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Online booking of express bus tickets to beat touts

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KUALA LUMPUR: Soon the hassle of going to crowded bus stations to book intercity tickets or paying over the odds to ticket touts during peak travel seasons will be a thing of the past.

Travellers will be able to book tickets online through Access EZBus, a new integrated ticketing system that had its soft launch yesterday.

ICT solutions company Access MyTicket Hub Sdn Bhd had already signed up three bus companies — Darul Naim Express Sdn Bhd, Mahligai Ekspres Sdn Bhd and Damai Ekspres Sdn Bhd.

And Access executive director Salina Jaffar said the company was confident of signing on another 15 to 20 express bus operators by the time the system is officially launched in May.

Basically, travellers key in the date and time of their trip to view the schedules of the various bus companies to book one that suits their plans.

The system will not only be more convenient for the 28 million express bus travellers a year, but it will also heighten the competitiveness in an industry marred by rogue operators.

One of the big issues in the express bus industry are touts, who charge exorbitant prices for tickets during peak travel

seasons.

Apart from passengers paying more than they have to, profits are also cut as touts are known to shave off about RM5 for each ticket obtained from the operators.

Travellers who use the Access EZBus system will be charged RM1, and the operators will pay less than one per cent of the cost of the ticket.

And the integrated ticketing system will also boost the tourism industry as it can be accessed from anywhere in the world.

The soft launch yesterday was witnessed by Commercial Vehicle Licensing Board (CVLB) chairman Datuk Markiman Kobiran.

The system, on trial for three months, also includes a telephone booking facility and ticketing kiosks in high-traffic areas such as universities.

Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Malaya and the Multimedia University have signed on to have the facility on their campuses, as students are one of the larger groups of bus passengers.

Markiman lauded the private sector initiative, saying the integrated ticketing system for the express bus industry would naturally consolidate the number of operators in the business.

"The smaller companies, with just 10 to 15 buses, will find it uneconomical to oper-

ate because passengers will be able to pick and choose. They would definitely go for the more reliable and efficient operators. So we hope the smaller companies will look at amalgamating with the bigger players," he said.

Markiman added that there were currently about 187 express bus operators and more applications were being vetted by the board.

"We have a freeze on the main trunk routes, such as the East Coast, North and South sectors.

"But most of the new applications are not for these sectors, but in those that are less in demand, and we do consider them," he said.