

Najib's Bus Journey Causes Road-Rage
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Dangerous driving and deaths from express bus crashes could soon become a thing of the past, on Malaysian roads, since Prime minister Najib Abdul Razak and the self-styled "First Lady" Rosmah Mansor have taken their first bus-ride.

Najib and a group of very important people, including the "First Lady of Malaysia" (FLOM), travelled by coach to officiate at various functions in Perak.

The PM was showing his true commitment towards the creation of the 'best democracy in the world' when he told reporters in Ipoh on 24 September about his travel plans.

The magnanimity of the PM to experience what it is like to be 'normal', and see for himself the trials and tribulations we face on Malaysian roads, is perhaps another way of hinting that it is 'time for change'.

Najib's critics might say it is an election gimmick and that he is only emulating the rock stars and politicians of other countries, who frequently use specially modified coaches for their road-shows or campaigns.

Going by bus is the PM's attempt to prevent the people from being marginalised. Furthermore, Najib is heeding former PM Mahathir Mohamad's call for politicians to avoid flaunting their wealth.

In an effort to get closer to the rakyat and experience life in the slow lane, Najib bit the bullet and opted to travel all of 50 km from Ipoh to Sungai Siput.

The rakyat should not be too harsh on the PM and should be thankful, his aides had selected a specially fitted bus with all the mod-cons.

Najib said, "It used to be by car but this time we board the bus to meet the people. I want to feel what it's like to do away with protocol.

"There must be no barrier to separate leaders and the people."

The clearly excited PM outlined his future travel plans which included taking the bus more often because his first bus ride had been thrilling.

He said, "Very interesting, will try more of this 'Bus Tour' concept... so far it has been very enjoyable.

"We were exchanging jokes and did not feel tired. The journey also gave us an opportunity to discuss a lot of things.

Now that Najib has seen that bus rides can be exciting, how could anyone express disappointment with him?

The rakyat is used to walking miles to the nearest bus-stop. Or praying at the beginning of a long-distance bus journey that they will reach their destination safely.

With Najib about to revolutionise bus travel, we might soon ditch the family car and instead opt to go by bus.

Bus companies would make bus travel one of the safest and cheapest forms of travel. One of the few downsides would be that the Malaysian car industry would be affected.

Perhaps, Proton would diversify and go into coach assembly.

In the past, Najib has been accused wasting the taxpayers' money to fund his private travel. He would disguise this wanton jet-setting by the inclusion of, at least, one official function.

We are often told to be innovative in our approach to the reduction of expenditure. So why is the rakyat envious of the PM's creativity in cutting costs?

Najib has been criticised for causing traffic jams when his police outriders force vehicles off the roads or block streets to make way for him and his cavalcade of cars.

In future, the PM will downsize from 10 outriders to 4, and have 7 black-tinted cars accompanying his bus, instead of the usual 13 cars in his convoy. Isn't that a sign of commitment?

Before Najib's "very enjoyable" bus trip, Malaysians who took coach trips were dicing with death because travelling by bus was unsafe, for a number of reasons.

Many companies had sub-standard buses. Bus drivers were paid a pittance and subsidised their income by taking on several jobs, to earn a living wage.

They would be fatigued and in an attempt to stay awake, would take drugs. Enforcement agencies, because of a shortage of manpower, would refrain from prosecuting bus drivers who had broken the law. Many had been accused of a variety of driving offences.

With Najib's new interest in bus travel, we will benefit from the filling of potholes, the provision of good signposts and strict enforcement of our traffic laws.

Najib will ensure that the bus-companies which continually violate the rules will not be protected by certain politicians.

He will make driving on Malaysian roads a real pleasure and the Mat Rempit menace will be curbed. Drivers have often been traumatised and had their safety threatened when they are confronted with Mats Rempit racing and performing stunts on the roads.

Malaysians will finally find in Najib a true leader with the political will to resolve many of our road safety problems.

Soon, the number of bus companies and businesses related to bus-travel will increase. There will be more bus-lanes instead of cycle-lanes and more roads will be included on bus-routes.

There will be an overall improvement in public transport and the people who helped bring about this change, will be Najib and his wife.

The first couple are known to be trend-setters and travelling by bus is set to undergo a magical transformation.

Or, will I, like Alice wake up to find this was only a dream.

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