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\$5b budget for police next year

By SIMON MACKLIN

HIGHER police pay, increased manpower, and new computer systems will cost the taxpayer nearly \$5 billion next year.

The Government plans to increase the police force to 34,160 posts by next year, up from 33,604 posts.

Some of the new posts will be in specialist formations such as the Commercial Crime Bureau and the Narcotics Bureau, but 157 will be in anti-illegal immigration operations on the border.

The Government will ask for \$581 million – about 1½ per cent up from the re-

vised figure for the current year – for the border force, which takes over the job of dealing with possible disasters, civil disturbances, and acts of terrorism from the withdrawing British garrison.

But the greatest chunk of the police budget – \$3.01 billion – will go towards the maintenance of day-to-day deployment of uniformed officers and the cost of a new Enhanced Command Control Computer System, which will be phased in to increase ability to respond swiftly to crimes.

This is up by \$198.9 million, or 7.1 per cent, from

the revised figure for this year which, the Government says, is mainly due to increments for the existing staff as well as an increase in the number of posts.

Extra money will also be spent in an attempt to reduce traffic accidents. Nineteen new posts will be created to patrol and manage increased traffic in the New Territories, while 13 posts will be created to control new vehicle weigh stations in Kowloon and the New Territories, for a total expenditure of \$409.2 million.

Additional vehicles for traffic operations as well as repairs to existing equip-

ment will help to increase spending in this area by 5.3 per cent over this year.

More funds will also be sought to go towards the prevention and detection of crime, with \$938.8 million to be spent on police operations and \$44.6 million on community-based operations.

New posts and equipment in technical sections will increase the cost of detection and prevention by four per cent, while new programmes and higher wages for existing staff will increase spending in the community-based programmes by 3½ per cent.