats of Hong Kong (UDHK) and Meeting Point submitted a set of counter-proposals on the Government's welfare policy.

The proposals were based on the MacPherson Report, which the Government recently rejected.

The report, conducted by Dr Stewart MacPherson of the City Polytechnic, showed that current public assistance payments could not meet the basic needs of the poor and called for huge increases.

United Democrats and Meeting Point delegates asked for a \$319 household allowance to be granted to all single CSSA receivers and the first member of all families receiving assistance payments.

The two parties also recommended a \$515 increase in all children's allowances under the CSSA scheme, while raising all assistance payments for the elderly by \$311.

Meeting Point chairman Anthony Cheung Bing-leung said both the United Demo-

crats and Meeting Point were prepared to support the Government's old age pension scheme despite their belief that such a scheme was still inadequate.

Meanwhile, delegates reiterated their position concerning the central provident fund (CPF) and revealed that a private member's bill could be a last resort for the liberal camp to table the fund suggestion to the Legislative Council.

"We have informed the Governor that if the administration does not do anything about the CPF, UDHK and Meeting Point might consider tabling a private member's bill," Mr Cheung said.

This was the second time UDHK and Meeting Point representatives had arranged a talk with the Governor before he makes his policy address next month.

UDHK chairman Martin Lee Chu-ming said they had made several recommendations to the Governor, most of which focused on livelihood issues, the enhancement of law and order and the protection of human rights.

Delegates called for the setting-up of an independent Court of Final Appeal in accordance with the Basic Law and the Sino-British Joint Declaration.

In addition, they believed the establishment of a human rights commission was essential.