

**Nazri to lobby PM for MRT realignment**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
**September 20, 2011**  
**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 20 — Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz today waded into the MRT land grab controversy plaguing Jalan Sultan and Jalan Bukit Bintang traders, by promising to meet with the prime minister tomorrow to push for a realignment of the multimillion ringgit rail network.

The senior Cabinet minister told reporters here that it makes “no sense” for the government to demolish areas considered as heritage sites when it had just recently spent millions to preserve Brickfield’s “Little India”.

“Firstly, we would be destroying our heritage forever, in the blink of an eye.

“Next, the PM’s goodwill in announcing all these reforms, whatever good he has done for the Chinese community, would all be lost. We have to seriously think about this ... I see only losses for the government in this situation,” he said after meeting with representatives from the Federation of Chinese Associations Malaysia.

Nazri expressed confidence that Datuk Seri Najib Razak would listen to his reasoning, saying, “I know the prime minister”.

He said the government’s policies should not be inconsistent and that the preservation of heritage sites, like the iconic Chinatown near Jalan Sultan, should receive the same attention as “Little India”.

Nazri explained that former Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat had recently written to him, appealing for a realignment of the MRT project, which broke ground in July.

Ong, he said, had prepared a detailed plan suggesting alternative routes for the MRT line, which is presently expected to run beneath both the iconic streets of Jalan Sultan and Jalan Bukit Bintang.

Nazri praised Ong’s proposal, saying it was feasible and would not pose any inconvenience to those in the affected areas.

“I believe that even if we realign the route, it would not inconvenience others because there is no specific place that can be considered as nearest or the most convenient to everyone,” he said.

Regulators Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD) and Prasarana have been under constant fire from angry traders with businesses located in the historic Chinatown area over its 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, said to be Malaysia’s most expensive infrastructure project to date.

Among others, Jalan Sultan traders are also upset that they had not been consulted prior to the final alignment of the MRT's Sungai Buloh-Kajang line and are now also mulling over whether to follow Bukit Bintang traders by taking their fight to court.

SPAD has since come out to deny 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.

In a letter to The Malaysian Insider recently, SPAD chief executive officer Mohd Nur Kamal said while the acquisition process was being worked out in detail, the government "is in no position to make guarantees of the return of these properties".

But he reasoned that what was most important was that the government had "listened" to feedback from the affected parties and had agreed to a mutually acceptable outcome.

The Malaysian Insider

Copyright © 2011 The Malaysian Insider

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/nazri-to-lobby-pm-for-mrt-re-alignment/>