Reforming Some of Japan's Fundamental Civil Laws Toward Solving the Issue of Unclaimed Land

Ministry of Justice, Civil Affairs [Outline of the Act Partially Amending the Civil Code and Other Acts, and of the Act on Vesting Inherited Land in the National Treasury] Bureau, December, 2021

The problem of unclaimed land* occurs mainly as a result of inheritance registrations not being made.

* Unclaimed land means:

- (1) Land whose owner cannot be immediately identified from the real property register
- (2) Land whose owner cannot be contacted because their whereabouts are unknown

Background

Issue

- O Inheritance registration is not compulsory, and there are few disadvantages to heirs if they leave it uncompleted.
- As people move to urban areas and the population progressively decreases and ages, people's awareness that they are land owners and land use needs are decreasing, mainly in rural areas.
- If property keeps being inherited without being included when estates are divided, the number of co-owners grows exponentially.

Problems

- Searching for owners requires a great deal of time and expense (things like collecting family registers and resident records and making site visits are significant burdens).
- If the whereabouts of the owner are unknown, land is often left unmanaged and abandoned.
- If there are numerous co-owners or if some of their whereabouts are unknown, it is difficult to make the joint decisions needed for managing and using the land.
- \Rightarrow This causes public works and restoration and reconstruction projects not to proceed smoothly, private transactions to be blocked, and other hindrances to the use of the land.
- \Rightarrow Land comes to be mismanaged, and this negatively affects the neighborhood.



The increasing number of deaths associated with a progressively aging population will likely cause the situation to deteriorate.

Solving the problem of unclaimed land is an urgent issue.

An example of land that has become difficult to

use as an open space (Exhibit: Ministry of Land,

Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism)

Government Policy

- O Basic Policy on the Promotion of Measures for Owner-Unknown Land (Ministerial Group Decision) "Going forward, we will move ahead with an even more concrete consideration of important issues such as reforming some of Japan's fundamental civil laws, and by taking actions such as submitting the necessary bills as quickly as possible within the current fiscal year (by March of 2021), we will steadily advance countermeasures under established timelines."
- Basic Policy on Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform 2020 "We will advance countermeasures for unclaimed land, based on things such as the Basic Policy on the Promotion of Measures for Owner-Unknown Land."



Outlines of Both Acts

- The Act Partially Amending the Civil Code and Other Acts (Partial Civil Code Amendment Act)
- The Act on the Vesting of Land Ownership Acquired Through Inheritance in the National Treasury (Act on Vesting Inherited Land in the National Treasury)

Through a dual-sided approach that **prevents** the problem of unclaimed land from occurring and **facilitates the use** of existing unclaimed land, these Acts comprehensively reform some of Japan's fundamental civil laws.

- 1 The real property registration system is revised so that the relevant land registrations will be made.
- Under the revised system, applying for inheritance and change-of-address registrations is compulsory.
- The new system simplifies and rationalizes the procedures for inheritance and change-of-address registrations.

Prevention

2 A system is created for landowners to transfer inherited land to the National Treasury (the System of Vesting Inherited Land in the National Treasury).

 A system is created that allows landowners who have acquired land through inheritance or bequest to vest the land in the National Treasury with the approval of the Minister of Justice.

Prevention

- 3 Civil Code rules related to land use are revised.
- A specialized property administration system for managing unclaimed land is created.
- The revision enables smooth utilization of jointly owned land if some of the coowners are unidentified or unreachable.
- The revision introduces new rules for long-overdue estate divisions.

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Facilitation of Land Use
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Effective Date

13 Partial Civil Code Amendment Act: in principle, the effective date is the day established by Cabinet Order that falls within 2 years after the April 28th, 2021, promulgation date. (Cabinet Order has established April 1st, 2023, as the effective date.)

* The effective date for the part of the amendments covered under section above that are for making inheritance registration mandatory is the day established by Cabinet Order that falls within 3 years after the date of promulgation (Cabinet Order has established April 1st, 2024, as the effective date for this); the effective date for the part of the amendments covered under that section that are for making change-of-address registrations mandatory is the day established by Cabinet Order that falls within 5 years after the date of promulgation (this Cabinet Order has not yet been enacted).

Act on Vesting Inherited Land in the National Treasury: the effective date is the day established by Cabinet Order that falls within 2 years after the April 28th, 2021, promulgation date. (Cabinet Order has established April 27th, 2023, as the effective date.)

[Progress of consideration]

February 2019		December	January – March 2020	February 2021	March	April
Consultation with the Legislative Council	Beginning of study and deliberations in the Civil Code and Real Property Registration Act Subcommittee	Compilation of interim draft proposal	Number of public comments submitted: 249 (Individuals: 143, Organizations: 106)	Legislative Council finalizes outline	Bill submitted	Enactment and Promulgation

Measures to Prevent the Problem of Unclaimed Land from Occurring

Amendment of the Real Property Registration Act

 (Background) The registered owner of land is sometimes different from the actual owner. It has been pointed out that in such cases: searching for the owner costs time and money, and things like public-use land purchases are obstructed because the heirs of the registered owner are unknown. land for commercial development can be selected in a smooth manner even if the only thing known about the registered owner is whether or not they have passed away. 							
 It will become mandatory for register their inherit It will be made mandatory for heirs who have acceregister their inheritance within 3 years after lear fine can be imposed for failure to apply without a l The following types of measures for concurrent at to ensure the viability of the obligation for he inheritance. 	 ② Public notice will be given of facts such as the death of the registered owner. ○ The registrar will acquire information on deaths and other events from other public institutions (from places such as the Basic Resident Registration Network System), and will record this information on the relevant registration (as a code) on the registrar's own authority. ⇒ This will make it possible to use real property registrations to confirm whether the registered owner has died. 						
Reduction of the procedural burdens of registering (such as collection of documents)	Reduction of the burden of costs in the registration process	Prevention of Unintended Non-Registration	Coordination with Local Governments				
 Establishment of a new "declaration- by-the-heir" registration An heir will be able to make a filing indicating that they are the legal heir of the registered owner. This will be one way for the heir to perform their duty to apply to register a transfer of title due to inheritance. (Heirs will be able to file individually. Accompanying documentation will be reduced, and the registration and license tax will not be imposed.) ⇒ This will make it easy for an heir to perform their duty to apply to register their inheritance. X The registrar will register the filer's name and address on the registrar's own authority (as an informational registration showing no registered ownership interest). 	Plans to request things such as the introduction of measures to reduce the burden of the registration and license tax (Reference) In the 2022 Tax System Revision Outline, it was decided: (1) to extend and expand tax exemptions for the registration of transfers of title due to inheritance, and (2) to introduce a tax exemption for registrations made on the registrar's own authority (such as declaration-by-the-heir registrations and change-of-name or change-of- address registrations), a category newly created based on the amended Real Property Registration Act.	 Establishment of a system for certifying the registered real property a person owns Allows for the issuance of a certificate listing the real property a specified person owns ⇒ This will make it easy to see which pieces of real property need to have a registration made showing a transfer of title due to inheritance. *This can also be used as a way for people to verify what real property they own, in general. 	Requests for local governments to make known or raise awareness of the need to register a transfer of title due to inheritance among people filing death registrations.				

Amendment of the Real Property Registration Act

Dealing with the Non-Registration of Changes of Address

[Current Situation]

- Currently, it is not mandatory for a real property owner to register a change of address.
- For both natural persons and corporations, registering every time they change names or addresses or relocate their main stores is perceived to be a burden, and there is a tendency to neglect it.
- * There are also survey results that show this to be the primary cause for the existence of unclaimed land in urban areas.

Structure of the New Method

It will be made mandatory for the registered owner of real property to apply for a change of address registration within 2 years from the date of the change of name or address (A civil fine can be imposed for failure to apply without an appropriate reason).

O New measures will be introduced through which the registrar, on their own authority, can make a change of address registration based on information acquired from other public institutions.

 \Rightarrow These measures will allow a change of name or address that accompanies something such as moving houses or relocation of main stores to be reflected in a registration through a simple procedure.

For Natural Persons

- When applying for a real property registration, a natural person provides "searchable information" such as their date of birth, in addition to a name and address.
- Provide the registrar can make inquiries in the Basic Resident Registration Network System using a person's searchable information and other data, and can acquire the information on changes in things such as the name and address of the registered owner.
- Sased on the information acquired, the registrar confirms the change in the address or other information with the registered owner, and then registers the change (registration and license tax will not be imposed).



For Corporations

- A corporation adds its corporate registration number to the registered information for a piece of real property of which it is the registered owner.
- **2** The Commercial and Corporation Registration System notifies the Real Property Registration System with information on corporations that have changed their names and addresses.
- **③** Based on the information acquired, the registrar registers the changes (registration and license tax will not be imposed).



<u>Measures to Prevent the Problem of Unclaimed Land from Occurring</u>

Creation of a system to vest land acquired by inheritance or through a bequest to an heir in the National Treasury					
 Background A decrease in land use needs and other such circumstances are causing an increase in the number of people who have inherited land but wish to relinquish it. Increasingly, people are feeling the burden of unwittingly acquiring land when they come into an inheritance, and this tends to cause mismanagement. 					
 This Act creates a system that allows land that has been acquired by inheritance or through a bequest to an heir to be relinquished and vested in the National Treasury. However, in light of the risk that this could allow heirs to abdicate their responsibilities and pass off the costs of management to the state or neglect to manage their land, certain requirements have been established (the details will be prescribed by Cabinet Order and Ministerial Ordinance) and requirements assessments will be implemented by the Minister of Justice. ⇒ Looking toward the future, this system will make it possible to prevent land from coming to be unclaimed or mismanaged. Requirements The land in question must not constitute land such as that described below whose regular management or disposition would require excessive cost or labor: (1) land with a building on it, or with a structure or other object on it that hinders its regular management or disposition; (2) land with polluted soil or with buried objects on it; (3) land on which there is a cliff; (4) land involved in a dispute; (5) land subject to a security right or a right to use or receive a profit from it; or (6) a thoroughfare or other such land that is used by other people. In addition to the assessment fee, a fee will be collected in an amount equivalent to 10 years' worth of land management costs, calculated in consideration of the standard management costs for that type of land (measures are to be taken based on the land category, size, and the actual circumstances of things such as the surrounding environment; the details will be prescribed by Cabinet Order). (Reference) Currently, 10 years' worth of standard management costs for public land amounts to 200,000 yen for a field whose management can be largely left to nature and					
 800,000 yen for 200m of urban residential land. Illustration of the procedure Application for Approval Applicants Requirements Assessment and Approval by the Ministry of Justice (Legal Affairs Bureau) The Bureau has the authority to conduct on-site investigations. The Bureau has the authority to conduct on-site investigations such as the departments and agencies in charge of managing national government assets. During this process, the Bureau shares the information that an approval application has been received with the national and approval application has been received with the national and approval applications and used effectively in the region. 					

Measures to Help Facilitate the Use of Unclaimed Land

Amendment of the Civil Code



所有者不明土地の解消に向けた民事基本法制の見直し 法務省民事局 令和3年12月 【民法等一部改正法・相続土地国庫帰属法の概要】 課題 相続登記がされないこと等により、所有者不明土地(※)が発生 所有者不明土地の割合 所有者不明十地とは・・・ \times 22 % (H29国交省調查) ①不動産登記簿により所有者が直ちに判明しない十地 原因 住所変更登記 相続登記の未了 ②所有者が判明しても、その所在が不明で連絡が付かない土地 **66**% の未了 34% 背景 相続登記の申請は義務ではなく、申請しなくても不利益を被ることは少ない 都市部への人口移動や人口減少・高齢化の進展等により、地方を中心に、土地の所有意識が希薄化・土地を利用したいというニーズも低下 遺産分割をしないまま相続が繰り返されると、十地共有者がねずみ算式に増加 問題点 ○ 所有者の探索に多大な時間と費用が必要(戸籍・住民票の収集、現地訪問等の負担が大きい) 所有者の所在等が不明な場合には、十地が管理されず放置されることが多い 広場等としての利用が 困難となっている例 (出典:国交省) 共有者が多数の場合や一部所在不明の場合、十地の管理・利用のために必要な合意形成が困難 ⇒ 公共事業や復旧・復興事業が円滑に進まず、民間取引が阻害されるなど、土地の利活用を阻害 土地が管理不全化し、隣接する土地への悪影響が発生 など \Rightarrow 所有者不明土地問題の 高齢化の進展による死亡者数の増加等により、今後ますます深刻化するおそれ 解決は、喫緊の課題

政府方針

- 〇 所有者不明土地等対策の推進に関する基本方針(関係閣僚会議決定) 「民事基本法制の見直し等の重要課題については、今後、さらに具体的な検討を進め、今年度(令和2年度)中できるだけ速やか に必要となる法案を提出するなど、期限を区切って着実に対策を推進する。」
- 〇 骨太の方針2020「所有者不明土地等について、基本方針等に基づき対策を推進する。」

両法律の概要

■ 民法等の一部を改正する法律(民法等一部改正法) ■相続等により取得した土地所有権の国庫への帰属に関する法律(相続十地国庫帰属法) 所有者不明十地の発生予防と、既に発生している所有者不明十地の利用の円滑化の両面から、 総合的に民事基本法制を見直し 3 2 1 登記がされるようにする 土地を手放すための制度 十地利用に関連する民法の ための不動産登記制度の見直し (相続土地国庫帰属制度)の創設 規律の見直し 所有者不明土地管理制度等の創設 相続登記・住所変更登記の 相続等により十地の所有権を取得 共有者が不明な場合の共有地の利 申請義務化 した者が、法務大臣の承認を受けて 用の円滑化 その土地の所有権を国庫に帰属させ 相続登記・住所変更登記の ることができる制度を創設 長期間経過後の遺産分割の見直し 手続の簡素化・合理化 など など 発生予防 土地利用の円滑化 発生予防

施行日等

13 民法等一部改正法:原則として公布(R3.4.28)後2年以内の政令で定める日(R5.4.1) *1のうち、相続登記義務化関係の改正については公布後3年以内の政令で定める日(R6.4.1)、 住所変更登記義務化関係の改正については公布後5年以内の政令で定める日(政令は未制定)

2 相続土地国庫帰属法:公布(R3.4.28)後2年以内の政令で定める日(R5.4.27)

【検討の経過】									
2019年2月	〉12月	〉2020年1月~3月	>2021年2月	〉3月	〉4月				
法制審議会 民法・不動産登記法部会 へ諮問 における調査審議開始	中間試案 取りまとめ	パブリック・コメント 提出意見数 249件 (個人 143件、団体 106件)	法制審議会 要綱決定	法案提出	成立・公布				

<u>所有者不明土地の発生を予防する方策</u>

不動産登記法の改正



所有者不明土地の発生を予防する方策

不動産登記法の改正

住所変更未登記への対応

【現状】

- ▶ 現在は、住所変更登記は義務ではない。
- ▶ 自然人・法人を問わず、転居・本店移 転等のたびに登記するのには負担を感じ、 放置されがちである。
- ※ 都市部では所有者不明土地の主な原因との 調査結果もある。

- 所有権の登記名義人に対し、住所等の変更日から2年以内に その変更登記の申請をすることを義務付ける(正当な理由のない 申請漏れには過料の罰則あり)。
- 他の公的機関から取得した情報に基づき、登記官が職権的に変 更登記をする新たな方策も導入する。
 - ⇒ 転居や本店移転等に伴う住所等の変更が簡便な手続で登記 に反映される。

新たな方策の仕組み

自然人の場合

- ① 登記申請の際には、氏名・住所のほか、生年月日等の「検索用情報」の申出を行う。
- ② 登記官が、検索用情報等を用いて住民基本台帳ネットワークシステムに対して照会し、 所有権の登記名義人の氏名・住所等の異動情報を取得する。



3 登記官が、取得した情報に基づき、登記名義人に住所等の変更の登記をすることについて確認をとった上で、変更の登記をする(非課税)。

法人の場合

- 1 法人が所有権の登記名義人となっている不動産について、会社法人等番号を登記事項 に追加する。
- ② 商業・法人登記システムから不動産登記システムに対し、名称や住所を変更した法人の 情報を通知する。
- ③ 取得した情報に基づき、登記官が変更の登記をする(非課税)。



<u>所有者不明土地の発生を予防する方策</u>

相続土地国庫帰属法



所有者不明土地の利用の円滑化を図る方策

民法の改正

