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'PM is right to focus on transport'

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KUALA LUMPUR: The modernisation of public transport will support the tourism industry and improve Malaysia's economy in the near future.

Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents president Datuk Hamzah Rahmat said transport played a major role in the industry.

He said this should have been done much earlier as the country was moving towards becoming a developed nation by 2020.

"Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has done the right thing by giving priority to public transportation system.

"As far as tourism is concerned, we need an excellent public transport system that will enable tourists to move from one point to another with ease.

"With an efficient and integrated transport system, tourists can visit places of interest effortlessly, similar to transport services in developed nations like Britain and Germany," he told the *New Straits Times* yesterday.

Hamzah said once the public transport infrastructure was operational, it would be a plus point to the tourism industry and would be a factor in driving tourists to visit Malaysia.

"Having a well interconnected railway network among the states will improve connectivity for the

people. The newly announced railway line from Kuala Lumpur to Tumpat is a step in the right direction.

"Besides, with an efficient and reliable public transport system, many will opt to commute via public transport, thus reducing the number of cars on the road."

Najib had on Monday unveiled a series of new initiatives to improve and modernise the country's public transport.

Topping the list was a new 600km railway line from Kuala Lumpur to Tumpat, Kelantan, to allow for faster land connectivity to the east coast states.

Among other initiatives was an allocation of RM760 million for the repair, rehabilitation and upgrading of the Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd line from Gemas to Tumpat, and the allocation of special bus lanes on the Federal Highway for the Kuala Lumpur-Klang Bus Rapid Transit to encourage people to rely less on cars, and the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High-Speed Rail that will link the two cities in just 90 minutes.

The government was also set to raise the taxi industry's standards by putting in place 11 key initiatives, including revising the coupon system from a zonal system to a distance-based system, and introducing a merit and demerit system based on taxi drivers' performance.