

MRT Corp denies misleading residents

> 'Pinggir Zaaba folk fully aware buy-out plan subject to government approval'

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PETALING JAYA: MRT Corp yesterday denied it had led residents of Pinggir Zaaba into believing their homes would be acquired, claiming the residents had been fully aware that a buy-out plan was subject to approval from the government.

Its chief executive officer, Datuk Azhar Abdul Hamid, said MRT Corp had no legal obligation to acquire the properties, but due to the residents' concerns had agreed to explore potential solutions, which included the possibility of acquisition.

"To buy the houses was our intention, not our promise.

"The buy-out effort actually came from MRT Corp and not from them," Azhar said at a press conference yesterday.

"This acquisition proposal was on a voluntary basis and was subject to the approval of the government," he added.

Several residents of Pinggir

Zaaba had issued a letter of intent to MRT Corp on Aug 16 for alleged breach of promise, claiming the corporation had misled them into believing acquisition was on the way.

Resident Norliza Kamaruddin reportedly said on Aug 25 that MRT Corp had taken them for a ride, and "we had no choice but to resort to this (legal action)".

In May, the Special Compensations Committee (SCC) rejected the proposal on the grounds that the 25 homes were more than the required six metres from construction for mandatory acquisition and that such a move would set an unsustainable precedent.

Azhar said the residents were aware from the very beginning that the proposal would have to go to the SCC as all compensation not involving mandatory land acquisition must be referred to the committee.

"I actually told the residents that we have only one chance with the

committee to get the approval for acquisition, and that we have to put a good working paper forward.

"However, because it was rejected, MRT Corp has made several technical changes to the design of the viaduct to mitigate potential noise and dust pollution," he said.

Besides sound barriers and nettings, the structure design was amended to reduce the number of pillars along Pinggir Zaaba to three pillars. The three pillars will be located in front of service lanes between the rows of houses and not directly in front of properties.

"All in all, the residents will have to bear with the construction for up to two years, but it won't be continuous construction.

"The fact is, they're not losing their homes like residents in other areas are because of this project; we must understand that this is a national project for the good of the larger population," Azhar said.