

02 FEB 1997

Land-DAP

CALL TO INCLUDE PRINCIPLES OF EQUITY AND TRANSPARENCY TO AMENDMENT BILL

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 2 (Bernama) -- The amendment bill to the Land Acquisition Act 1960 to be tabled in Parliament next month should include principles of equity and transparency so as to protect the rights of landowners whose land are involved in the acquisition exercise by the government.

DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang, who made the proposal today, said the principles, among others, should give the expansion of the present limited right of hearing of aggrieved landowners on the question of compensation to the right to pre-acquisition hearing to question the acquisition of their land and its purpose.

He said landowners should be given the right to object to any acquisition and to compel the government to prove that the acquisition was in fact for the betterment of the public in general.

He was responding to an announcement by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on the amendment bill to be presented to parliament next month to streamline matters relating to the assessing of land acquired for public and commercial development to ensure a fair value for the property and uniformity in land valuation.

Anwar said the amendment bill would clarify the definition of acquisition for public and commercial purposes to ensure the process is more transparent and fairer to the landowners.

Lim also said there should be a clear-cut provision making it illegal for any subsequent disposal of the acquired land if it did not comply with the original purpose of the acquisition.

This is to prevent abuses by state government which had acquired land from the people under the pretext of developing it but handed the land over to private developers instead, he said.

Lim said an amendment to provide that land acquired for a specific purpose, whether public or commercial, must revert back to the original landowner if the land is not developed for such a specific purpose within a given time-frame.

On Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed's statement on an electronic government, Lim proposed that a white paper on the matter be presented to Parliament next month on its plan for the immediate introduction of the electronic government as well as annual on-line government expansion plans until the year 2000.

He said all ministers should be given two weeks to present a list of online government services they could introduce within this year and another two weeks to finalise online government expansion plans which they could introduce every year until 2000.

Lim said the government online White paper should incorporate plans by the various state governments and local authorities to introduce electronic public services at their respective levels.

He added that the government does not lack the technology to immediately introduce online services as it has spent billions of ringgit for its computerisation programmes since the 1960s. -- BERNAMA

ARA RM