

S.C.M.P.

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# \$1 billion plan to promote arts

A \$1 billion programme to establish district cultural centres to promote the arts at a grass-roots level was unveiled yesterday.

The scheme is designed to provide a small multi-purpose auditorium, rehearsal and practice rooms, an exhibition gallery, a library and conference facilities in each district.

News of the plan was disclosed by the Director of Cultural Services, Mr Darwin Chen, when he spoke at a meeting of the Young Mandariners Club at the Mandarin Hotel.

He said that most of the funds will come from the Government and detailed

planning will be undertaken by the Urban Council and the Urban Services Department.

Facilities will be housed in multi-storey buildings which could also accommodate markets and recreational facilities, he said.

"It is hoped that they will stimulate and promote interest and appreciation of the arts at grass-roots level and generate audiences for the professional resident companies of the larger cultural complexes," he said.

"Provision of facilities for the arts to enrich the cultural life of a city results from its people's access to creative expression, and the many multi-

purpose buildings for the arts which I have described are intended to enhance this access," he added.

Mr Chen said the City Hall, which was the first experiment in multi-purpose buildings to house the arts, was a phenomenal success.

"It has proved that such an arts complex not only provides cross-fertilisation among the various art forms, but what is more significant, it removes barriers to the appreciation of the arts.

"The arts presented in a multi-purpose building are likely to have a wide range of interest and sophistication, and over a period of time

there will almost certainly be something for everyone, whatever his intellectual capacity and artistic experience," he said.

Such centres would have an appeal to all levels of society and would help remove the "misguided view which is still too often held, that the arts are only for the elite. This, to me, is the most significant and valuable contribution that can be made by multi-purpose cultural centres," he added.

Projects scheduled for completion over the next decade include five large, fully equipped auditoria and sever-

al smaller halls, two large indoor stadia for sports as well as cultural activities and three museums. Most of the projects will be housed in multi-purpose cultural centres.

Referring to the New Territories, Mr Chen said three multi-purpose cultural centres have been included in the town planning blue-prints.

"These cultural centres, all planned by the Urban Services Department, will have one thing in common — they are all multi-purpose buildings serving both the performing and the visual arts," said Mr Chen.