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REQUEST FOR URGENT MEETING: Operational cost affected in the wake of new electricity tariff

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THE announcement by the government on the electricity tariff hike of 15 per cent in the peninsula and 17 per cent in Sabah and Labuan beginning Jan 1 may see public transport providers request for a new fare structure.

Industry players have confirmed with *Cars, Bikes & Trucks (CBT)* that public transport conglomerates are asking for an urgent meeting with the Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD) in the wake of the electricity tariff hike starting from 2014.

There are currently at least three public transport companies in the peninsula with rail networks that use electricity as the only source of energy for the transportation service to the public.

Syarikat Prasarana Negara Berhad (Prasarana) has two Light Rail Transit (LRT) systems under its wings, namely the Kelana Jaya and Ampang lines as well as the KL Monorail service; KTM Berhad which runs the urban commuter rail in the Klang Valley and ETS inter-city services; and Express Rail Link Sdn Bhd (ERLSB) which operates the country's only airport transfer and transit services to and from the capital city and Kuala Lumpur International Airport, would be affected as a result of the new electricity tariff.

Prasarana group director for rail Khairani Mohamed told *CBT* that the

new tariff rate would definitely affect the cost of its rail operation.

"The new tariff would cause our expenditure to escalate. A fare review for rail services would help as it is long overdue since the days we started the LRT and Monorail services. Besides, we have been absorbing high operation costs for quite a while since we are still paying the commercial rate for electricity," he said.

Khairani said even though Prasarana was mentally prepared for the expected electricity hike for its 2014 projected expenditure, he said: "It will certainly hurt our operation cost. We were preparing for about 10 per cent increase from electricity charges but with 15 per cent, then we have to revisit our budget."

ERLSB chief executive Noormah Mohd Noor said it was crucial for the government to look into the public transport providers' plight in view of the electricity tariff increase.

"We are using electricity to transport our passengers and air travellers daily. I think it is beneficial for us if SPAD could support our cause if we can get some sort of special electricity rate with Tenaga Nasional Berhad," she told *CBT* during the recent Land Public Transport Conference.

Prasarana group managing direc-

tor Datuk Shahril Mokhtar and Noormah concur that it is imperative for the government to allow the rail operators to enjoy a special rate for electricity usage.

"I need to study thoroughly the new tariff. But it will be good if SPAD and TNB listen to our rationale. We are running a service for the public on a daily basis," said Shahril in a telephone interview.

Noormah said the public transport companies were unified to meet SPAD soon to present their justification.

SPAD chief executive officer Nur Ismal Kamal said the commission was ready to meet the rail companies to have an in-depth discussion.

"We are currently studying all fare structures in the public transport sector. We will listen. We will study their proposal for a special electricity rate and probably will support it since after all, the public transport companies are providing a service to the masses," he said.

Meanwhile, public transport supporter Improvement of Mass-Transit (TRANSIT) expressed displeasure about the possibility of a fare hike by rail operators next year.

"It is sad that public transport users will be forced to pay twice despite doing the most for reducing (traffic) jams," TRANSIT tweeted via its @transitmy Twitter handle.

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