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**R**ANGKAIAN Pengangkutan Integrasi Deras Kuala Lumpur (Rapid KL), the flagship service brand under Prasarana Malaysia Bhd, marks a significant milestone in revolutionising Malaysia's urban mobility since its establishment in 2004.

For the past two decades, Rapid KL has accompanied the nation on its journey, reflecting the country's dynamic fusion of modernity and tradition.

As part of the company's 20th anniversary, *Business Times* spoke to Prasarana President and Group Chief Executive Officer Mohd Azharuddin Mat Sah on its accomplishments over the past two decades.

"Rapid KL's journey began with just two rail lines — the Putra and STAR Light Rail Transit (LRT) lines. These covered a modest 56.2km and served 49 stations.

"Today, the network has grown significantly, now managing five major rail lines — the Kelana Jaya LRT line, the Ampang/Sri Petaling LRT line, the KL Monorail, and the Kajang and Putrajaya Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) lines.

"This expansion has seen the rail network extend to 203km — nearly quadruple its original length — and encompassing 149 stations — triple the number we started with," Azharuddin told the *Business Times*.



Prasarana Malaysia Bhd President and Group Chief Executive Officer Mohd Azharuddin Mat Sah says *Rangkaian Pengangkutan Integrasi Deras Kuala Lumpur* now manages five major rail lines across a 203km network encompassing 149 stations. PIC BY AZIAH AZMEE

### Ridership enhancement

Due to various enhancements, the addition of new trains and the launch of Phase 2 of the MRT Putrajaya line last year, daily ridership across all five rail lines operated by Prasarana (Rapid KL) rose to an average of 904,000 (up to August), compared with 741,000 last year and 502,000 in 2022.

He added that Rapid KL bus services now cover stage buses, LRT and MRT feeder buses, and the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service on the Sunway line.

Azharuddin also noted that Rapid

KL's bus services have seen significant progress. The number of routes has grown by 50 per cent, from 179 routes in 2004 to 273 routes today.

"As a result, Rapid KL now handles over 1.25 million passenger trips daily, covering both rail and bus services," he said.

### Improved Service Reliability

In terms of reliability, in 2022, there were

more than 200 disruptions across all Rapid KL rail services, averaging about 50 per line.

However, Azharuddin said the company has reduced that figure to fewer than 30 now, and aims to bring it down to just 20 disruptions per line.

Year-to-date, the number of disruptions on the Kelana Jaya line is 19, down from 49 in 2022, while the Kajang line experienced 13 disruptions so far, com-

pared with 46 in 2022.

Azharuddin noted that such growth reflects the organisation's commitment to enhancing public transportation infrastructure, adapting to modern technology and meeting the evolving needs of urban commuters.

"Our focus is not just on expanding the network, but also on making travel seamless, efficient and convenient for our passengers," he said.

### More connectivity

In the Klang Valley, there is currently one bus for every 5,000 passengers, compared with one bus for every 1,000 or fewer passengers in the three other referenced cities.

Prasarana's data indicates that 92 per cent of bus routes experience waiting times longer than 15 minutes, with a third of routes having wait times exceeding 30 minutes.

Azharuddin said: "We don't have enough buses. Therefore, the government, through Prasarana, plans to progressively add 310 diesel buses (costing around RM700,000 for each), starting from the first quarter of 2025, and 250 electric buses (costing over RM1 million for each), beginning in the fourth quarter of 2025."

Meanwhile, to improve public transport accessibility, Rapid KL launched the Demand-Responsive Transit service, deploying 20 vans in June this year.

Azharuddin said this service is expected to grow to 320 vans by the first quarter of 2025.

"With this service, passengers can book a van through the MyRapid Pulse app, and the van will pick them up from designated 'pick-up points'.

"Currently, nine residential areas are served. This option is more efficient than traditional buses, with operational costs about 70 per cent lower."

### Fully electric in five years

As part of its green mobility efforts, Azharuddin said Prasarana aims to convert its entire bus fleet to electric vehicles (EVs) within the next five years.

"We plan to convert 1,200 buses. Therefore, we will coordinate with Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB) to ensure an adequate power supply for charging stations to support these buses.

"TNB will handle the power supply, while we will issue tenders for depot infrastructure. The cost of developing the required energy infrastructure is estimated to be between RM2 billion and RM3 billion."

According to Azharuddin, the 250 EV buses are expected to be delivered gradually, starting in the fourth quarter of 2025.

Of these, he said 150 will be midi buses, and 100 will be full-sized buses.

"From the total, 200 of the EV buses will be deployed in Kuala Lumpur, with the remaining units allocated to Penang.

"We are conducting an open tender process. Based on current market rates, a full-sized EV bus costs around RM1.5 million, while a smaller bus is priced between RM1.1 million and RM1.2 million."

### Plans moving forward

Prasarana aims to increase the average daily ridership of its rail and bus services to 1.4 million by the end of 2025.

This goal will be achieved through various initiatives supported by the Transport Ministry and the government.

Azharuddin said one major development will be the new LRT Shah Alam line, which will connect Bandar Utama to Johan Setia, Klang.

"Spanning 37km and featuring 25 stations, the Shah Alam line will benefit two million residents along the Shah Alam and Klang corridor.

"The first 20 stations are expected to begin operations in the third quarter of 2025."

According to Azharuddin, the launch of this new line will significantly enhance urban mobility and provide more travel options for city residents.

"We are 90 per cent complete, with most of the infrastructure already in place. Our focus now is on implementing and testing signaling systems and communications.

"The trains are ready, and testing is underway. Since these are automated trains, thorough testing is essential to ensure seamless communication between the trains, stations, headquarters and depots. This process will take several months.

"We will commence testing with the Land Public Transport Agency in June. If everything meets its rules and regulations, we expect the line to open by the end of September," he said.

### Initiatives for 2024



- Special bus lanes (Ampang, Genting Klang & Klang Lama)

### Initiatives for 2025



- Improvement of rail service levels
- Replacement of buses until 2030 (phased)
- Expanding DRT (Demand-Responsive Transit) services
- Commencement of LRT3 operations - Shah Alam route
- Feeder Bus Services in Shah Alam

