

Owners want meeting with MRT Corp

DEADLINE NEARS: Clearer terms of mutual agreement sought before signing

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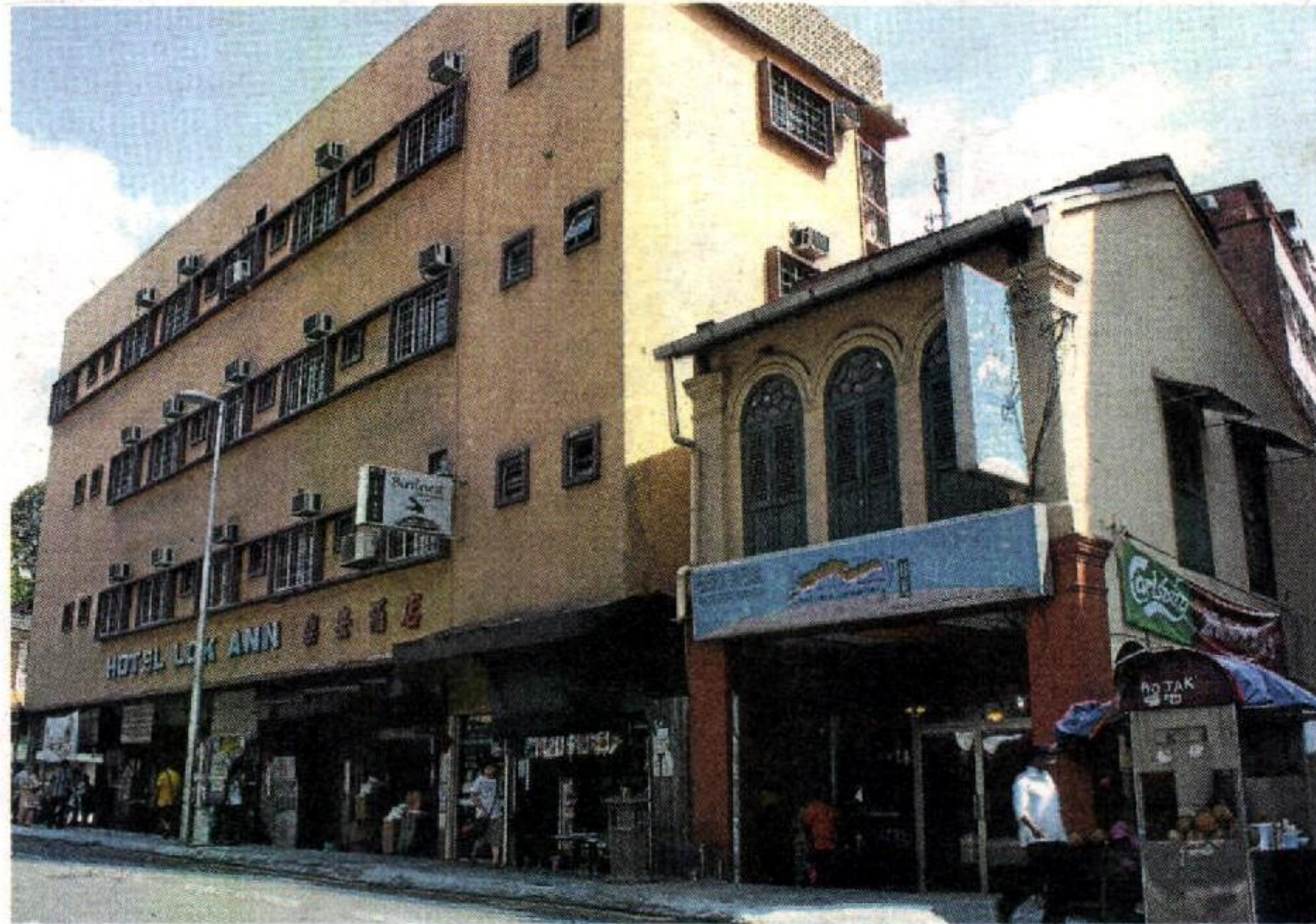
PROPERTY owners in Jalan Sultan are still hoping to discuss the terms of the mutual agreement for the Sungai Buloh-Kajang My Rapid Transit (MRT) project with MRT Corp before Wednesday — the deadline for them to sign the agreement or face compulsory land acquisition.

Lok Ann Hotel owner Judy Tan said she wants MRT Corp, which is responsible for the project, to provide a letter of guarantee that their properties would be intact after the tunnelling work is completed in six months.

"The terms and conditions currently in the mutual agreement are vague," she said.

Tan said the property owners were aware that they would be compensated and that the structure reinforced during the tunnelling work.

"Our concern, however, is on the safety of the buildings after the work is completed. How do we know that after six months, our buildings will be safe for occupancy unless they come out with a guarantee letter?"



Buildings in Jalan Sultan affected by the MRT project would see their **structure reinforced** before the tunnelling work starts. Pic by Adib Rawi

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Safety assurance of buildings sought

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"We don't want to be told six months later that the building is full of defects and that it would have to be torn down for safety reasons," she said, adding that she would seek a meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak on the matter.

Tan said she was not against development but hoped to find a better solution to the issue.

Yan Keng Benevolent Drama Association representative Ng Siek Weng shared the same sentiment.

"We are concerned about the safety of the building after the project is completed. We want some form of assurance from MRT Corp on top of the mutual agreement that it had proposed.

"We hope to have a meeting to discuss the terms of the mutual agreement before the offer expires on Wednesday."

He added that they were not against the MRT project, but didn't want the safety of the buildings to be compromised.

Last Friday, MRT Corp chief executive officer Datuk Azhar Abdul Hamid had said the property owners had until the end of the month to decide on the mutual agreement.

Under the agreement mooted by MRT Corp, the occupants will have to relocate for a maximum of six months and their land titles would be endorsed with a statement recognising the existence of the tunnel beneath it.

Azhar had said the corporation had no intention of acquiring or demolishing the shop lots on Jalan Sultan but it was running out of time for negotiations as the project had to be completed by July 2017.

"The land acquisition process was initiated before MRT Corp was established. We have spoken to the

authorities and the process is on hold for the time being.

"If the property owners sign the mutual agreement, then we can ask the authorities to stop the land acquisition," he had said.

Azhar had also said the tunnel could be completed without any adverse impact on the property.

He had said the six-month period was needed for the contractor to carry out a comprehensive check on the structure of the buildings there.

"The tunnelling work only takes three weeks, but we want to do a complete check on the buildings for health and safety reasons," he had said.

Azhar had also said that all defects would be checked and noted before the construction begins.



"We will rectify all defects and ensure the buildings are safe for occupancy."

Datuk Azhar Abdul Hamid
MRT Corp chief executive officer

"The contractors will first strengthen and support the buildings to prevent any impact from the tunnelling work. After the construction is completed, we will check the buildings again for defects.

"We will rectify all defects and ensure the buildings are safe for occupancy. Once everything is completed, the property owners can move back in and resume their businesses as usual."

Azhar had said the property owners would be compensated for the duration of the tunnelling project.

"MRT Corp will calculate the property owners' business income and ensure that they get a fair compensation for the duration of the project," he said.

He had stressed that MRT Corp was on a tight schedule and it would have to meet the deadline by solving all issues with the property owners.

"The MRT line has to be completed by 2017. Without this line, we cannot resolve the problems surrounding

the public transport infrastructure in the Klang Valley," he said.

Azhar had also said MRT Corp fully supported the preservation of the heritage buildings on Jalan Sultan.

"If the owners want, we can pool our resources together and help make Jalan Sultan a heritage site," he said.

Meanwhile, property owners in Jalan Bukit Bintang have until April to sign their mutual agreement.

Twenty-one property owners in Jalan Inai, who were affected by the MRT project, had already signed the mutual agreement last December.

The MRT project line will start from Sungai Buloh, cutting through the Kuala Lumpur city centre to Kajang involving a distance of 51km. It will have a 9.5km underground tunnel between Jalan Semantan and Taman Maluri.

The objective of the project is to encourage more people to use public transport, alleviate traffic congestion and decrease travel time.