

# \$600m for new towns' development

By BARRY CHOI

About \$600 million will be spent on the development of three new towns in the New Territories this year.

Part of this fund is expected to be used on some public housing and engineering works in other market towns as well, to cater for the needs of the rural people.

Yesterday, the Deputy Secretary for the New Territories, Mr Barrie Wiggham, said he was very pleased the new towns have done so well in the allocation of funds from the Government.

"It seems all the estimates prepared by project managers for what they could realistically achieve came out unscathed in the scrutiny before the full estimates were prepared by the Financial Secretary," he said.

He said expenditure on the three new towns, including funds for public housing by both the Housing Authority and the Public Works Department, was \$260 million in 1974-75, rising to \$450 million in 1975-76.

Allocation for the coming financial year was \$600 million, showing that the new towns' programme is gathering momentum, Mr Wiggham said.

He said although there has been some degree of under-expenditure in the new towns in the out-going financial year - a lot of this can be accounted for by the reduction in tender prices - the new towns' programme has been generally on target.

"We certainly expect that in the coming financial year our work will be on schedule," Mr Wiggham said.

The Deputy Secretary said as results of various feasibility studies on engineering work

and the need for public housing in 12 market towns over the whole territory are now coming in, planners hope to start working out real programmes for them.

"Thus expenditure on the three new towns will not be restricted to Tuen Mun, Tsun Wan and Shatin, although that's where the main emphasis is. Some expenditure will also be allocated to the market towns," he said.

Mr Wiggham expected that some public housing would be built in the market towns such as Taipo, Fanling and Sheung Shui.

"We expect to have fairly large public housing estates in some of these market towns, perhaps similar to those in the three new towns. But in the more rural areas such as Mui Wo and Sai Kung, the Housing Department is designing smaller, low-rise estates in keeping with the rural environment," he said.

The Deputy Secretary said that already the three new towns are beginning to emerge with their own identity. Tsun Wan has already half a million people to Kwai Chung and Tsing Yi.

He said the problem in Tsun Wan is to make up the imbalance in the provision of community facilities.

"This is very important in Tsun Wan because we must admit that the way the township has been developed so far, Tsun Wan has very little in the way of 'soul.' We've got to put back in there facilities which are lacking," he said.

He said what is happening in terms of management for Tsun Wan will become an example for the two other new towns.

As a first step in involving the people there to take part in

community affairs, a Recreation and Amenities Committee has been formed. This comprises six Government officials and 13 local representatives from the rural committees, Mutual Aid Committees, sports associations and students.

"We are trying to develop a sense of community involvement and we hope this will set the pattern for the two other new towns," Mr Wiggham said.

He said because the Government's emphasis on the concept of balanced development of the new towns into self-contained townships, industry is to play an important part, especially in Tuen Mun.

Over the past few months, he said work has been started on a number of industrial sites in Tuen Mun. This year almost \$100 million is earmarked for the Tuen Mun Road project to link the township with Tsun Wan.

Progress on Shatin has been satisfactory also, he said, and people can expect to see a lot happening soon as several new contracts will be let.

Towards the end of the year, the population of Shatin will be doubled from its present 20,000 with the occupation of the Lek Yuen estate, the first public housing estate for Shatin.

The extent of changes that will take place in Shatin over the next year or so, he said, will be seen in the current public exhibition on the township at the commercial complex of the Lek Yuen estate.

Mr Wiggham said the problem with the development of Shatin and Tuen Mun is one of development and planning as the populations there are just beginning to build up, unlike Tsun Wan.