

500 residents criticise Govt estate scheme

ABOUT 500 residents of the Taihangtung resettlement estates in Shamshuipo criticised the Government's estate redevelopment scheme in a seminar held yesterday.

It was organised by the Estate People's Committee of the district to protest against the high rent and other policies in connection with the scheme.

A committee spokesman said in the seminar that the residents welcome the plan, as far as improving living condition is concerned, but not the high rent of the estates

they are going to move in.

The spokesman said the committee is preparing an opinion letter, which will be sent to the Housing Authority, Shamshuipo City District Office and the Consumer Council.

The views of the residents were collected during the seminar and the letter is expected to reach these bodies in three days, he said.

He also said they had invited representatives from these bodies to attend the seminar, but they did not show up.

However, Urban Councillor Tsin Sai-nin and Dr L.K. Ding were present at the meeting to voice their support to the residents.

Tsin noted that as the Housing Authority is building more high-rent estates, the term "low-cost housing" no longer exists.

But he thought that the Government should be

considerate in lowering the rent of newly-built estates, so that residents originally paying low rent and affected by the scheme can afford to move in.

"The Government should give first priority to house the majority low-income people, and this cannot be achieved by moving them into high-cost estates," he said.

Ding said the Housing Authority, the City District Office and the Consumer Council should send representatives to attend a meeting like this, so that a better solution to the problem could be worked out.

Another spokesman of the committee said the Housing Authority so far has not revealed the details of the redevelopment scheme, such as the rent and the new living condition.

"Judging from the rent of other redeveloped estates, the new rent is expected to be around \$200 each month, which is too high for us to afford," she said.

Meanwhile, the committee has recently published a survey report after studying the scheme for three months.

The report said the Taihangtung resettlement estates residents agree to improving of living condition of mark I and II estates in the district, but said they do not need luxurious facilities in the new ones.

"We hope the Housing Authority can provide us more estates with basic facilities such as our own kitchen and bathroom — and that is what we need," the report said.

The report also criticised the redevelopment scheme of destroying Chinese family tradition, as it does not allow married members to live with their parents.

It also demanded that the future meetings of the Housing Authority be open to the public, so that public opinion can reach the decision-making body of the authority.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the Housing Authority said yesterday that tenants' views are being carefully considered in the planning of the redevelopment scheme at Taihangtung estate.

The spokesman said results of a survey last year show that a great majority of families now living in the old mark I blocks in the district consider their present living space insufficient and welcome the opportunity to move into larger self-contained flats.

That is what redevelopment is all about — providing a better life for these people, the spokesman said.