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\$10m lost through meter tampering

THE Government is losing up to \$10 million in revenue a year due to parking meter tampering, according to the Commissioner for Transport, Mr Gordon Siu Kwing-chue.

He said steps would be taken to prevent meter tampering, which had become a major concern for both the police and the Transport Department.

One preventive measure could be installing a metal device inside each of the 14,000-odd parking meters in Hongkong to stop pointed objects from being used to turn the meters' wheels.

The department's revenue is expected to rise by \$26 million in 1991 after the measure is in place.

The cost of fitting the equipment would only amount to about \$40 for each meter.

Last year, the Transport Department collected \$111.5 million in parking meter revenue, representing a drop of \$14.6 million from \$126.1 million the previous year.

The Legislative Council's Finance Committee yesterday began a three-day debate on the 1990-91 Budget. Reports by DAPHNE CHENG and SHIRLEY YAM.

Mr Siu told legislators that tampering was one of the reasons for the reduction in revenue.

Other reasons included the removal of parking meters in busy areas due to various traffic management schemes; temporary suspension of parking meters to facilitate road works; and a rise in the number of cases of ageing meter breakdowns.

The Transport Department plans to install 4,000 more parking meters in the next five years.

Plans are also afoot to replace about 7,000 old meters over the next three years.

The parking meters currently in use are mechanical devices. Mr Siu said his department would consider importing new electronic models being developed in Europe and the United States.

He added the technology

the franchised bus companies, with China Motor Bus (CMB) accounting for 91 cases, Kowloon Motor Bus (KMB) 582 cases, and New Lantau Bus (NLB) four cases.

Mr Siu said the complaints were mainly about the performance of bus conductors and the schedule of buses.

There were 93 complaints against taxi services.

Mr Siu said he was satisfied with the way the complaints were dealt with by the parties concerned.

The success rate in dealing with franchised bus company-related complaints was 51 per cent for CMB, 36 per cent for KMB, and 25 per cent for NLB.

The department has retained area road pricing as a longer term option to tackle traffic congestion, as new technology is being developed.

The system is to charge motorists for the use of roads in selected districts. The levy on the busiest roads during the busiest periods would be the highest.



Gordon Siu

could also be applied to other purposes such as tunnel toll collection.

Meanwhile, the Transport Department last year handled 1,411 complaints against public transportation, representing a slight decline over the 1,452 handled in 1988.

Most were lodged against