

Airport security on its toes for arrival of British prime minister

BY RITA LUN

SECURITY was tight over the eastern corner of the airport yesterday afternoon as the British Prime Minister, John Major, made his historic visit to the territory.

More than 40 officers from the Special Branch, the Royal Hongkong Auxilliary Police and Royal Hongkong Police Force, the Airport Police and Immigration Department were on full alert as Mr and Mrs Major stepped out from their aircraft at 4.17 pm.

About 120 reporters and photographers were required to have their bodies screened and bags searched before being allowed into the restricted area.

Amid the clicking of the cameras and the sharp questioning, officers from the Special Branch shielded the

prime minister in a semi-circle.

Special Branch officers also oversaw security for the arrival of Government officials whose limousines were lined up by the side of other aircraft.

The welcoming party included Lady Wilson, Chief Secretary, Sir David Ford, Senior Exco member Lady Dunn and senior British Trade Commissioner Peter Heep.

When the aircraft landed, the prime minister was greeted with handshaking and warm smiles.

At another corner of the airport, outside the restricted area, 12 members of the Hongkong Federation of Students staged a demonstration against the arrival of Mr Major.

Chanting slogans and wav-

ing banners, the students accused Mr Major of betraying Hongkong people by signing the Airport Memorandum of Understanding.

Spokesman Lai Chi-wai said the memorandum violated the spirit of Hongkong people ruling Hongkong because it "traded" part of the ruling authority to China.

He also criticised the colonial laws as detrimental to the development of human rights in the territory, attacking in particular the immigration and the public order ordinances.

"It is important for him to know that not everyone welcomes him," Mr Lai said.

A group of Bank of Credit and Commerce Hongkong depositors marched to Government House in Chater Gardens to petition Mr Major on the future of the bank.