

No MRT land acquisition along Jalan Sultan, Najib tells owners
The Malaysian Insider
April 09 , 2012

KUALA LUMPUR, April 9 — Jalan Sultan properties will not be acquired to make way for the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) project, the prime minister assured landowners today.

“That is absolutely not true. I can make a categorical assurance that we will not take over their land, we will not acquire their land but we only want permission to go below their land,” said Datuk Seri Najib Razak on a talk show hosted by ntv7 tonight.

“Secondly, we will declare their properties as heritage while properties that are not really that sound, structurally speaking, we will take action to fortify the buildings,” the prime minister continued.

“So, we hope this will allay any fear they have over losing their much-valued, much-treasured properties.”

Unhappy landowners along Jalan Sultan and other city locations have mounted a high-profile campaign marked by protests, signature drives and claims that Putrajaya was conducting a “land grab” in order to defray project costs.

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 MRT tunnel as owners’ rights extend to the centre of the earth under the 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 had 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 refusal to accept MRT Corp’s latest offer will likely delay further the RM50 billion megaproject that has faced various hurdles since being announced in June 2010.

Today, Najib also told Jalan Sultan landowners that the previous land acquisition notice will be rescinded to pave way for a mutual agreement.

“It will be withdrawn in a matter of time and all we want is their co-operation,” Najib said.

“The owners have conveyed to me that they are not against the MRT project. They think MRT is good for them, good for Kuala Lumpur and for all Malaysians, otherwise we will be facing horrific traffic jam and it will get worse in the future.”

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