

LRT system to get RM10 billion boost

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PUTRAJAYA: Klang Valley's light rail transit system is to get a RM10 billion boost over the next four years in a package of initiatives, the government announced yesterday.

The main elements of the plan are:
» a new 30km LRT line from Damansara to Kota Damansara, which will cut through the city centre, and Cheras;

» the Kelana Java line (formerly Putra line) between Gombak and Kelana Jaya will be extended to include Subang Jaya and USJ.

» the Sri Petaling line (formerly STAR line) between Sentul Timur and

Sri Petaling will be extended to Puchong.

Speaking to reporters after chairing the cabinet committee meeting on transport, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said this is contained in a report tabled by Syarikat Prasarana Negara Berhad (SPNB), which runs the LRT system and Rapid KL bus system in Klang Valley.

The committee has approved the report which Najib said will help increase the number of people who use public transport.

Apart from the proposed construction and extension of LRT lines, the RM10 billion allocation is also meant for the purchase of train coaches and new buses, enhancing

ticketing system and building integrated transport terminals (1IT).

Najib said the Transport Ministry will also look into the extension of services provided by the KTM Komuter, KL monorail and the ERL, which serves those going from KL Sentral to the KL International Airport.

No details were given on what the extensions are.

Najib said the percentage of Malaysians using public transport is only 11% compared with people in other big cities around the world which is about 40% to 50%. This is a contributing factor to traffic jams in Klang Valley.

Najib said

the improvements to the public transport system will be done in stages until 2010.

He added that SPNB and Rapid KL will also improve bus services to housing areas, and by the first quarter of next year, Rapid KL will be having 1,700 buses fully operational.

He said the company has bought 1,100 new buses and another 600 buses will be repaired and refurbished.

On the Kumpulan Wang Amanah Pengangkutan (Transport Trust Fund), Najib said the trust will be operational this year with an initial sum of RM50 million. It will have RM500 million the following year.

He added that RM200 million from the trust will be allocated to the SME Bank next year to allow bus and taxi operators to take loans to upgrade their vehicles or purchase new ones.

Answering a question, Najib said the money is not from the RM4.4 billion savings in subsidy following the increase in fuel prices early this year.

"That money (RM4.4 billion) is already burnt ... this is a special allocation and we will top it up from time to time.

"Many of the bus and taxi operators are having problems getting loans from the commercial banks to do this ... and the committee today has agreed to give them loans through the SME Bank," said Najib.

Also present was Transport Minister Datuk Seri Chan Kong Choy.

Najib said the ministry is working out a proposal on the Penang Monorail System, the Integrated Transport Terminals in Gombak and Tasik Selatan and also the need to have a master plan for integrated transport system.