

# Time to clear the air

## Jalan Sultan stakeholders want MRT Corp to hold public hearing

By **JASTIN AHMAD TARMIZI** and  
**YEOH YI SHUEN**  
jastin@thestar.com.my

**A**FTER receiving the social impact assessment and soil test reports, several stakeholders in Jalan Sultan, Petaling Street, now want MRT Corp to hold a public hearing to clear the air.

The stakeholders had earlier said they would not vacate their premises in Kuala Lumpur's Chinatown to make way for the My Rapid Transit (MRT) project unless the Government made good on its promise to disclose the soil investigation and social impact assessment reports and carry out a public hearing.

Lok Ann Hotel representative Judy Tan said they would appeal for a public consultation so that MRT Corp could explain how the alignment was run, the construction details that would affect the buildings and answer public queries.

"They have to tell us what they have done," she said, adding that the stakeholders had already sent the report for study.

She added that the report was also not comprehensive enough for a mega project as the report they received was the Environmental Impact Assessment, which also contained the Social Impact Assessment within it.

"This should be an extensive report and not done together with



**Details needed:** Kuala Lumpur Gospell Hall elder Jimmy Chok (left) and Tan speaking to reporters.

the environmental impact," she said during a press conference that was attended by representatives of three affected buildings, the Yan Keng Benevolent Dramatic Association, Kuala Lumpur Gospell Hall and Lok Ann Hotel.

"The time taken for MRT Corp to send these documents to us has made us very suspicious and therefore, we do not trust the promise given to us by the government that our buildings will remain untouched," said Tan.

She added that they only

received the reports almost four weeks after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak's directive to MRT Corp.

Najib, who had earlier met the stakeholders, said the government was prepared to declare the shops in Jalan Sultan as heritage buildings and do everything possible to preserve them.

He said the shophouse owners affected by the MRT had met him and were not against the project but wanted an assurance that their property would be protected.

Najib then said while it was important to preserve history, it should not impede progress.

He added that the country must have an efficient public transport, especially in the capital, to develop and the only way forward was to have the MRT system.

The stakeholders also questioned MRT Corp's request for them to be relocated for six months during the construction period.

"The Prime Minister and MRT has assured the stakeholders that the buildings will remain untouched and safe while construction work is being conducted underground. Why are they asking us to move out when we won't be affected?" asked Tan.

Another stakeholder, Khong Kim Lyew, cited the example of the Imbi Palace Restaurant that was demolished recently.

"Are we going to face the same fate as the Imbi Palace Restaurant?" he asked.

MRT Corp had requested the occupants to relocate for a maximum of six months and promised fair compensation during the period.

The company stressed that it supported the preservation of the heritage buildings in Chinatown by not acquiring and demolishing the buildings.

Their land titles will be endorsed with a statement recognising the existence of the tunnel beneath it under a mutual agreement mooted by MRT Corp.