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I REFER to the recent discussion between three ministries and the bus and taxi operators.

According to the reports, bus fares will see an increase soon because the last one was four years ago. And in that time, petrol and diesel prices have increased and so have many of the parts and operations costs.

Of course, petrol and diesel prices have gone down in recent months but that does not seem to have made a difference to the bus operators in their request for a 100 per cent increase in fares.

I also find it interesting to read that while the budget taxi operators are asking for an increase in the "base" fare from RM2 to RM4, the luxury taxi operators are actually asking for a decrease -- from RM6 to RM4.

RM4 also happens to be the "base " price for the Teksi Premier -- a service that, for some reason, is only operated by one company, Uptown Ace.

I find this amusing because as a passenger, I would certainly choose a luxury taxi over a taxi premier or budget taxi -- especially if they all charge a base rate of RM4.

It is doubly amusing because two years ago I wrote to the Commercial Vehicle Licensing Board asking them to get rid of the three different taxi services with the three base fares. Instead, there should be one class of taxi, providing two different types of service -- by meter or by coupon.

The metered taxi service could have a base fare of RM4 and could be hailed at taxi stands, on the street, be pre-booked or called up.

This metered taxi service could be supplemented by a coupon taxi service that could operate out of transport hubs at LRT stations, malls, hypermarkets, office buildings and housing estates.

The coupon taxi service and hubs could be managed by the local authority to improve accountability. Fares could be set through agreements with local authorities, operators and users.

Having only two types of taxis, metered and coupon, would increase the quality of the taxi service and decrease the number of problems within the industry. It would reduce the number of rogue taxi drivers and increase accountability all around.

Source: http://www.nst.com.my/Current_News/NST/Monday/Letters/2564959/Article/index_html