

Azhar: MRT station will invigorate Bukit Bintang area

MRT Co chief executive officer Datuk Azhar Abdul Hamid says the location of an MRT station in Bukit Bintang Plaza (BB Plaza) will invigorate and transform the entire Bukit Bintang area.

While this may not constitute urban renewal or regeneration, it would be a catalyst for the transformation of the area and its surroundings. "The basis for renewal or regeneration is to spur economic activities. The location of a station there will almost be like a catalyst as it will up the income of all stakeholders," he says.

MRT Co is working with both BB Plaza and Yayasan Selangor to integrate a station in both these premises. UDA Holdings Bhd owns Bukit Bintang Plaza while Yayasan Selangor owns the premises next door. Both have been around for several decades.

Azhar says these two buildings are located smack at the intersection which make them ideal to have a rail transport element. There is also the existing monorail it can integrate with.

The plan is to introduce, integrate and use public rail transport to transform the area as the two buildings are essentially located in the heart of the Bukit Bintang area.

"This is an opportunity for Yayasan Selangor and the UDA. As to how they want to go about maximising the value of this integration



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is up to them. We will give them a basic box," says Azhar.

He adds that this idea cropped up some time ago and they, together with the relevant parties including the Finance Ministry, is revisiting the idea again.

"Both UDA and Yayasan Selangor have agreed to integrate. The issue is 'How'," he says. It seems a waste to integrate a brand new station

into two old structures, he says, which was how the idea for redevelopment came about.

Azhar says it would be difficult to replicate what MRT Co want to do in Bukit Bintang for other stations as that location offers a unique proposition on many perspectives, namely, ridership, business and commerce, tourism among others. Among all the 31 stations and four interchanges, Bukit Bintang offers a cultural, business and commercial proposition that was unique to the city.

"The first thing that will happen is business will improve many folds and both UDA and Yayasan will have properties that will be seamlessly constructed with an MRT station, with the integration being underground," he says.

He says currently, there is a conceptual go-ahead with the government.

"With some locations, there are opportunities for redevelopment as in the case of Bukit Bintang. With other locations, as in Sungai Buloh, it is an opportunity for development. There is a difference between the two.

He says MRT Co's plan is to turn a few of the 31 stations into iconic destinations where people will go as a destination. There will be a lot of spin-offs if this is planned properly," he says. — **By Thean Lee Cheng**