

Puspakom's 'tiresome' regulation

Rule forces lorry owners to rent tyres just to pass roadworthy inspections

By CHARLES RAMENDRAN
charles.ramen@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: A rather strange regulation imposed by Puspakom has led to lorry owners using rented tyres on their vehicles before they are sent for testing, say lorrymen.

While most lorries are fitted with the preferred choice of modern tubeless tyres, Puspakom's rules demand that models that originally came with tubed tyres must have such tyres before they can pass inspection, revealed a senior member of a lorry drivers association.

So, those who use tubeless tyres "rent" the tubed tyres just for the tests.

"There is no other reason to rent tyres because new tyres are now affordable and it is more cost-efficient to use them," says Negri Sembilan Lorry Operators' Association treasurer Alvin Loke.

The practice of renting tyres continues because lorry drivers face challenges when switching between the two kinds of tyres during roadworthiness inspections.

"Many lorries, especially the older ones have switched from tube tyres to tubeless ones which are safer and last longer.



Fit for the road: Lorries lining up for inspection at Puspakom Alam Megah, Shah Alam. — FAIHAN GHANI/The Star

However, Puspakom fails these lorries as the vehicle model was originally built with tubed tyres.

"This is when the lorry owners resort to tyre rental services. It is no longer about renting tyres to temporarily replace worn-out ones. Brand new China-made tyres and imported second-hand Japanese tyres are affordable," Loke told *The Star*.

As switching wheels just for inspections also incurs costs, he urged the authorities to ease this rule.

"The change to tubeless tyres does not compromise a lorry's roadworthiness. Tubeless tyres

are safer as, in the event of a puncture, deflation occurs slowly keeping a vehicle running safely unlike tubed tyres which go flat almost instantly.

"Tubeless tyres also last much longer. Often, the cause of tyre blowouts is overloading and this is something the authorities should regulate," Loke said, adding that the government should also consider exempting or lowering taxes on tyres, which make up the highest expenditure for lorry owners.

Meanwhile, road safety experts have urged authorities to impose stricter enforcement against lorry

owners who may resort to renting new tyres to hoodwink authorities during roadworthiness inspections.

Assoc Prof Dr Law Teik Hua of Universiti Putra Malaysia's Road Safety Research Centre said hot stamping tyres with a vehicle's registration number was one possible solution.

"It could also deter syndicates from renting out tyres since they can be identified and cannot be reused on other vehicles. There should also be harsher penalties for both lorry owners and syndicates involved in tyre rentals," he said.

Law, too, suggested subsidies or tax incentives on the purchase of tyres so lorry owners would be encouraged to use high quality tyres.

"There can be partnerships with tyre manufacturers for fleet owners or lorry operators who adhere to safety standards. This could also increase overall road safety," he said.

Road Safety Council of Malaysia executive council member Datuk Suret Singh said the agencies should "crack the whip" to ensure that commercial vehicles do not use low quality and worn-out tyres.

"Such tyres are a deadly threat to road users. Duties on high quality tyres should be reduced or waived to encourage their use. Consistent enforcement is also crucial."

He said the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission should also take prompt action against any Puspakom or enforcement agency officials who accept bribes and turn a blind eye on regulatory violations.

Last month, Deputy Transport Minister Datuk Hasbi Habibollah said the government was considering amending existing laws to combat "tyre rentals" used to manipulate vehicle inspection results.