

# 70 hectares available for luxury flats

By Cynthia Wan

THE government will release a record 70 hectares of land for luxury residential development within two fiscal years, Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands Bowen Leung Po-wing revealed yesterday.

The 70 hectares was more than four times the combined 17 hectares released for low-density luxury flats over the past three financial years, Mr Leung said yesterday after the opening of the Stonecutters Island Sewage Treatment Works.

"We're likely to make available 70 hectares of land in the current Budget year and the coming one," he said. "We are planning to release more land as soon as possible to meet the demand (for luxury flats)."

But details of land locations and a timetable for the allocation would be announced by the Special Administrative Region government, he said.

However, some real estate associations did not think the extra allocation would ease demand for luxury properties.

Eddie Lou Kong-fai, executive member of the Property Agencies Association said: "Most locations which are historically used for luxury flats have been built up already. More land granted in other areas, like some remote areas in the New Territories, could only be good for resort houses but not luxury flats."

Tony Chan Tung-ngau, chairman of the Society of Hong Kong Real Estate Agents said: "(It) depends

on the location of the land. If it is in the New Territories, it will have little effect on the situation."

Mr Leung also refused to predict the response for three government lots in Stanley, Hung Hom and Cheung Sha to be auctioned today.

The 53,126 square metres on Wong Ma Kok Road, Stanley, will be for three-storey luxury apartments with an estimated price of \$17,000 per sq ft.

About 2,240 sq m on Cheung Fu Street, Cheung Sha, Lantau are intended for private residential use.

Whereas, an area of about 7,402 sq m on Wan Hoi Street, Hung Hom, is for a mix of high-density residential and commercial purposes.

Mr Leung said no more measures to curb property speculation had been lined up after a series of cooling methods announced by the government earlier this year to combat the overheated speculation on luxury flats.

"I hope the property market will operate normally without being dragged by the speculation frenzy. But it definitely needs more land to be available in the market," he said.

Last night Chief Executive-designate Tung Chee-hwa said rocketing property prices were unhealthy.

Mr Tung said he had identified a housing problem through consultations and would turn his ideas into policy after the handover.

Leung Chun-ying, Mr Tung's housing planner, said he welcomed the secretary's announcement. "To focus on increasing land supply within a short period of time is one thing we should be able to achieve," he said.

HK Star News

3/6/97