

Minister shoots down DAP over stage bus services

THE Sarawak government never intends to neglect the operation of the stage bus services as one of the modes of transport in Kuching, said Minister of Transport Datuk Seri Lee Kim Shin.

In response to remarks by Violet Yong (DAP-Pending) he said, if fact the ministry was trying to revive the struggling stage bus services in Sarawak by introducing the RM1 Flat Rate Bus Fare Subsidy programme.

"Through this programme, we are expecting more and more people to use the bus as their main mode of transport in the city area.

"To date, the total ridership for stage buses in Kuching since its inception in May 2020 until February 2022 is 1.5 million," he said in his winding-up speech on Tuesday.

Lee said bus companies were advised to gradually modernise their current fleet of buses for the convenience of the passengers.

"The role of my Ministry is policy formulation and project implementation is carried out by the agencies which are under the Ministry to ensure clear demarcation of functions and regulations in various government entities.

"For this reason, the function of the Ministry is to formulate policies to ensure the orderly development of the transport sector in Sarawak whereas the implementation of projects is executed by the implementing agencies," he said.

On another note, he said that the Kuching Urban Transportation System (KUTS) is envisioned to be the backbone of a modern and green public transport system for Greater Kuching, with the main component being the Autonomous Rapid Transit (ART), which will be powered by hydrogen fuel cells and will run on virtual tracks.

"This ART project comprises 2 lines namely Samarahan Line from Rembus to Hikmah Exchange stretching 28 kilometres and passing through 14 stations and Serian Line

from Mile 12 to Isthmus with a length of 24 kilometres passing through 13 stations.

"At the moment, 3 locations for the proposed Transit Oriented Development or in short, TOD, have been identified and expected to increase in the future especially upon the completion and operation of the ART," he said.

He added that to date, the Environmental Impact Assessment and Social and Heritage Impact Assessment studies as well as pre-engineering works such as soil investigation and surveying works had been completed.

"Currently, the Scheme and Infrastructure Detailed Design is in progress while the tender exercise of the System Design & Build package contractors are progressing.

"As for the land acquisition exercise for the KUTS project, this will be done in stages commencing in the third quarter of this year," he said.

On the operation of the hydrogen buses in the state, Lee said that although the buses run on limited route, namely the 'Downtown Heritage Loop' and 'Damai Loop', the hydrogen bus trial operation passenger service recorded an average ridership of about 1,000 passengers per month, with ridership totalling 18,580 passengers from September 2020 to April 2022.

Presently, the hydrogen bus passenger service is offered free of charge to members of the public, which is part of the stage bus services operating in Kuching City.

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