

J. C. W. P.

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## Annual fare rises to start aboard HYF

Motorists will be the first to be hit by a series of public transport fare increases expected in the coming 12 months.

Charges for Hongkong and Yaumati Ferry Co vehicular services will rise by an average of 21 per cent from today.

And higher fares are expected on at least three major public transport carriers in the first six months of 1985.

The Commissioner for Transport, Mr Peter Leeds, has already indicated a need for the Kowloon Motor Bus Co to raise fares, in view of the huge fleet expansion in the coming two years.

Under a programme endorsed by the Transport Advisory Committee last month, KMB will be required to spend millions on 288 new double-deckers this year and 186 extra buses in 1986.

KMB carries some 3.1 million people each day. The company last increased fares by an average of 18 per cent in May 1983.

The two railway corporations — the Mass Transit Railway and the Kowloon-Canton Railway — are expected to raise fares with the onset of summer.

The two concerns have adopted a policy of annual increases.

Hopefully, a drop in the inflation rate — forecast to be in single figures in the coming financial year — should spare train commuters a hefty fare rise this year.

The corporations have

argued that fare increases should be in line with inflation to avoid a reduction in real earnings as they pay off huge debts.

The KCR raised fares for services between Kowloon and Sheung Shui by an average of 15 per cent in April.

But fares for Lowu-bound trains went up by as much as 450 per cent. The company said domestic commuters should not have to subsidise mainland-bound travellers.

The MTR last raised its fares by between 11 and 33 per cent in May.

In addition to possible fare rises on its existing lines, the corporation will also disclose the fare structure for the Island Line, which is due to open in June.

The other major public transport company — China Motor Bus — has pledged that a fare rise submission is unlikely in the first half of the year, but passengers must keep their fingers crossed for the remaining six months.

CMB's chairman, Mr Ngan Shing-kwan, has already warned that competition from the MTR's Island Line will either prompt a fare rise or a reduction in bus services.

The Island Line is tipped to syphon off 180,000 passengers from CMB routes.

On the power front, China Light and Power and Hongkong Electric have both promised a tariff freeze for the coming year.