

S. L. M.?

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\$m boost for crime fighters

Police forensic experts are to get \$2.5 million worth of intricate equipment to help in their crack-down on crime.

The sophisticated apparatus could mark a breakthrough in detective work which relies largely on witnesses to convict a suspect.

It will enable scientists to examine minute exhibits and produce evidence powerful enough to stand up in court.

The Government Chemist, Dr A. J. Nutten, said last night that many exhibits could only be cursorily examined before because of their size.

"Some of the modern apparatus also allows us to scrutinise these exhibits without destroying them," he said.

He added the exhibits could then be used in court.

The multi-million dollar installation will put Hongkong on an equal footing with forensic laboratories throughout the world.

Included in the equipment is a "micro-spectrophotometer" used for testing minute fibres entwined after contact between victim and suspect.

And the electron microscope — 200,000 times more powerful than an ordinary optical microscope — can examine particles of paint, rubber and other materials.

The Forensic Division has also bought a newly-developed electrostatic detection machine which can trace information from documents.

Linked with the installation, forensic scientists here are in continual touch with experts all over the world to keep abreast of new developments.

Dr Nutten stressed that forensic science is vital in catching criminals.

He pointed to the case of a taxi driver accused of deliberately ramming his car into a police motorcycle.

The motorcycle hit a lorry and the rider was severely hurt.

When questioned the taxi-driver denied being involved in the crash.

But faced with an analysis of plastic smears, grease marks, paint fragments and the motorcyclist's clothes collected from his car, "the taxi driver quickly changed his plea," said Dr Nutten.