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KUALA LUMPUR: The cost of embarking on the mass rapid transit (MRT) lines two and three should be lower than the first one, according to MRT Corp chief executive officer Datuk Azhar Abdul Hamid.

Azhar defended the decision by the Government to continue with the MRT project, which includes two subsequent lines in addition to the first – the 51-km Sungai Buloh-Kajang line – as it would benefit the public and provide sustainable support to the development of Greater KL that should attract more investments into the capital. Lines two and three are expected to be approved by the end of the year.

“The Government had recently mentioned that projects with low import content would be given priority due to their higher multiplier effect on the economy. From MRT Corp’s perspective, we have already brought in 10 tunnel-boring machines for line one and these can be utilised for the next lines. When we undertake lines two and three, all things being equal, the cost of embarking on these projects should be lower than the first one,” he told reporters at an informal meeting recently.

However, Azhar admitted that he could not estimate the total cost of the lines, as there would be other variables to be considered such as land cost.

“But in the whole scheme of operations and undertaking the future projects, it can be done in a more effective and efficient manner.

“This is because we already have our learning curve from the first line and that is priceless. We can also bring in the resources gathered from line one as the continuity is there,” he said. Azhar said there would be a reasonable timeline for the development of the entire MRT system in the Klang Valley, which should come in time to support other upcoming developments such as the Tun Razak Exchange and the Warisan Merdeka skyscraper project.

The current modal share of public transportation is about 20%, and this is expected to

grow by an additional 10% with the completion of line one of the MRT and the light rail transit extension project.

Lines two and three of the MRT are crucial in boosting the public transportation modal share to as high as 50%.

“The growth of Kuala Lumpur cannot be sustainable without a good public transportation system. If a good public transportation system is not ready by the time the capital is congested with development projects, then we are going to be in trouble,” he pointed out.

Thus, Azhar stressed that the decision by the Government to carry on the MRT project was a significant move, as the full benefit would be channeled back directly to the public.

“Additionally, with a good and efficient public transportation system, we can afford to be creative in further supporting the growth of the economy.

“We can try to render 24-hour operations on Fridays and Saturdays as well as the MRT system, with its underground facility, being able to create real estate prospects,” he said.

Azhar also reiterated that the benefit of having the MRT outweighed the cost of building the system itself.

“We are doing our best to engage the public better and listen to their opinion. We would engage the public more on the advantages of having a good network of an urban rail system as lines two and three progress.

“Furthermore, when the Government comes up with a project (such as the MRT), we do not have to cough up the lump sum of the cost involved. It all depends on the cash flow.

“You pay for what is progressively being done. This is money that is not going to be wasted since the infrastructure is going to be there for generations to come,” he said.

Azhar is excited that the current Government was now focusing on the long-term well-being and prospects of the country.

“That says a lot about the leadership of the country. For us, there is no hidden agenda. We just want to make sure that we complete the project on time, so that the benefits would start rolling to the public as fast as possible.

“I won’t be happy until the MRT is being used by the public, and our delivery dates still remain,” he said.



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