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3.6m users forecast for KLIA Express, Transit

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AT least 3.6 million people are expected to use the KLIA Express and KLIA Transit to travel to the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang and nearby areas once the RM2.4 billion high speed train services hit the rails in April 2002.

About 3.6 million users is the target set by Express Rail Link Sdn Bhd, the concessionaire of the KLIA Express, a high speed non-stop train service, and KLIA Transit, a high speed commuter rail service.

"We expect to get 20 per cent of the estimated 18 million passengers who will use KLIA in 2002. Anything above that will be a bonus," ERL executive chairman Datuk Mohd Nadzmi Salleh said yesterday.

From then on, ERL expects a four or five per cent ridership growth annually, in line with the growth in the number of people using KLIA, he told a Press conference to announce the name of the commercial services as well as the terminal for the services which is being built as part of the KL Sentral project.

While the two train services are known as KLIA Express and KLIA Transit, the terminal is officially called Kuala Lumpur City Air Terminal or KL CAT. The names were approved by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

With 3.6 million users initially, ERL expects to garner RM100 million revenue in the first six months. The first full-year turnover is forecast at RM180 million.

Mohd Nadzmi said the concession company, owned by TH Technologies Sdn Bhd with 60 per cent stake and YTL Corporation Bhd (the remaining 40 per cent), expects to recoup its massive RM2.4 billion investment in six or seven years.

On ERL's listing plan, Mohd Nadzmi said it would be actively pursued after the high speed train operations get off to a good start.

"It also depends on the market situation. We definitely want to go for a listing. It may be one or two years after the ERL project starts operation or maybe sooner."

He confirmed that ERL wants to be listed on the KLSE's main board under the infrastructure project company category.

He also disclosed that the Government has decided to shelve plans to create a multi-billion ringgit bullet train service between KLIA and Singapore.

Development on this scale needs thorough study and planning, said Mohd Nadzmi, who estimated the bullet train development to cost more than RM10 billion.

"But we are ready to undertake the job with other people if the Government decides to start the project."

Mohd Nadzmi also gave updates on the ERL developments.

He said construction work has passed the 50 per cent mark. As at Dec 8, slightly over 70 per cent of civil works and 38.5 per cent of system works had been completed.

To date, 14km of track have been laid. All work is to be completed by October 2001, after which testing and commissioning will take place before operations start in April 2002.

Based on Heathrow Express and Gatwick Express in London, KL CAT provides airline check-in. It also provides baggage check-out where check-in luggage may be tagged from any overseas airport to KL CAT, and have it

claimed and customs-cleared there.

An integral part of KL CAT is the KLIA Express which plies between the terminal and KLIA, departing from both places every 15 minutes with a journey time of less than 30 minutes.

KLIA Transit will ply between KL CAT and KLIA but with stops at Bandar Tasik Selatan, Putrajaya, Cyberjaya and Salak Tinggi.

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