

ART allegation baseless, says transport minister

THE allegation by Violet Yong (DAP-Pending) that Sarawak's autonomous rapid transit (ART) project was a political decision by the Premier in 2017, is baseless, said Minister for Transport, Datuk Seri Lee Kim Shin.

Lee said the idea to modernise the public transport system started in 2009 when the Premier was the then Minister for Housing and Urban Development.

"When the Sarawak government decided to implement the Kuching Urban Transportation System (KUTS) project, the term 'Autonomous Rapid Transit' was applied.

"There are six levels of autonomous driving based on the definition by the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) J3016 Standard, and in the context of ART for Kuching city, we will operating at Level 2, which is partial automation where vehicles can take control of both the vehicle speed and lane centering," he said in his ministerial winding-up speech during the DUN sitting on Tuesday (May 24).

"In this regard, we need to correctly understand the meaning

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and levels of autonomous in the context of the Rapid Transit System.

"So based on the SAE J3016 Standard, I wish to reaffirm that there is no downgrading of the autonomous system."

Lee also said that the August House should not be carried away by debating over trivial matters such as on the abbreviation as to whether it was autonomous or automated, as it was made clear



LEE (left) discusses points raised on the ministry with his deputy Datuk Henry Harry Jinep (centre).

that the ART would have a driver to ensure its smooth operation and safety.

"I wish to reiterate that the Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS) government will only implement major projects after a proper study has been carried out and the findings suggested that the project should proceed based on the financial viability and technical feasibility.

"For this reason, a feasibility study on KUTS was carried out in 2017 by Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) and completed in 2018.

"The study was carried out by competent consultants who concluded that an urban public transport system is needed

to address Kuching's growing population and the corresponding increase in the number of trips by motor vehicles on the road," he said, while adding that the demand for a reliable and efficient transport system was deduced from the same feasibility study.

He added that the same feasibility study also identified and recommended that the ART stations be based on transport demand for public transport and the ridership was modelled during the scheme design for the proposed KUTS project.

"In the planning and development of a modern transport system, we should make available to the people a multimodal transport system where they will

have a choice of using buses and other premium modes of transport, and in this case, the ART.

"Therefore, the suggestion made by Violet that we abandon the ART project and only rely on the stage bus services shows her lack of knowledge and understanding in developing a good and advanced transport system.

"Don't you want to have a multimodal and modern transport system for Kuching city where you can travel conveniently either by ART, modern stage buses powered by hydrogen fuel cell or electricity and even non-motorised vehicles?"

The ART project is implemented by Sarawak Metro Sdn Bhd, a wholly owned subsidiary of SEDC.