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Rent Act hot topic in Penang

PENANG, Sun. - With the general election approaching fast, issues over the Control of Rent (Repeal) Act 1997 appear to be a hot campaign topic among three major Chinese-based political parties in Penang.

Gerakan, MCA and the Opposition DAP believe it is a subject that matters in the Chinese-dominated Georgetown - the country's biggest concentration of pre-war houses.

The Gerakan-led State Government wants a three-year reprieve while the MCA wants a four-year extension of the Act, due to expire on Dec 31 1999.

But the DAP, which hopes to regain lost ground in Penang politics after the 1995 general election debacle, is pressing for a five-year extension till 2005.

At a public meeting on the Act at the Chinese Town Hall last night, DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang said the State Government should convene an emergency State Legislative Assembly meeting to resolve the "transition period" problem once for all.

About 1,000 affected residents attended the meeting organised by the Rent Control Act Residents Action Committee chaired by trader Ang Joo Seng.

The residents signed a petition initiated by the committee urging the Federal Government to extend the transition period to January 1 2005.

It will be submitted to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad by this month.

The State has 12,577 pre-war houses occupied by 16,166 families totalling 60,273 people, including 10,350 houses and 8,284 families in Northeast district.

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