

\$1 taxi levy to stay until fuel price falls further

By Juanito Concepcion

THE Government will consider lifting the \$1 fuel surcharge by urban taxis if the price of diesel drops below its present price of \$4.84 a litre.

Transport deputy commissioner Pang Hau-cheung yesterday said there could be a case for dropping the surcharge if the price of diesel fell to \$4.20, its price before the Persian Gulf crisis erupted in August.

Mr Pang said the Government had no intention of mediating between taxi drivers and operators locked in a dispute on whether or not the surcharge would stay.

Drivers called for the scrapping of the surcharge after the diesel price fell to \$4.84 last week. But operators claim they have an agreement with the Government that the surcharge will be eliminated only if the diesel price falls to the pre-August 1990 level.

Taxis on December 16 started charging passengers \$1 extra to help offset fuel cost increases triggered by the Gulf crisis.

Mr Pang said the difference in the positions of operators and drivers was not really that big.

"I think they should first arrive at a consensus before we can consider scrapping the surcharge," he said.

A drivers group last week said it would seek a meeting with transport officials to thrash out the surcharge issue.

Operators and drivers' groups were not immediately available for comment yesterday.