

S. C. M. P.

4 Sept. 1983

Assurance sought on land rights

By ROSALYN PANG

The Chinese and British Governments should immediately issue an assurance on land rights in Hongkong — even while the 1997 talks are still going on — a local political group urged yesterday.

Only practical measures could maintain the confidence of the people of Hongkong, said the secretary-general of the Hongkong Civic Association, Mr Edmund Chow.

Mr Chow disclosed at a press conference that the association recently sent letters to the acting Governor, Sir Philip Haddon-Cave, and the director of the local office of the New China News Agency, Mr Xu Jiaturu.

The letters asked the British and Chinese Governments to adopt an economic approach

aimed at maintaining the stability and prosperity of Hongkong.

The association suggested that to achieve this, the two governments should issue statements with immediate effect that:

Legal documents on Hongkong properties expiring in 1997 shall be renewed or renewable by the authorities concerned for a period of 50 years or more.

Terms of other properties which expire after 1997 shall be fully-observed.

Mr Chow said that the real estate business was a major pillar of the Hongkong economy, and it therefore deserved prompt attention.

The association also requested assurances from both governments that the economic, social and

legal systems of Hongkong would be basically preserved for at least 50 years after 1997.

It suggested that the governments consider using Macau as a blueprint for the future of Hongkong.

Mr Chow said the association had no doubt that the sovereignty of Hongkong belonged to China and that it would finally revert to Peking.

But he said it was important that both governments were aware of the need to keep Hongkong economically healthy.

The association also believed that such assurances could be given now, even though the Sino-British talks were still going on.

"It can be done if the two Governments are really sincere in maintaining the stability and prosperity of Hongkong," he said.