

# Officials 'dishonest over Tamar site'

Lawmakers go on the attack but the government denies withholding analysis from the legislature or the public

**Chloe Lai**

The government was accused of being dishonest and "talking nonsense" after it denied withholding a report backing the redevelopment of government offices on their present site.

Legislators said the administration had never given them a detailed analysis of why it needed to move its headquarters to the Tamar site in Admiralty.

They were speaking after the government described as misleading a *South China Morning Post*

report yesterday that it was keeping under wraps research that showed retaining the headquarters in Central was feasible.

The *Post* revealed that the internal study - never released to the public or legislators - had found that the need for office space could be adequately met by renovating the Central Government Offices and using the full permitted density of the nearby Murray Building.

In response, the government said research had shown the Central option was "technically feasible" but difficult and would not

meet the needs for more space. "It is a totally unfounded allegation that the government has been withholding any such analysis from the Legislative Council and the public," it said. "Throughout the process of consultation and deliberations with the Legislative Council, we have furnished detailed information as to the rationale, justification and various considerations regarding the Tamar project."

Independent legislator Kwok Ka-ki said the government was "talking nonsense" and "not honest". "Yes, it did tell Legco why it

wanted to move to Tamar. But the explanations are unconvincing."

Democratic Party chairman Lee Wing-tat said he had been to every meeting on Tamar since the plan was relaunched last year.

"I haven't seen any document, nor convincing arguments, on why we need to move to Tamar. At the end of the day, there are reports the government has never published. It must release the information."

Mr Lee said the party would write to the Administration Wing and demand the release of all related studies since the early 1990s. In

its statement, the government said it had been looking into options for coping with the demand for office space in the Central Government Offices and Murray Building since the early 1990s.

"Previous research on redevelopment [in situ] showed that while it might be technically feasible to redevelop the CGO, there would be significant constraints," it said.

A spokesman added that the required move to interim premises "would cause serious disruption to the operation of the Government Secretariat. There are also concerns

on site limitations, such as the presence of a large number of mature trees and preservation of historical features, for instance, the character of the open space outside St. John's Cathedral and the Court of Final Appeal, Battery Path, etc."

Mr Lee said that "of course" there would be disruption during the renovation. "But the government must weigh which will bring more benefits to Hong Kong and I'm sure Tamar is not the answer. Meanwhile, the CGO must be preserved, that is Government Hill, our history and cultural heritage.