

\$200m facelift for border shantytown

By JIMMY LEUNG

THE border village of Shataukok, known as the Western world's window on China, will soon boast more than the renowned Chung Ying (China-England) Street when it receives a \$200 million facelift from the Hong-kong Housing Society.

Until recently, the Chinese sector of the village was regarded as the upmarket part of town, while the Hong-kong side remained a shantytown much in need of development.

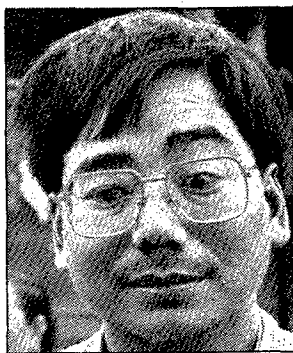
According to project architect Mr Jim Jessamine, in 1985 the non-profit housing organisation carried out a nine-month development study of the area, which will house 6,000 people by 2001.

"The study concluded that it was more cost-effective to move squatters from Yim Liu Ha and Tsoi Yuen Kok areas straight into rural public housing rather than accommodating them in temporary housing and waiting for new housing to be completed," Mr Jessamine said.

To preserve the village lifestyle as much as possible, Mr Jessamine said, the housing was designed to form clusters within the estate to enable tenants to share the open space.

"It allows mothers to keep an eye on children playing in the garden while they are working in the kitchen," he said.

Each block has four flat



Mr So Tin

sizes, ranging from 9.2 square metres to 46 sq mt of habitable area for families ranging from two to 10 persons.

The two-person flats are generally on the ground floor because, Mr Jessamine said, old age pensioners and villagers should not have to climb five floors to their homes.

The first phase of the project is expected to be completed next month and will allow 1,300 former squatters to move in. Some of them have been living in ramshackle squatter structures for generations.

Some Yim Liu Ha squatters have expressed concern that the flats might not be big enough for them. Nonetheless, they all agree that the shantytown would benefit from the provision of recreational and amenity facilities.

Mr So Tin, 38, whose family has been living in Yim Liu Ha for more than 30 years, said he wanted to apply for an extra flat because the one allocated to



Mr So Fu

him was inadequate for six people.

Student Mr Lee Koonwah, 20, said his family of eight would be occupying a smaller living area when they moved into rural public housing next year.

"I'll be sad to leave our two-storey squatter hut because every piece of wood and tin was put up by us more than 10 years ago," he said.

Mr So Fu stopped being a fisherman 10 years ago due to massive land development which brought shore pollution. He is now a construction site labourer.

"Moving into public housing means I need to spend about \$1,000 a month, including \$600 in rent.

"I hope the town can be opened up, allowing investors to come and set up factories to provide employment," Mr So said.

The whole development area had been raised by one metre to avoid flooding, which has occurred every 50 years.