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Move to discourage private car use (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Signalling the Government's seriousness in promoting public transport, particularly the Light Rail Transit, the Cabinet has ruled that new buildings need not allocate parking bays while existing buildings can reduce theirs.

The decision was made after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad called for the speedy construction of major transportation infrastructure projects at the ground breaking ceremony of the Kuala Lumpur Sentral Station last night.

This appears to be a reversal of the long-standing City Hall policy that buildings should have sufficient parking facilities.

Failure to comply could result in hefty fines.

In the last few years, the number of vehicles had surged as a result of the country's rapid economic growth and the success of the national car and motorcycle projects.

Announcing the move today, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the Government policy of partial-abolition and partial-reduction of parking spaces was expected to take place next year or early 1999.

To further discourage private vehicles from entering the overly congested city, parking rates might be increased but this would be decided by City Hall, he said.

Besides reducing traffic congestion, he said the move was to encourage motorists to use public transport.

The Government wants motorists to use the alternative integrated public transport system comprising of the Light Rail Transit I/II, KTM Komuter, Intrakota and Park May bus services and the Kuala Lumpur Linear City monorail system.

On the date the policy would be enforced, Dr Ling said this would depend on how soon the alternative integrated public transport system was fully operational.

This policy was among several policies which would be implemented in stages to reduce traffic congestion, he told reporters before chairing a post-Cabinet meeting.

"Even now, it is gradually being implemented," he said, "and on-going building projects have had their parking spaces cut down."

Once the system was fully implemented, street parking would be abolished to enable city streets to be widened, he said.

Dr Ling said the system of reducing city traffic congestion could only be done in stages when commuters were guaranteed an efficient, fast, comfortable and predictable public transport system.

Besides the integrated public transport system, Dr Ling said the relocation of Federal Government departments to the Putrajaya administrative centre was also part of the strategy to reduce traffic congestion.

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