

Talks on transitional justice for Aborigines put on hold

Written by Taipei Times

Saturday, 16 December 2017 06:15 -

To promote transitional justice for Aborigines, the government should clearly define the scope of Aboriginal territories, lawmakers agreed unanimously at a legislative session.

The Legislative Yuan on Tuesday last week passed the Act on Promoting Transitional Justice (促進轉型正義法), which is aimed at redressing injustices perpetrated by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) administration during the authoritarian era between Aug. 15, 1945, when the Japanese government surrendered in World War II, and Nov. 6, 1992, when the Period of National Mobilization Against the Communist Rebellion ended in Kinmen and Lienchiang counties.

In a Judiciary and Organic Laws and Statutes Committee meeting on Monday, lawmakers discussed five proposed draft bills on promoting transitional justice for Aborigines.

The bill should also deal with the injustices done to Aborigines and “comfort women” during the Japanese colonial era, Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Legislator Yosi Takun said, adding that his suggestion to have those issues included in the Act on Promoting Transitional Justice had been rejected.

In his draft bill, Yosi Takun defines Aboriginal territories in an attempt to help Aborigines reclaim property seized by the government since the Japanese colonial era.

In response, Council of Indigenous Peoples Minister Icyang Parod said the definitions would be tackled in a draft Aboriginal land and sea bill, which is being prepared by the council.

However, the minister’s remarks sparked criticism.

The minister’s view is totally unacceptable because the rights of Aborigines can never be severed from their lands, Non-Partisan Solidarity Union Legislator May Chin (馬英九) said.

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Legalizing Aborigines' rights to reclaim their property certainly relates to historical justice, especially when there is a subcommittee on land matters under the Presidential Office's Indigenous Historical Justice and Transitional Justice Committee, New Power Party Legislator Kawlo Iyun Pacidal said.

On the time frame for dealing with the historical injustices done to Aborigines, lawmakers differed.

Committee convener KMT Legislator Alicia Wang (王淑惠) suggested that the time frame start in 1895 when the Qing Empire ceded the sovereignty of Taiwan to Japan in the Treaty of Shimonoseki.

However, the investigation of historical truths should not have a time limit, she added.

After no consensus about a time frame was reached at the meeting, the subject was again picked up on Wednesday when Democratic Progressive Party Legislator Tuan Yi-kang (團逸康) tendered a motion that the committee should put off the discussion until the Executive Yuan presents its draft bill on promoting transitional justice for Aborigines in six months.

The Executive Yuan's draft bill could be examined together with the five draft bills proposed by lawmakers at that time, Tuan said.

After Tuan's motion was passed, Icyang promised that the council would propose a draft bill within six months.

Additional reporting by Cheng Hung-ta

Source: [Taipei Times - 2017/12/16](#)