

**Jalan Sultan shopowners say PM to mediate in MRT issue**  
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**By Yow Hong Chieh**

KUALA LUMPUR, March 19 — The prime minister has promised to raise concerns held by the Jalan Sultan landowners about proposed tunnelling works in the capital city area with MRT Corp, its preservation committee said today.

The Committee to Preserve Jalan Sultan and Jalan Bukit Bintang, or PJSJBB, said Datuk Seri Najib Razak pledged to meet with the project owner shortly to seek an “amicable solution” to the issues raised.

“The prime minister also clearly stated that there is no necessity for the owners to meet MRT Corp for now,” it said in a statement.

PJSJBB said they spoke to Najib on March 12 in the Parliament building for a little over 30 minutes. The meeting had been organised by de facto law minister Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz.

Also present at the meeting were Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall president Tan Yew Sing and secretary-general Stanley Yong, Jalan Sultan representative Jimmy Chok and Bukit Bintang representative Datuk Chong Peng Wah.

The committee said the prime minister also agreed to engage an independent consultant to verify soil conditions along Jalan Sultan to ensure tunnelling works for the Klang Valley Mass Rapid Transit (KVMRT) would not damage the existing buildings there.

PJSJBB has also urged Najib to withdraw the compulsory land acquisition process of affected landowners’ lots, “which has imposed great uncertainty and despair on the owners”.

The landowners also stressed that they were neither against development nor the current government but were only concerned that a “megaproject” like the KVMRT lacked sufficient transparency, public consultation and assessment of social impact.

The dispute over land acquisition began soon after landowners in Chinatown, Imbi and Bukit Bintang were informed in mid-2011 that the government would acquire lots above the KVMRT tunnel as owners’ rights extend to the centre of the earth under Malaysian law.

Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD) chief executive Mohd Nur Kamal has said landowners could then apply for stratum titles but added there was no guarantee Putrajaya would re-alienate the surface land back to them.

Critics have 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 have mounted a high-profile campaign marked by many protests, signature drives and claims that Putrajaya was conducting a “land grab” in order to defray

project costs.

The multi-billion ringgit MRT, meant to ease traffic congestion in the Klang Valley, is Malaysia's most expensive infrastructure project to date.

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