

CE determined to ensure sustainable land supply for all housing needs

In her Policy Address under the theme "Building a Bright Future Together" today (October 6), the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, said, "Providing decent accommodation for all is the primary goal of my housing policy."

Realising that goal, she added, "rested not on 'quick fixes' to deal with current situations, but rather on the determination to sustain land supply, as well as the courage to remain steadfast with the policies implemented in the face of short-term economic changes or fluctuations in property prices".

Mrs Lam said that about 350 hectares of land had been identified to produce some 330 000 public housing units in the 10-year period to 2031-32. That, she said, would meet the estimated public housing demand of about 301 000 units over the next decade.

Recognising that only about one-third of the units may be delivered in the first five years, Mrs Lam said that the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HKHA) and the Hong Kong Housing Society will adopt modular integrated construction and other innovative construction technology more widely to expedite development procedures.

The HKHA will also introduce a new procurement model to suitable projects and work with contractors to enhance the entire construction workflow.

In addition, Mrs Lam said she has requested the Development Bureau (DEVB) and the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) to submit quarterly reports on all public housing sites for the next five-year period, adding, "I will give instructions personally if the time to deliver the sites or the progress of construction is less than satisfactory."

Mrs Lam said she would invite the HKHA to conduct a redevelopment study of Sai Wan Estate and Ma Tau Wai Estate, noting their build-back potential of providing more housing units upon redevelopment.

The redevelopment of Tai Hang Sai Estate has been approved conditionally, and is expected to provide more than 3 300 units upon completion, more than double the existing number. The redevelopment will include 1 300 units to rehouse existing tenants and 2 000 "Starter Homes" units to be provided by the Urban Renewal Authority (URA).

The current-term Government has introduced transitional housing to alleviate the hardship faced by families still awaiting public rental housing units.

While the THB has identified sufficient land for the targeted 15 000

units originally pledged, Mrs Lam proposed increasing the supply of transitional housing to 20 000 units in the coming few years, and would boost relevant funding to \$11.6 billion.

On private housing, Mrs Lam said the Government will strive to secure approximately 170 hectares of land in the coming 10 years, and make available to the market sites for the production of about 100 000 units through land sales or by putting up railway property developments for tender, not counting projects undertaken by the URA and other private land developments.

"With the Government's determination to further streamline the land development process, we are confident that there will be a steady supply of land for private housing development," Mrs Lam said.

To ensure sustainable land supply for the next decade and beyond, Mrs Lam said the Government was pressing ahead with relevant studies on reclamation works for the Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands and various development areas in New Territories North.

The DEVB, Mrs Lam said, will conduct studies on the Lung Kwu Tan reclamation (about 220 hectares) and the re-planning of the Tuen Mun West area (about 220 hectares).

"Our target is to seek funding approval from the Legislative Council in the first half of next year to kick-start the planning and engineering study for the land development," Mrs Lam said.

Mrs Lam said that more than 50 per cent of brownfield sites have been covered by development projects, adding that the Government had resumed 90 hectares of land in the New Territories for development over the past two years. Looking ahead, as much as 700 hectares of land are expected to be resumed by the Government in the coming few years, Mrs Lam said.

The Land Sharing Pilot Scheme, Mrs Lam said, was designed to use the development potential of private land in the New Territories primarily for public housing development. The DEVB is processing three such applications involving 23 hectares of private land and 17 850 proposed units, 70 per cent of them for public housing.

In addition, Mrs Lam said a series of projects is under way to relocate government facilities to caverns. That will release more than 40 hectares of land for housing and other uses, beginning in 2027.

The ongoing large-scale projects and those under planning are expected to provide about 400 000 to 500 000 public and private housing units in the medium to long term. Together with the 165 000 to 186 000 units that can be built on the newly identified land under the Northern Metropolis Development Strategy, housing supply can climb to 565 000 to 686 000 units in the 10 to 15 years after 2031-32, Mrs Lam said.

Mrs Lam noted that Hong Kong is projected to have a shortfall of some 3 000 hectares of land from 2019 to 2048.

"Through successful implementation of various new development areas and reclamation projects, as well as taking forward the Northern Metropolis initiative, we are confident that we will be able to meet the shortfall of land in the medium to long term," Mrs Lam said.

Mrs Lam outlined several measures to help speed up land supply. They include a further Planning Department review of the development potential of the "Green Belt" zone.

In addition, the Secretary for Home Affairs will set up a working group with the Heung Yee Kuk New Territories to discuss amendment proposals for the New Territories Ordinance regarding Tso/Tong lands and their availability for development. The working group will work out specific amendment proposals within a year.

"I agree that to pragmatically break the current impasse in developing Tso/Tong lands, we may consider amending the New Territories Ordinance on the premise that the Tso/Tong tradition should be respected and the legitimate interests of Tso/Tong members be protected," Mrs Lam said.