

UEM Builders sets sights on Indian rail projects

JOCKEYING FOR POSITION : Company wants to make name for itself as niche metro player

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UEM Builders Bhd is keen to participate in future metro rail projects in India and is now repositioning itself as a niche railways and urban transit player there.

"We are re-looking at India. We want to focus in doing similar projects like the mass rail transit (MRT) that is ongoing here over in India," managing director Mohd Razin Ghazali told Business Times after briefing the media on the MRT V8 viaduct work package here yesterday.

UEM Builders, through its unit UEM Construction Sdn Bhd, started construction on the MRT viaduct work package worth RM951 million this month.

Mohd Razin said UEM had participated in several road projects in India in the past but faces stiff competition from local road builders which have gained experience in such projects.

"Rather than doing general road construction in India, we want to make a name for ourselves as a niche metro player in that country," he said.

India, one of the fastest growing



UEM Builders' managing director **Mohd Razin Ghazali** (left) and MRT Corp director of strategic communications and public relations **Amir Mahmood Razak** (centre) inspecting the MRT V8 project. Pic by Nurul Shafina Jemenon

economies in the world, is investing heavily to modernise its public transportation system which includes construction of metro lines across all major cities in the country.

For UEM, this presents vast opportunities for the firm to use its experience in the construction of MRT, light rail transit (LRT) and even bridges to participate in upcoming tenders.

"Because of our track record in Malaysia, we were able to pre-qualify ourselves (for Metro rail projects in India). But the process for tender is ongoing," he said.

It is understood that the tenders would be called by next year or in 2014.

Apart from India, UEM Builders sees potential in highway construction in Indonesia and affordable

housing schemes in Brunei.

"We want to continue to focus in Indonesia but that will be long-term and not immediate. For Brunei, we hope to continue to have a presence there since more housing projects tenders is expected to be called in 2014," he said.

UEM Builders' current outstanding order book stands between RM6 billion and RM7 billion which is expected to keep the company busy for the next two years.

Some 60 per cent of the order book is from local projects and the balance overseas.

Local projects which UEM is engaged in includes the MRT, the Second Penang bridge and PLUS Malaysia Bhd's (PLUS) highway fourth lane widening project.

Meanwhile, MRT Corp director of strategic communications and public relations Amir Mahmood Razak said the MRT V8 package from Taman Mesra to Kajang station is expected to be completed in December 2016.

A total of 85 work packages were tendered out by MRT Corp since the MRT project started.

To-date, 53 work packages have been awarded with a total value of RM19.8 billion. The balance 32 packages are expected to be awarded by the end of this year.