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OUR VIEWPOINT LAND: SLOW PROGRESS MAY BE GOOD

IT is never quite certain whether the ANC will blow hot or cold on the question of land expropriation without compensation. President Cyril Ramaphosa generally tries to contain the alarmism that swirls around the issue, usually without success as Afriforum stokes the flames on right and the EFF on the fascist front. This week he will be called on to provide twitchy investors with some assurances at the SA Investment Conference in Sandton.

Deputy Public Works Minister Jeremy Cronin has in the meantime stepped in to allay panic among property owners, farmers and investors by saying that the Expropriation Bill, without which no progress on the matter can be made, is unlikely to be adopted before next year's elections.

Cronin, whose department is responsible for authoring an addition to the bill, pointed out that in spite of government working frantically on the matter, time was against them.

"We want to publish for public comment before the end of the year. Obviously, it will have to go through cabinet. Obviously, there is no time in this current Parliament for it to be submitted to Parliament and for Parliament to process it," Cronin said.

Cronin emphasised that there would be no blanket expropriation without compensation and that, even where conditions were met, expropriation without compensation would not be a default.

It is likely that the EFF will use this delay to argue that the government is not serious about going ahead with expropriation without compensation, which will no doubt elicit some renewed bravado from those in the ANC whose rhetoric has more in common with the EFF than with their own party.

But the delay will be welcomed by everyone who wants to see the implementation take place under the calmer conditions that will exist after the elections, rather than in the heat of electioneering.