

## The Star : Board reviewing plans for higher public transport charges

Written by Administrator

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PUTRAJAYA: New fares for all types of public transport will be announced in the second half of next year, according to Commercial Vehicle Licensing Board chairman Datuk Markiman Kobiran.

He said the board, which has been given the mandate to review fares imposed by public transport services, was studying various proposals from all parties in the industry that have been submitted to it.

We are looking at the middle or third quarter of 2008 for new rates to come into effect. The public can be assured that the people's interests and well-being will not be abandoned, he told reporters after closing a refresher course for temporary bus drivers yesterday.

Public transportation companies have been pressing for higher fares, claiming escalating operational costs due to fuel price increases over the years.

Markiman said a taxi operators' association was asking for a 600% increase in fares while an association representing bus operators was to raise fares by 100%.

He said the review process was ongoing and that while public transport industry associations could submit new fare proposals it did not necessarily mean that their exact requests would be met.

We will allow an increase but we will have to be practical and realistic. The public need not worry that taxi fares will be up by 600%. That will not happen, said Markiman.

While we review bus and taxi fares, we also have to ensure that efficient services are provided, including the comfort of vehicles and skilled drivers.

Public transport companies cannot be allowed to increase fares without committing to better services. We agree with the revision but we expect that, with the new rate, operators will become prudent and more responsible.

The last review of public transport fares was made in 2005, and Markiman said that while the normal practice was for the review to be made every five years, the Entrepreneurial Development and Cooperative Ministry had decided to do the review earlier.