

Committee denies agreement by landowners

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Jalan Sultan Preservation Committee yesterday refuted a statement by MRT Corporation that only two landowners were resisting a mutual agreement to proceed with the Klang-Sungai Buloh railway project.

Its co-chairman Yong Yew Wei said none of the landowners had signed the agreement, and criticised MRT Corp chief executive officer Datuk Azhar Abdul Hamid's ultimatum that they sign the agreement or face compulsory land acquisition.

"We asked for talks with MRT Corp six months ago but there has been no response, and now the owners have received this ultimatum - they should not be subjected to intimidation; it's undemocratic," Yong said at a press conference.

He said the points in the agreement were vague, which worried many landowners.

"MRT Corp cannot guarantee that the buildings will be safe for occupancy after the project, and if the century-old buildings are deemed unsafe, the owners will lose their buildings."

Bukit Bintang MP Fong Kui Lun said the issue at hand

was preservation of Jalan Sultan and its buildings, some of which are more than a hundred years old.

"One main issue is that there has been no announcement of a social impact assessment, and Jalan Sultan is a tourist hotspot, too," she said.

Azhar reportedly announced on Feb 24 that landowners on Jalan Sultan and Jalan Petaling had until the end of the month to sign the said agreement or have their land compulsorily acquired.

He had said it was not the intention of MRT Corp to enforce compulsory acquisition but the project was slated to be completed in July 2017 and work had to commence.

Thomas Tan, a shareholder of Lok Ann Hotel in Jalan Sultan, said MRT Corp's actions were unfair. "It's not fair that they use acquisition to pressure owners to sign the agreement; a mutual agreement means there needs to be 'mutual' agreement."

Yong said more than 300 non-governmental organisations had stamped their support for an MRT realignment proposal which would see the route moved to Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock and Jalan Pudu instead.

"More signatures are coming in and once compiled, the committee will seek an audience with the prime minister and ask for his personal help to resolve the issue," he said.

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