

S.C. W.P.

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\$10m available for Basic Law team₃₋₁₁

By TERRY CHENG

The confidentiality rule over donations for the operating costs of the Basic Law Consultative Committee has drawn mixed reactions.

More than \$10 million is now available for the use of the committee, which was formally established on December 18.

The fund was raised by the promoters of the committee, who are those members of the Basic Law Drafting Committee who set up the Consultative Committee.

Mr Hu Chu-jen, a consultative committee member, said he would like to see the disclosure of individual contributions as a matter of principle.

"The financial matters of an organisation should be made public."

However, Mr Hu, a magazine editor, said he acknowledged that the disclosure would cause embarrassment to donors.

He explained that people might view the amount of contributions as a reflection of the donors' status in the set up.

"But I do not think those who contributed more could have a greater say in the consultative work," he said.

Mr Hu said since the members did not know of the contributions there was no way they

could exert influence.

He said he would not raise the matter with the consultative committee.

Another consultative committee member, Mr Man Sai-cheong, the vice-president of the Hongkong Affairs Society, said he agreed that the disclosure might embarrass donors.

He said there were both pros and cons for the confidentiality rule.

"Even if the donations are made public, there is no way those who contributed more could have a greater say," he said.

He said decisions were made by the consultative committee members or its executive committee collectively.

Mr Man said the \$10 million in donations was made before the consultative committee was formally established.

A third consultative committee member, Mr Ng Siu-peng, said he hoped the donations could be made public in the coming full meeting when the executive committee gives its financial report.

This complies with the stipulation in the constitution that the progress in the work of the consultative committee shall be made public as far as possible, he said.

Mr Ng, who is a district board member, said some do-

nors could remain anonymous if they chose to do so.

He said he believed committee members would not accept donations with conditions, especially political conditions.

While who donated how much to the operating costs is still anyone's guess, it is thought Sir Yue-kong Pao is contributing a substantial amount to the fund.

The shipping magnate is a vice-chairman of the Basic Law Drafting Committee.

The luxurious chamber of the consultative committee on the seventh floor of Lane Crawford House in Central owned by him is said to be worth \$60,000 a month in rent.

However, according to Mr Shiu Sin-por, the deputy secretary-general of the consultative committee, the 5,200 sq ft site is rent-free for the next five years until the drafting of the Basic Law is completed.

More than \$1 million has been spent so far, mainly on decoration and equipment in the committee chamber.

In the case of a deficiency, the outstanding sum can be raised by the consultative committee itself.

Raising the sum is by no means difficult for a committee whose 180 members comprise a large number of well-off businessmen.