

# \$50m sought for hospital expansion

By Anthony Flores

THE increasing use of services of the Prince of Wales Hospital by boat people from the Whitehead detention centre will require the Government to seek another \$50 million to expand its facilities.

The Legislative Council's finance committee is expected to be asked to approve the funds.

The hospital expansion programme is believed to be in response to a substantial increase in the population at the neighbouring detention centre over the past 18 months, estimated to be 23,000.

Although 3,000 boat people will be moved out of the camp next month the hospital is still under great pressure.

Opened in 1984 it was originally designed to serve about one million residents in New Territories East, including Sha Tin, Tai Po and Sai Kung as well as the outlying islands.

But the building of Hongkong's largest boat people detention centre in the district has created more patients for the hospital.

Sha Tin residents complain that the boat people create delays for local residents sharing the same hospital services.

Worst hit are the obstetrics and gynaecology units although some specialist units are also heavily affected.

Figures released show that in the first 10 months of this year more than 2,000 boat people were admitted to the obstetrics units while 561 were treated at the gynaecology unit.

Hospital Services

Boat people treated at Prince of Wales Hospital				
1990	Obstetrics	% of total obstetrics	Gynaecology	% of total gynaecology
Jan	150	13	53	13.4
Feb	177	15.3	38	11
March	192	15.6	50	10.7
Apr	173	17.1	58	14.8
May	240	19.6	61	14.5
June	239	17.9	64	14.9
Jul	324	22.8	79	18.4
Aug	298	21.5	68	15.6
Sept	270	20.1	43	11
Oct	250	17.8	47	11.8

spokesman said there were plans to expand the two units by providing four additional delivery suites, which will raise the number to 14.

She said the expansion programme would also include the re-provisioning of specialist clinics such as ear, nose and throat units and the eye unit.

"All these projects are still in their planning stage and no final decision has yet been made. No date has yet been fixed for the commencement of the project," the spokesman said.

She said, however, that the \$50 million was only an estimate.

"Although the number of the boat people in the camp is not that significant if you compare with the population it is still a big number once they start using the services at the hospital," the spokesman said.

■ A group of 175 boat people left for Vietnam yesterday under the voluntary repatriation programme.

The group comprised 62 men, 43 women, 34 boys and 36 girls.

Their departure brought to 6,095 the number of Vietnamese who have returned home voluntarily since the programme began in March last year.