

Coalition for commuters

Public transport users need voice to change policy planning, say society reps

A NEW coalition of civil society organisations handling a gamut of concerns, has been cobbled together with the express mission of giving a voice to the commuter in pressing for changes to the government's public transport policy.

The primary intention was to ensure motoring, road construction industries, transport operators and car owners did not overshadow the needs of commuters.

The coalition was decided upon after a roundtable public forum on Wednesday, attended by representatives of societies for the young, the disabled and the elderly, public transport activist Transit, and social organisations Aliran, Suaram, Federation of Malaysian Consumer Associations, and the Pahang Consumer Association.

Two parliamentarians, Parti Sosialis Malaysia's (PSM) Sungai Siput MP D. Jeyakumar and DAP strategist and Bukit Bendera MP Liew Chin Tong, also addressed the forum.

Jeyakumar, whose party had organised the meeting, offered PSM's help in bringing the coalition together but insisted it should remain independent of political parties.

"Strong corporate interests are pushing public transport policy, especially for Klang Valley's new Mass Rapid Transit rail line.

"The people need an equally strong political voice but it must be an independent initiative without the backing of any political party, not even PSM," he said.

Public transport, he said, had been a victim of former



PUSHED ASIDE: There is an urgent need to improve public transport policies so that society benefits — FILEpic

premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's vision for Malaysia when he chose the US model of modernisation, encouraging greater car ownership through a national car industry and the construction of new toll highways instead of a European model favouring public transport.

"Transport policy has been controlled by corporate interests and the govern-

ment, not by what the public wants or needs," Jeyakumar added.

Liew said a good public transport system was a social benefit which could help boost people's income.

"By cutting hire-purchase, petrol, maintenance and highway tolls expenses, it'll put more money in your pocket," he said.

— Malaysiakini