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# Action plea over ferry fears

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The Hongkong and Yaumati Ferry Co, worried about the effect of the second cross-harbour tunnel, is to press for clear-cut Government policies over the fate of several ferry routes.

A report detailing HYF's views on the dubious viability of the routes will be submitted to the Government in a month.

HYF's managing director, Mr Edmond Lau, said after the company's annual general meeting yesterday that the Government should decide now its position, so the firm could plan ahead.

Mr Lau said the new tunnel between Quarry Bay and Kowloon, due to open by 1989, will turn passenger ferry routes between the two districts into a commercial misadventure.

Mr Lau said: "If the Government wants to keep these routes as an alternative transport mode, it should come up with solutions to keep them commercially afloat - either through direct or indirect subsidy.

"If the Government agrees that they can be scrapped should they become loss-making, we can then plan ahead to phase out possible staff and ferry redundancies by stages between now and the end of the decade."

He said it would be unfair to ask outlying islands residents to continue to bear an ever-growing burden of subsidising loss-making harbour services.

Mr Lau said one means of indirect subsidy would be to

waive or reduce premiums for the high-rise hotel at Central Ferry Pier.

The company is planning to add a 26-storey, five-star hotel on top of a proposed four-storey pier structure.

But Mr Lau said the pro-

ject is in the balance, with the Government yet to decide on whether large-scale reclamation will be carried out on the Central coastline.

"They only say a decision will be made in one or two months," Mr Lau said.

The reclamation issue has also prevented the company from redeveloping the old Central pier into a four-storey structure, including new berthing facilities and shops.

The proposed reclamation is for the construction of a

road tunnel bypassing the heart of the Central commercial district, to link up with highways from the east.

The road tunnel might ultimately also connect with a proposed coastal highway from Central to Aberdeen.