

'We made no promises'

No agreement to acquire houses or compensate owners, says MRT Corp

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NO, we did not commit to acquire houses nor pay compensation to house owners in Taman Tun Dr Ismail, the Mass Rapid Transit Corporation Sdn Bhd (MRT Corp) clarified.

MRT Corp strategic communications and public relations director Amir Mahmood Razak responded to residents who were under the impression that the corporation would acquire 25 houses in Pinggir Zaaba or compensate house owners since the MRT line would pass near their houses.

"We never agreed to acquire their properties or compensate them. We agreed to look at the options," Amir said.

On Monday, *The Malay Mail* reported that the MRT line would be located between 14.5m and

15.9m from 25 houses along Pinggir Zaaba.

There had been various engagements between residents and MRT Corp since Jan 2011 which saw negotiations over acquisition of properties or compensation.

After a valuation process, a proposal — the acquisition or compensation of the 25 houses — was put forth to the government's special compensation committee.

However, residents were informed that the committee rejected the idea of property acquisition or compensation as the move would set an "unsustainable precedent".

The rejection also hinged upon the lack of a legal requirement for acquisition or compensation under the Railway (Railway Protection Zone) Regulations 1998.

The very same regulations that govern the MRT project, stipu-

lates a 6m reserve on both sides of the line — raising a question as to the need for the proposal.

Amir replied: "Negotiations were already ongoing when MRT Corp was formed. So (MRT Corp CEO) Datuk Azhar (Abdul Hamid) said we should consider the options."

When contacted, a Pinggir Zaaba spokesperson who declined to be named said residents would discuss the next course of action.

"MRT Corp did not mislead one person, but 69 families," the spokesperson said, also referring to 44 families who also fear encroachment of the project upon their homes.

"CEO Datuk Azhar told us he would bend over backwards to help us and that he has never lost a proposal before. Isn't that assurance?"

"There are still important issues to be answered like will there be enough space for the

Bomba to pass through. What about vibrations and noise?" the spokesperson said.

MRT Corp assures that it is prioritising mitigation methods to reduce the effects of the projects on the residents.

"Hoardings have already been set up but we are considering how best we can provide other solutions to decrease the effects," Amir said, adding that tree removal would be minimised and trees will be replanted if removed.

"We are also looking at full coverage of the noise deflector which is already included in the design of the line which will be equipped with rock wool to absorb sound when it passes the area," he said.

Amir also said construction vehicles are only able to use the Damansara-Puchong highway (LDP) as an access route to the work site, not the road lane next to Pinggir Zaaba.