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## 54 satellite TV systems register with authorities

By OWEN HUGHES

FIFTY-FOUR satellite television systems have been registered by the Telecommunications Authority at the end of a compulsory month-long drive to identify the number and ownership of satellite dishes in Hongkong.

Operators of satellite master antenna television (SMATV) systems were told to complete registration documents within days of the Executive Council announcing changes to the territory's Broadcasting Ordinance on August 1.

While television receive only (TVRO) systems linking a dish to a single set were permitted without a licence, officials imposed a ban on the building of any new SMATV systems pending the result of a broadcasting review currently underway.

Secretary for Recreation and Culture, Mr Gus Chui Kam, has promised that new operating and licensing conditions recommended by the

review will be announced by the end of the year.

A spokesman for the authority said the registration total tallied with the number arrived at after physically counting Hongkong dishes.

Anyone found owning and operating an unregistered SMATV system faces a maximum fine of \$5,000 and two years in jail.

However, there are no effective methods of tracking down such equipment if it is hidden from view and the owners refuse to come forward.

Some estimates have put the number of SMATV systems in use throughout the territory as high as 300, although officials have repeatedly claimed that this figure is far too high.

The New China News Agency, the American Club at Stanley and several luxury hotels and blocks of flats, are among those with dishes on their roofs.

● Sales of TVROs have risen sharply in the last six weeks since the Govern-

ment said no licence was needed to operate them.

Mr Eddie Chan of Hongkong Satellite Television said: "Now the law is clear on TVROs, people are happy to install them."

He added that there had been a sharp falling-off in demand for SMATV systems, but in the last four weeks his company had performed preparatory studies to design systems for 15 luxury blocks of flats and hotels.

"There are a lot of people who think the law is going to be changed soon and they want to have a SMATV system installed as soon as it is."

His views were endorsed by Mr Louis Leung of the Satellite TV Receiving Consultancy, who said that architects and developers were now planning buildings with the installation of satellite dishes in mind.

The most popular satellites to pick up were the Japanese NHK, AsiaSat and the American IntelSat, he said.