

# FATAL CRASHES EXPOSE DEEP FLAWS

Experts blame systemic gaps for repeat tragedies involving heavy vehicles

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**F**ATAL crashes in Teluk Intan and Gerik involving heavy vehicles that failed safety audits underscore systemic flaws that are all too familiar, said transport and road safety experts.

Transport policy expert Wan Agyl Wan Hassan said the revelations on the fatal crash involving a lorry and a Federal Reserve Unit (FRU) truck, as well as the bus accident in Gerik, Perak, that killed 15 Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris students, were hardly shocking.

"They are devastatingly familiar. We've seen violations that should have triggered red flags and suspensions, yet somehow, these vehicles were still allowed to operate."

"The crash in Teluk Intan involving FRU personnel and the Gerik bus tragedy are not isolated lapses."

"They are evidence of a system that is structurally broken," said Wan Agyl, founder of transport think tank MY Mobility Vision.

Yesterday, the task force probing the FRU accident released its preliminary report, showing that the tipper lorry involved was significantly overloaded.

The report, released on the Transport Ministry's website, said investigations uncovered gaps in the safety management and operational practices of the vehicle.

Transport Minister Anthony Loke said the operator of the bus involved in the Gerik crash had failed to comply with all seven mandatory safety audit criteria under the Road Transport Department's (RTD) Inspection and Safety Audit.

He said a comprehensive audit conducted by the RTD found the operator had neglected critical safety protocols.

## LACK OF INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Wan Agyl said what was most troubling is that the tipper lorry and the bus had already been



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flagged as non-compliant before the crashes.

This, he said, shows that these were not hidden risks but known risks and direct threats to life.

He said the main issue lies in the lack of system-wide enforcement, real-time risk detection and institutional accountability.

He said multiple agencies — including RTD, the Land Public Transport Agency (Apad), Puspakom, Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research and Occupational Safety and Health Department — operate in silos, where data is not shared promptly.

## GOVERNMENT VEHICLES MUST SET GOLD STANDARD

He proposed five steps to overcome issues involving heavy vehicles, including centralising enforcement under a single lead agency with full authority over planning, licensing, inspections and compliance — much like a reformed version of the now-defunct Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD).

He also proposed making safety audits binding instead of cosmetic.

"If companies fail RTD's audit, their operating licence should be suspended immediately; no exceptions."

"Passing these audits must be a condition to stay on the road," he said.

He added that GPS tracking and tamper-proof safety technology for commercial vehicles should be mandated, including speed limiters and dashcams with live data access by authorities.

No operator, he said, should be allowed to "switch off" visibility.

"As I've mentioned many times, there should also be a reform of RTD's demerit system and integrate it with a national digital registry of high-risk drivers and operators, so patterns of repeat offences are flagged early before tragedy occurs."

He said government vehicles should be treated equally, noting

that the FRU truck had no seatbelts or headrests.

"Government fleets must set the gold standard in compliance."

## NOT ISOLATED INCIDENTS

Echoing the same sentiment, Universiti Putra Malaysia's Road Safety Research Centre head, Associate Professor Dr Law Teik Hua, said the recent fatal crashes are not isolated incidents but rather symptomatic of broader, systemic failure in Malaysia's transport enforcement and reg-

ulatory ecosystem.

While each case may involve specific failings, such as overloading, missing seatbelts or poor vehicle maintenance, Law said they collectively point to deep-rooted issues in enforcement consistency, compliance monitoring and institutional accountability.

He said oversight by agencies such as RTD, Apad and Puspakom frequently lacked coordination and consistency.

"Overloaded lorries, non-compliant vehicles and unsafe driving practices often go undetected until after accidents occur."

"Enforcement efforts tend to be reactive rather than preventive."

He said many regulations, particularly those governing vehicle safety features, inspection protocols and cargo limits, have not kept pace with real-world transport risks.

"For example, mandatory seatbelts for all government vehicles or real-time monitoring systems are not uniformly enforced."

"There is also little integration of enforcement data across agencies, allowing high-risk drivers or repeat offenders to continue operating without triggering red flags."

"A lack of public transparency

further undermines accountability."

Transport analyst Dr Rosli Azad Khan said the government should consider forming an independent road safety oversight commission to audit RTD, Puspakom and commercial vehicle operators without conflict of interest.

"This commission must have access to the vehicles' database in the same way that traffic police have to enforce the law and compliance," he said.

He called for public whistleblower channels to encourage the public and employees in transport companies to report unsafe practices, with legal protection for whistle-blowers.

"There must be zero tolerance for heavy vehicles that fail safety inspections to be on

the road," he said.

He added that heavy vehicle operators with failed safety audits should be made public to pressure companies to comply.

Transparency, he said, would give passengers and road users safety information.

He called for the installation of GPS and telematics systems in commercial heavy vehicles to monitor speed, routes and driving behaviour in real-time, where violations should trigger automatic enforcement actions.



Wan Agyl Wan Hassan



Associate Professor Dr Law Teik Hua