

AHMAD
A TALIB

FROM BULLOCK CART TO MRT

It will become everyone's favourite mode of transport and we have to help keep its stations clean and safe

THIRTY sen! That was my fare when I took the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) from Muzium Negara to Pasar Seni yesterday. This special discounted fare is on until Merdeka Day on Aug 31. On normal days, the fare is 60 sen.

If I were to take the MRT from Muzium Negara to Kajang for satay, the fare on a normal day is RM1.90. Really, you can't get a better deal than that. This alone is a big incentive to enjoy satay Kajang, don't you think?

A big poster inside the underground station stared at me in a thought-provoking way. The poster was that of a bullock cart! A full-blown poster of a bullock cart that took me back to my childhood days.

I remember riding on one in Ampang Pecah, Kuala Kubu Baru. It was a 3.2km ride from the village to the town. It was quite an experience. The owner of the bullock cart was fondly referred to as "Bhai".

In the old days, every Sikh was referred to as "Bhai" — "Bapa Bhai", "Bhai Muda", "Bhai Susu" and "Bhai Jaga". The friendship between the kampung folk and the Sikh community was always warm.

That poster took me back to the late 1950s and early 1960s. And yesterday, I took the escalator from where the poster was placed down to Platform 1 towards the present, where technology makes things happen.

The MRT, just like the monorail, the electric train service of Keretapi Tanah Melayu, KLIA Ekspres and the light rail transit, is something whose time has come.

We can no longer use our private cars for daily commuting. There will be days when we need to leave the Protons and the Mercedes and the Toyotas at home and take the train instead.

The train services are fast taking us to developed-nation status, infrastructure-wise, that is. Soon, more people will be using the MRT and its related services not just for their convenience but for economic reasons.



It was a stress-free ride on the Mass Rapid Transit yesterday morning. PIX BY AHMAD A. TALIB

Giving weekend discounts would help ease the city's traffic congestion. I could see families on the MRT going for weekend visits and shopping. Young parents and grandmothers pushing baby strollers were a common sight.

But, stories of vandalism emerging so soon after the MRT started operations two weeks ago were a shock. It shows that some of us still have third-world mentality.

Come on, people! We are all better than that. How can we benefit by breaking glasses and toilet seats? What do we get by drawing graffiti on walls with profanities and other nonsense?

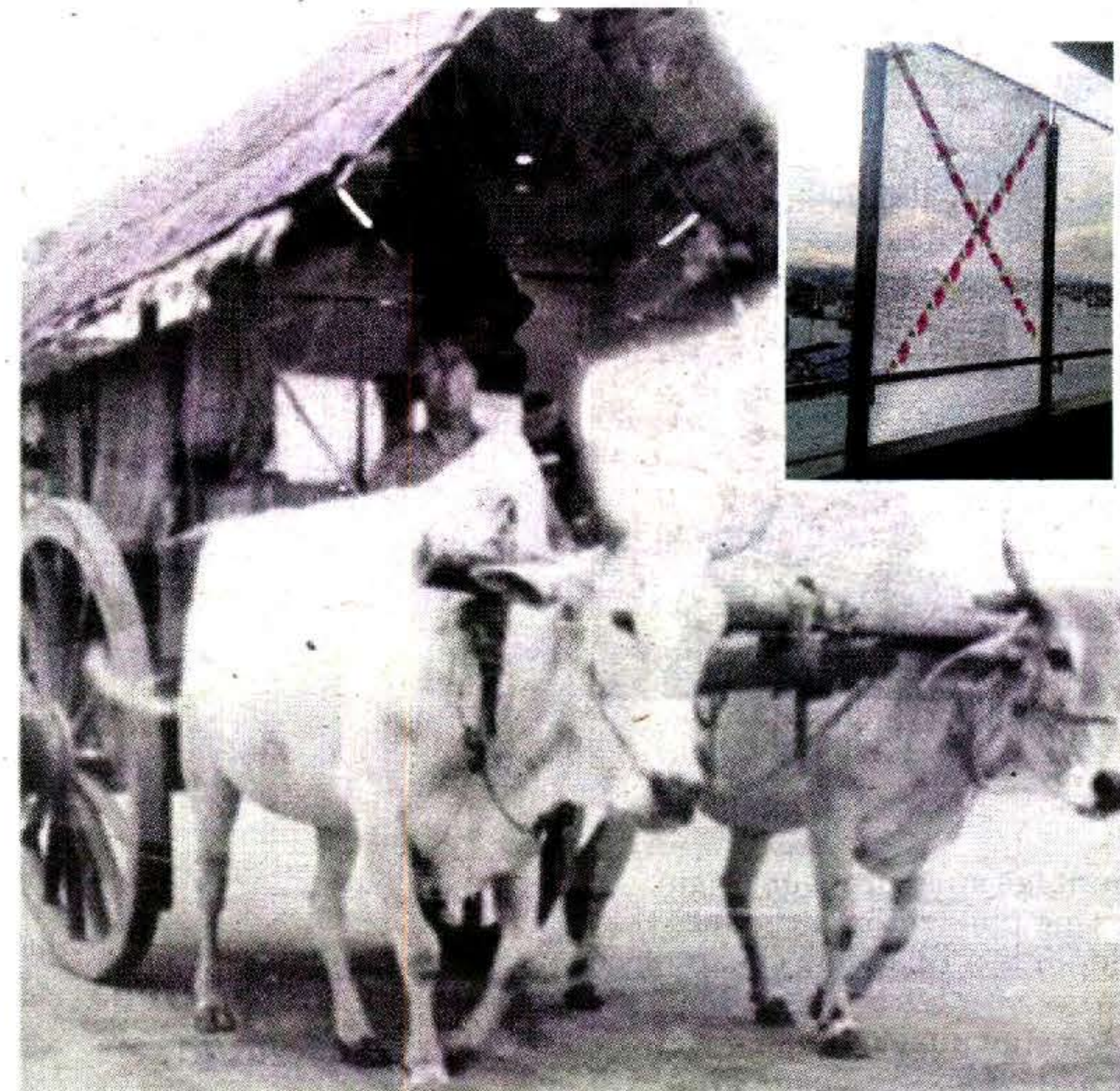
If the culprits are caught, they should be punished. On Thursday, a glass pane was smashed at the Batu II Cheras MRT station. Luckily, the glass was strong and it did not shatter, and hurt someone.

Last week, a toilet seat was broken, making it difficult for users. Come on! This is not your private toilet at home. You can do whatever you want with your home toilet but a public toilet is a shared property.

Naj, short for Datuk Najmuddin Abdullah, who is MRT Corp strategic communications and stakeholder relations director, told me: "Underground stations seem a popular target for such acts of vandalism. I'm not saying that they are very bad but we must nip this in the bud."

So far, the stations affected are Maluri, Bukit Bintang and Merdeka. These are all underground (UG) stations. MRT surveys showed UG stations are mostly located in the city and have more users.

Maybe, MRT operator, RapidRail, should pay more attention to these stations and be



A poster of a bullock cart can be found at the Muzium Negara MRT station in Kuala Lumpur. (Inset) The smashed glass pane at the Batu II Cheras MRT station.

vigilant at all times. I'm sure there are closed-circuit television cameras placed at strategic locations (but not in the toilets, of course).

The MRT will be everyone's favourite mode of transport soon, if not already. We have a common duty to help keep our stations clean, safe and fully operational.

Yesterday, Naj accompanied Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai on his MRT ride. I hope Liow would do this more often so that he could monitor the service.

Go incognito YB (Yang Berhormat) — put on your dark shades and check things thoroughly

without media cameras and pressmen.

Listen, people! During the days of the bullock cart, its owner used it every day to transport all sorts of goods — from cow dung to wooden planks to earth and plants.

The Bhai owner would scream at any troublemaker using his bullock cart. And that person would never get to ride on it any more after that. The MRT operator may want to consider this.

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