

## 80pc of labour import bids don't get past first base

By Philip Ho and Anna Tam

ABOUT four-fifths of the applications received under the supplementary labour importation scheme have been rejected.

The government has received 8,100 applications since the scheme began on 1 February.

Of these, only a fifth have passed the preliminary screening while the others infringed basic requirements.

Most of those approved to continue with their applications are waste-disposal workers and old-age home care takers.

Several hundred waste-disposal workers have already been approved to work in the territory.

Secretary for Education and Manpower Joseph Wong Wing-ping said yesterday the scheme was proceeding as the government expected and he believed there would be no need to revise it before the end of the year.

The scheme's initial quota of 2,000 will be revised once it is filled.

Meanwhile, visiting Chinese officials are expected to release tomorrow their report on allegations that mainland labour recruiting agencies exploit workers exported to the territory.

China launched the investigation amid allegations by workers that large amounts were being deducted from their wages by employment agencies in China.

Shi Hequi, head of China's Department of Economic Co-operation under the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic

Co-operation, met Commissioner for Labour Stephen Yip Shu-kwan yesterday.

"We have discussed the issue of foreign labour concerning both of us," Mr Yip said.

The subjects included how to

prevent middlemen exploiting the mainland workers and how to bring them under the scope of Hong Kong law. "I believe we are clear where the problem arises," Mr Yip said. "We concur on what can be done."

"What we are talking about are the details of the measures and when to implement them."

He hoped some of the measures could be implemented this year.

Mr Yip also said both sides

had agreed to strengthen contacts on the issue of foreign labour.

He said the Chinese officials would meet Education and Manpower officials again in May or June.