

\$60b power station to run on gas

By Vivian Tse

THE supply of electricity is set to become more expensive but environmentally cleaner under an ambitious plan to build a \$60 billion natural gas-run power station in Tuen Mun.

The power plant, planned to be operational by 1996, is seen as playing a vital role in tackling the territory's energy shortage problem beyond the turn of the century.

Assistant public relations manager for China Light and Power, Albert Chan, said the gas would come from either Hainan province in China or be shipped from a number of sources, including Indonesia or Malaysia.

"Our concern is to ensure a steady supply of natural gas for the generation of electricity. We will examine the advantage and disadvantage of these options," Mr Chan said.

A final report on the design of the plant will be ready by the end of the year.

A feature of the proposed plant is its switch from the conventional use of oil or coal fuels for power generation, which has always been the source of environmental controversy.

Plans to build the natural gas-powered plant has



gained initial support from the Government because of its environmental merits.

Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands, Graham Barnes said: "From an environmental point of view, natural gas is a very good substitute for coal, oil and any other fuels available in Hong-kong."

"As far as pollution is concerned, we support the use of natural gas in electricity generation as it will be beneficial to Hong-kong's overall air quality."

However, he said the Government would also consider other aspects of using natural gas before making a decision on such a drastic change.

"We will have to look at the whole picture. In other words, we will have to consider other factors such as safety, storage and economic aspects of using natural gas before making any change of our policy," he said.

Mr Chan said the company was hopeful that the report on building the power plant would be ready to go before the Government for approval by the end of the year.

But he stressed that the company would deliberate the pros and cons of using natural gas in its report and that the final decision would rest with the Government.

"As the cost of natural gas is much higher than coal and other fuels, it will have an impact on our electricity charge. Eventually, it is up to the Government to decide whether citizens have to pay more for a better environment," he said.

China Light and Power, which is responsible for more than 60 per cent of Hongkong's electricity supply, plans to build a 6,000 megawatt power station at Black Point.

Mr Chan said the company is concerned about the supply of natural gas in the region.