

'MRT at the forefront of change'

CONNECTIVITY: It will be the solution to traffic congestion in Greater KL, says MRT Corp CEO

KUALA LUMPUR

THE Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) will be at the forefront of the changing landscape of land public transport in Malaysia, said Mass Rapid Transit Corporation Sdn Bhd (MRT Corp) chief executive officer Datuk Seri Shahril Mokhtar.

"By 2020, there will be an estimated 10 million people living in the Klang Valley, all of whom will travel around Greater Kuala Lumpur by

car. With such growth, both in population and in the number of cars, the roads will not be able to accommodate the vehicles.

"MRT Corp envisions that MRT will be a solution to traffic congestion by reducing the number of people relying on private cars for commuting."

MRT Corp has estimated that some 400,000 people would use the Sungai Buloh-Kajang (SBK) line once operations begin. When the Sungai Buloh-Serdang-Putrajaya (SSP) line begins operations in 2022, 529,000 commuters are expected to use it daily.

Shahril said the MRT project would create 130,000 jobs.

Besides improving connectivity and stimulating the economy, the

MRT could generate higher productivity gains and promote a better quality of life, he said.

"For example, with travel time reduced, as people are no longer stuck in traffic jams, productivity is expected to increase to 280 million hours annually. This will translate to RM20 billion per annum in time savings."

The MRT, he said, had been a catalyst for transit-oriented development and would pave the way for similar projects in other urban areas in the country.

East Coast Economic Region (ECER) Development Council chief executive officer Datuk Seri Jebasingam Issace John said he believed the East Coast Rail Line

(ECRL) would be a catalyst to socio-economic development in ECER.

He said the council had been working to correct the regional imbalances between the West Coast and the East Coast Economic Regions covering Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang and the Mersing district in Johor, a 66,000 sq km area that makes up half of the peninsula.

"The ECRL will provide rail connectivity from the Klang Valley to Kuantan, along the coast to Kuala Terengganu and Kota Baru, connect Malaysia to Thailand, and run all the way to Kunming, China.

"Given ECER's wealth of natural resources and land availability, with the completion of the ECRL, it will be cost-effective for investors, whether domestic or foreign, including those looking at expansion or relocation, to develop their businesses in the region as they will have

easy access to raw material," he said.

Those who want to travel or exit the Klang Valley would be able to do so through the ECRL in half the time. It will only take six hours to travel from Kuala Lumpur to Tumpat, Kelantan, compared with 12 hours on the current railway system.

"The major challenge, besides improving land connectivity, is improving public transportation in ECER," Jebasingam said, adding that an improved public transportation system would go a long way in reducing the socio-economic disparity between people in the rural areas and those in urban centres.

He said those residing in ECER could expect improved quality of life, with better access to public transportation and improved connectivity.



Datuk Seri Shahril Mokhtar