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Tunneling 88 per cent complete

KUALA LUMPUR: The tunneling works of the Klang Valley MRT project is on track with an overall progress of 88 per cent.

Mass Rapid Transit Corporation Sdn Bhd (MRT) project director Marcus Levon Karakashian said there were only two tunneling sites left to complete.

"We are now carrying out work with two tunnel boring machines (TBM) for the Pasar Seni-Merdeka and Merdeka-Pudu shafts. All

the tunneling work is expected to be completed by the first quarter of next year," he said yesterday.

He added that the overall completion of tunneling and underground station works stood at 70 per cent as the end of last month.

MRT director for strategic communications and public relations Amir Mahmood Razak said the completion of the tunneling

work for the twin MRT tunnels beneath Jalan Bukit Bintang was a major achievement because of the area's challenging geology.

Inai 1 TBM began tunneling beneath Jalan Bukit Bintang near the Armed Forces Fund Board building on April 7, while Inai 2 TBM entered on April 16. The TBMs broke through on Oct 16 and Oct 21, respectively.

"Jalan Bukit Bintang straddles two geological formations. The eastern end sits above the Kuala Lumpur limestone formation, while the western end is above the Kenny Hill formation. The transition between these two formations is in the Pavilion area.

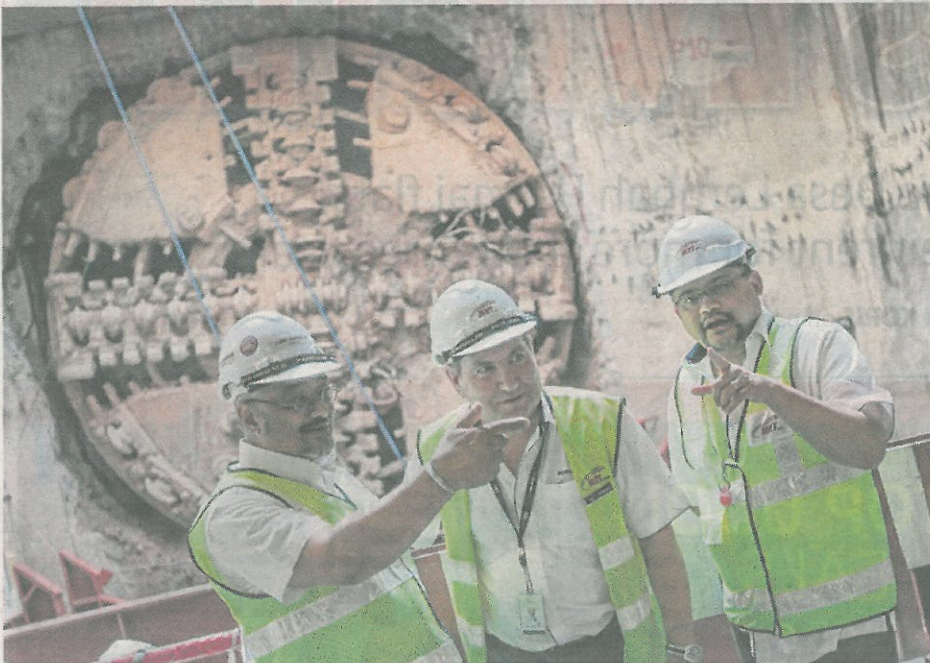
"However, there was no impact to adjacent buildings and structures, except for two incidents of sinkhole formation, a risk that we were aware of and worked hard to mitigate. Thus, the tunneling works have been a huge success for us," he said.

MMC-Gamuda tunneling head Ng Hau Wei said the use of variable density TBMs had significantly reduced the risk of sinkholes occurring.

"Over the 7.5km of tunneling, only two incidents occurred, compared to the excavation of the 9km Stormwater Management and Road Tunnel where there were more than 41 incidents," he said.

Apart from the difficult geology, he said, the Jalan Bukit Bintang stretch also had the highest concentration of utilities.

"Despite the relocation works, there were instances when the utilities got in the way. We also had to deal with ground anchors, left behind by previous construction projects, which got entangled with the TBMs," he said. **By Nor Ain Mohamed Radhi**



(From left) MMC-Gamuda Klang Valley MRT project director Satphal S. Bhogal, **Marcus Levon Karakashian** and **Amir Mahmood Razak** inspecting the progress of work at the twin MRT tunnels beneath Jalan Bukit Bintang. Pic by Asyraf Hamzah