

No promises made

MRT Corp has denied making any misleading agreements with TTDI residents in Pinggir Zaaba to acquire their properties for the MRT project. >3

Major undertaking: The MRT project is set to take place in Pinggir Zaaba.



Acquisition rejected

MRT Corp: We did not make misleading agreements with residents

By S.PUSPADEVI
puspa@thestar.com.my

MASS Rapid Transit Corporation (MRT Corp) denies making verbal promises to mislead Taman Tun Dr Ismail (TTDI) residents living in Pinggir Zaaba into believing that their properties would be acquired for the MRT project.

Its chief executive officer Datuk Azhar Abdul Hamid said the 'willing buyer and willing seller' proposal was voluntary and made out of goodwill.

He said based on the Land Acquisition Act 1960, there was no basis to acquire the land.

"The TTDI issue involved a larger group of residents. The original opposition involved 69 Pinggir Zaaba and 70 Medan Burhanuddin Helmi houseowners.

"The 69 owners had sought for realignment of the MRT line, an underground alignment and relocation.

"For relocation, the group asked for one-for-one swap with replacement houses built on a 10ha site called Taman Rimba (located at the border of Bukit Kiara and TTDI).

"This was rejected as it was unprecedented and because Taman Rimba is a green lung," Azhar said at a media conference at MRT Corp's office in Bukit Damansara, Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

He said no less than 14 meetings were held between the group and the Government before MRT Corp was formed in September 2011.

"When MRT Corp took over management of the project in October 2011, we decided to only engage with the 25 property owners on Pinggir Zaaba as they were closest to the alignment.

"Furthermore, they have stated that their homes will be 'unliveable' due to the construction work and the presence of MRT line 15m in front of their houses," he said.

However, he said this engagement had consumed a lot of time as residents wanted everything to be com-

When MRT Corp took over management of the project in October 2011, we decided to only engage with the 25 property owners on Pinggir Zaaba as they were closest to the alignment.

—DATUK AZHAR ABDUL HAMID

pensated for. Because of this, both parties came to a mutual agreement that the properties would be evaluated and the papers submitted to the Special Compensation Committee (SCC) for approval.

The SCC is chaired by Treasury secretary-general Datuk Dr Mohd Irwan Serigar Abdullah and its members comprise representatives from the Finance Ministry, Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department, Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD), Works Ministry, Valuation and Property Management Department and MRT Corp.

According to Azhar, the first property valuation was done with Lebuhraya Damansara-Puchong (LDP) concessionaire — taking into consideration the existence of LDP in terms of noise and traffic — and MRT Corp.

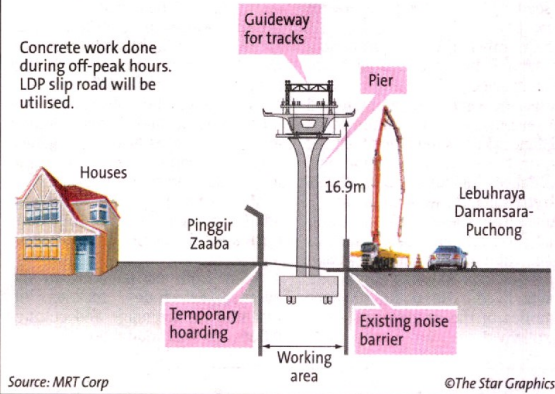
This was followed by valuation by LDP and subsequently revisions of valuation were conducted by Jones Lang Wootton.

This was mutually agreed upon by both parties as the residents did not agree with the earlier valuations.

"MRT Corp agreed to explore ways to address their concerns which was subjected to the Government's approval," he said, adding that all compensation, which does not involve mandatory land acquisition must be referred to SCC.

On mitigation concerns, Azhar said several technical changes were made to the design of the viaduct

Layout plan of construction work for MRT project along Pinggir Zaaba in TTDI



such as wider special spans to reduce the number of pillars required in front of the 25 houses.

Now, only three pillars will be constructed and this will be located in front of service lanes between the rows of houses. The installation of vertical nettings above aluminium hoarding is also being studied to further minimise dust.

Azhar said access to the work area is exclusively from LDP and not from Pinggir Zaaba. Construction vehicles are not allowed to park along the road once the hoarding have been put up. Construction workers are also not allowed to loiter there.

He also stressed that in the event of an emergency, Fire and Rescue Services Department vehicles would not face a problem entering the area.

He said trees cut down to make way for construction will be replaced with semi-mature trees once work is completed. The need to install sound deflators on the completed viaduct will be assessed.

Azhar said to date, it has not received any news from Abdul Raman Saad and Associates (Arsa)

— lawyers appointed by the residents.

In response to a question on the next course of action, he said as this is a national project, decisions made will benefit the people at large and if the group continues to disrupt the project, MRT Corp will not hesitate to take legal action.

In response to MRT Corp's statement in *The Star* on Aug 27, Pinggir Zaaba resident and spokesman Norliza Kamaruddin said, "The statement by MRT Corp about us being unaware of SCC is wrong."

"We wish to reiterate that we were misled by MRT Corp which had in the beginning assured us that it will make the decision on the 'willing buyer, willing seller' proposition."

"A series of valuations on the 25 properties along Pinggir Zaaba can attest to the seriousness of MRT Corp's intention.

"We are also pleased that MRT Corp is willing to make public all relevant details pertaining to the discussions which took place with the residents of Pinggir Zaaba," she added.