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## 6 months more on ferry franchise

THE three-and-a-half-year marathon negotiations between the Yaumati Ferry Company and the government on a new franchise are expected to carry on for another six months following the expiration of the old one tomorrow.

Official sources said the Executive Council decided at yesterday's meeting to extend the old franchise which will expire on June 30, for another six months for further negotiations on a new franchise.

The latest extension will be the sixth one since the present franchise expired at the end of 1979.

A Government Secretariat spokesman declined to disclose whether the issue was discussed at the Exco meeting, saying only that any decision on the franchise will be published in the gazette.

The HYF public relations manager, Liu Chiu-chun, said yesterday that the company had not yet reached any agreement on a new franchise with the government.

Mr Liu said one of the reasons for the lengthy delay of the new agreement was that the government reserved the right to order the company to maintain and open unprofitable routes which were needed by the public.

Since early this year, the HYF has applied to the government for the suspension of six routes. Mr Liu said the HYF had not yet heard from the government on its decision.

Meanwhile, an official from the Transport Branch said the government could not reach an agreement with the HYF on ways of dealing with the money-losing routes. The government hopes HYF will maintain the six routes which could not be substituted with other transport modes, he added.

He said the branch was conducting an intensive study on the operations, passenger volume and cost of the HYF in the longer term. The study will also forecast the operations of the company in the next five to 10 years.

The findings of the study will be forwarded to the Transport Advisory Committee and finally to the Exco for consideration.

Exco  
Ferry  
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