

Penang monorail project right on track

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BUTTERWORTH: The proposed monorail for Penang is set to materialise as the Federal Government has issued a letter of intent to the company undertaking the project.

Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Dr Hilmi Yahaya said the 37km-long monorail project would kick off once all the parties involved had ironed out the problems.

The company, he said, was now negotiating with the state government on the proposed alignment.

"The monorail will link major commercial and residential areas with a 37km-track to overcome traffic congestion on the island.

"We have identified four areas on which monorail lines can be erected and all will be linked to Komtar which is in the heart of the city," he said after presenting prizes to Indian students who excelled in public examinations organised by the Sri Murugan Centre in Chai Leng Park here yesterday.

It was reported in 2002 that the project would be built at a cost of RM2bil between five and 10 years.

Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad expressed enthusiasm when the idea was proposed to him during a state visit in 2002.

Dr Hilmi said the proposed monorail line would be: Raja Tun Uda Ferry Terminal-Komtar, Tanjung Bungah-Komtar, Air Itam-Komtar, Penang International Airport-Komtar.

He said the monorail would be different from that in Kuala Lumpur and that it would not have any power cable.

This meant that it would be cheaper, he added.

"The coaches would be self-powered via a generator and it is environment-friendly," he said.

He said the company had been told to find the most suitable alignment for the monorail line to minimise the relocation of people.

"The state government is thankful to the Federal Government for issuing the letter of intent as it shows that it understands the acute traffic problem on the island."