

# Forced to move out of his own house

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** A man's townhouse has been rendered unlivable after his neighbour did illegal renovation.

Francis Xavier Nathan had lodged numerous complaints with City Hall, the Housing Ministry and the police over the last nine years but to no avail.

Nathan, the owner of a two-storey townhouse in Jalan Sri Hartamas, said his woes started in 1999 when his neighbour began renovations which caused the roof of his house to leak, cracks in the floor and plaster to fall from the ceiling.

"The damage was extensive and posed a risk to my family. To make matters worse, the neighbour started renovations in 1999 without approval from City Hall.

"He has illegally demolished the main dividing wall on the upper storey without my consent and the foundation of my home is now unsafe," said the 47-year-old contractor who has no choice but to move out.

Nathan said he was unable to live in the home, rent it out or sell the property due to the problem.

He said his initial attempts to reason with the neighbour were futile as the latter's reply was "I cannot get what I want, you will never live in your house again."

Latiz Abdul Halim, who lives near the strait neighbour, said the renovation work had also caused leaking in the neighbouring units.

"I am concerned about the vulnerable structure and that some mishap may happen," he added.

On Dec 20, 1999, following a



Francis Xavier Nathan complaining to Segambut MP Lim Lip Eng about illegal renovations by a neighbour. Picture courtesy of *Sin Chew* daily.

complaint by Nathan, City Hall sent a letter to the neighbour, citing that his renovations were illegal and had inconvenienced, encroached and disrupted the lives of those living in the adjacent

units.

The owner was told by City Hall to obtain certification from a registered structural engineer, and was also warned to keep his premises clean of construction

debris and that he needed to submit renovations plans before any work could commence.

At the time, City Hall officers had visited the house and found a scaffolding erected at the porch of Nathan's home.

Following many calls to City Hall by Nathan, an enforcement notice was served on the owner to stop all renovation work on June 27, this year — nine years after the initial complaint was lodged.

Nathan had also lodged a police report in 1999 and commenced legal action against the owner.

"The situation has gone on long enough and I am shocked that no action has been taken by the authorities," said Nathan.

Having little avenue to resolve the issue, he sought the assistance of Segambut MP Lim Lip Eng who visited the townhouse last Friday.

Lim said: "It was appalling that after nine years of complaints, no action was taken against the neighbour who clearly has flouted the law. I will write to City Hall to help resolve the matter.

On a separate matter, Lim said that since April, he had received more than 10 complaints from residents of apartments and condominiums in Segambut about leaks at their homes caused by renovations in units on higher floors.

"It's a never ending problem as most of these owners who have renovated their homes refused to listen to reason to allow for repairs.

"Many of the affected unit owners had to sell off their property for a song as water leakage had made these units difficult to live in," he added.