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\$35m for fingerprint unit

THE Finance Committee has approved funds of \$35 million for the introduction of a computerised fingerprint system in the police.

The police hold fingerprint records of about 600,000 convicted people and the first phase of this project will involve the conversion of 180,000 fingerprint records to the computer system.

Phase one is expected to be operational by mid-1990 and with approval and further funding, all records will be computerised by mid-1992.

Development in this forensic field is internationally recognised as the most important technological ad-

vance in crime investigation and detection in the past decade.

Today, more than 70 major police and law enforcement agencies have computer-assisted fingerprint identification systems.

The advantages of the system are the speed at which fingerprint searches can be completed, the accuracy of these searches and the capability of the system to search and identify prints recovered from crime scenes that would be considered unsuitable for search manually.

A partial fingerprint found at the scene of a murder can take several weeks to search by the existing manual procedures and the search

will be limited to selected records.

The computer-aided system will complete this search in a matter of hours and cover all records in the system data base.

Additional benefits will include savings in manpower and accommodation.

The Hongkong Computer-Assisted Fingerprint Identification System (CAFIS) has yet to be selected. Following tendering procedures, selection of a suitable system should be completed in three months.

It is anticipated that vendors will include manufacturers from Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.