

## 15 to go homeless

FIFTEEN tenants in a Sheung Sha Wan cage house are set to lose their home because the operator has decided to wind up the business.

The third-floor, 11-cubicle flat on Fuk Wa Street falls under the Bedspace Apartment Ordinance effective since last April. The operator had obtained a Certificate of Exemption which allows a two-year period of grace for upgrading.

Last month, however, he secured a court order of repossession and gave tenants until Sunday to vacate the flat.

Cage dweller Ho Kim-fai, 51, said: "If he wanted to close down the house, he should talk to us instead of having it done so secretly."

Mr Ho, who is unemployed, cannot afford to move out of the 100 square-foot cubicle for which he pays \$900 a month. Social worker Wong Yun-chuen said the Bedspace Apartment Ordinance was forcing cage tenants into the streets.

"If an operator can still close the business even with an interim licence, what is the use of the ordinance?" Mr Wong asked.

A City and New Territories Administration spokeswoman said an operator was not obliged to continue business with the Certificate of Exemption.

She said the ordinance was not aimed at getting rid of cage houses. "It simply aims to protect the safety of tenants in terms of fire and structural safety of the flats," she said.