SPAD urged to postpone fare hikes

CABINET CONCERN: Timing not right as it will coincide with GST and may burden people, says Muhyiddin

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THE Cabinet has asked the Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD) to postpone the implementation of the fare hike for public transportation as the timing is not right.

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the timing of the fare hike would coincide with the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

"The cabinet discussed the matter and agreed that there is a basis for the hike due to the rising costs of operation and maintenance and the last fare hike was six years ago.

"However, the timing of the hike is unsuitable because with the GST being implemented at the same time, it would seem that the people's burden will increase.

"Therefore, the cabinet has asked that SPAD postpone the hike."

Muhyiddin said this after officiating the Pagoh Umno branches' collective meeting at the Pekembar Complex here yesterday.

On Thursday, SPAD had announced fare adjustments for taxis which would be effective immediately, and for express buses, which would be effective from May 15.

SPAD chairman Tan Sri Syed Hamid Albar said the fare increases of between 20 and 67 per cent for taxis and 22.6 per cent for express buses were inevitable due to the higher costs, including maintenance, borne by public transportation operators.

On another matter, Muhyiddin, who is also education minister, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak would launch the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015-2025 on April 7.

"This is an important initiative that the ministry has taken to improve the quality of higher education in the country.

"The blueprint was formulated after we received feedback from all stakeholders like parents and lecturers.

"There will be 10 shifts that will be announced.

"This will take our universities to a higher level and will ensure that we continue to produce high quality human capital."

Muhyiddin said the masterplan was for a period of 10 years, beginning this year.

*Deputy Prime Minister **Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin** presenting a mock cheque for RM13,500 for the Palestinian Humanitarian Fund to TV3 bureau chief (Johor) **Yusri Sahat** (right) after officiating the Pagoh Umno branches' collective meeting in Pagoh yesterday.* Pic by Syarafiq Abd Samad

He said the country's economy was registering positive growth, despite the current uncertain economic situation.

He said the country's development remained unaffected, with development projects proceeding as usual.

"Our economic growth is positive, with last year's rate at six per cent, and although it has slightly gone down this year, it is still positive.

"For some countries it is negative. Negative means no growth, people do not have jobs and there is no investment.

"In Malaysia, we have an inward investment of more than RM200 billion."

Muhyiddin said a responsible government would not want the people to suffer and would address the high cost of living.

He said as chairman of a special cabinet committee to tackle the cost of living, he would ensure that the people were helped in this matter.

"The Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Ministry has taken the necessary step by announcing lower prices for goods to help the people."

On the GST taking effect on April 1, Muhyiddin said the people should understand the need for the new tax regime, pointing out that many developed countries had long practised the GST as it was a better tax system.

"We have a lot of items exempted from the GST, and what the government is doing is ultimately for the good of the people," he said, adding that he hoped the people would report errant businesses that raised prices to the ministry.