

# Airports 'may force rail expansion'

By **Tonny Chan**

THE Light Rail Transit System will be revised for further expansion in the northwest New Territories when sufficient details of new airports in Shenzhen or on Lantau are available, the LRT director said yesterday.

Mr Joe Wade said extension of the rail network would be necessary because new airports would cause population increases in that area of the New Territories.

"When the airport — either in Shenzhen or Lantau — is built,

the centre of local development will be shifted and it is foreseeable the population in these areas will increase," Mr Wade said.

The LRT authority, therefore, had to develop the system further to cope with the new situation, he said.

"The effect on [the] LRT will be a practical one because the increase will be much larger than what we are predicting at this moment," he said.

On June 4, the Xinhua news

agency announced that the Chinese State Council had approved a plan to construct a civilian airport in Baishizhou, about a 30-minute drive west of Shenzhen town centre.

And the Hongkong Government is reconsidering the Chek Lap Kok airport proposal alongside a plan prepared by a private consortium led by Hopewell Holdings.

Speaking after the topping-out ceremony for the new LRT Administration Building, Mr

Wade said a long-term development review would be carried out when plans for the airports "reach a sufficient stage of certainty."

"Presumably, the Government will re-evaluate its development plan and we will from that embark on our study. More people means more trips and more trips means more LRT," he said.

At present, the LRT had committed itself to three more links and a fourth link was under design, in addition to the main

network running between Tuen Mun and Yuen Long, he said.

The three regional links include one linking Tuen Mun Town Centre and northeastern Tuen Mun, Tuen Mun Ferry Pier and Yau Oi Estate, and Yau Oi Estate and Sam Shing Estate, with a total length of five km.

The LRT authority will monitor various developments in the northwestern New Territories including Tin Shui Wai so that it will have enough time to introduce the regional links.