

Another old landmark to bite the dust

ANOTHER major historical Hongkong landmark is to be razed to the ground.

The latest on the doomed list is the well-known Marine Department headquarters on Connaught Road near the Macao ferry pier.

Top Government officials are understood to have decided that the building be demolished and the prime site sold off.

The Heritage Society yesterday condemned the move. It has recently been embroiled in a struggle to preserve the old Tsimshatsui railway station and the Hongkong Club.

The decision, if carried out, is bound to enrage conservationists, many of whom see the Marine Department building as one of the last of Hongkong's major landmarks.

The shock government decision may also surprise members of the Antiquities and Monuments Board.

It was learned yesterday that the board has listed the building as a monument.

Sources disclosed yesterday that government officials had originally considered turning the building into a huge marine museum.

But the proposed plan was short-lived. Top level officials huddled recently to consider the possibility of a marine museum.

Sources said the plan was vetoed for various reasons.

One reason given was that experts doubted the stability of the building.

Sources said the building had been made unstable because of past construction operations nearby.

Sources said the Government had already carried out a series of repair works on the building recently in a bid to stabilise it.

It was learned yesterday that the Antiquities and Monuments Board had considered the question of whether or not to preserve the building recently.

Sources said the board finally decided to recommend the building be preserved on historical

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grounds.

But the board's power is only limited to making recommendations. The final decision is up to the Governor-in-Council.

Sources said yesterday it now appeared the Governor-in-Council had decided to overrule the board's recommendations.

A spokesman for the Heritage Society said yesterday:

"If it's true they're tearing it down to sell off the land, then it's a completely and utterly mercenary attitude on the part of the Government."

The spokesman demanded Government answers on whether the future of the building had been discussed by the Antiquities and Monuments Board.



THE Marine Office in Connaught Road Central has been earmarked for the bulldozers.