

IMPRESSIVE

# PROUD OF NATION'S MRT SYSTEM

**A** DEBATE has been going viral that our mass rapid transit (MRT) system is better than the New York City Subway or London Underground.

Malaysians who always look up to the West will certainly not agree with this.

As someone who is living a stone's throw from the New York City, it is not fair to compare Malaysia's newly launched MRT Sungai Buloh-Kajang Line to the 113-year-old NYC Subway.

Credit must be given where it's due.

The NYC Subway is regarded as one of the most famous underground systems in the world.

With nearly 500 stations, more than 1,000km of rail tracks and carrying close to 1.8 billion riders every year, the system is still in operation 24/7, serving New Yorkers and keeping the city alive.

I once envied the system and wished that Malaysia could have one just like it. But that was then, before I learnt that the system has its own problems and issues that disappoint commuters.

Subway delays have significantly increased from 28,000 cases per month in 2012 to more than 70,000 recently.

Its reliability, a measure of distance subway trains travel be-



*The Mass Rapid Transit Sungai Buloh-Kajang Line is said to be on a par with the New York City Subway or London Underground public rapid transit system. FILE PIC*

tween breakdowns, decreased to 190,000km this year from 320,000km last year. On-time performance has decreased for majority of its lines, the lowest being 33 per cent.

One of the lines, which used to run with an impressive 94 per cent on-time performance, has declined to 70 per cent.

Countless cases of people trapped underground, derailed

trains and emergency evacuations are haunting subway commuters.

A number of reasons have been identified as the cause for the subway's declining performance: ageing trains, outdated signal systems, a lack of financial support, poor maintenance, overcrowding and, last but not least, local politics.

Maintenance budget is often

neglected due to political reasons. To reduce government spending, less money is channelled to public transportation on the basis the trains are still in operation, thus maintenance is not needed.

Once the system breaks down, the cost of repairing it turns out to be more than the initial maintenance cost. The signalling system, which dates back before

World War 2, has failed to manage the much complicated system, resulting in delays. It is possible to transform the whole signalling system, but it will take about 50 years with an expected budget of US\$20 billion (RM85 billion).

What can we learn from here?

Our MRT is in its infancy, and we have a lot to do to make sure it can operate for the next 100 years. To say that we are the best in the world is not an overstatement, but we also cannot be too complacent about it.

We should ask ourselves: in 50 years, can we still claim to be one of the best in the world? How can we ensure that we are not going to repeat the mistakes made by the NYC Subway?

Everyone has to keep the MRT safe and secure. For civilians, we must refrain from littering. Some subway trains had caught fire due to rubbish found on the track.

Looking at the pictures of MRT stations, I am impressed with the modern interiors.

I am very proud of Malaysia's MRT and hope to continue doing so in the years to come.

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