

Just one firm to operate KL minibuses

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PEKAN, Thurs. — There will only be one company operating the stage bus network and one company operating the minibus service in Kuala Lumpur in future, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

~~Dr Mahathir said it was the Government's plan to restructure the bus service in Kuala Lumpur starting with the minibus service.~~

"It is time we addressed the problem of Kuala Lumpur's poorly organised public transport system," Dr Mahathir told a Press conference here.

Diversified Resources Berhad will lead a consortium to operate the restructured minibus service in the federal capital. DRB will do this through IntraKota Consolidated Sdn Bhd which will be incorporated soon.

Dr Mahathir was asked to explain the rationale for the announcement that DRB would lead a consortium to operate the minibus service.

He had earlier witnessed the handing over of 40 4x4 Pinzgauer vehicles to the Ministry of Defence by DRB, the assembler. He later toured the facility at Automotive Manufacturer of Malaysia, a subsidiary of DRB, where new monocoque buses

were being assembled.

The Prime Minister said the Government had directed the Datuk Bandar of Kuala Lumpur to bring together the stage bus operators in the city to form a consortium to run the service.

London, a city with a population of 10 million, had only one company and was able to provide an efficient bus service, he said.

On the other hand, Kuala Lumpur, with a population of about two million, had some 15 bus companies.

Dr Mahathir said the decision to just have one company to operate the stage bus service and one company to run the minibuses should not be misconstrued as taking away the livelihood of the present operators.

"They (the bus operators) can still be involved by acquiring shares in the new companies," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was keen to see that more modern and better equipped vehicles were introduced.

"These buses, among others, will have a lower floor, making it easier for older people to board. They should probably have automatic ticketing system as well," he said.

Most of the present buses were using the lorry chassis and putting a bus body to it.

It is understood that the Government has directed IntraKota Consolidated to phase out the present minibuses and replace them with monocoque buses.

The phasing out must be completed before Malaysia hosts the 1998 Commonwealth Games.

Approached by reporters, IntraKota Consolidated managing director-designate Mohyee Wardy said:

"We have just got the approval from the Registrar of Companies and are in the process of incorporating the company.

"DRB will retain the majority stake in the consortium."

Mohyee said the company hoped to deploy the first 50 monocoque minibuses in the first quarter of next year.

"Minibus operators affected should not worry because they can easily be redeployed to other sectors in Kuala Lumpur that face a shortage in the number of buses," he said.

Mohyee said beyond 1997, minibuses would become a feeder service between one housing estate and another.