

Authorities should privatise road surveillance

UNIVERSITI Putra Malaysia Road Safety Research Centre head Associate Prof Dr Law Teik Hua has called on the Government to introduce mobile Automated Enforcement System (AES) cameras to catch errant motorists off guard for driving above the speed limit or beating a red light.

He was reported to have said: "The effect of Awas presently is somewhat limited, because motorists know first-hand where these AES cameras are located and will be more cautious when driving or riding past them. So instead of using the current fixed AES cameras, maybe we can also introduce mobile ones."

Such an approach has long been used by the traffic police along our highways. At times, motorists could see a man behind a speed camera perched precariously on a slope or seated in front of a pillar. Those

exceeding the speed limit would be flagged down later or receive notification of their traffic offence via post.

Instead of waiting for motorists to commit offences and catch them, we should be more compassionate by deterring them. If deterrence is just as effective as punishment, we should opt for the former.

I am not an academic expert but I have written many articles on road safety. In 2003, I made a presentation at a road safety seminar, which was organised after the Merapoh bus tragedy that took 14 lives. Back then, I proposed that the authorities privatise surveillance as there would never be enough enforcement officers to station everywhere. The police, Road Transport Department (RTD) and local authorities could appoint concessionaires to submit evidence of driving and parking offences, and

it would be up to these enforcement agencies to issue summonses.

The concessionaires could hire and train mobile camera crews to be deployed at traffic lights and highways where driving offences are rampant. Instead of hiding behind bushes or pillars, these camera crews must be conspicuous by wearing bright uniforms.

A tag team could easily record hundreds of vehicles parked indiscriminately daily and there would be no shortage of fines to be collected, and income to be earned by the concessionaires.

The presence of cameras crews would also deter snatch thieves as the mobile cameras would be trained at motorcyclists, particularly those jumping red lights. If deployed at hilly highways, heavy vehicles belching thick smoke would be recorded for RTD and the Department of Environment

(DOE) to act.

Likewise, the local authorities and DOE could prosecute those caught on camera dumping garbage by the roadside or into rivers. Many servicemen who leave the armed forces at a relatively young age are fit and could easily be trained for surveillance, as many camera crews are needed. They should be rotated and not assigned permanently to one area.

Since 2003, I have advocated a common-sense approach to road safety by privatising surveillance with the use of mobile camera crews or authorised dashcams. This would not cost the Government a single sen but could generate billions of ringgit in revenue if motorists continue to commit driving and parking offences.

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