

**DAP says Prasarana attempting Chinatown land grab**  
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**By Shannon Teoh**

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 25 — The DAP has accused the Najib administration of using the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) project as an excuse to hijack prime land in the capital's Chinatown for profit.

Party publicity chief Tony Pua said in a statement late last night that the Land Public Transport Commission's (SPAD) insistence that 31 shop lots must be acquired ahead of tunnelling works was "complete and utter nonsense".

"Clearly, Prasarana is attempting to hijack the land affecting the heritage shop lots in Kuala Lumpur's Chinatown for the purposes of profit and not for the purposes of MRT construction work 100 feet underground.

"Such action for profit is clearly bad faith on the part of the government," he said, referring to the state-owned company operating the RM50 billion project.

SPAD chairman Tan Sri Syed Hamid Albar said yesterday that compulsory acquisition of the Jalan Sultan lots — where the Klang Valley MRT would run underground — was necessary because under land law, landowners also owned the land that lies below ground.

Pua claimed that Prasarana was trying to hijack the Chinatown land for profit. Although MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek had worked out an agreement with the 31 landowners on Tuesday for the traders to keep their buildings and land on the surface, Syed Hamid said that prior acquisition of both surface and underground levels was needed to provide "certainty."

Pua said that the statement was a "big tight slap" for Dr Chua whose "role as a hero was unfortunately a short-lived one" as Syed Hamid has insisted that there is no guarantee that the 31 shop lots in the historic Chinatown, some of which are nearly a century old, will be returned to their owners.

"Once again, this is complete and utter nonsense. The National Land Code 1965 had been specifically amended in 1990 to allow for the acquisition of underground land without affecting surface property by inserting Part Five (A) (section 92A to 92G) under Clause 3," the Petaling Jaya Utara MP said.

He added that the amendment enables the disposal of "underground land", which can then either be alienated or leased for the use to construct tunnels, car parks and to lay pipes.

Part of the century-old Chinatown was planned for demolition due to the multibillion-ringgit project, but loud protests from residents — who said they were informed just two weeks ago — forced the MCA chief to intervene.

Project owner Syarikat Prasarana Negara Bhd (Prasarana) also said last Monday that 20 lots in the capital city's main shopping district, Bukit Bintang, would be acquired to make way for tunnelling work and an underground MRT station.

Disgruntled owners have accused the government of robbing their prime land in the Golden

Triangle.

Prasarana project development director Zulkifli Mohd Yusoff, however, has said the government could not develop the land due to safety concerns over the tunnel.

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