IRRESPONSIBLE AND DANGEROUS TREND

More motorists are menacing the roads without licences and insurance, causing undue suffering to their accident victims

ALIZA SHAH
KUALA LUMPUR
alizashah@nst.com.my

IT'S a prerequisite before getting behind the wheel, yet nearly eight million summonses have been issued to motorists for not having licences and insurance in less than five years.

Data from the Road Transport Department (RTD) also revealed another troubling pattern — many of those fined did not even bother to rectify their offence.

And now, road safety experts and victims of these irresponsible drivers want the authorities to seize the vehicles of these errant drivers on the spot and even blacklist them from buying anything with an engine.

ILLEGAL DRIVERS

In statistics shared with the *New Straits Times*, the RTD revealed that it had issued 1,244,248 summonses to motorists for driving without a licence between 2021 and June this year.

However, that total grew to 3,222,043 — almost three times — due to repeat offenders.

The data also showed an increasing trend, with the first half of this year recording 645,615 summonses issued so far — just one more than the whole of last year.

In an age-focused breakdown, motorists in the 17-25 group had racked up 868,548 summonses since 2021, just ahead of the 26-35 group (862,671). Another 570,174 offenders were 56 and above.

DRIVING WITHOUT COVER

In the same period, more than 1.04 million summonses had been issued to first-time offenders of insurance offences, and the number surged almost four-fold to 3.9 million — also due to repeat offenders.

So far this year, 126,297 summonses were issued, but an age-based analysis saw the number soaring to 780,635 this year — more than six times. Since 2021, drivers in the 36-45 age group led the violation (890,954), surpassing even the 17-25 group (721,742).

BEHIND THE BREACH

RTD director-general Datuk Aedy Fadly Ramli said many offenders cited financial constraints in getting a licence and insurance, but noted that ignorance and low awareness also played a part.

Therefore, he said Program MyLESEN was introduced by the department to help those in the Bottom 40 (B40) income group get free licences.

"The programme is the government's commitment to helping the B40 obtain driving licences and educating the public on the importance of following regulations. Our aim is to nurture competent road users," he said.

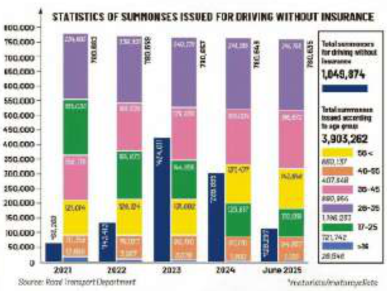
TIME TO GET TOUGH

However, Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research (Miros) chairman Professor Wong Shaw Voon said there was a need to get tough on repeat offenders, including seizing their vehicles and blacklisting them from entering hire-purchase agreements.

"Let them settle their licences or insurance first, and then come back to take their vehicles.

"Of course, they (the authorities) will say it is very cumbersome to manage the seized vehicles, but it is a lesson for them (the offenders) to act instead of just getting a mere RM300 summons," he said.

He said enforcement should be targeted — those who never had a licence, those who deliberately refuse to renew and those who genuinely forgot.



"Those who never had a licence are the most critical group compared with those who simply overlooked renewal.

"Enforcers may also want to visit schools and other areas where potential young offenders tend to gather," he said.

Wong added that the RTD and insurance companies should optimise their data to tackle the issue, for example, by sending renewal reminders to motorists and making the process easier.

"This will at least help the genuinely forgetful group. After all, imagine trying to remember a licence renewal date after 10 years — you could easily miss it," he said.

Universiti Putra Malaysia Road Safety Research Centre head Associate Professor Dr Law Teik Hua said the high number of summonses reflected a systemic failure that puts law-abiding road users at risk.

He described the current fines of RM300 for driving without a licence and RM150 for not having insurance as too low.

He also suggested for the authorities to adopt an artificial intelligence-powered system to detect and penalise uninsured vehicles immediately.

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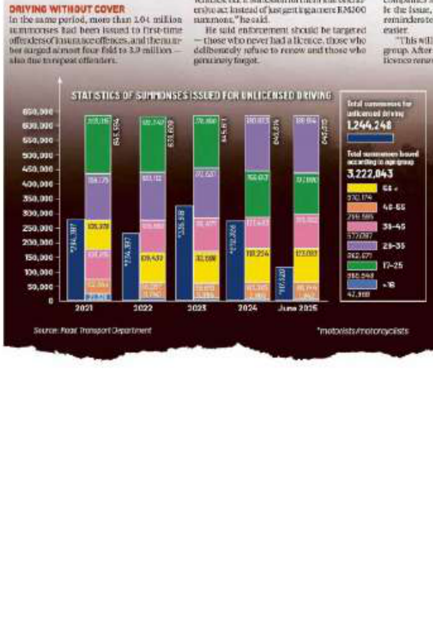

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JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS

Law also called for the implementation of a national compensation fund for victims of uninsured drivers.

"The Motor Insurers' Bureau (MIB) in the United Kingdom is one of the famous examples. It was created to help those injured by uninsured drivers or hit-and-run cases.

"A tax on all insurance firms funds it, meaning every insured driver indirectly contributes to it. The MIB covers both personal injuries and property damage, and it can recover the cost later from the driver responsible," he said.


Associate Professor Dr Law Teik Hua

Law noted that some American states also required drivers to carry an "Uninsured Motorist Coverage" as part of their insurance.

In Canada, he cited the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund, a government-run programme that helps when parties involved in a crash had no insurance.

Law added that Australia had a similar mechanism called the "Nominal Defendant Scheme".

"The organisation is responsible for compensating victims of uninsured or untraceable drivers. Fees from vehicle registrations or motor insurance are used to fund this scheme.

"It covers medical care, rehabilitation, income replacement and death benefits, ensuring that accident victims aren't left without help due to another's carelessness," he said.

COMPENSATORY FUNDS FOR ACCIDENT VICTIMS

COUNTRY	THE UNITED KINGDOM	THE UNITED STATES	CANADA	AUSTRALIA
Scheme/organisation	Motor Insurers' Bureau.	Uninsured Motorist Coverage.	Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund.	Nominal Defendant Scheme.
What it does	Compensates victims of uninsured or hit-and-run drivers for injuries and property damage.	Mandatory in many states. Provides compensation for injuries/damage caused by uninsured or hit-and-run drivers.	Helps victims when no parties have insurance; covers injuries and some property damage.	Compensates victims of uninsured/untraceable drivers for medical care, rehab, income loss and death benefits.
How it's funded	Levy on all motor insurers (indirectly paid by insured drivers).	Included in auto insurance premiums.	Funded by the provincial government.	Funded via vehicle registration fees or insurance levies.