

## 200 up for hawkers?

The Government has in hand a comprehensive plan to open up more than 200 streets on the island and in Kowloon as "hawker permitted areas."

The S.C.M. Post learned yesterday that the experimental setting aside of 15 demarcated streets as open zones for hawking "was just a beginning."

"Like all experiments of this nature, nobody expects it to be perfect," a source said. "But it should clearly demonstrate the Government's intention to try to resolve the long outstanding hawker problem"

He warned, however, that economic factors would be the prime consideration in extending the scheme to other areas.

For example, it would be unwise for the Government to encourage hawking in times when the economy was growing, thereby depriving industry of an essential source of labour.

On the other hand, people genuinely interested in earning a livelihood as hawkers had to be

assisted as far as possible but on the understanding that plying their trade in public areas should not affect other sectors of the community.

Referring to the growing opposition to the 15-street experimental scheme for hawkers, the source said several Government departments and the Urban Services Department were already collaborating on a more suitable arrangement.

It all arose from a misunderstanding that the scheme would bring in thousands of hawkers from all over Hongkong.

In addition, the premature announcement of the scheme had resulted in a "rush" into the designated areas, in turn inviting triad elements to exploit the situation.

The source said every effort is being made by USD and City District Office officials in the area to explain the position to the hawkers. The police were also doing their part by cracking down on triad exploitation.

The experimental scheme is expected to be revised when it is launched on March 14 with a limitation on business hours.