

Panel turns to Opposition

Chinatown traders want close monitoring of land acquisition for MRT project

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AFTER failing to seek a dialogue and redress from the government over the construction of the mass rapid transit (MRT) project in Chinatown, the Preservation of Jalan Sultan Committee (PJSC) now turns to the Opposition for help.

PJSC co-chairman Stanley Yong said they would like the opposition MPs to play watchdog and monitor the progress of the land acquisition process at the area which they claimed was conducted in a non-transparent manner.

He said the committee have even started a campaign to highlight the hap-

azard and non-transparent manner in which the land acquisition was carried out by MRT Corp.

“We have also conducted various activities including a public consultation meeting and invited MRT Corp, Kuala Lumpur City Hall, the Prime Minister’s Department and Tourism Ministry. Regrettably, none of them turned up,” he said.

“This clearly demonstrates the non-compromising stand of the relevant authorities, denying the public the opportunity to voice out their grounds of objection on the project,” he said at a press conference at the Parliament lobby yesterday.

It was reported that the dispute over land acquisition began soon after landowners in the area were

informed in 2011 that the government would acquire their lands for the building of underground MRT tunnels.

Critics questioned the need for compulsory acquisition of both surface and underground land as the National Land Code 1965 was amended in 1990 to allow underground land to be acquired without affecting surface rights.

Unhappy landowners had mounted a high-profile campaign marked by many protests, signature drives and claims that the government was conducting a “land grab” in order to defray project costs.

Yong said despite the setbacks, the committee would continue their struggle to preserve the city’s historic

and cultural heritage.

“Currently, the demolishing works to bring down the buildings are ongoing. Historical buildings such as the Klang bus station, Plaza Warisan and Uda Ocean have already been torn down. What is left is a piece of vacant land to be converted into modern structures.

“This is why we would like to request opposition MPs to monitor the progress,” he said, adding that the committee also wants Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak to suspend the project and order MRT Corp to review the alignment.

The RM50 billion MRT project, meant to ease traffic congestion in the Klang Valley, is said to be Malaysia’s most expensive infrastructure project to date.