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MRT SBK line a milestone for nation

GOAL: Najib says project brings Malaysia a step forward as developed nation

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THE much-awaited first phase of the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Sungai Buloh-Kajang Line service kickstarted at 6am today, marking yet another milestone in the nation's journey towards becoming a developed nation.

In launching the line, which took five years to construct, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said Klang Valley commuters would enjoy a month of free rides on the MRT and its feeder buses until Jan 16.

"The MRT project will elevate Malaysia, bringing it one step forward as a developed country.

"No country can be recognised as a developed nation without an efficient and modern public transportation network.

"As a New Year's gift and to give a chance for all to try this new, modern and efficient public transportation facility, Rapid Rail Sdn Bhd will provide free MRT and feeder bus

services for a month.

"Commuters will only be charged beginning Jan 17," he said at the Kwasa Damansara MRT station yesterday.

There was also an additional cheer as the "on time and below budget" first phase megaproject had saved the government a whopping RM2 billion from its initial target cost of RM23 billion.

He also said he did not want the slogan "People first, performance now", coined in 2009, to be an empty slogan or mere political rhetoric without real implementation.

Najib added that it was then that he formed national policies such as the Government Transformation Programme, the Economic Transformation Programme and the National Key Result Areas (NKRAs).

"Out of the seven NKRAs, one of it was to make public transportation the country's highest priority."

The essential ingredient of a first-rate nation was to have good and reliable infrastructure, he said, adding that the government had other projects that placed priority on

connectivity and infrastructure development in the country.

"If we want Malaysia to be a first-rate nation, we must have a very good infrastructure.

"This is why we have the MRT, the LRT (light rapid transit), the High-Speed Rail, the East Coast Rail Line, the Pan-Borneo Highway and many others."

The 21km northern elevated section of the MRT SBK Line involves 12 stations between Sungai Buloh and Semantan.

Other stations ready for operations include Kampung Selamat, Kwasa Damansara, Kwasa Sentral, Kota Damansara, Surian, Mutiara Damansara, Bandar Utama, Taman Tun Dr Ismail, Phileo Damansara and Pusat Bandar Damansara.

The second phase of the MRT SBK Line is slated to start operations in July next year. Once in full operation, the entire 51km SBK line from Sungai Buloh to Kajang would take an hour from end to end.

Having personally inspected the feeder bus services, Najib said he believed that passengers would feel "very comfortable" riding on them. The buses will service residential areas situated within a 5km radius of selected MRT stations.

He also said most MRT stations

were equipped with walkways that connected the station to nearby buildings, giving better access to those who lived or worked at a particular building, while being able to enjoy a shopping experience at the stations.

"These facilities are among the steps taken by the government to encourage the usage of public transport among Malaysians, particularly those in the Klang Valley."

With a "Jom naik MRT", (Let's ride the MRT), Najib later invited almost 1,000 attendees at the MRT SBK launch to ride the brand new four-

car carriage from Kwasa Damansara station, stopping at the Kampung Selamat and Sungai Buloh stations before heading back to Kwasa Damansara.

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