

Fri, May 22 2009 - KUALA LUMPUR: Luxury cab owners want a RM2 cut in starting fares while budget taxis are demanding their starting fares be increased by a similar amount.

Federal Territory and Selangor Taxi Operators Association president Datuk Aslah Abdullah said Malaysians were becoming thrifty in their spending and were turning away from luxury taxis.

"We are suffering. We want the government to amend our licence and tweak the meters so that we can start charging less."

Aslah said operators had reported a 30 per cent drop in the number of customers since the middle of last year.

Customers, usually foreigners and Malaysians, who don't mind paying extra for a more comfortable ride, pay RM6 as soon as they sit in the vehicle.

But Aslah said business has dropped due to fewer tourists visiting the country and more Malaysians becoming more careful with their money.

He said a proposal would be submitted to the Commercial Vehicle Licensing Board (CVLB) and Puspakom to amend their licences and make it mandatory for all to reduce fares by RM2 until the economy improves.

As for budget cabs, Taxi Owners and Drivers Association secretary Hiew Pow Man said members wanted the starting fare to be RM4.

"We submitted our proposal two years ago. We are hoping the government will look into our recommendations."

Hiew was responding to CVLB chairman Datuk Markiman Kobiran's statement on Wednesday that public transport operators may soon get their long-awaited fare hike.

Markiman did not state the amount of the hike but transport sources say it is estimated to be 30 per cent, the same as that given to express bus operators last year.

The express bus operators were given a temporary 30 per cent hike before the Raya festive season to cope with the fuel hike. The government then decided to retain the hike.

Hiew also said the association hoped the government would set a rate of 10 sen for every 100m travelled instead of the current 150m.

The association also wants waiting time in traffic jams cut from 45 seconds to 30 seconds before additional charges can be levied.

Pan Malaysia Bus Operators chairman Datuk Asfar Ali said the members were happy with the 30 per cent hike but wanted the government to increase the diesel subsidy for every 100km travelled and to review fares charged by RapidKL.

He said RapidKL was eating into the customer pool of stage bus companies.

The operators also want the government to help lower insurance premiums charged by insurance companies as the companies no longer issued third party policies.

Public transport operators pay up to 200 to 300 per cent more for high-risk premiums