

23.5

Airport sit-in hits at extended hours

By Yonden Lhatoo

PRESSURE groups lobbying against the government's plans to increase operating hours at Kai Tak airport took their protests right to the battlefield yesterday.

Members of the Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood (ADPL) and Sham Shui Po District Board staged a three-hour sit-in at the arrival hall of the airport to air their grievances.

The protest, which was initially intended to be held outdoors, was allowed inside by reluctant airport police because of the rain.

While the protesters demanded the airport curfew be extended to a 8.30 pm-6.30 am time slot, the government has proposed cutting it by yet another hour in order to fit in six extra flights. Under the administration's proposal, the airport would run flights from 11.30 pm to 6.30 am.

The government also wants

to add 26 slots within the existing operating hours, saying this could bring an annual \$4.3 billion boost to Hong Kong's economy from increased tourist spending.

"We are not going to give up these protests until the administration addresses the problems faced by residents living under the flight path," ADPL chairman Frederick Fung said.

"The Civil Aviation Department itself has said that sleeping people could be woken up 11 to 27 times a night if the proposed measures are taken."

Mr Fung said the results of the public consultation exercise recently announced by the department had proved that only organisations which stood to gain financially from the changes were supporting the proposals, while district boards representing public opinion were all against the idea.