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Beijing buses ready to roll

THE first regular bus route linking the territory and Beijing is likely to get clearance from Hongkong authorities next week.

Lyndon Rees, managing director of Citybus, said: "The way is clear for them (two left-hand-drive coaches) to be licensed now, subject to usual Government inspection."

The company is to operate the service from May 1 with one coach running every two weeks.

Ernest Lee, Assistant Commissioner for Transport, said if the two new vehicles pass all mechanic tests "I cannot see any problem for issuing the licences".

"We have already written to the company, saying that we have no objection to the service in principle."



■ Lyndon Rees ... way clear.

He said the \$1.8 million coaches' left-hand-drive design did not pose licensing problems.

The procedure for getting a licence to run on the territory's roads was the same for any new vehicle, he said.

The design is to meet Chinese regulations.

But Gordon Jones, Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport, said assuming the Government agreed to issue Citybus the licences, Hongkong and China authorities still had quotas on border crossing traffic.

All vehicles running across the Hongkong-Shenzhen border have to be included in the day's quota in advance.

Mr Jones said the next meeting with Shenzhen authorities was scheduled for next month.

Asked whether Citybus could get the quota before May 1, Mr Jones said: "For this application, we will move very fast."

Mr Lee said a temporary inclusion in the quota could be given for the first run.

Mr Rees said he be-

lieved there was considerable potential for developing Hongkong-China bus services.

"The world is our market place. There has been considerable interest (on the Hongkong-Beijing route) from Europe, Southern Australia, Japan ...," he said.

He said the operation would possibly develop into a weekly, or twice-a-week service next year.

It would take 15 to 20 days going from Hongkong to Beijing, depending on the route, at a charge of about \$15,000 a passenger including meals and accommodation en route.

Mr Rees said there might be "a cheaper version in some future days", and Citybus was looking at the possibility of developing routes along the east coast of China.