

Survey claims 230,000 unemployed

# 20 p.c. may be jobless next year

by  
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THE unemployment rate will soar to 20 per cent by early next year if the Government continues to ignore the problem, it was claimed yesterday.

The warning came from the Unemployment Action Group yesterday when it revealed that the unemployment figure has reached a startling 230,000, or 13.9 per cent of the entire work force.

"The more optimistic estimate of just eight per cent unemployment rate no longer exists. The Government must face reality and do something," said the chairman of the group, Mr Joe Leung, at a press conference yesterday.

The figures are obtained from a month-long study on the employment situation of about 3,015 residents of Yautong, Saumauping, Ngautaukok and Kuntong estates.

While it showed that another 22.6 per cent of the work force are partially employed, the figures further indicated that about 210,000 households are being affected as a result of the spiralling unemployment rate.

The findings also revealed that only 13 per cent of those interviewed have applied for public assistance and half of them succeeded. The majority of them survive by pawning, borrowing or getting help from the various charitable organisations.

The reason, the study pointed out, is that most of the residents do not know of the existence of public assistance scheme or the methods and qualifications to apply for the fund. A minority believe that it is a shame to get subsidy from the Government.

"The fault lies within the Government as it fails to educate the public on this aspect. The public still think that they are begging from the Government, instead of understanding that it is their right to

demand for such assistance," remarked Mr Leung.

The public assistance recipients are also unhappy at the amount of fund being given because it does not help them to make ends meet and they find the 15 to 55 age limit is unreasonable.

"We believe that in times of economic crisis, the Government should take up the responsibility to educate the public on the scheme, raise the amount of money given to each recipient and delete the 15 to 55 age limit," he said.

The group also made a three year comparative study on the living conditions of the residents. It showed that 8.7 per cent are living better while the living condition has remained unchanged for the 38.1 per cent. But 53.2 per cent was found to be going through harder times as a result of unemployment and spiralling cost.

To overcome the crisis, the residents believe that the best measure is to create more jobs for them. They are also in favour of a long-term welfare plan.

Meanwhile the group is to hold a four-day exhibition beginning tomorrow in an effort to drive home to the Government the problems of rising unemployment.

It is believed that about 2,000 copies of the findings of the survey will be distributed to all government departments and other welfare organisations.