

# Proposed enhancements to ex-gratia compensation and rehousing arrangements for Government's clearance exercises announced (with photo)

The Government announced today (May 10) proposed enhancements to the general ex-gratia compensation and rehousing arrangements for eligible domestic occupants in squatters and business undertakings affected by Government's development clearance exercises.

The Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, said that in the course of development clearance exercises, affected clearerees and local stakeholders had expressed their views about the compensation and rehousing arrangements. He remarked that the Government understood the concerns of affected clearerees and their worries over relocation, while also being mindful of societal expectations for the Government to uphold principles of fairness and proper use of resources to take care of the needs of different sectors, especially the grassroots, in taking forward development projects.

"In line with the people-oriented philosophy of the current-term Government, we hope the enhanced ex-gratia compensation and rehousing arrangements could pragmatically address the needs of different groups of people, while balancing the use of public money and public housing resources, principles of fairness, and expectations of affected clearerees as well as the wider community," he said.

The relevant arrangements comprise the following key directions:

- (1) From "project specific" packages to a unified as well as enhanced general ex-gratia compensation and rehousing package which will be applicable to all future Government's development clearance exercises (irrespective of project scale);
- (2) To offer non-means tested rehousing for affected eligible squatter households in dedicated rehousing estates (Dedicated Estates) to be developed and managed by the Hong Kong Housing Society;
- (3) To suitably relax the eligibility criteria and increase the amount of cash ex-gratia allowances;
- (4) To enable eligible households residing in 1982-surveyed/licenced non-domestic structures to benefit from non-means tested rehousing and ex-gratia compensation, subject to them meeting the specified prescribed requirements of the one-off voluntary registration exercise to be implemented by the Lands

Department; and

(5) To relax the eligibility criteria of applicable ex-gratia allowance for business undertakings on brownfields and in squatters.

Please refer to Annex for details.

"Our proposals aim to fairly and suitably respond to the expectations of the community and affected clearerees. We also hope that the proposal could help remove hurdles to land resumption and clearance exercises for timely increase in land supply to address housing and economic needs," Mr Wong said.

The Development Bureau and relevant departments will brief local stakeholders and affected clearerees on the relevant measures from mid-May to July. In end-May, the Government will brief the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Development. Thereafter, approval of the LegCo Finance Committee (FC) will be sought on the enhancements involving ex-gratia allowances with a view to addressing the needs of affected clearerees as soon as possible. The proposed enhancements to ex-gratia allowances and the enhanced rehousing arrangements will take effect at the same time. Subject to FC's approval, implementation of the enhanced general compensation and rehousing package for domestic occupants in squatters and cases of businesses operating from squatters will be backdated to the date of announcement (i.e. today, May 10, 2018), while for business undertakings on brownfields will be backdated to April 11, 2017 (i.e. the date on which the Government announced the introduction of an ex-gratia allowance arrangement for open-air/outdoor business undertakings last year).

