

'SPEED UP KLANG VALLEY ROAD PROJECTS'

Congestion at peak levels as road network can no longer cope, says Anwar

HAKIM MAHARI
KUALA LUMPUR
hakimmahari@nst.com.my

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim wants road construction projects in the Klang Valley to be fast-tracked despite their high costs as traffic congestion has reached "extraordinary" levels.

He said the Klang Valley road network could no longer cope with current demand, with congestion now at peak levels, and measures were needed to ease the pressure.

"I was coming back from Kinrara (in Puchong) after Friday prayers and the congestion was extraordinary. Getting back here was the same.

"Road projects in the Klang Valley must be expedited and stay on schedule even though the costs are high," he said in his speech at the opening of the East Klang Valley Expressway (EKVE) Section 1 from the Sungai Long interchange to Ampang interchange.

Present were Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari,



Section 1 of the East Klang Valley Expressway, between the Sungai Long and Ampang interchanges, opened yesterday. NSTP PIC BY SAIFULLIZAN TAMADI

Works Minister Datuk Seri Alexander Nanta Linggi and Ahmad Zaki Resources Bhd (AZRB) deputy executive chairman Datuk Seri Wan Zakariah Wan Muda.

AZRB owns EKVE Sdn Bhd, the concessionaire for the expressway.

Anwar said the government wanted projects to be accelerated, but quality must not be compromised.

"Yes, we want projects to be expedited, but the quality must meet their original objectives.

"In terms of expenditure, after

education and healthcare, public works and transport take up the largest share of the budget."

He said the Works Ministry must learn from past weaknesses and improve oversight.

"I want to assure the works minister and the secretary-general

that I will monitor this.

"The Malaysian Highway Authority determines these projects, but I want to see them carried out properly and on time."

On transportation, Anwar said Malaysia must enhance both the railway and aviation sectors to keep pace with growing demand, particularly with the country's rising status as a tourism destination.

"We want trains that are faster and more efficient, with more coaches. We need more planes, whether from Boeing or Airbus, because Malaysia is now a top tourist destination.

"Passenger numbers have already surpassed 130 per cent compared with last year. Congestion has reached the maximum level.

"All our airports, from Tawau to Kota Baru to Penang, must be upgraded and expanded to meet this demand."

Anwar said while these investments would be costly, they were critical to addressing the country's infrastructure needs and ensuring public convenience.

He underlined the importance of Bumiputera participation in such projects.

"In many cases, we award tenders openly. But for certain projects, we want Bumiputera companies to play a significant role.

"Companies like AZRB have the expertise, skills and experience. They should train young people so that this work can continue."