

\$7b budget for highway projects

THE Government is to spend \$7 billion on transport infrastructure in 1993-94, according to the Secretary for Transport, Mr Michael Leung Man-kin.

Speaking at a Transport Branch briefing yesterday, Mr Leung said the \$7 billion included expenditure on highway projects related to the new airport and development in the western part of the territory and represented an 85 per cent increase over the \$3.8 billion for 1992-93.

The money would go towards the construction of the Country Park section of Route 3 and additional climbing lanes on the Tuen Mun Highway.

Mr Leung said the Government's pledge to contribute \$4 billion at 1994 prices made the Route 3 project more attractive to the private sector.

Bids were invited from yesterday on a build-operate-transfer basis. The deadline for submissions is April 30, and target completion has been set for 1998-99.

The 13-kilometre road with a dual three-lane carriageway will run in a north-south direction from Au Tau near Yuen Long to Tsing Yi.

The price tag for the entire project is estimated at around \$11 billion at 1994 prices, excluding land re-

sumption cost and overheads.

Mr Leung said the expressway would provide an essential link between the northwest New Territories and the urban areas and would relieve congestion on the Tuen Mun and Castle Peak Roads.

"It will meet transport needs arising from the growth in cross-border traffic and the new developments in the northwest New Territories," he said.

The expressway is to be built in three sections: the Ting Kau bridge, the Tai Lam tunnel and the Yuen Long approach.

The bridge is to be a 700-

metre cable-stayed bridge with a 420-metre main span across the Rambler Channel and about 1,100 metres of viaducts. The 3.4-kilometre tunnel is to have its southern portal linked with the Ting Kau interchange and the northern portal to the west of Ho Pui.

Construction of the first three sections near Tuen Mun, Tai Lam and Ting Kau is expected to begin early next year.

He listed four major projects due for completion this year. These are the hillside escalator linking the Mid-Levels and Central, the Yuen Long-Tuen Mun Eastern Corridor, Stage 2 of the Lam Kam Road improvement, and the improvement to the road leading to the Po Lin Monastery on Lan Tau Island.

The Yuen Long approach is to be an eight-kilometre expressway connecting the northern portal of the Tai Lam tunnel with the New Territories Circular Road at Au Tau.

On the \$1 billion Tuen Mun Highway improvement scheme, Mr Leung said an additional lane and a hard shoulder would be con-