

HK STANDARD 28 SEPT 85

\$9,325 — the cost of a night in hotel

HOW much did it cost in the unprecedented move of two High Court juries to spend a night at the Hilton Hotel before continuing deliberations on Wednesday? \$9,325.

Were the expenses substantial? Yes, but they are insignificant when compared with the cost of retrials if the jurors had been discharged before reaching their verdicts, a Judiciary Department spokesman said yesterday.

She said the two juries were involved in exceptionally long and complex trials, and it was hardly surprising that they were unable to reach verdicts before they became too tired to carry on their deliberations.

The cases involved the trial of 14 people accused of smuggling a total of 2.8 tonnes of heroin into Hongkong from Thailand and the trial of three men over conspiracy to defraud, offering advantages and procuring the execution of a valuable security.

Verdicts of both cases were reached after 18 and 23 hours, respectively.

The spokesman said the money for 14 jurors' overnight accommodation came from the \$2.5 million allocated for the expenses of witnesses and jurors in the current financial year.

She said decisions on whether juries needed overnight accommodation before continuing deliberation was at the discretion of trial judges.

As to why Hilton Hotel was chosen, the spokesman said it was because it was nearest the Supreme Court and it had rooms available at short notice.