

Safety trumps hefty fines

PASIR GUDANG: The Transport Ministry has snubbed the call to review existing hefty fines imposed on offences such as overloading, saying that the aspect of safety must take precedence. In warning lorry operators and lorry drivers not to “cross the red line”, Anthony Loke said the rules were very clear when it concerned lorries caught for overloading. “I am very firm on this matter. They should not blame us for issuing hefty fines. “This is a safety matter as overloaded lorries pose a threat to other road users and also damage the roads,” the minister told a press conference after witnessing Johor Port Bhd handling a record container volume of one million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU) here yesterday. Loke said enforcement would be carried out by the Road Transport Department (JPJ) under two existing Acts – Land Public Transport Agency (APAD) Act 2010 and JPJ Act 1987. “It depends on the severity of the offence. JPJ officers can take action through the provisions under the JPJ Act or APAD Act against offenders. “We have our own internal policy on this matter and the APAD Act will usually be applied to serious cases of overloading, ” he said. Under the APAD Act, lorry operators caught for overloading are liable to a fine of between RM1,000 and RM500,000 or a maximum jail term of two years, or both. As for the JPJ Act, a maximum fine of RM2,000 each will be issued to both the lorry driver and the lorry operator.

On Sunday, Pan-Malaysia Lorry Owners Association urged the authorities to review the hefty fines imposed on lorry operators for offences, particularly for overloading. Its president Datuk Ng Koong Sinn said more than 10 cases of JPJ officers issuing hefty summonses against lorry operators under the APAD Act had been brought to their attention. One of the offenders was slapped with a fine of RM40,000, raising much concern among association members. Ng pointed out that there was no provision in the APAD Act to penalise the lorry drivers and consignors, who were equally responsible. He said since the penalties were “unduly harsh” on lorry operators, it could give rise to the possibility of bribery and corruption involving enforcement officers.

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