

Property owners confused

Acquisition still on despite assurance to the contrary, they say

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THE Committee to Preserve Jalan Sultan and Jalan Bukit Bintang has accused the government of doublespeak over the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) project.

Committee chairman Stanley Yong said the land office was still pursuing land acquisition despite an announcement that Jalan Sultan properties would not be acquired to make way for the RM50 billion mega-project.

"Actually, we are not sure

about the announcement but I think what was meant was that the owners must first sign the mutual agreement before the land (acquisition) notice could be cancelled," he told *The Malay Mail*.

"I think it is a bit unfair because now you are maintaining a noose around the neck of the owners to go on with the negotiations. The owners will have no choice but to follow the instructions of MRT at the negotiation table."

On April 9, it was announced that no properties in Jalan Sultan would be acquired and that the land acquisition notice would be rescinded to pave the

way for a mutual agreement.

Yong said the land office had claimed otherwise, contrary to the government's announcement.

"There would be no land acquisition but the land office said it is still pursuing land acquisition procedures," he said.

"The land owners want transparency and fairness. They find it a bit awkward that two different offices have two different orders."

He said Mass Rapid Transit Corporation Sdn Bhd (MRT Corp) had told the group the Prime Minister's Office was now handling the matter.

"MRT told us the matter is now in the prime minister's hand. Despite the announcement, how can the owners expect fair compensation if the acquisition is still being pursued by the land office?"

"This is difficult for the owners and they will leave it to their lawyers to negotiate with MRT on the conditions for the mutual agreement."

The committee has been campaigning for the MRT line to be re-routed from Jalan Sultan to Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock and for the new route to be integrated with the LRT Pasar Seni station and KTMB line and the Puduraya bus

terminal.

MRT Corp is expected to start tunnelling work for its underground line in the second quarter of 2014 and the affected tenants will have to vacate their premises for six months.

MRT Corp has also reiterated its guarantee that there would be no land acquisition and any damage will be repaired and loss of income compensated.

However, the committee said the six-month compensation offered by the project owners did not address the real cost borne by the shop owners, the tenants, sub-tenants and surrounding community.