

Phase one of MRT to be operational in December

By **MENG YEW CHOONG**
ycmeng@thestar.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: Commuters wishing for an alternative to KTM Komuter can find relief when phase one of the Sungai Buloh-Kajang MRT line opens this December.

The opening has to be done no later than Dec 31, although project owner and developer Mass Rapid Transit Corporation Sdn Bhd's (MRTC) remains coy on the actual date.

"It will definitely not be on a public holiday," said MRTC's director of operations and assets management division Mahmood Abdul Razak at its Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah MRT information centre here yesterday.

Mahmood was responding to questions whether Malaysian commuters can get a "Christmas present" from MRTC as he updated the media on the progress of the 51km-long Sungai Buloh-Kajang (SBK) line.

Phase one of the opening will involve 12 stations at the northern end of the line – Sungai Buloh, Kampung Selamat, Kwasa Damansara, Kwasa Sentral, Kota Damansara, Surian, Mutiara Damansara, Bandar Utama, Taman Tun Dr Ismail, Phileo Damansara, Pusat Bandar Damansara, and Semantan.

The Sungai Buloh station will be integrated with the KTM Sungai Buloh station, while a bridging bus service will be provided from Pusat Bandar Damansara all the way for commuters to get to KL Sentral.

This particular bus service is a temporary measure until July 2017, when the entire line opens.

MRTC has procured 300 new buses, mostly Volvos and Scania's, to be used as feeders to serve the 12 stations.

However, these buses will not sport the familiar red and blue RapidKL livery that commuters here are used to, even though Rapid Bus Sdn Bhd, a Prasarana subsidiary, will be the ones operating them.

"They will be made to look distinctive so that commuters can spot that they are MRT feeder buses from afar. The buses will bear a new logo with the words MRT and RapidKL," said Mahmood, who added that 140 buses will be deployed to serve the 12 stations.

He also confirmed that trial runs for the buses and trains for phase one will begin by October.

MRTC also clarified that Rapid Rail Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Prasarana Malaysia Bhd, will be operating the MRT service and keep all fare revenue to itself, along with bus fares.

"MRTC will remain the owner of the assets, and keep all non-fare revenue such as advertising and retail rental," he said.

MRTC recently granted a 10-year concession, with an option to extend by another five years, to Rapid Rail to operate the trains.

"MRTC will set some key performance indicators for Rapid Rail to ensure the assets perform at the highest level."