



# DON'T POLITICISE TENDER TIMELINE

Shorter bidding period for MRT3 in line with new target completion date — MRT Corp. Sulhi Azman has the story on **Page 4**.

Datuk Seri Shahril Mokhtar

# Don't politicise tender timeline — MRT Corp

Shorter bidding period for MRT3 is in line with new target completion date

STORIES BY SULHI AZMAN

KUALA LUMPUR: The decision to limit the tender period for the mass rapid transit Line 3 (MRT3) project to 45 days should not be politicised, said Mass Rapid Transit Corp Sdn Bhd (MRT Corp).

"There are no political elements involved in the design of MRT3. It is transparent, and the tender period is open from Nov 15 until Dec 29," said MRT Corp chief executive officer Datuk Seri Shahril Mokhtar, at a media briefing yesterday.

Shahril disagreed with the suggestion that the shorter timeline would pose a challenge for robust participation in the tender process.

"We have the necessary experiences, and we know they [the bidders] can do it. These are regular railway players in the market, and they are certainly not new to our processes and requirements," he said, adding that the shorter timeline is in line with the new target completion date for the project.

"As you know, the prime minister in his Budget 2018 speech announced that the construction of MRT3 has been moved forward to 2025, two years ahead of the original 2027. And to meet this deadline, it is only sensible that construction of MRT3 commences as early as possible," said Shahril.

MRT Corp, he said, wants the construction of MRT3 to run concurrently with the construction of MRT2 so as to meet the stated deadline.

Shahril said the company expects to kick off the construction of MRT3 — estimated by analysts to cost around RM40 billion — by as early as the third quarter of 2019, with completion in about 75 months.

He said MRT Corp expects the first phase of the project to be completed by the end of 2025, and the second phase by September 2026.

The company expects to announce the successful bidder by as early as February 2018, he added.

"We will organise a briefing for MRT3 on Nov 15, and the tender will be closed by Dec 29. Then, it is up to the responsible committee to pick and select the most suitable candidate for the job," he said.

Shahril rejected the view held by some analysts that no local contractor fulfils the technical experience required to bid for the leading contractor's role to undertake the project on a turnkey basis, and to provide financing for it.

"It is not true that local contractors are seen as incompetent to bid for the leading role in MRT3 jobs. I am in talks with capable ones almost on a weekly basis, and to ensure smooth completion of MRT3, local firms are allowed to partner with eight firms. Now, who



(From left) MRT Corp director of commercial and land management Datuk Haris Fadzilah Hassan, Shahril, director of strategic communications and stakeholder relations Datuk Najmuddin Abdullah, and chief financial officer Datuk Mohd Hairul Abdul Hamid at a media briefing held by MRT Corp yesterday. Photo by Haris Hassan

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says that our local firms can't bid for the leading role?" he stressed.

At the same time, Shahril also said if a local contractor is good in civil engineering work but is lacking in terms of signals and systems, then a strategic partnership is the key to enter the bid.

"It is all about partnership and complementing each other. In railway engineering, two key aspects are important: civil works and signalling systems. This is where smart partnership is vital," he added.

Previously, Nomura Securities Malaysia Sdn Bhd had said that the huge requirement to finance up to 90% of the total MRT3 cost — which could be worth more than RM30 billion for a minimum of 30 years, and sanctioned with a moratorium for the first eight years — in addition to the relevant technical experiences required, is likely to pave the way for foreign contractors to bid for the leading contractor role.

"Who says local firms are not welcome or won't be able to participate in the MRT3 project? Even if a foreign firm wants to come

in and bid [on their own], they won't be able to do that as one of the requirements is to have local and bumiputera participation," he said.

Declining to reveal the alignment of MRT3, Shahril said MRT Corp is still in discussion with regulators and the local authorities, particularly with the Land Public Transport Commission, on the matter.

He said the company hopes to announce the route, which will mostly be elevated and underground, by the end of 2018.

It was previously reported that MRT3 will cover hotspots in the city centre such as Ampang Jaya, the Kuala Lumpur City Centre, Jalan Bukit Bintang, the Tun Razak Exchange, Bandar Malaysia, KL Eco City, Pusat Bandar Damansara, Mont Kiara and Sentul.

"MRT3 is expected to complement MRT1 and MRT2, and it will also integrate with the railway lines operated by Prasarana Malaysia Bhd and Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd," said Shahril.

The already operational MRT1 stretches from Sungai Buloh to Kajang, while MRT2, which is currently under construction, will connect Sungai Buloh to Putrajaya via Serdang.

In a tender notice released early this month, MRT Corp said MRT3 is expected to be 40km long, 32km of it underground and the remaining 8km elevated. The underground portion is expected to feature 19 stations, while the elevated portion will have seven stations.

MRT3, also referred to as the Circle Line, is set to be the 13th urban rail transit line and the fifth fully automated and driverless line in the Klang Valley.