



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement

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Penalise those responsible for damaging roads

In early May 2023, a group of lorry owners urged the Transport Ministry to intervene because they claimed that the Road Transport Department (JPJ) was about to forfeit the ownership of their vehicles. They should know better that their vehicles are not supposed to be overloaded under the law which has been around for more than two decades.

There are a variety of reasons why a road appears to be damaged within a short time but overloading of commercial vehicles and sub-par road repairs are two of the critical ones. Sub-par repairs may include material design, construction, moisture, and temperature.

The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) urges the government to seriously look into a report by drivers' education firm Zutobi that ranked Malaysia as No. 12 in the world with the worst roads in 2022. Rather than brushing off the claim, the government should address the problems concerning bad road conditions that have been festering in the country for decades.

The media reported that about 60 percent of the federal roads in the country had expired service lives and needed repairs. The government has to plan the upgrading of roads that have already exceeded their service lives while considering strict penalties for overloaded commercial vehicles because studies have found that they are the cause of premature damage to the roads, particularly those in rural areas.

It was found in 2008 that 27 percent of the one million registered commercial vehicles in the country were overloaded. The maximum gross vehicle weight permitted is dependent on the vehicle's axle configuration. It was claimed that some of these vehicles were illegally modified so that they could carry up to three times the permitted quantity.

Besides road damage, the Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research (MIROS) showed that heavy vehicles were involved in 25 percent of fatal accidents. One reason is that an overloaded vehicle would take a longer distance to stop.

The Works Ministry said in 2012 those roads that were meant to last up to a decade before they were mended "now needed major repairs within the first three years because of the overloaded vehicles".

In 2018, the Public Works Department (PWD), the Malaysian Highway Authority (MHA), the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL), and the Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) blamed third-party contractors for the substandard remedial work, claimed that new roads conformed to the same standards as member nations of the World Road Association. However, we would like to know if the road work or repair is supervised and monitored by qualified personnel to ensure it is carried out according to specifications.

DBKL Civil Engineering and Urban Transportation Department revealed that 70 percent of the potholes and damaged roads can be attributed to substandard remedial works by contractors, particularly those hired by utility and development companies. It is a very shocking revelation because the utility and development companies should be held accountable for the work of the contractors applied.

It is futile for authorities to blame contractors because payments shouldn't be made if they fail to comply with quality standards and this should be verified by the Public Works Department (JKR). Either the contractors concerned have to re-do the repair or both the utility and development company and the contractor will be blacklisted.

Among the measures that the government can take regarding the overloading by heavy commercial vehicles, and the substandard repairs carried out by subcontractors are:

- To introduce weigh-in-motion devices that have been adopted in many countries. They are designed to capture and record the axle weights and gross vehicle weights as vehicles drive over a measurement site such as at strategic locations equipped with CCTV along rural roads used by such vehicles. These devices are worth investing in because of the eventual great savings on road repairs.
- To set up Road Transport Department (JPJ) weighing stations for heavy commercial vehicles in compliance with the global standards, and with computer-generated reports that can be used in court.
- To ban commercial vehicles that weigh more than three tonnes from housing estates.
- To impose heavy penalties for overloading and to confiscate the vehicle if it had been illegally modified.
- As for bad roadworks, errant contractors and subcontractors should be blacklisted.
- To assign qualified personnels from the relevant government department to supervise or monitor the road repair to ensure that the work carried out conforms to technical specifications.
- To put in place an effective monitoring and reporting system to eliminate corruption and abuse of the process.

We reiterate our call to the government to take stern action on overloaded commercial vehicles because they damage our roads and contribute to road accident cases. Transport companies having overloaded heavy commercial vehicles should be fined, based on how much they exceeded the permissible limit. The reason is that prematurely damaged roads have to be repaired and it is grossly unfair for taxpayers to be burdened by the cost of premature road repairs.

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