

WILDLIFE-RELATED ACCIDENTS

'TAKE STEPS TO PREVENT MORE DEATHS'

Elevated crossings, underpasses and motion sensors among solutions, say experts

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THE cow elephant seen mourning the death of her calf after it was hit by a lorry along the Gerik-Jeli Highway in Perak on Sunday has returned to the forest, but experts warn more such incidents will occur if nothing is done.

Perak Wildlife and National Parks Department (Perhilitan) director Yusoff Shariff said the calf's carcass had been buried.

"The mother has returned to the forest. We hope that she has rejoined her herd," he told the *New Straits Times*.

A video showing an adult elephant standing guard over her

calf that was pinned under the lorry went viral on Sunday.

The elephant was seen trying to push the vehicle with her head in a desperate attempt to save her calf.

Perhilitan had to sedate the cow elephant after she remained by her calf's side for more than five hours, refusing to leave and posing a risk to passing motorists.

Experts, however, warned of more wild animal deaths on Malaysian roads.

They said the latest incident was a call to action for the government to build infrastructure such as animal crossings on highways to prevent similar tragedies from recurring.

Universiti Putra Malaysia Road Safety Research Centre head Associate Professor Dr Law Teik Hua proposed three measures to reduce wildlife-related accidents, which are the installation of motion sensors, rumble strips, and ele-

vated crossings.

He said motion sensors and wildlife detection systems could activate flashing warning signals when large animals approached the road, allowing drivers to slow their vehicles in real time.

"In high-risk areas, rumble strips and slowed speed zones can notify and compel drivers to stay focused.

"These steps can considerably lower crash hazards when combined with improved signage and public awareness efforts," he said.

While these technologies could involve higher costs, Law said long-term solutions such as elevated crossings or wildlife under-

passes offered the best fix.

He said these approaches would transform highways into shared spaces that integrated the natural ecosystems, rather than solely as pathways for vehicles.



Associate Professor
Dr Law Teik Hua



The government has been urged to build more infrastructure that facilitates safe animal crossings on highways, such as signage. PIC COURTESY OF WORKS MINISTRY



Anthony Tan Kee
Huat



Tan Sri Lee Lam
Thye

MySDG Centre for Environment and Sustainability director Anthony Tan Kee Huat called for improved infrastructure, such as viaducts, to allow animals to safely pass under highways.

He said the increasing frequency of vehicle-animal collisions, especially along the East Coast Expressway, had become a concerning norm.

"How well lit are our highways? There are straight stretches of highways that are pitch dark at night and do not give the driver any time to react to animals crossing," he said.

Animal welfare advocate Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye said the authorities must take immediate action to implement mit-

igation measures as this would ensure the safety of both motorists and wild animals.

He said the installation of wildlife crossings such as overpasses and underpasses would enable safe passage for animals between fragmented habitats, without the danger of encountering speeding vehicles.

"Every year, we witness tragic incidents where animals like tapirs are struck by vehicles while crossing roads in search of food.

"These collisions not only result in the loss of precious wildlife, but also pose significant risks to drivers, leading to injuries and, in some cases, fatalities," he said in a statement.