

MP: Public transformation reforms are political
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By Bernard Cheah

GEORGE TOWN (Aug 2, 2011): A member of parliament stressed that the public transformation reforms are political in nature and require a political will to change.

Bukit Bendera MP Liew Chin Tong said this in disagreement to Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD) chairman Tan Sri Syed Hamid Albar's comment yesterday.

Syed Hamid was reported as saying that public transport should be depoliticised as "it is not for the opposition to determine that public transportation is efficient (or otherwise)".

Liew argued: "Public transport, or the lack of it, should be at the top of our political agenda."

"I strongly believe that political will is needed to change this. Without policy intervention by the state, the public transportation sector, left to its own devices, will not be transformed to fulfill both the public's needs and help ordinary taxi drivers earn reasonable income," he said in a statement.

Liew added that the government should intervene to facilitate better solutions for public transportation and this is what a Pakatan Rakyat-led government intends to do when it comes into power.

"In the decades to come, the world will be confronted with the following challenges, namely, rising energy cost, carbon emission and global warming, a bigger population to share a diminishing pool of natural resources. Public transport will be the most important policy tool to overcome those challenges," he said.

Liew pointed out in the case study which was made available to SPAD, that Kuala Lumpur has a taxi-to-population ratio of 16.5 taxis per thousand population while most other advanced cities have an average of 2 taxis per thousand people.

"Yet taxi services are not up to the international benchmark while taxi drivers suffer from low income," he said. "Big corporations are given permits in the thousands while genuine drivers are forced to rent from these well-connected firms."