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KUALA LUMPUR: The Transport Ministry has called off the purchase of second-hand Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs) worth RM64 million from Spain after criticisms from various quarters, Public Accounts Committee (PAC) chairman Datuk Seri Azmi Khalid disclosed yesterday.

He did not specify the reason for the cancellation of the purchase of the eight trains, each worth more than RM7 million.

However, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat explained later the decision to cancel the contract was made after the supplier failed to deliver the units.

Azmi told reporters at Parliament, where he chaired a PAC meeting, the decision to cancel the purchase of the DMUs was made in December.

"They have their rationale

# Ministry cancels purchase of second-hand trains

for the decision but I cannot reveal anything yet as we do not have the complete details. We have asked for more information," he said.

It was reported in October last year that Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd (RTMB) had planned to buy the second-hand DMUs from Spain.

RTMB was said to have opted for the second-hand DMUs - trains comprising multiple carriages powered by one or more onboard diesel engines - because of cash constraints.

The DMUs had been meant for use as a stop-gap measure to solve KTM's commuter

woes.

The issue was raised in Parliament and came under fire from several MPs.

Azmi said PAC had asked the Transport Ministry to provide written information but it could not supply it in time for yesterday's meeting, where the decision on the purchase, the procedures and other related matters were discussed.

Testifying before the PAC was the ministry's acting secretary-general, Datuk Long See Wooi.

"PAC has not taken any decision yet. Our investigation is focused on the decision-

making process, especially on the decision to purchase and the decision to cancel," Azmi said.

Agreeing that there was urgency to purchase the second-hand DMUs, he said: "There is urgency, there is a need to cater to the demand of the passengers because the capacity is inadequate. That is why we have complaints from the public.

"If we want to order new ones, it would take two years."

Asked whether new locomotives will be purchased, Azmi said: "RTMB has decided

not to go on with the purchase. It is convinced that it can do a lot of refurbishing but a lot of money is needed to refurbish old ones."

He said RTMB has 26 commuter trains and also hybrids that can use both DMUs and Electric Multiple Units (EMUs).

However, there are 32 trains that are "inoperable" because they are in various stages of repair and need to be refurbished.

Ong, who spoke to reporters after launching a road safety campaign, themed "*Buckle up, it is the law*", in conjunction

with Chinese New Year, said the contract was terminated in the second half of last year and the ministry had received confirmation from the Finance Ministry.

"I did not have a chance to explain the situation as I was on leave," he said.

He said a decision was made to combine the allocation for the DMUs with the allocation for the improvement of public transport under the National Key Result Areas (NKRA) budget.

"In this way, we have much more resources to spend for the improvement of public transportation," he said.

Ong defended the government's original decision to acquire the used DMUs, saying it was not "scrap metal".

"It is not easy to purchase new DMUs as it would take not less than two years. It is not scrap metal, I assure you. I will show you one day," he said, adding that the trains have a life expectancy of 15 years.