Plan to amend land use policy every five years to be added to bill

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Land ownership and use can be contentious issues in Myanmar. Police stand guard near a confrontation between homeless people and the police in Hlaing Thar Yar on the outskirts of Yangon February 1, 2013, where about 300 homeless people tried to build huts illegally on municipal land. Photo: Nyein Chan Naing/EPA

A provision allowing a change to the land use policy every five years has been put in the draft of the National Land Bill, according to U Shwe Thein, a consultant with the Land Use Management Committee.

U Shwe Thein said, “Unlike a ‘crony-law’, a policy cannot be used for many years [without amendment]. In the bill, we systematically put in a provision to change the policy every five years, and for the change to the policy to be based on research findings.”

The clauses setting the standards and procedures to protect the land rights of the people, including the national ethnic people, will be contained in the land use policy, according to U Shwe Thein.

Land ownership and land use continue to be contentious issues in Myanmar, with land grabs often sparking protest.
Regional MP U Kyaw said, “If a land use policy should be amended every five years in the people’s interest, it must be amended. The policy needs to bring benefit to the citizens. Therefore the policy must be amended.”

A draft of the land use policy will be completed by late November, and will be subject to suggestions from local and foreign experts, stakeholders, civic organizations and the citizens.

It will be published online in the Myanmar and English languages in November so that the general public can read it and make suggestions, U Shwe Thein said.

The National Land Bill will be prepared by December and will then be presented to parliament.

“After enforcing the land use policy, land cannot be carelessly used without compiling a list of land resources. And the authorities will not be able to invite investors just to allocate the land to them thoughtlessly,” said U Shwe Thein.