

3,500 sign petition opposing tax plan

FOUR liberal groups led by the Hongkong Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood collected 3,500 signatures yesterday in a protest against the possible introduction of a wholesale tax.

More signatures will be collected on May 11.

The campaign, instigated after the passage of the Government's Budget earlier this month, has included a series of seminars in Sham Shui Po on the territory's tax system.

Hongkong Association chairman, Urban Councillor Federick Fung, rejected suggestions that the campaign had been started too late.

"We want the public to speak up before the Government makes up its mind on the new taxation," he said.

Introducing a wholesale tax would further fuel inflation and increase the burden on the public, Mr Fung said.

The groups plan to present the signatures collected to the Finance Branch and the Housing Department.

Apart from taxation, the campaign organisers also called for a rent waiving scheme to help public housing tenants whose incomes fall below a certain level.

Mr Fung, also a Housing Authority member, said he hoped his colleagues in the authority would consider the groups' recommendations in policy reviews later this year.

Regarding the taxation reform, the groups wanted the personal tax allowance to be increased from \$41,000 to \$45,000.

They propose a one to three per cent hike in corporate taxes to balance raising the wholesale tax.