

Govt may amend land law

PM: Move to protect govt assets after Duta enclave ruling

THERE are plans to amend the Land Acquisition Act to protect government assets and public interest following a land issue involving the Duta enclave, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"The law must be tightened. Public interest cannot be compromised. If we compromise on this matter, then all land (acquisitions), particularly Malay-owned land in urban areas, will be reopened for scrutiny," he said.

A 12-page judgment released on Oct 21 by the High Court in Kuala Lumpur ruled that the disputed 106.542ha of land in Mukim Batu, known as the Duta enclave, should be returned to

Semantan Estate Sdn Bhd.

This means that the government's 1956 acquisition of the land was invalid.

In 2003, Semantan Estate filed a lawsuit against the government, citing encroachment due to illegal acquisition of the land.

The land, located in the prime area of Jalan Duta, is the site of government buildings including the National Hockey Stadium, the Malaysian Institute of Integrity, the National Archives, the Kuala Lumpur Syariah Court, the Inland Revenue Board building and the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Academy.

According to a Bernama report last week, the Court of Appeal will

hear the government's appeal on Nov 7.

Yesterday, Datuk Seri Takiyudin Hassan (PN-Kota Baru) asked in the Dewan Rakyat about the government's solution to the issue.

Anwar said the draft proposal to amend the Act was being prepared by the Attorney General's Chambers before being presented to the Cabinet to be finalised.

He said the amendment could not go against Article 13 of the Federal Constitution concerning rights to property.

The government, he said, would continue with fair compensation over the acquisition of any land.

He said the compensation for the Duta enclave would be worth

more than what the government paid in 1956, which was RM1.4mil, adding that it was now worth about RM6bil.

"We will continue with negotiations, and clarify to Semantan Estate that they will receive compensation exceeding RM1.4mil, but this cannot be considered a simple matter.

"This is not only a technical issue but also a matter of national development principles and public interest," he added.