

19 October 2007

KUALA LUMPUR -- According to a recent news report, the government plans to phase out budget and premier taxis plying the roads in the Klang Valley, replacing them with executive limousines.

Commercial Vehicle Licensing Board (CVLB) Chairman Datuk Markiman Kobiran was reported as saying that the move would be implemented once the public transportation system has been upgraded.

He said the move would take place in stages within the next 10 years.

According to Markiman, the CVLB is already freezing licenses for premier taxis and the operators of budget cabs have been told to upgrade their vehicles.

The base rate of the executive limousine is RM6 as compared to RM2 and RM4 budget cabs and premier taxis respectively.

## **WISE MOVE?**

The plan drew flak from consumers who are against it.

According to consumer and social activist Gurmukh Singh, at the RM6 base rate, the executive limousines are not for the lower income group as not all commuters in the Klang Valley can afford it.

"The moment you take your seat in a limousine, the fare meter reads RM6. Yes, the limousines maybe comfortable but not all Klang Valley residents are businessmen who can afford to pay the fare.

"Don't the authorities ever think of the handicapped. Most of them are poor. If they are well off, then they would not be taking the taxi ride," said Gurmukh.

Gurmukh said from past experience, the people could not solely rely on public transportation to move around.

## **Bernama : Phasing Out Budget Cabs a Bad Move,says consumers**

Written by Administrator

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The federal government is spending RM10 billion over the next three to four years to upgrade public transportation in the Klang Valley.

Gurmukh said most of the public transport vehicles and their related facilities are not disabled-friendly.

For example if a wheelchair-bound person wants to get to the hospital, he can call for a budget cab and his wheelchair can be placed in the vehicle's boot, he said.

"We hardly find Rapid KL buses and Light Rail Transit (LRT) coaches being equipped with facilities for the handicapped," he said, adding that it would be very difficult for a crippled, what more a wheelchair-bound person to board a Rapid KL bus.

Putraline and Starline are the two LRT systems operating in the Klang Valley. Syarikat Prasarana Negara Bhd and Rapid KL have been entrusted by the government to improve the LRT services and put more buses on the roads.

Gurmukh said the RM6 base fare charged by limousines is exorbitant and would be a burden to the handicapped if the budget cabs are phased out.

"It is a pity that when Malaysia is fast turning into a developed country, its public transportation facilities for the handicapped are still lacking," he said.

"Therefore I hope the authorities would conduct a study first before phasing out the budget cabs and premier taxis and maybe reconsider their decision," said Gurmukh.

### **RELIABLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT?**

Meanwhile, educationist Fatimah Mansur lauded Markiman's statement that the CVLB is in the process of upgrading the taxi industry's quality of service.

"But is there a guarantee that the public transport service has enough quality and the new system provides the public a service that commensurate with the amount of funds spent by the government?" she asked.

Fatimah also said a large number of taxi users are school children and housewives.

Do not expect schoolchildren to be able to pay the limousine fare every time they need the cab service, she said.

"Same with the makcik who needs to go to the market. At the present moment the public transportation sector is still messy enough, instead of providing excellent service despite the government's efforts to improve it," she said.

### **EXECUTIVE TAXIS**

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According to Markiman, CVLB had begun discussions with taxi owners to replace their vehicles with the 2,000 cc executive taxis.

"Much easier said than done," said Liu Meng Fong, the owner and operator of a budget taxi.

Liu said the transition would be quite easy for companies operating a fleet of taxis but not for individual taxi owners like him.

"The move, if implemented would phase out taxi drivers like me as even now we barely earn enough money daily, considering the high gasoline price.

"They told us to upgrade our cabs, but this means we have to buy new limousines as the present budget cabs are of the 1,300 cc type.

"Where to find the money to buy larger cars?" he asked.

Lim said the move appear to benefit only the companies operating fleets of limousines.

As Fatimah put it: "Improving the image of the taxi industry, yes. But is it really going to improve the service?"

"The people on the street do not need to watch neither DVDs nor reading materials while they are taking a ride in the taxis. These are for the business people. Not for the school children or housewives.

"They only want to reach their destination safely and on time," she added.

By Zulkiple Ibrahim