

Najib to launch MRT service today

ON TRACK: First phase covering 12 stations to open to public tomorrow

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MALAYSIANS will be able to enjoy the most convenient way to zip around Klang Valley, in particular the Greater Kuala Lumpur area, with the launch of the first phase of the Klang Valley Mass Rapid Transit Sungai Buloh-Kajang Line (MRT SBK).

With the launch, commuters can look forward to travelling from Sungai Buloh to Semantan in 30 minutes.

The first phase, which covers 12 stations, will be launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak at Kwasa Damansara MRT station today.

The service will be open to the public tomorrow.

Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD) chief executive officer Mohd Azharuddin Mat Sah said the 51km-long rail network, which will include 31 stations by July next year, would be complemented by 300 feeder buses.

He said the MRT stations were within walking distance for most commuters, thanks to improved first- and last-mile connectivity.

This, he said, meant that the new MRT SBK line, compared with other rail networks, was located closer to where Malaysians worked and lived.

"In improving the accessibility of the rail network to commuters, a feeder bus will only take 10 minutes to arrive during peak hours between 7am and 9am, and 20 minutes during off-peak hours.

"We also estimate that 30 per cent of commuters will use Uber and taxis to move about. There will also be 14 park-and-ride facilities conveniently located around MRT stations to help motorists reduce travelling costs and time," he said, adding that commuters who parked their cars at the facilities would be charged only RM4 per entry.

The train frequency during peak hours was about 2.5 minutes, and 3.5 minutes during off-peak hours.

Each train set serving the line, he said, would have four cars, which could ferry 1,200 passengers.

The daily ridership is estimated to be about 400,000 passengers, while train operation hours are from 6am to midnight daily.

Azharuddin said SPAD was developing an app called Journey Planner, which offers a wide range of real time information for all modes of public transportation.

"The app, which is expected to be launched in the second quarter of next year, will empower commuters and motorists to make informed decisions and better plan their journeys," Azharuddin said.

He said the Klang Valley Mass Rapid Transit project, which was approved in December 2010, would



A test run of the MRT train at Sunway Damansara in Petaling Jaya yesterday. Pic by Zunnur Al Shafiq

see the construction of three MRT lines.

"It is testament to the government's commitment to improve public transportation and enable people to travel comfortably, conveniently and safely.

"The benefits of public transport are irrefutable. It translates into greater connectivity and productivity, which in turn increases economic growth.

"It will also reduce the number of vehicles on the road, which results in lower carbon emissions and a cleaner environment."

Malaysian Retail Chain Association president Datuk Garry Chua

said the MRT line would create a multiplier effect for businesses operating around the rail network.

"The MRT is one of the best things that could happen as it will create more business opportunities for operators. With better connectivity, more people will be able to visit shopping malls and businesses. This will bring in more investors."

Chua said the MRT SBK line would benefit the nation and the people as it would create a seamless travel experience for consumers.

Among the commercial areas and shopping malls that would be covered by the MRT lines are Damansara Sentral, Sunway Giza, The

Curve and iUtama Shopping Centre.

Public Transport Users Association president Ajit Johl, meanwhile, praised Prasarana Malaysia Bhd for charging commuters only RM1 per trip on the feeder buses.

"We are also grateful to the government for ensuring the project was completed on time and for making public transport one of its priorities.

"We look forward to the completion of the line and more public transport infrastructure.

"And, while the focus has been on the Klang Valley, we hope the government does not neglect other developing states like Penang, Johor and Perak."