

PM: Four public transport projects will be speeded up

Move to end KL's traffic congestion

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By K.P. Waran

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — The Government, concerned with the worsening traffic congestion in the federal capital, plans to speed up the implementation of four public transportation projects for the city. **Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad** said today.

The Prime Minister said the upgrading of the railway system and the introduction of the light rapid transit and the monorail service and allowing the commuter bus service to be run by a single company were part of the Government's design to improve the traffic system in city.

He said the introduction of the LRT was expected to be costly and commuters should be willing to pay slightly higher fares to use the service although compared with some other countries the fares would still be cheaper.

He said the fares would be controlled by the Government which would also continue to subsidise the LRT

to ensure it would be affordable.

"It is also about time city dwellers accept the fact that they should leave their cars somewhere and then use public transportation to move about in the city.

"The notion that they should always drive themselves to the front doors of their offices and other buildings should be discarded," he said when responding to questions by reporters after opening the New Klang Valley Expressway at the Jalan Duta toll plaza here.

Also present were Works Minister **Datuk Leo Moggie**, his deputy **Kerk Choo Ting**, **Projek Lebuhraya Utara-Selatan (PLUS)** chairman **Tan Sri Radin Soenarno Radin Soenario** and Inspector-General of Police **Tan Sri Hanif Omar**.

The Prime Minister also handed over the keys of two police patrol vehicles to Hanif to be used to patrol the new expressway.

Dr Mahathir, who is chairman of the Kuala Lumpur Infrastructural Development Committee, said work

on the LRT project would start this year following the signing of an agreement for its construction last year.

"Kuala Lumpur should have had its LRT system long ago but the Government had to defer its implementation since no company was willing to foot the high costs in return for the cheap fares allowed by the authorities.

"Feasibility studies in the past showed that companies undertaking the project were bound to suffer losses if low fares were levied.

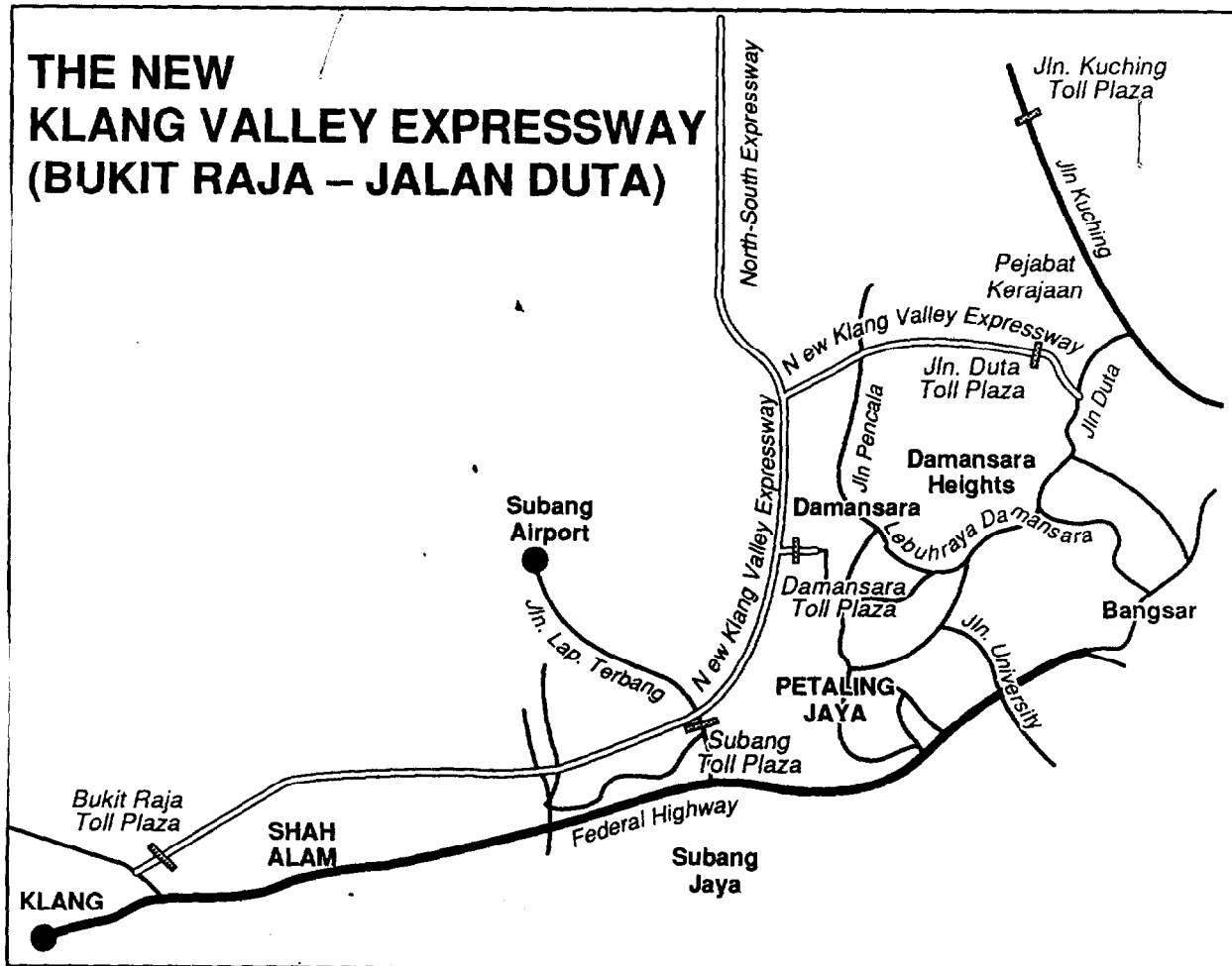
"Although we offered land at cheap prices and agreed to allow the private sector to build shopping centres and embark on other business-generating activities along the route, there was no taker.

"Nevertheless, we have to continue with the project because if we wait longer, the cost of building the LRT will only continue to soar," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the

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THE NEW KLANG VALLEY EXPRESSWAY (BUKIT RAJA - JALAN DUTA)



Rail double tracks to be ready next year

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monorail system, had been planned to serve as a trans-city transportation complementing that of the LRT.

On the construction of double tracks for the railway, he said, it had already begun and should be ready next year, linking Kuala Lumpur to Rawang, Seremban and Port Klang.

It will be used to ferry commuters to the city where they can continue their journey by using the light rapid transit.

On the amalgamation of

bus companies operating in the city, Dr Mahathir said the Government was looking into it since there were now too many bus companies running city commuter services resulting in them covering overlapping routes and causing traffic congestion.

He also said studies showed that most of the buses entering the city were from outside Kuala Lumpur.

When asked to comment on the toll being levied on expressways, he said, in many countries toll was collected to build quality high-

ways and for its maintenance with some countries charging as high as one ringgit per kilometre since there was no subsidy from the respective Government.

"Toll rates here are low because there is an element of subsidy from the Government. If the Government had transferred the building cost of its roads and highways to PLUS at market value, then the company would have to levy higher toll rates."

"The Government not only received a nominal sum for the already built highways, it also offered

loans at very low interest rates to PLUS to enable it to charge reasonable toll rates," he said.

Earlier in his speech, he said, the Government could finance the building of roads and highways by increasing road tax and the price of petrol but added that this would not be fair to motorists who did not use the expressways. "With the toll system, only those who use the expressways need to pay for it and there are also sufficient alternative routes for those who do not prefer to use the expressways."