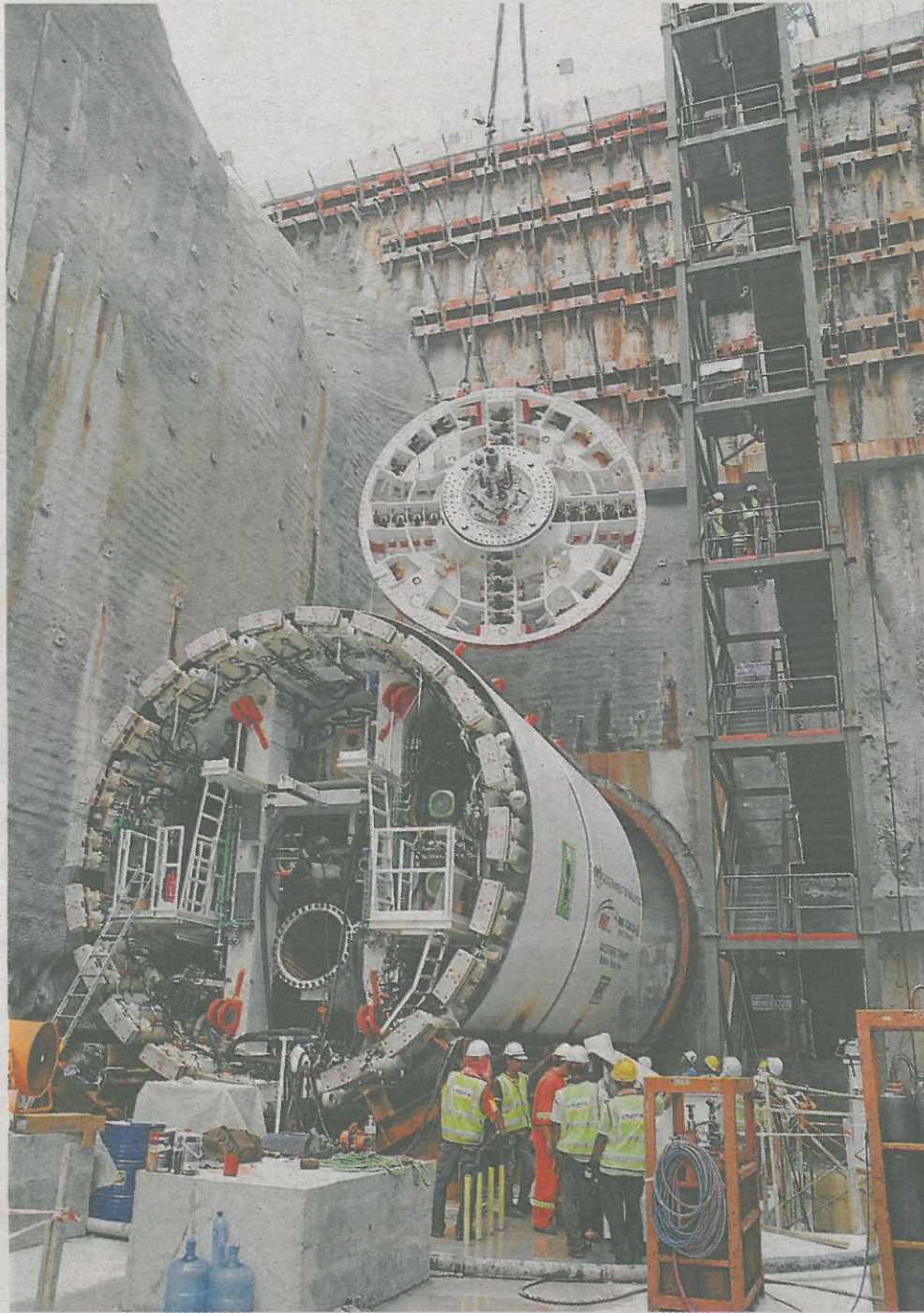


MRT works progressing well

Cutterhead fitted to first tunnel boring machine at Cochrane

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Halfway there: The cutterhead about halfway down the 30m-deep Cochrane shaft.

WORK on the underground portion of the Klang Valley Mass Rapid Transit (KVMRT) is progressing well with the successful lowering and fitting of the cutterhead for the first Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM).

The lowering of the 70tonne cutterhead, with a diameter of 6.7m, took place under a balmy afternoon sky from the ground surface of the Cochrane launch shaft, located near SK Perempuan Jalan Peel, Kuala Lumpur.

The operation took an hour to complete even though the vertical distance was only 30m, or roughly the height of an 11-storey building. Viewed from another perspective, the gigantic crane needed close to two minutes just to lower the cutterhead by one metre.

The operation was a delicate one for the crane operator as there was not much space between the first segment of the TBM and the portal's opening (the cutterhead has to squeeze through this gap without hitting either). At one point during the operation, the front side of the cutterhead passed by the steel portal door with only 0.5cm to spare.

MMC-Gamuda KVMRT (T) Sdn Bhd construction manager Ng Hau Wei said the lowering of the cutterhead was carried out after extensive planning to ensure smooth execution.

"The main part is in the planning, and we have a good team that ensured everything is neat and tidy."

Project manager Gus Klados said he was satisfied with the level of competency displayed by the Malaysian team in lowering the cutterhead into the shaft.

"I derive great satisfaction when these men, many of whom worked on the Stormwater Management and Road Tunnel projects a few years ago, carry out their tasks well," said Klados, who had worked with Ng and many young Malaysian engineers on the SMART project that was completed in 2007.

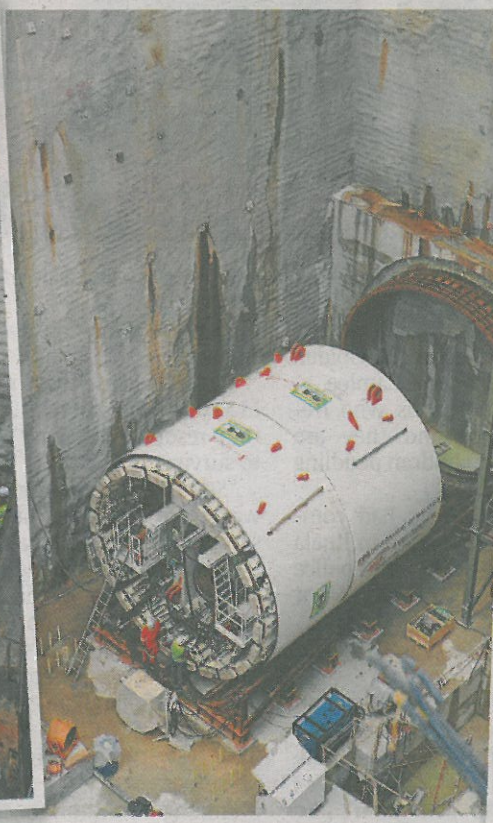
"The assembly of the TBM is according to schedule. We hope to launch the TBM ahead of schedule but that will depend on other factors," he added.

When fully assembled, the TBM will be about 200m long.

The assembly and final testing of this TBM will most likely be completed by the end of next month, with boring scheduled to begin early May.



Working on it: There is still a lot of horizontal movement required to move the cutterhead closer to the first segment of the TBM.



Getting ready: The TBM will start digging into the wall and make its way to the Pasar Rakyat station.



Aerial view: View of the 30m-deep Cochrane shaft. The dotted lines indicate the area where the works are being carried out.