

Strict vetting can save lives

Experts: Regular tests could prevent lorry drivers from being complacent

By GERARD GIMINO

gerard.gimino@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: Thorough background checks should be carried out on those seeking jobs as commercial vehicle drivers, say road safety experts.

Malaysian Road and Transportation Safety Association president Md Hairolazaman Muhamed Nor called for enhanced screening and monitoring measures to be taken.

“Ongoing monitoring, including drug and alcohol testing as well as performance evaluations, is important,” he said.

However, he said it could be discriminatory to impose a blanket ban on former convicts looking for employment in the sector.

“It may unfairly exclude responsible and reformed individuals from job opportunities.

“Instead, policies that disqualify persons with recent serious or violent offences can be implemented.

“Comprehensive assessments rather than blanket bans should be used to evaluate each driver’s

suitability,” he added.

Md Hairolazaman proposed the mandatory use of dashcams and CCTVs inside heavy vehicles.

“Continuous recording of driver behaviour and vehicle conditions can also assist investigations and promote accountability,” he said, adding that it should be done alongside regulatory measures, driver training, infrastructure improvements and enforcement.

He also proposed increased adoption of ISO 39001 due to the recent spate of road crashes involving heavy vehicles.

ISO 39001 is an international standard for road traffic safety management systems, providing a framework for organisations to reduce and prevent road fatalities and injuries.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia’s Dr Nurrul Hafeezah Sahak called for a zero-tolerance approach, such as immediate suspension, for drivers found taking banned substances.

“Screenings should be conducted at the pre-employment phase and also at periodic intervals,” said the Faculty of Science and

Technology lecturer.

She said public involvement is equally crucial in enhancing road safety, adding that unsafe lorry driving should be reported immediately.

“Transport companies must ensure timely and appropriate investigations of complaints addressed against them as well,” she said.

Universiti Putra Malaysia’s Prof Dr Kulanthayan KC Mani said road crashes are preventable and that the probability of technical issues in heavy goods vehicles can be reduced if they are well maintained.

“These vehicles are highly used, so maintenance requirements must be met.

“When heavy vehicles carry loads, the total weight also increases, which can make it harder to control.

“Driving fast makes the situation even more challenging,” said Kulanthayan, who heads the Putra Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion Group.

He said it is important to monitor drivers, adding that compa-

nies should take responsibility too.

“The installation of systems like dashcams can possibly reveal how an incident happened, enhancing crash investigations.

“With more vehicles having dashcams, it can also enhance driving etiquette, as the chances of being seen committing violations will be high,” he said, adding that the idea also applied to private vehicles.

A lorry carrying gravel rammed a truck carrying nine Federal Reserve Unit personnel on Tuesday, resulting in their deaths.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the lorry had a malfunction causing its steering system to fail.

Perak police chief Datuk Comm Noor Hisam Nordin said the lorry driver had six prior criminal cases mostly related to narcotics and had multiple outstanding traffic summonses.

FOR MORE:
Turn to page 6