

Application deadline for Squatter Occupants Voluntary Registration Scheme extended

The Lands Department (LandsD) announced today (October 29) the extension of the application deadline of the Squatter Occupants Voluntary Registration Scheme for one year, from October 31, 2021, to October 31, 2022.

Launched on November 1, 2018, the Scheme complements the Government initiative announced on May 10, 2018, to enhance the ex-gratia compensation and rehousing arrangements for persons residing in squatter structures affected by the Government's development clearance exercises. Specifically, persons residing in licenced non-domestic structures or in squatter structures recorded for non-domestic uses in the 1982 Squatter Control Survey (hereinafter collectively referred to as "non-domestic squatter structures") would be eligible for registration under the Scheme if they can prove that they started to reside in the non-domestic squatter structures since May 10, 2018 (i.e. the date on which the enhanced ex-gratia compensation and rehousing arrangements were announced by the Government), or before.

A spokesperson for the LandsD said, "Non-domestic squatter structures should not be used for domestic purposes. Persons residing in non-domestic squatter structures were not eligible to apply for rehousing and ex-gratia compensation in the past. Under the Scheme, occupants of non-domestic squatter structures who have successfully registered can apply for rehousing and ex-gratia allowances if they are affected by the Government's development clearance exercises in future. Through establishing a register to record those households who are already living in non-domestic squatter structures, the Scheme aims to protect these households and to discourage others from moving to reside in non-domestic squatter structures as well as to curb related speculative activities."

The LandsD has been explaining the objective of the Scheme to members of the local community and stakeholders, and has stressed that households who have successfully registered would not be subject to enforcement actions for the change of use of the squatter structures for domestic purposes. Considering that there are views suggesting that the Government allow more time for households to understand the Scheme and come forward for registration, and that the number of registrations is still on the rise, the department has decided to further extend the application deadline.

"For those who have successfully registered under the Scheme, the LandsD will not take enforcement action on their squatter structures for a change of use for domestic purposes. However, the structures concerned are still required to comply with other requirements governing the licenced or surveyed squatter structures under the relevant licences and/or the prevailing squatter control policy, including the prohibition against any extension or addition, as well as unauthorised alteration," the spokesperson stressed.

Guidance notes on the Scheme and application forms can now be downloaded from the LandsD's website (www.landsd.gov.hk/en/vrs/vrs.htm), and will be made available at District Lands Offices, Clearance Offices and Squatter Control Offices of the LandsD, and at Home Affairs Enquiry Centres of the Home Affairs Department. For enquiries, please call 2231 3392 or email vrs-cu@landsd.gov.hk.