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11pc rise tipped for Lantau taxi fares

By Jessie Yim

LANTAU taxi operators' bid for a 46 percent fare rise is likely to be drastically cut to about 11 percent by the Government.

Taxi operators applied in December for the increase which called for a flagfall of $8 for the first two kilometres instead of the present $5.

The Government has countered that an 11 percent increase would be appropriate, sources close to the Transport Department said.

The counter-proposal calls for a flagfall of only $5.50. The rate for every 0.25 kilometre would be raised to 70 cents from the present 50 cents for every 0.2 kilometre.

The charge for waiting time would be raised from 50 cents to 70 cents per minute.

The operators' proposal called for 70 cents for every 0.2 of a kilometre.

Sources said the Transport Department thought an 11 percent increase would be appropriate to maintain a reasonable fare difference between taxis and buses.

Public acceptance of the proposed fare rise was also considered, sources said.

The last time taxi fares were raised on Lantau Island was in December 1987.

The Transport Advisory Committee (TAC) is expected to discuss the issue at its meeting on Tuesday.

Chairman of the Lantau Taxi Association, Mr Poon Kwok-hung, said he would be astonished if the Government rejected their proposal for a 46 percent increase.

Taxi operators were having a hard time making a profit, he said.

He said Lantau taxis should be allowed to charge about the same as urban and New Territories taxis.

The flagfall for urban taxis is $6.50 and that for New Territories taxis is $5.50.

It is understood transport officials are trying to handle the sensitive issue with care.

In a go-slow protest recently, taxi drivers demanded to meet Miss Maria Tam, the TAC's chairman, who visited Lantau last week.

They want the Transport Department to allow them to use Ngong Ping Road when proceeding to the Po Lin Monastery.