

FRU crash sparks calls for transport **system review**

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PETALING JAYA: The recent crash involving a Federal Reserve Unit (FRU) truck, which resulted in multiple fatalities, has sparked renewed calls for a thorough review of government personnel transport practices.

Experts emphasise that the tragedy could have been avoided with stricter safety protocols and higher vehicle standards.

Universiti Putra Malaysia Road Safety Research Centre head Assoc Prof Dr Law Teik Hua stressed the urgent need for all relevant agencies – including the Armed Forces, FRU and the Transport Ministry – to reassess their transport systems.

“Given recent disasters, it is clearly time to examine how several ministries and agencies manage the transport of personnel.

“The current approach is largely based on outdated vehicles that fail to meet modern safety standards,” he added.

Law suggested that operational zoning could mitigate risks by assigning certain trucks for short-distance or controlled-area operations.

“This would ensure vehicles are appropriately matched to the route conditions, minimising the potential for accidents.”

➤ Safety criteria for official personnel carriers must be thoroughly examined and enforced as overall vehicle roadworthiness crucial for long-distance travel: Academic

He also raised concerns about the safety of FRU vehicles, particularly reports suggesting that some trucks lack seat belts or proper restraint systems in their rear compartments.

“This is a major lapse. Those being carried in these vehicles are highly vulnerable in rollovers or crashes.

“Safety criteria for all official personnel carriers must be thoroughly examined and enforced, especially for long-distance travel, where seat belts, secure seating and overall vehicle roadworthiness are crucial.”

Law emphasised that outdated vehicle designs or antiquated SOPs should not compromise personnel safety.

“It is long overdue for a comprehensive audit and update of transport safety procedures across various authorities,” he said.

Echoing similar sentiments, Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research chairman Prof Wong Shaw Voon called for immediate action, stressing that

the loss of life must not go unaddressed.

“We should not let these fatalities pass without learning from them.

“This must serve as a lesson to prevent future tragedies, especially one with this many casualties,” he said.

He also disputed the idea that such crashes are unpredictable.

“Many things are preventable. Buses and cars are designed with safety features such as proper seating and seat belts to absorb impact energy and protect passengers.

“Engineers have already done their part. But FRU trucks, which are designed for specific enforcement operations, may not prioritise passenger safety in the same way.”

Wong acknowledged that FRU trucks are intended for rapid response and flexibility, which sometimes requires trade-offs in comfort or safety.

However, he emphasised that safety must remain a priority.

“If there’s a steering issue, we

can prevent the crash. If people are in unsafe positions, the injuries are predictable.

“Once the energy exceeds human tolerance, injuries are inevitable. By preventing that energy from reaching the person, we can prevent injury. It’s not random.”

Wong also encouraged organisations to implement structured road safety management frameworks, such as ISO 39001 (an international standard for road traffic safety management systems).

“This is about proper management. Management must take ownership and safety must be treated as an ongoing process.

“Things change, environments evolve and risks shift. We must keep identifying hazards, controlling them and eventually eliminating them,” he said.

Nine members of the FRU were killed in a road accident on Tuesday when the truck they were traveling in collided with a gravel-laden lorry along the Chikus-Sungai Lampam road in Teluk Intan, Perak.

Preliminary investigations indicate that a steering malfunction may have caused the crash.

Eight other FRU personnel were injured in the incident and are receiving treatment at Teluk Intan Hospital.