

'I can count better than them'

CM raps Land Office staff

■ **By Sumitha Martin**

news@nst.com.my

MALACCA, Mon. — Land Office staff who can't count? Apparently so.

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam put the blame for the recent quit rent fiasco squarely on the poor maths skills of some Land Office personnel.

Over the past two weeks, ratepayers have been up in arms about the high hike in rates. The increase was as much as 1,800 per cent on some properties.

Ali gave an assurance that quit rents for rural and town categories would be raised only by 20 per cent.

He said this at a Press conference after Land Office offi-

cers had briefed the state executive council on the matter.

Ali chided two Land Office staffers present when they could not make on-the-spot computations in response to queries from reporters.

"They don't know. I can count better than them," he said, shaking his head in disappointment. Although there was a standard 20 per cent increase, ratepayers in areas reclassified from "rural" to "town" will pay more.

A hue and cry was raised by ratepayers after they were issued notices in December of quit rent increases.

It was reported yesterday that parliamentary opposition leader Lim Kit Siang would have had to fork out RM540 compared with RM28 for his

house in Ujong Pasir.

Ali said according to the correct computations, Lim would have to pay RM62, an increase of below 150 per cent, because Ujong Pasir had been re-categorised from "rural" to "town".

Lim's daughter-in-law and Kota Laksamana assemblyman Betty Chew, who lives in Lim's house with her husband DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng, was among the ratepayers who protested against the increase.

Ali said quit rent rates were reviewed every 10 years and the last increase was in 1996.

He advised ratepayers to wait for the amended quit rent notices to be issued or to go to the Land Office and pay the revised rates.