

The Star : Public transport charges set to go up

Written by Administrator

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</p><p>COMMENT
By V.K.

CHIN</p><p align="justify">Apart from buses, the other form of public transport, though more costly, is the taxi. And, of course, there is the light railway system.◆

</p><p align="justify">They therefore constitute the main mode of travel in Kuala Lumpur though the LRT has yet to be introduced in other cities such as Penang and Johor Baru, where congestion is equally hectic. </p><p align="justify">Taxis are a familiar sight in the country though the registered ones are found mainly in urban areas, with illegal ones being more

popular in small towns and kampungs.◆ </p><p align="justify">While taxis are more expensive than buses, they are still used by those who can afford the price and almost by all those without their own transport in an emergency.◆ </p><p align="justify">Taxi fares are relatively cheap and the Government is proposing to increase them by at least 100% following complaints by operators, who have asked for a 600% revision.◆ </p><p align="justify">However, the

Commercial Vehicles Licensing Board, the agency controlling all public transport, must give its approval first. ◆ </p><p align="justify">It has always been reluctant to do so in order to make such transport affordable, especially bus fares.◆ </p><p align="justify">But with prices of petroleum products, batteries and other spare parts going up, the Government has to be fair to the operators since they have to survive too.◆ </p><p align="justify">Keeping fares artificially low will therefore not be in the interest of consumers and operators, and what is contentious is the rate of increase.◆ </p><p align="justify">The Government and public must have been shocked by the 600% increase asked for by taxi operators. ◆ </p><p align="justify">It is definitely huge and even operators realise that it would never be approved.◆ </p><p align="justify">Perhaps it is more a figure to bargain with the board in the hope that some concession will be granted. ◆ </p><p align="justify">Still, the operators must be happy with the 100% increase hinted at by the board.◆ </p><p align="justify">They should not be too happy yet as any increase must be accompanied by better service and courtesy, two traits very much lacking among taxi drivers. ◆ </p><p align="justify">They are also expected to maintain their vehicles properly and to dress appropriately. ◆ </p><p align="justify">However, whatever increase given is unlikely to stop overcharging.◆ </p><p align="justify">There have been numerous complaints of some drivers not using the meters and charging customers exorbitant fares for short distances. ◆ </p><p align="justify">The board, together with the Road Transport Department, is trying to weed out such bad apples, with mixed results.◆ </p><p align="justify">There are, of course, greedy taxi drivers everywhere, but the Government has to do something to change them as their unbecoming behaviour has tarnished the nation◆s image.◆ </p><p align="justify">It may not be a bad idea for the Government to allow taxi operators to increase their fares by 600% or more.◆ </p><p align="justify">If this should happen, taxi drivers may find that they may earn less rather than more because there will be a drastic drop in passengers.◆ </p><p align="justify">In an emergency, such as going into hospital, it may be cheaper and definitely quicker to use the ambulance service provided by medical centres and other voluntary organisations. ◆ </p><p>
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