

# Lee debunks DAP allegations on hydrogen buses

**KUCHING:** The hydrogen buses in Kuching have not been grounded often as alleged by DAP assemblywoman Violet Yong as they have been operating as planned and serviced in a timely manner this year.

Sarawak Transport Minister Datuk Seri Lee Kim Shin said the only major inspection and maintenance by the engineering team from Feichi, China was carried out in August for 13 days based on their contractual obligation.

Out of 300 days this year (January - October 2022), he said, the hydrogen buses were brought for inspection and maintenance by local technicians for only 16 days which amounts to 5.3 per cent.

He said the number of technical issues faced are considered typical for any similar sized buses in the market, whether they are battery-electric powered buses or powered by diesel engines.

"Our technical team, assisted by the manufacturer's team of engineers and technicians have addressed the issues which are standard in nature.

"Sarawak Metro has established its local human capital and local technicians to specialise in repairs and maintenance of the hydrogen buses.

"Therefore, there is no question that Sarawak does not have any capable technicians who specialise in hydrogen technology to carry out major maintenance works.

"It is irrelevant for Sarawak Metro to fly in the technician from the bus manufacturer in China whenever there is a problem," he said when delivering his winding-up speech at the State Legislative Assembly (DUN) sitting here on Tuesday.

The Sarawak government, he said, through Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) had launched the trial run for three hydrogen buses in Kuching to prepare the bus as the future public bus including as feeder buses for the ART system in 2020.

However, he said, the total number of hydrogen buses required to complement the service of ART can only be finalised when operational plans are

firmed up.

"It is definitely not 100 buses," he stressed, adding that it (the number) would be based on ART development phases.

On the price of the hydrogen buses, Lee said, the existing three units in Kuching cost less than RM1.5 million each and definitely not RM4 million to RM5 million as alleged.

He said the price of hydrogen buses is subject to the technical specifications, model and quantity.

Although diesel buses are relatively cheaper to maintain, fossil fuel is getting scarce and the world is moving towards green mobility.

"I must stress that zero-emission vehicles are the future

mode of transport, not only in Sarawak but all over the world and they are an important part of the global efforts to combat climate change.

"By choosing hydrogen-powered vehicles, Sarawak is moving forward in line with the global move for green transport. Hence, the hydrogen buses are vital for us to prepare for a more modern and environmentally friendly mode of transport, also in line with Sarawak government's effort to subscribe to the Paris Agreement on climate change," he added.

Since it began trial operations in January 2020, the hydrogen buses recorded a total ridership of 25,564 passengers from September 2020 to October 2022.



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## ART project progressing well

**T**HE implementation of the Autonomous Rapid Transit (ART) project is progressing as planned by Sarawak Metro, a wholly owned subsidiary of Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC).

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Lee Kim Shin said ART's Blue Line which covers Rembus to Riveria is expected to commence service in fourth quarter (Q4) of 2025 and expected to extend to Hikmah Exchange in Q4 2026.

The Red Line which is from Kuching Sentral to Pending is expected to begin in Q4 2026 while the Green Line which covers from Pending to Damai Central is expected to commence in Q4 2027.

"The Proof-of-Concept (POC) exercise of the ART vehicle is also scheduled for the first quarter of next year," he said when delivering his winding up speech at the State Legislative Assembly (DUN) sitting here yesterday.

The project, Lee said, was the backbone of the Kuching Urban Transportation System (KUTS), which was implemented through open tender that reflected transparency and good governance practices.

As of second quarter of 2022, he said a total of four tenders were called and awarded, including the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) with a value of RM3,088,332 which was awarded to EMS Progress Sdn. Bhd.

He said the System Package 1 was awarded to a joint-venture company, EPR Mobilus GR JV



LEE (centre) has a discussion with his deputies Datuk Dr Jerp Jusil (left) and Datuk Henry Harry Jinep on his winding-up speech. Photo: Ramidi Suban

Sdn Bhd, which comprised EPR (Kuching) Sdn Bhd, Mobilus Sdn Bhd and Global Rail Sdn Bhd, at a value of RM1,425,000,000, including the supply of hydrogen-powered ART vehicles by CRRC Zhuzhou Institute Company

Limited and CIMC-Hexagon Hydrogen Energy Systems Limited. "Phase 1 covers the design, engineering, procurement, manufacture, assembly, testing and commissioning and handover of Hydrogen Vehicle (H2V), Depot

Equipment and Maintenance Vehicle (DEMV), Automatic Platform Gate (APG) and Signalling and Control System (S&CS)," he added.

Meanwhile, System Package 2 was awarded to DOM Industries (M)



“The Proof-of-Concept (POC) exercise of the ART vehicle is also scheduled for the first quarter of next year.”

Sdn Bhd and China Railway Electric Engineering Group Malaysia Sdn Bhd at the value of RM448,000,000.

These systems include Telecommunication (Comms); Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA); Automatic Fare Collection (AFC); Computerised Maintenance Management System (CMMS); Operation Control Centre (OCC); and Information Technology System (ITS).

Lee also said the tender for the Construction of the Rembus Depot under Stage 1 has just been awarded to Hock Seng Lee Berhad, where the project will be launched soon to mark the beginning of the physical construction works of the ART project.