

**Pakatan MPs want SPAD to come clean over VIP line shift**  
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**By Melissa Chi**

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 10 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) lawmakers today accused the Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD) of issuing “contradictory excuses” in explaining the alleged realignment of the Klang Valley Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) to spare the home of a noted personality.

Petaling Jaya Utara MP Tony Pua said SPAD’s response to their claim last week that it shifted a portion of the Sungai Buloh-Kajang line at Jalan Damansara here to bypass the unnamed VIP’s mansion, as “incongruous, unbelievable and contradictory excuses in the entire land acquisition exercise”.

According to the PR MPs, work on the original tunnel site has now been stopped, the tunnel portal relocated and a variation order issued to the contractor, ensuring that the line no longer passes beneath the house.

SPAD, the project regulators for the mammoth MRT project, said last Thursday the line was rerouted to save money and not to save a prominent ex-minister’s home as claimed.

SPAD chief executive Mohd Nur Kamal had said the allegation is “totally false” and the “item marked on the map as the ‘VIP House’ is totally incorrect”, and that the original proposed alignment did not affect the building in the first place.

A comparison between the original alignment and the revised alignment. — Diagram courtesy of Tony Pua

Today, Pua said the original alignment plan for the tunnel issued by SPAD and Syarikat Prasarana Negara showed it cutting below the swimming pool and an ancillary building at the mansion residence.

Mohd Nur said SPAD decided to change the proposed rail line in Jalan Damansara after getting feedback from the land owners for two main reasons: Firstly, there was suitable alternative land nearby that allowed it to shift the MRT’s original alignment; and secondly, the realignment reduced the amount of land acquisition by over 1,000 sq m.

He said the same principles applied for the MRT rail tracks at Jalan Sultan and Jalan Bukit Bintang that have also stirred heavy debate.

Pua today demanded that SPAD disclose the total cost incurred for the realignment, especially with tunnelling works having already begun on the initial alignment.

He also pointed out that the National Land Code 1965 was amended in 1990 to allow for the acquisition of subterranean land without affecting surface property.

“The amendment enables the disposal of ‘underground land’, which can then either be alienated or lease for the use to construct tunnels, car parks and to lay pipes,” he said.

"The flimsy reply provided by SPAD is completely unacceptable and only serves to confirm the fears of ordinary Malaysians that special privileges are accorded only to the very privileged few, while the rights of the honest man trying to make a living on the street are trampled upon indiscriminately," he said.

Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah Anwar went further by attacking the SPAD CEO's description as deceptive and misleading.

"I feel this strong case has actually proven to all of us we cannot trust SPAD at all, we cannot trust its independence, and I would say that they better issue a clear explanation as to how this realignment can take place," she said.

"Someone's head has to roll."

Nurul Izzah said they did not have information on the current owner but that it was formerly owned by Tun Daim Zainuddin, a former finance minister, and was rented to the government to house then deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his family before "they were kicked out unceremoniously" on Sept 2, 1998.

SPAD and Prasarana, the government's public transport operator, have been under steady fire from angry traders with businesses located in the historic Chinatown area over the plan to acquire their properties to facilitate the tunnelling portion of the multibillion ringgit rail project.

Suspicion has also arisen over whether the transport regulator's purpose of acquiring the prime land lots was to exploit their commercial value to fund the construction of the MRT, Malaysia's most expensive infrastructure project to date.

SPAD has denied any intention of a "land grab" in its acquisition of Jalan Sultan properties but admitted it could not guarantee that the acquired lots would later be returned to landowners.

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