

MRT blow for Taman Tun folk

No compensation or buy-out for 25 families living close to proposed line

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THEY were told about compensation and acquisition of their properties in view of the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) line passing close by their houses, but their hopes have been dashed.

For 25 families living in Pinggir Zaaba, Taman Tun Dr Ismail, the news from MRT Corporation (MRT Corp) that they would not receive compensation or have their properties acquired came as a blow.

Now they will have to bear with the inconvenience of construction work, and the traffic congestion when the line is completed.

The proposed line will sit between 14.5m and 15.9m from their doors.

Norliza Kamaruddin, 47, a single mother of four, said she had spent all her savings to buy her house five years ago.

"I still have loans to pay. It's too late now to start selling my house. No one is going to buy it," she said.

"What we are angry about is that they had led us on all this while."

Norliza said deliberations with MRT Corp began one-and-a-half years ago and the residents were under the impression they would be compensated or that their properties would be acquired.

"They had agreed to it in principle and had even enlisted a property valuer to come up with a proposal. We had also submitted proposals on the values of our houses.

"Now they tell us they won't be offering us anything."

Norliza said the residents were not against the project, but they wanted to be compensated for having to live with construction work and the effects from the operation of the trains.

Resident Ho Lee Yoke, 54, said he had bought another property in view of MRT Corp's negotiation with the residents. "Now I'm stuck. I have spent so much money buying the other property."

After engaging with residents since January last year, MRT Corp told them a special compensation committee (SCC), comprising representatives from the Finance Ministry, Economic Planning Unit, Valuation and Property Services Department (JPPH), Public Works Department (JKR), Land and Mines Director General Department (JKPTG) and Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD), had rejected the voluntary buy-out programme.

MRT Corp CEO Datuk Azhar Abdul Hamid wrote to residents on July 24 the committee concluded that the proposal could not be approved as there was no legitimate provision under the law compelling such an action by the government.

"The Railway (Railway Protection Zone) Regulations 1998, under which the MRT projects requirement falls, provides for a six-metre 'first reserve' on both side of the parapet's edge to protect the railway and its train services," he had said in the letter.

"In the case of the 25 Pinggir Zaaba houses, the closest house to the edge of the para-



HO: Bought another property in view of negotiations with MRT Corp



VALENTINE: Worried about the effects of construction work on his grandchildren

pet is 14.5 m away. It is clearly located outside of the 'first reserve' limit of six metres.

"The committee was concerned that if the proposed voluntary buy-out scheme was approved, the decision will set an unsustainable precedent not only for the MRT project but other public infrastructure projects going forward."

Azlina Aisyah Khalid, 42, said residents would have pursued other options earlier if MRT Corp had been clear about the inability to compensate residents or acquire their properties from the start.

She said they would have



TOO CLOSE: The proposed MRT line will be between 14.5m and 15.9m from some of the houses at Pinggir Zaaba — Pix: SHAHIR OMAR

organised themselves into a pressure group, sought legal recourse or tried to sell their properties a year ago.

"I think the stipulations under the Railway Act need to be reviewed as well. Having a reserve of six metres from houses is not safe enough," she said.

James Valentine, 70, said his grandchildren, who live several doors from his house, were already falling sick because of pollution from the Damansara-Puchong highway (LDP) in front of their homes.

"They are always having cold, flu and fever," he said.

Akram Syah Muammar Ubaidah, 38, is also concerned the dust and noise would take a toll on his five young children.

He said the executive summary of the project's detailed environmental impact assess-

ment (DEIA), available to the public, does not touch on the pollution during the construction, adding information given to residents suggested construction would be at night.

"They told us it would be done during off-peak hours."

Currently, Pinggir Zaaba recorded a noise level of 66 dBA, largely due to the LDP situated next to the neighbourhood.

According to MRT Corp, hoardings equipped with noise absorbers would be placed along the lane next to Pinggir Zaaba as a mitigation measure during construction.

It had also revealed the noise level would only increase to 69 dBA when the trains begin operation, far below the noise limit of 75 dBA set by the Environment Department, due to engineering and technological tools used to cushion the operations of the train.