

Seven hidden gems

The new MRT train service set to pull in on July 17 has a significant 'underground' message to share. >22



Seven hidden gems of the MRT

A new MRT train service will pull in on July 17, signalling the start of Phase 2 of the MRT Sungai Buloh-Kajang line. This Semantan-Kajang route, which covers 30km and 19 stations, has a significant "underground" message to share.

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

WHEN you board the MRT Sungai Buloh-Kajang train, spare a minute to reflect on the concept that is being conveyed, especially at its seven underground stations.

The idea for these seven stations was inspired by the Klang Gates Quartz Ridge, a pure quartz dyke found in the Klang Valley that is the world's longest at 16km.

Quartz has many facets by nature, so the designers of the underground stations have used its kaleidoscopic reflections to symbolise Malaysia's diversity in race and culture.

Entrances to the Muzium Negara, Pasar Seni, Merdeka, Bukit Bintang, Tun Razak Exchange, Cochrane and Maluri stations all incorporate quartz's multi-faceted form in various ways through transparent, reflective and angular structures.

The outcome is the joint effort between project owner Mass Rapid Transit Corporation Sdn Bhd, turnkey contractor MMC Gamuda KVMRT (T) Sdn Bhd (MGKT) and various design consultants.

International consultants Aecom and Mott MacDonald were roped in as the overall lead architectural consultants, forming partnerships with Malaysian architectural firms Veritas Architects and NEUformation Architects.

The Aecom-Veritas team is in charge of the Muzium Negara, Pasar Seni, Merdeka and Bukit Bintang stations, all located in heavily built-up areas, while the Mott MacDonald-NEUformation team took care of Tun Razak Exchange, Cochrane and Maluri, all sited in areas that are being transformed by large, mixed development projects.

Muzium Negara

For this station, which is next to KL Sentral, the catchphrase is "Transition". This is based on the fact that the museum is a treasure trove of all things old and priceless, while neighbouring developments are all brand new.

At its concourse level, columns with glass cladding depicting modes of public transport from yesteryear evoke a sense of nostalgia in an otherwise sleek and contemporary station interior.

At 24m deep, this station is connected to KL Sentral via an underpass that crosses Jalan Damansara, before re-emerging on the other side in the form of an overhead bridge to KL Sentral.

Pasar Seni

The keyword for the Pasar Seni station, which is 25m below the meeting point between Sungai Klang and Sungai Gombak, is "Confluence" (Kuala Lumpur means muddy confluence).

"This is the birthplace of Kuala Lumpur, and we are paying tribute to this confluence by stylising its Y shape into a contemporary interior design motif," said Tricia Low, architectural manager of MGKT, the builder of the seven underground stations and tunnels.

At Pasar Seni, commuters can change to the Kelana Jaya LRT



Bold and bright: The Maluri MRT station was given a lighter and more playful design to add character to its theme "New Generation".



Patriotic spirit: The Rukunegara is enshrined in the feature wall of the Merdeka station. — Picture courtesy of Veritas Design Group



Getting creative: For Ng, the challenge in designing the station interiors was choosing which facets of independence to include.

line without having to tap in or out of the system.

Merdeka

The theme for the station, located near Stadium Merdeka where Independence was pro-

claimed, is obvious.

Low said this station would be integrated with the proposed KL118 development (formerly known as Warisan Merdeka), touted as the future tallest building in Malaysia.

This four-level station is seamlessly linked to the Plaza Rakyat LRT station via a walkway, without needing commuters to tap out.

Ng Yiek Seng, principal of Veritas Design Group, said the challenge in designing the interior was "what not to include", given that there are so many facets of independence.

"The end result is the collective contribution of many parties, while keeping in line with the requirements of transit architecture," he said.

Patriotic images are featured at its concourse level and include the proclamation of Merdeka by the late Tunku Abdul Rahman.

This is one of the more visually interesting stations, with feature walls within the station that highlight the Rukunegara. (Selfies and wefies alert!)

Bukit Bintang

This is a place that practically never sleeps, hence the "Dynamic" theme. The constant vibrancy of this area is expressed through a bold, four-storey high feature wall composed of dynamic trapezoidal geometry in various shades of red that suggest movement.

At 33.4m deep, this is the second deepest station in the MRT network (just imagine going 12 storeys underground).

Tun Razak Exchange

This is the largest station in the MRT network as it will host the upcoming Line 2 of the MRT, also known as the Sungai Buloh-Serdang-Putrajaya line.

The station, built to provide seamless integration between the two lines, adopts "Islamic Corporate" as its theme. At 45m, it is the deepest station in the MRT network.

As TRX will be a future finance hub, the design of the station has to balance the fine line between beauty and the need to project a business-like image.

"The design intent here is to pro-

ject an Islamic identity while maintaining a contemporary, formal and corporate ambience. Here, consistent and identifiable Islamic motifs are expressed in columns, walls and ceilings," said Low.

Cochrane

"Urban Living" is the theme of this station, which is located in a part of town badly in need of a facelift. There is an underground link to Ikea Cheras, as well as a pedestrian link to Sunway Velocity, a mixed commercial-residential development.

Maluri

This station, which is in quite an old part of town, takes on the theme "New Generation".

It is located on a site undergoing rapid urban renewal, led by Sunway Velocity. This presents opportunities to approach it in a lighter, more playful manner to add character to the local urban context.

The station is seamlessly integrated with the Maluri LRT station, which is located right above it.