

ROADBLOCKS: So much for RTD to do elsewhere

QUESTION :

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SUSAI ANTHONY MUTHU, Puchong

FOREIGNERS and locals alike arriving at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport are greeted by roadblocks at all roads leading out of the airport which are manned by officers from the Road Transport Department (RTD). While it would not be uncommon for roads leading into an airport to be heavily guarded, the presence of government officials at roads leading out of the airport appears rather out of place.

Foreigners might wonder what all the fuss is about. They have already gone through the mandatory Immigration and Customs formalities, so why another checkpoint? Is this another check to ensure no trouble makers or subversive elements have slipped through the scrutiny of Immigration and police? Not at all.

The answer, of course, is that the RTD was conducting checks on the vehicles to ensure only bona fide taxis and limousines pick up passengers from the airport. They also make it a point to ensure that the safety belt ruling is strictly complied with.

Is this the type of first impression that we want to give to visitors? That the country is full of people out to fleece them or that we are a nation of lawbreakers?

The RTD would be better off hauling up all the motorists and motorcyclists who are flouting the law in many other parts of the Klang Valley, especially along the Federal Highway and Lebuhraya Damansara Puchong.

Motorcyclists do not ride in the prescribed lanes and motorists do not turn on their lights even in the dark. Then there are cars with headlights that blind every other motorist.

Why is it that nothing is being done, despite several complaints, about these blinding headlights (the types not approved or fitted by the original car manufacturer) or about bulldozers crawling along at peak hours holding up everyone else or drivers talking on their mobiles without a handsfree kit?

Taxis are often parked along bus stops at key pick-up points along the LDP. No matter how much the government raises the fares, they will always want to go one better. In addition, their illegal parking causes traffic congestion along the highways. This is especially evident in the Puchong area.

Yes, dear officers of the RTD, there is much to do outside KLIA. The highways are being turned into a circus. Let the airport take care of itself and stop inconveniencing visitors to our country.

FEEDBACK :

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Not to worry unless you're an offender

I REFER to the letter from Susai Anthony Muthu of Puchong on the roadblocks leading out of Kuala Lumpur International Airport ("So much for RTD to do elsewhere" -- NST, Dec 9). First of all, it must be made clear here what the Road Transport Department's role is at KLIA. Being the

premier gateway of the country, KLIA is the crown jewel of our nation's transport, tourism, international trade and services industries.

The government has decided that all relevant agencies must shoulder the responsibility to keep KLIA in the capacity it is intended to be. Thus, a multi-agency task force comprising the RTD, police, Commercial Vehicle Licensing Board, Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd and Tourism Ministry was set up for the regulation and enforcement on public transport at KLIA.

Tasked with enforcement against touts and illegal taxis that beset KLIA, the RTD has been conducting operations since March last year. Statistics on RTD's anti-touting efforts at KLIA (both at the main terminal and the Low-Cost Carrier Terminal) until Dec 7 this year show that 108 touts were hauled up.

As the RTD intensified its anti-touting efforts, the problem of illegal taxis (private vehicles, tour vans, city and hotel cabs) reared its ugly head at KLIA, prompting the department to set up roadblocks on routes leading out of KLIA. Since June this year, the roadblocks have netted 4,898 cases, with 391 vehicles seized for being repeat offenders.

We concur that there is much for the RTD to do outside of KLIA. However, there is lot left to do at KLIA in order to fully eradicate touts and unscrupulous parties looking to make money out of visitors to KLIA, be they foreigners or locals. Being cheated in a foreign country is never a pleasant experience and will affect the repeat business the tourism industry depends upon, unless we have already forgotten the case of tourists being charged RM2,000 for a trip to Lumut, and cases of rape and robbery committed inside taxis. Touts and illegal taxis are problems that KLIA certainly can do without. To eradicate these problems, multiple agencies, including the RTD, are playing their part in the government's decision on short- and long-term measures at KLIA. Rest assured, our roadblocks are part of the short-term measures at the airport. Until the long-term measures are in place, it is the RTD's duty to ensure that KLIA will not be infested with people lurking to milk victims of their money.

For the time being, the RTD will continue conducting roadblocks leading out of KLIA. Placed at the chokepoint leading out of the airport, the roadblock will help to tighten the noose on the illegal taxi operations.

Our personnel manning the roadblocks are tasked to spot and stop only vehicles identified by informers at the main terminal as being illegal. Any visitors unlucky enough to be conned are asked to alight at the roadblock and sent back to the terminal where our officers will arrange for their transportation.

Other vehicles visiting KLIA are never stopped to be inspected unless they blatantly flout traffic rules.

Security personnel at any airport is a common sight and to this department, the roadblocks are not out of place. It must be highlighted that visitors to our country are never inconvenienced as it is not them that we are targeting in our operations.

Our roadblocks at the nation's premier international airport are intended to make all visitors feel secure. There is nothing to be worried about when passing our roadblocks unless you are a law-breaker.

DATUK SOLAH MAT HASSAN

Director-General Road Transport Department