

People have a say, too

> Govt can't ignore importance of pre-war buildings, says historian

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HISTORIAN Prof Emeritus Tan Sri Khoo Kay Kim says the government should not insist on building MRT (My Rapid Transit) stations along Jalan Sultan as doing so would destroy century-old heritage buildings that bore witness to the development of Kuala Lumpur.

He said the government has ignored the importance of protecting heritage buildings and if the pre-war buildings in Jalan Sultan are forced to make way for the MRT project, Kuala Lumpur will become a city without heritage buildings.

"In England, all centuries-old buildings are preserved. Malaysia is obviously not being careful enough in protecting heritage buildings," Khoo was quoted by *China Press* as saying.

He was asked by the daily to comment on efforts by the public to save Jalan Sultan's heritage buildings. "In a democratic country, the public have the right to ask the government to protect heritage buildings.

"If the owners do not want to move out of their buildings in order to protect their properties which have historical

significance, the government should not ask them to give way," he said.

Khoo said that in a democratic society, the development of a city is not decided solely by the government, as the people also have the right to part-take in decision-making.

"Not everything regarding the development of a city is decided by the government, the people also have a say.

"What we want is a government which is for the people, and heeds the voices of the people.

"If the owners decide to keep their (heritage) buildings, you (the government) have to respect their wishes, this is called democracy."

He felt that if the government does not respect the people's wishes and insists on going ahead with the MRT project in Jalan Sultan, the people can exercise their voting right to speak their minds during elections.

"The general election is coming. If the government does not listen to the people, we will tell the government how we feel at the ballot box."

He said politicians can help resolve problems on the issue of saving Jalan Sultan.