

Bus firms seek increase in fares

SUN, 17 OCT 2001

They also want lower duties on spare parts

By **R. Manirajan**

PETALING JAYA, Tues: Bus companies want the government to reconsider their request to increase fares because of rising operational costs.

They also want taxes on the import of bus chassis and spare parts reduced so that they can provide better services to commuters at a lower cost.

Pan Malaysia Bus Owners Association president Tun Sulaiman Ninam Shah said today bus operators are struggling to run their businesses.

He said the situation is expected to get worse as the US-led war against



Afghanistan progresses, as oil prices around the world are expected to increase.

"We hope the government will reconsider allowing bus firms to increase fares to meet the additional costs," Sulaiman said.

These are the association's requests to the government for the 2002 Budget which is to be tabled by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad in parliament on Friday.

Sulaiman said if the

government cannot increase bus fares then it should at least control the price of petrol.

"If nothing is done to help us, we fear that we may even have to retrench workers to cut costs," he said.

The association has about 40,000 members.

Persatuan Pengusaha Bas Express Melayu Semanjung Malaysia president Zamri Mahmud hopes that the government will reduce the import tax on bus chassis which now costs about RM250,000 each.

He said the high levy has raised the operating costs for bus companies.

On the need to increase fares, Zamri said that the last government review was in July last year.

"We hope the government will allow us to increase fares by at least 15% and make it a policy to review fares every two years," he said.

He also hopes the government will reduce toll charges for public transport vehicles by half.

"Currently, we are paying the same toll rate as private vehicles. This is a big cost factor in our operations," he said.

Zamri also urged the government to provide an allocation to set up a training institute for bus drivers to improve service standards.

Meanwhile, Transline Express Sdn Bhd operations manager Rosli Yusof said the government should provide a special allocation or subsidy for bus operators.

"The prices of tyres, chassis, toll and even diesel fuel have gone up, but at the same time we are not allowed to increase fares," he said.

With a special allocation, Rosli said, he believes bus operators can purchase new buses to provide a better service.