

DRIVER FATIGUE TECH MULLED

Expert calls for legal code on data use before such a system is implemented

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THE Transport Ministry is holding engagements with stakeholders in the land transport industry to examine the proposed use of digital monitoring to detect driver fatigue and health conditions, particularly in relation to sleep disorders or sleep apnea.

Bernama reported that Deputy Transport Minister Datuk Hasbi Habibollah said discussions were also held with various parties including industry operators, innovators and logistics companies, especially those involved in both heavy and light transport.

“We are aware of (sleep apnea). In the past, concerns about (the digital driver health monitoring system) had been raised about its cost, because each check will cost hundreds of ringgit.

“However, with this new memorandum of agreement, we will look at this matter comprehensively.”

He said this during a question-and-answer session in Dewan Negara yesterday.

He was replying to a supplementary question by Senator Datuk Koh Nai Kwong, who wanted to know if the government was considering the use of wearable device technology or digital monitoring systems to detect the level of fatigue and health of public service vehicle (PSV) drivers.

In May, the Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research (Miros) and Alpha International Training and Consultancy signed an MoA to collaborate in developing and implementing specialised training programmes in the field of road safety and related aspects, including the Sleep Management and Rehabilitation Certification Programme.

The programme aims to address sleep deprivation and its impact on road safety, raise awareness, encourage behavioural changes and equip

road users with the skills to manage fatigue.

Hasbi said the ministry is also paying attention to proposals on the use of advanced technology such as a driver identity recognition system through the vehicle steering wheel that can detect health indicators such as heart rate as soon as the driver holds it.

He said this can prevent unfit drivers from starting a journey.

“We are taking note of this matter including the MoA with industry on sleep apnea.

“The ministry will determine the outcome of the MoA and the way forward.”

A road safety expert has stressed the importance of protecting personal data if the government proceeds with the digital monitoring system.

Universiti Putra Malaysia’s Road Safety Research Centre head Associate Professor Dr Law Teik Hua warned that without a clear and transparent legal framework, the initiative risks eroding public trust.

“The success of this initiative depends on several key considerations.

“First is the need for data security and privacy.

“This system will collect sensitive biometric and healthcare information, raising questions about how it would be stored, who will have access to it and how it will be used.

“In the absence of a vigorous and transparent legal code — like a distinct Fatigue Data Protection Act — this system has a chance of eroding public trust.”

Law suggested that a dedicated legal code may be needed to safeguard the information.

He stressed that the data should function as a safety tool to alert and caution drivers, not as a basis for punitive action.

“It is about supporting drivers in gaining awareness of their own fatigue and making safer choices, rather than having automatic penalties without help or understanding.”