

Government meets Choi Yuen Tsuen villagers to explain compensation package

The Under Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Yau Shing-mu, today (January 18) visited Choi Yuen Tsuen in Shek Kong. He reiterated to villagers affected by the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL) project that the compensation package would be implemented and that the registration period would be extended to end of February.

Following the funding approval for the XRL by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council on 16 January, the Government is implementing the project.

"We are grateful for the Legislative Council's approval of funding for this rail project to allow its early implementation. Relevant government departments will be conducting the work in full speed. Understanding the concern of the villagers of Choi Yuen Tsuen, we visited the village today with other departments and reassured them that the compensation and rehousing package would be implemented as announced earlier. We made it clear that the package would not be enhanced or reduced." In response to villagers' enquiries about the possibility of relocating the whole village, Mr Yau stated that the compensation package approved by the Executive Council and the Legislative Council's funding approval did not provide for such an option.

Most villagers had expressed that they would like to obtain the compensation as early as possible to facilitate planning for a new life. Mr Yau said the government would provide them with necessary assistance and complete the registration and vetting process as soon as possible.

The government explained the compensation and rehousing package to affected villagers on October 20, 2009 through

briefings and leaflets and has been in close contact with them. Over 120 households have registered with the government. The government will continue to communicate with the non-registered households and assist those who wished to continue farming activities to identify suitable agricultural land.

Mr Yau also explained the importance of the rail project to the villagers. "The 26-km XRL Hong Kong section allows Hong Kong to tap into the national high-speed railway network. It was the result of in-depth studies and discussion by the Administration in conjunction with the Legislative Council, professionals and different sectors of the community. The project will bring enormous social and economic benefits to Hong Kong. There is general community support for the project and its early implementation in the interest of Hong Kong's competitiveness and long-term development," he said.

The Hong Kong section of the XRL will run in a 26km underground tunnel to protect the environment and minimize the impact on ecology and the public. To meet fire safety requirements, there is a need to provide an emergency rescue station within the Hong Kong section. Having considered different options and the need to affect as few residents as possible, the Government decided that a site of Choi Yuen Tsuen in Shek Kong is the most suitable location. Under that option which affects residents the least, about 150 households will be subject to land resumption.

Ends/Monday, January 18, 2010