

## For Immediate Release

Press Release

11 August 2024

### Sarawak Metro – Committed in developing local talents for a modern public transport industry

**KUCHING:** Sarawak’s future modern public transport industry is set to bring in novel concepts and innovations, especially technologies such as the Autonomous Rapid Transit (ART) vehicles and the use of green hydrogen to power the new public transport fleet.

As such, it is more crucial than ever to groom young local talents to ensure the availability of a pool of competent workers for this new industry.

One of the approaches that Sarawak Metro Sdn Bhd (Sarawak Metro) has taken to address this issue was to introduce its Young Talent Programme (YTP), which is a sub-programme of its Socio-Economic Enhancement Development (SEED) Programme under the Operational & Maintenance Readiness Programme Initiative.

“We are very proud of our SEED Programme, because I believe it is a new concept that will add value to our project, not only in Kuching but throughout Sarawak,” said Ts. Mazli Mustaffa, the Chief Executive Officer of Sarawak Metro, who introduced the idea for the programme in 2019.

“We are committed to see this initiative through especially when we know that the Kuching Urban Transportation System (KUTS) project is a game changer in improving the socio-economic landscape of Sarawak, in line with its plan towards becoming an advanced economy by 2030,” enthused Mazli, who makes it a point to personally monitor the development of the YTP apprentices.

With the main objective of adding value to the KUTS project, the SEED Programme is specially tailored for the needs of the industry in Sarawak.

The programme was inspired by the Industrial Collaboration Programme, which is implemented in most federal-funded mega projects, especially in Peninsular Malaysia.

For media enquiries, please contact the Sarawak Metro Corporate Communication team :

Letitia Samuel, Media Senior Manager

+6(016) 800 4516

[letitia.samuel@mysarawakmetro.com](mailto:letitia.samuel@mysarawakmetro.com)

[www.mysarawakmetro.com](http://www.mysarawakmetro.com)



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**SARAWAK METRO SDN BHD (201801007738)**  
*A Member of the SEDC Group of Companies*

16-01A, Level 16, Gateway Kuching,  
No. 9, Jalan Bukit Mata Kuching,  
93100 Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia.

Tel: (082) 524 222  
Fax: (082) 524 224  
E-mail: [info@mysarawakmetro.com](mailto:info@mysarawakmetro.com)  
Website: [www.mysarawakmetro.com](http://www.mysarawakmetro.com)

For Sarawak Metro’s SEED Programme, one of the main components of the YTP are the series of industrial attachments with the KUTS Project’s contractors, either locally or overseas.

And one of the major benefits of the industrial attachments is the potential for knowledge transfer made possible through the on-the-job training experienced by the apprentices.

The first recruitment for the YTP was in 2021, starting with 12 apprentices.

Sarawak Metro’s aspiration is to have 60 apprentices successfully completing the programme, by 2026.

Upon completion of their 24-month apprenticeship, those who make the cut are offered full time positions at Sarawak Metro.

As of May 2024, a total of 13 apprentices have gone on to become full time staff of Sarawak Metro while another 27 are still undergoing their apprenticeship.

During their apprenticeship, they are assigned to various departments, under mentors with vast experience in the railway and public transport industries.

As mentioned, the apprentices are also given the opportunity to undergo industrial attachments with Sarawak Metro’s technology partners in the development of the KUTS project.

The industrial attachments carried out so far have been held either in Malaysia or China and all the apprentices involved felt that the experience has enhanced their insights and industry knowledge, and they also believe that the experience will help them grow further in their career.

“Before joining this industrial attachment, my understanding of the hydrogen vehicle (H2V) preliminary design stage was limited to only a few sub-systems, but the comprehensive training at CRRC allowed me to explore all of the sub-components in depth,” shared Sara Athynna binti Mohd Kamal Basheer, who is now a systems engineer (hydrogen power and SCADA), in the KUTS project team.

Sara had the opportunity to attend a two-month industrial attachment with CRRC MRT Holding Group Co. Ltd., together with YTP apprentices Addery Ingka Andok, Nabil Norman and Muhammad Razi Yunus.

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"I learned not only the theoretical aspects but also the practical maintenance skills such as starting and shutting down the ART, changing the dryer for propulsion and inspecting passenger doors. It's one thing to study systems in theory and another to handle them hands-on," she added.

"It gave me a clearer picture of the entire system since I had just joined the company four months before being sent for the attachment. In terms of skills, I learned quite a number of maintenance procedures, even though their ART vehicle is slightly different from ours," shared Nabil bin Norman, an apprentice assigned to the Operations and Maintenance department.

Apart from Sara, Nabil, Addery and Muhammad Razi, another batch of young talents, Muhammad Azri Abdul Wahab, Syammil Mohd Ishak, Qhalief Sapawi, Nur Nafisa Abdullah and Farid Hamizan also benefited greatly during their industrial attachment at Fangda InnoTech Co. Ltd. in Shenzhen, China.

"Fangda is a huge company, and the automatic platform gate (APG) they produce is just one of the many components they are involved in," said Muhammad Azri, an engineer with the System Assurance and Requirements department.

"The most significant takeaway from this attachment is the importance of communication among everyone involved in the APG project because effective communication is crucial in developing the project, preventing any delays, and ensuring the best possible outcomes.

"This experience has equipped me with invaluable skills and knowledge, setting me up to give my best to elevate the KUTS project to a premier status in public transportation," enthused Muhammad Azri.

In terms of the challenges faced during their industrial attachment, the barrier in communication was a common issue for all of them.

According to Qhalief Bin Sapawi, a Systems Assurance and Requirements engineer, although he managed to learn basic Mandarin, it was still a struggle and at times technology was one of the best solutions to overcome the language barrier they faced.

"We used translator apps to facilitate our discussions and with persistence we managed to understand each other," he said.

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Similarly, Nabil also found language to be a barrier during his attachment, and despite having some basic knowledge of Mandarin, the technical terminology was a challenge for him.

For Syammil Mohd Ishak, a mechanical engineer, who is an apprentice assigned to the Signalling and Automatic Platform Gate (APG) team, the industrial attachment also exposed him to a very different work culture.

He was impressed with the hosts' dedication and commitment towards their work and this view was also shared by Nur Nafisa Abdullah, an apprentice assigned to the Signalling, Train Control and APG team.

"We tried to tag along and adjust to their work tempo. It was challenging, but the great hospitality shown by our hosts made it much easier," said Nur Nafisa, who admitted she was also more competent in using chopsticks after her month-long stint in Shenzhen.

Muhammad Afio Rudi, a senior apprentice in the Systems department, recently completed his industrial attachment with Tangshan Baichuan Intelligent Machine Co. Ltd. in China.

"The attachment exposed me to a wide range of equipment found in a typical railway depot, from the pre-design stage to the final product awaiting delivery," Afio shared.

"Gaining knowledge on various design types and project exposure is important for becoming a knowledgeable professional in the industry. As someone who is still considered 'crawling' into the industry, this attachment provided me with new experiences and perspectives. I am honoured to have been chosen by Sarawak Metro for this opportunity."

Mazli reiterated that Sarawak Metro would continue to send its young engineers for industrial attachments in collaboration with its suppliers, towards developing the human capital for KUTS.

Sarawak Metro acknowledged the support given by the contractor for Systems Package 1 of the KUTS project – EPR Mobilus Global Rail JV Sdn Bhd (EMG JV) – for coordinating the industrial attachment with its partners and suppliers.

Ends

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**About Sarawak Metro and KUTS project:**

Sarawak Metro Sdn Bhd (Sarawak Metro), a wholly owned subsidiary of Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC), has been entrusted by the Sarawak Government to modernise public transport through the Kuching Urban Transportation System (KUTS) project.

Sarawak Metro is the implementer, operator and maintainer of the KUTS project.

The project is being developed in phases, and Phase 1 includes the development of three lines: the Blue Line from Rembus in Kota Samarahan to Hikmah Exchange in the city centre; the Red Line, from Kuching Sentral to Pending; and the Green Line, from Pending to Damai.

Construction of the first package for the Blue Line is expected to complete by the fourth quarter of 2025 and all three lines are scheduled to be fully completed by the end of 2027.

The backbone of the KUTS project is the introduction of the zero-emission Autonomous Rapid Transit (ART) hydrogen vehicles.

The ART vehicles will be operated on dedicated lanes, meaning they will not share the lane with other road users. The ART hydrogen vehicles will run on rubber tires, and hence the dedicated lanes will be trackless. The lanes will mostly be at-grade (road level) while certain sections of the alignment will be elevated.

The ART operation will be supported by a network of feeder buses, which will also consist of hydrogen-powered vehicles to offer the ‘first mile and last mile’ connectivity for commuters.

The move to use hydrogen is in line with the Sarawak Government’s aspirations to advance the hydrogen economy and to decarbonise public transport in Sarawak.

**Photos and Captions:**



**Pioneer Batch...**The first batch of Sarawak Metro’s young talents celebrating the successful completion of their apprenticeship in July last year

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**Sending off...**Sarawak Metro's young engineers and apprentices heading off for their S&CS and APG attachment with Global Rail in August last year



**Hands on training...**Sarawak Metro's young engineers and apprentices performing maintenance works at MRT Kuchai



**Attachment milestone achieved...**Sarawak Metro's young engineers with their certificates after completing their S&CS and APG attachment, last November

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**Marking a new phase...**Sarawak Metro’s apprentices departing for their attachment at CRRC MRT Holding Group Co., Ltd in August last year



**Unique experience...**One of Sarawak Metro’s apprentices, experiencing first hand how it feels to drive an ART vehicle



**Marking the moment...**A simple closing ceremony for Sarawak Metro’s young engineers was held at the end of their attachment, which focused on the ART hydrogen vehicle

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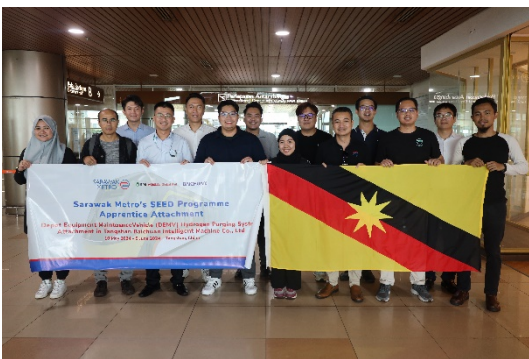




**China bound...** Sarawak Metro's young engineers and apprentices heading off to FANGDA InnoTech for the attachment, which focused on APG, last March



**Learning from the experts...** One of Sarawak Metro's apprentices inspecting a control panel under the watchful eyes of expert engineers during an attachment in China



**Another significant journey begins...** The latest batch of apprentices set off for their attachment, which was focused on depot equipment and maintenance vehicles (DEMV), last May

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**Always more to learn...**A Sarawak Metro apprentice gaining further insights on depot equipment for the ART system



**A moment to remember...**Celebrating the completion of the DEMV attachment, last June

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