

116 IN DRUG SYNDICATE CASE FREED FROM ICAC BAIL

THE ICAC announced last night that it would not renew the bail of 116 people under investigation in connection with a suspected drug syndicate in the Yau Ma Tei fruit market, the papers reported in massive coverage today.

A spokesman said the Attorney-General was now considering the case and pending his decision on the matter, these people had been informed by letter that they did not need to attend the ICAC's offices in the coming week as agreed in their bail.

The papers said that the travel documents of these people had, however, not been returned to them.

A number of papers, including Wah Kiu Yat Po and

Ching Po, said that the ICAC's announcement in some way resulted from the amnesty announced by the Governor and that most of these people would not be prosecuted. Sing Tao Jih Pao and Ching Po said that about 20 people would still be charged with serious offences.

The Hong Kong Economic Journal said the announcement implied that the Government was bowing to pressure and had dealt "another blow"

to the ICAC's dignity. "The Commission's anti-corruption drive may be affected in the future," the paper said.

On Saturday, the papers reported prominently that the Attorney-General, Mr. John Hobley, had decided not to prosecute 18 policemen in connection with a suspected corruption racket that once operated in Sham Shui Po.

The Express said a report would be sent to the Commissioner of Police for him to decide whether disciplinary action should be taken against the policemen.

A street poll conducted by Ming Pao showed that residents were generally dissatisfied with the Attorney-General's decision.

JUSTICE

In two editorials on Saturday and today, the paper said the Attorney-General's decisions not to charge the policemen and to prosecute only one former sergeant in connection with last month's Hutchison House incident were wrong and went against the spirit of justice.

"In the long run, these decisions will have grave implications for Hong Kong because public confidence in the Government will diminish in large measures," the paper said.

Kung Sheung Evening News said on Saturday that the decisions represented a series of compromises with policemen.

In another development, some papers reported yesterday that the proposed Junior Police Officers Association was still awaiting approval from the Commissioner of Police for its representatives to take the grievances of rank-and-file policemen to Britain.

Sing Pao and Kung Sheung Daily News said that the preparatory committee of the association had asked for a meeting with Sir Yuet-keung Kan.