

A \$4 toll helps clinch the Tate tunnel tender

By Kris Chan

MOTORISTS will have to pay a \$4 toll to use the Tate's Cairn Tunnel linking Sha Tin and Kowloon after its scheduled opening in 1991.

The low-price toll helped earn the Gammon-Nishimatsu consortium — an Anglo-Japanese group — the 30-year franchise to operate the tunnel. It is the first land tunnel to be built and operated in Hongkong by the private sector.

In return for the franchise, the Government will charge the group a royalty based on the annual gross revenue of the tunnel.

The Government officially announced yesterday that the Gammon-Nishimatsu group was the successful bidder for the \$2 billion project, although the news was reported last week.

The group is made up of Nishimatsu Construction Company, Jardine Matheson and Company, Trafalgar House PLC, Standard Chartered Asia, and C Itoh and Company.

In announcing the winner, the Secretary for Transport, Mr Michael Leung said yesterday that the consortium was selected partly because it proposed a \$4 fare for cars, taxis and motorcycles.

Light goods vehicles and public light buses will pay \$7, while all other vehicles, including buses, will pay \$8.

Mr Leung said the consortium guaranteed that the tolls would be kept stable for the first five years of operation.

"The present arrangements are the result of a keen competition among several intended

ment, its expertise in construction, and the ability to finish the work quickly, Mr Leung said.

The Government is keen to have the tunnel in operation as soon as possible as it is considered a long-term solution to the congestion at the Lion Rock Tunnel.

Construction of Tate's Cairn Tunnel, which links Siu Lek Yuen in Sha Tin and Diamond Hill in Kowloon, will begin in three months. It should be completed in mid-1991, one year earlier than initially envisaged.

The four-kilometre tunnel will be the longest in Hongkong, double the length of the Aberdeen and the Cross Harbour tunnels and three times that of Lion Rock Tunnel.

It will be one of two new transport links at Sha Tin ex-

pected to alleviate congestion. The other is the Route Five trunk road connecting Sha Tin with Tsuen Wan. The new trunk road, which had its final "break-through" for tunnel work yesterday, is expected to ease the traffic at Lion Rock Tunnel by 10 to 15 percent when finished late next year.

For the new Tate's Cairn Tunnel, the Government will spend \$2 billion in building approach roads at both ends.

A total of 18,000 people will have to be resettled as a result of the three-phased clearance plan for the approach roads.

Mr Leung said the Housing and Lands departments are still working on the resettlement plan and the cost of compensation has yet to be worked out.

The twin-tube double-lane

tunnel linking East Kowloon with North-east New Territories will serve as an alternative route to the Lion Rock Tunnel.

At Sha Tin it will link with the Tolo Highway while the Kowloon end is connected to a number of existing road networks.

They include the Kwun Tong bypass, which will provide direct access to the Eastern Harbour Crossing, as well as the Junk Bay Tunnel.

It will also be connected with the future Prince Edward Road interchange which will disperse traffic quickly to other parts of Kowloon.

The maximum capacity of the tunnel is 100,000 cars per day with traffic turnover for the first year estimated at 60,000 cars a day.



■ Mr Leung...keen competition

consortia, and is the best package in the interests of the public," he said.

The other factors the Government considered when awarding the project were the group's financial resources and manage-