

# ART cheaper of two options

## Premier: Sarawak changed from LRT to ART due to lower costs

Rintos Mail

**KUCHING:** The state government changed its public transport plans from a light rail transit (LRT) system to the autonomous rail transit (ART) because of the lower costs, said Premier Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg.

He said implementing the ART project to modernise Sarawak's public transport system is within the state government's means.

"In terms of costs, the whole project that covers Kuching, Samarahan, and Serian will cost RM6 billion.

"As it may take about six or seven years to complete, it means your budget, cash flow, is about RM1 billion a year.

"And this is within our means, and with the amount we are going to provide good service in our public transport system," he told a press conference after launching the Kuching Urban Transportation System (KUTS) project - Phase 1 in Kota Samarahan yesterday.

Abang Johari said although he was criticised initially, over time it has become clear from the cost benefit analysis that the project's benefits exceed its costs.

He said aside from providing a sophisticated, efficient, and friendly public transport system to commuters, the KUTS project is also creating job opportunities for Sarawakians.

In terms of human resources, he said the ART system involves high technology.

"And today we have seen Sarawakians who worked with Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) in Kuala Lumpur coming back and they are working with Sarawak Metro now because they have got the experience.

"It means we have created jobs that allow people to earn quite a high pay. This project will surely bring benefits to Sarawakians who have studied in the field of information



Abang Johari (third right) checks the ART's routes on a topographic map. From left are Dr Sim, Sarawak Metro CEO Mazli Mustaffa, Abdul Aziz, Lee, and Rubiah. — Photo by Chimon Upon

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Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg

technology, public transport, and in human relations," he said.

Abang Johari pointed out that another benefit of the ART system is that it will operate on a schedule, where passengers will know when the ART will arrive for them to travel to their respective destinations.

He said the ART in Sarawak will be the first in the Association

of South East Asian Nations (Asean) region where the public transport system uses green energy with hydrogen-powered vehicles.

He said the project will part of the state's green economy, where Sarawak will use green energy to manage and move its public transport system.

"This will certainly sustain our

environment as well as give good public transport services to the public.

"If in Samarahan, students will want to have a very good public transport system within their affordability, which is faster mobility at a fixed price.

"Aside from that, tourists can board the ART and they can go anywhere they like, especially if they want to go to Damai and also other places of interest," he said.

Abang Johari said the ART is a facility the public at large need and expects to build the system in other areas.

"Maybe not within my time. Other people will continue because this is the latest mode of transport.

"Even Singapore now is transitioning towards a green economy. And, apparently, we are quite advanced in terms of green economy," he said.

Among those present were Deputy Premier Dato Sri Dr Sim Kui Hian, Transport Minister Dato Sri Lee Kim Shin, Deputy Minister of Rural and Regional Development Datuk Rubiah Wang, and Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) chairman Tan Sri Datuk Amar Abdul Aziz Husain.