

1 May 1990

# \$40m to be spent on Western Market redevelopment

By FANNY WONG

THE Land Development Corporation will spend up to \$40 million to redevelop the historic Western Market into a Covent Garden-type shopping and cultural centre.

A 21-year lease has been granted to the corporation and the multi-purpose bazaar is scheduled to be in place by early 1992, following the Executive Council's approval last week.

Principal Assistant Secretary for Recreation and Culture, Mr Peter Bourton, said yesterday the length of the lease was meant to allow the corporation ample time to keep its investment in the project.

Mr Bourton said the Antiquities Advisory Board had been consulted and agreed to preserve the 82-year-old building.

It is understood one condition on the private treaty grant is

for the corporation to pay a \$7.6 million premium to the Government.

A nominal annual rent of \$1,000 will be charged before June 30, 1997. From then on, the annual figure will be revised to an amount equivalent to three per cent of the rateable value of the property at that period.

However, Mr Bourton and the corporation's public relations manager, Mr Yeung Ka-

wah, declined to disclose details of the financial arrangement.

Mr Yeung said the corporation estimated that between \$30 million to \$40 million would be needed for redeveloping the historic building.

The corporation's first conservation project, the Western Market plan, is scheduled to take 18 to 20 months to complete, Mr Yeung said.

"Currently the corporation is

finalising the project blueprint and we hope that we can start the project as soon as possible," he added.

Mr Yeung said it was planned that the project would be financed by the corporation and it would not seek outside help.

Revenue will be generated from leasing outlets in the building which will have a total redeveloped floor space of 1,190 square metres.

Formed in 1988, the corporation is responsible for undertaking, encouraging, promoting and facilitating urban renewal in the older urban areas.

To preserve the features of the historic building there will not be any major alterations to the building structure.

Under the present blueprint, Mr Yeung said the ground floor would be reserved for shops selling fish, bird or cloth.

An artists' corner selling traditional handicrafts is planned for the first floor and a variety of food outlets on the second floor.

The present plan also envisaged adding another floor to the two-storey building to accommodate a tea house covered with a transparent roof, Mr Yeung said.

He added, however, that all the details would be subject to a finalised plan.

# A PARK FOR THE

# MASSSES

WORDS:  
SIMON TWISTON DAVIES  
PICTURES:  
EDDIE JIM

There's to be a verdant oasis amid the concrete, full of exotic tropical vines and lush bushes, with bird song in the air and elderly men moving in the slow dance of *tai chi* exercises. If

the planners get it right, that's what the former Victoria Barracks will grow into this time next year



# in this photograph?



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**I**T WAS more than 20 years ago that they declared it would be one of the great parks of the world: as the British garrison pulled out, Hongkong's historic Victoria Barracks would be converted into 17.6 glorious hectares of green space set aside for local residents to disport themselves.

It would, the government said, be a place far from the thunder of the traffic and the roar of the crowds. An area where the masses could relax and escape the rig-

ours of the filth and noise of urban Hongkong island.

Today, just over a year before it opens, the \$380 million project will cover 10 hectares of ground, and Victoria Barracks has been renamed Hongkong Park to avoid reminders of the territory's "unfortunate" colonial past.

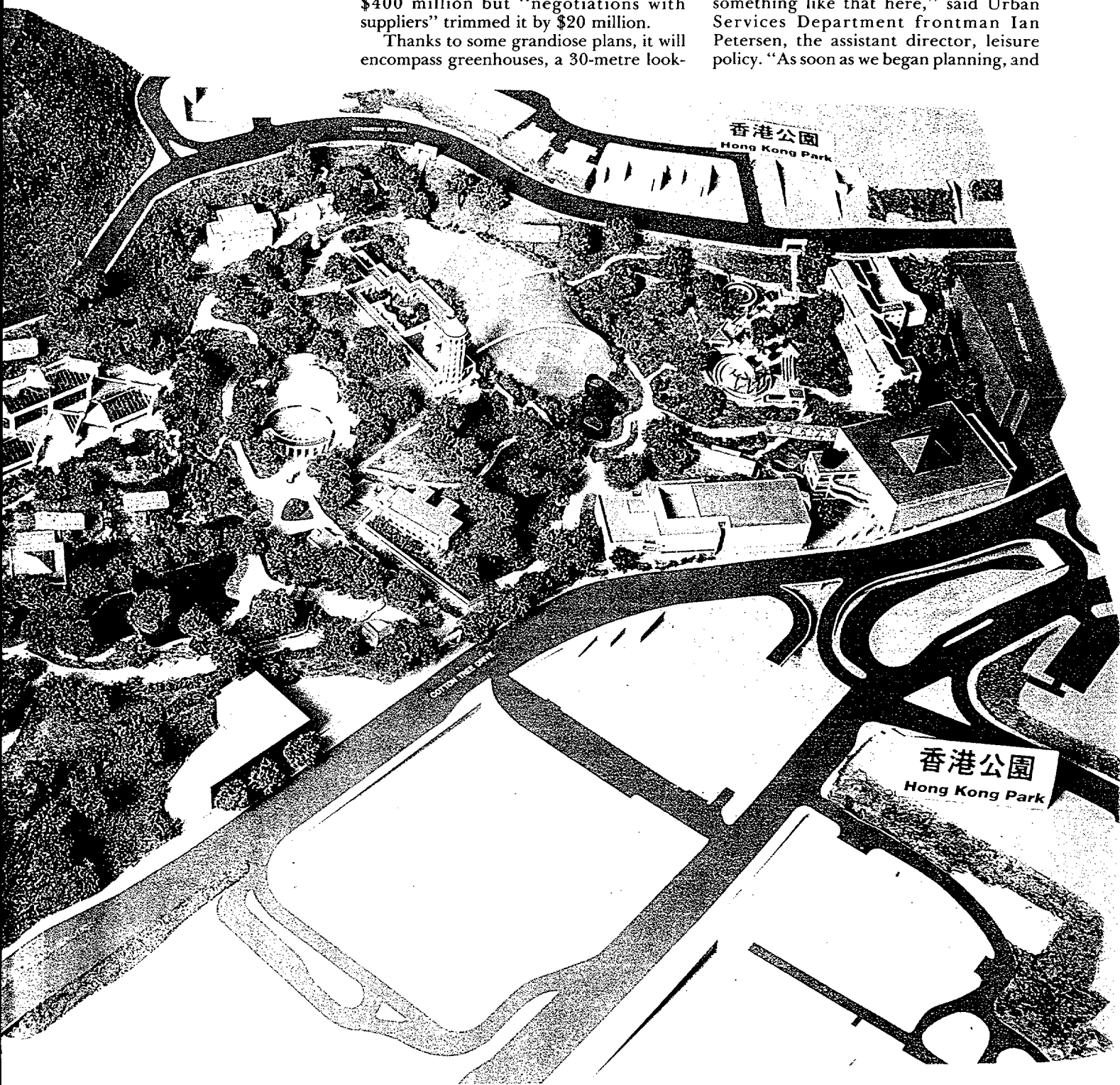
Of the \$380 million price tag, the Royal Hongkong Jockey Club has provided \$170 million in cash, plus some expertise, and the government has provided the rest. At one point, the bill was going to be as high as \$400 million but "negotiations with suppliers" trimmed it by \$20 million.

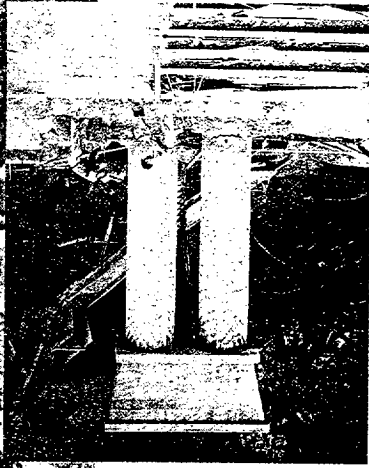
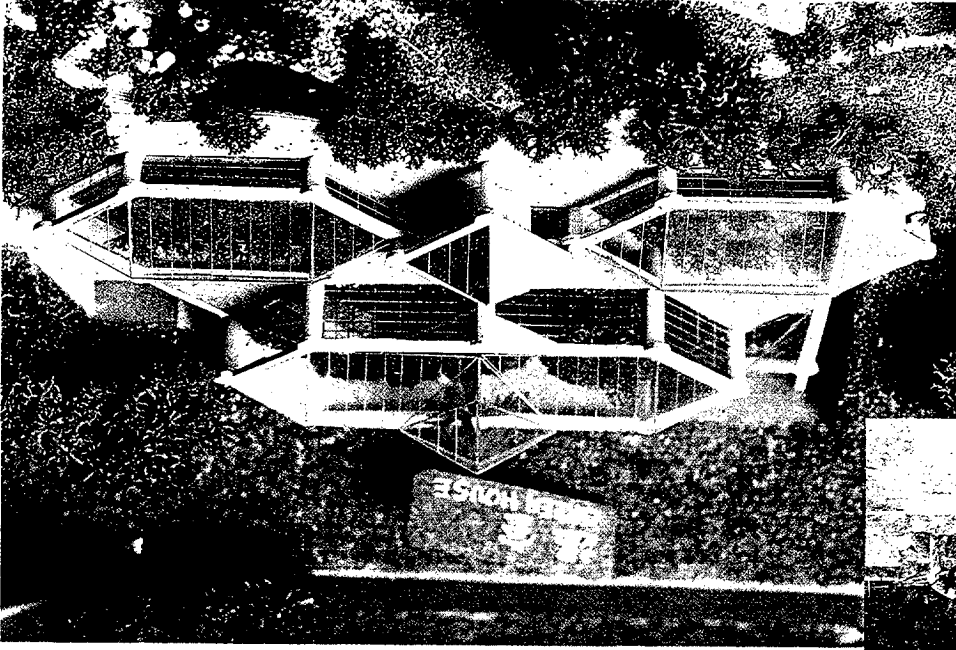
Thanks to some grandiose plans, it will encompass greenhouses, a 30-metre look-

out tower, a three-tier concrete playground, waterfalls, fountains, "education facilities", a massive aviary, restaurants, an amphitheatre, a large public lavatory block and a huge, concrete *tai chi* park.

Already there are squash courts on the Cotton Tree Drive side of the park, and a somewhat soulless indoor games hall will soon spring up close by. Hardly the stuff of an idyllic green lung on the lines of Central Park in New York, Hyde Park in London, or the Bois du Boulogne in Paris.

"Early on we realised we couldn't do something like that here," said Urban Services Department frontman Ian Petersen, the assistant director, leisure policy. "As soon as we began planning, and





Impressive playground (clockwise, from above): All Cheung has an order for over 100 species of birds; a model of the aviary; the park is to include an amphitheater and educational facilities; the greenhouse will feature two climates, separated by an airlock; workers put up columns for the amphitheater.

