

# Commuters more intolerant of SMRT, SBS services: poll

By **TEH SHI NING**

COMMUTERS made their unhappiness with Singapore's public transport operators clear in the latest round of surveys conducted by the Institute of Service Excellence at SMU (ISES).

Train and bus operators SMRT and SBS Transit saw their scores on the Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore (CSISG) plunge from a year ago, as commuters surveyed from April to June this year reported a drop in the quality of their public transport experience.

The MRT sub-sector's index fell 8.7 per cent to score 61.9 out of a maximum of 100 points, while the public buses sub-index fell 7.2 per cent to 61.6 points. These scores were the lowest the MRT and public buses sectors have seen since the start of the CSISG in 2007.

ISES academic director Marcus Lee said that in parsing the survey results, the institute found that commuter expectations did not fall "despite the series of MRT breakdowns in the past year, the gripes relating to overcrowded buses, and the large public mind-share that these issues have had in 2012".

"Rather, in our opinion, these developments have primed the weary commuters to be more intolerant of service lapses, negatively affecting how the customer perceives the service experience," he said.

To remedy this fall in customer satisfaction, the two transport companies could take the opportunity afforded by the government's upcoming plans to improve public transport infrastructure, to communicate better with customers, ISES suggests.

For instance, they could "keep their customers apprised of developments, consolidate their feedback from time to time as the projects are being rolled out, and demonstrate that they are offering a participatory role to the commuters in such upgrading efforts," said Dr Lee.

ISES produces customer satisfaction scores for different sectors each quarter, which are compiled into a national score for the year. In focus in Q2 were the Transport & Logistics, Private Education and Public Education sectors.

The score for Transport & Logistics, which also includes taxis, airlines, budget airlines, Changi Airport, postal and courier services, slipped 1.8 points to 68.3.

The private education sector lost some of last year's gains in satisfaction, shedding 5.4 points to score 69, while university students pulled down the public education sector's score by 5.4 points to 69.

In total, more than 11,800 responses were collected via face-to-face interviews on 273 companies in the three broad sectors.