

Government approves rehousing assistance applications from  
XRL affected villagers

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A spokesman for the Transport and Housing Bureau said today (May 5) that the Government had completed the approval procedures for the applications under the ex-gratia rehousing package (the Package) exclusively applicable to households affected by land resumptions and clearances under the Express Rail Link (XRL) project.

"A total of 232 households (three are not from Choi Yuen Tsuen), composing of some 430 people, said that they were affected by land resumptions and clearances under the XRL project and have registered with the Lands Department, " the spokesman said.

"Of these, 190 households have applied for the rehousing package which was approved by the Executive Council in October last year and endorsed by the Legislative Council in this January. The Government has completed vetting all the applications except a few isolated cases. "

"Nearly 150 applications were approved, in which more than 60 were qualified households which had fully met the prescribed eligibility criteria. The Secretary for Transport and Housing had exercised discretion and approved some 80 cases which did not fully comply with the relevant eligibility criteria."

"For the remaining one-fourth of the applications, approvals were not granted as the applicants failed to meet the relevant requirements (such as residing in Choi Yuen Tsuen for less than 10 years).

"All the villagers will be notified of the results of their applications in the first ten days of May so that they can have more time to prepare for their new home."

The spokesman added that about 72 million of ex-gratia cash allowance had been offered to the approved applicants in total. Some 100 applications were granted an ex-gratia cash allowance of \$500,000 or above. Also, about 40 households chose to purchase flats under the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS).

Arrangements were made for villagers who were given approval to purchase HOS flats to select the flats in accordance with the selection priority decided earlier. The HOS flats were ready for taking over by the villagers upon completion of the deals. Some had already signed the provisional agreement for sale and purchase.

The spokesman revealed that nearly half of the applications for the special rehousing package were made by singleton households. Many of these applicants were self-reliant and single adults who were often members of the second or third generation of the family. Many were residing in structures converted from pig sheds or chicken sheds.

"In processing the applications of the Special Package, the Administration has adopted a humanitarian and flexible approach with a view to accommodating the needs of the affected villagers as far as possible. A considerable number of cases which involved the elderly, elderly singletons, chronic patients and families experiencing unexpected changes, were given compassionate consideration.

"We will continue to assist other villagers to meet their rehousing needs. If they meet the relevant criteria, the Administration will arrange them to move in to public housing units, interim housing units, etc as soon as possible."

On land compensation, the spokesman said that about 160 million were offered to some 40 extended families who owned private land. A total of 240 million including ex-gratia cash allowance and land compensation were offered to the Choi

Yuen Tsuen villagers.

In addition, a total of 29 villagers had applied for agricultural resite to facilitate them to continue farming and to build a house in the vicinity of the farmland so that they can conveniently take care of their farmland and crops.

Among them, seven villagers had been verified by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department as genuine farmers. Nine villagers had withdrawn their applications or had their applications rejected on grounds that they were not affected by the land resumption, overlapping of farm land or other reasons.

The spokesman called on other villagers who wished to apply for agricultural resite to submit their applications by mid-May so that the Government could process their applications and verify their eligibility the soonest. The spokesman added: "Otherwise, construction work for residential houses may not be able to complete before the end of October and villagers may need to seek temporary residence."

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