

12 AUG 1996

Handphone-Enforcement

SMOOTH START TO ENFORCEMENT ON HANDPHONE BAN FOR MOTORISTS

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 12 (Bernama) -- Enforcement of the nationwide ban on use of handphones and other communications devices without the hands-free kits while driving got off to a smooth start today.

Police said enforcement had started but statistics on the number of people summoned would only be available after a week.

It was learnt that the Road Transport Department (JPJ) had made at least four bookings against motorists here.

A Bernama check showed that many motorists were prepared for the ruling which came into force today.

Many motorists who had hands-free kits installed in their cars began using them diligently today.

The regulation covers the use of handphones, mobile communications devices by police and radio sets in taxis.

A study by the Transport Ministry shows that the use of communications equipment without the hands-free facility while driving can endanger road users.

The penalty is a maximum of RM1,000 fine or three months' jail for the first offence and up to RM2,000 fine or six months' jail or both for the second offence.

In the federal capital and Johor Baharu, radio taxi drivers switched off their communication sets to avoid being summoned, causing exasperation among would-be taxi users.

However, commuters in Johor Baharu heaved a sigh a relief when radio cab service in the city resumed at about 12.30pm following news that the Transport Ministry has given taxi drivers a one-month grace to instal the hands-free kits.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik will hold a dialogue with representatives of taxi and hired car operators on the matter at the ministry tomorrow.

Malaysia on the other hand wants skilled technical workers from Myanmar to help ease the shortage of such workers in the country.

Malaysia and Myanmar registered an increase in total trade from RM213.6 million in 1991 to RM683.5 million last year.

Malaysia's exports to Myanmar are mainly palm oil, crude petroleum, petroleum products, cereals and tobacco. Malaysia imports cereals, rubber, vegetables and organic chemicals from Myanmar.

On the meeting between Than Shwe and Dr Mahathir, Abdullah said the prime minister expressed his appreciation to the Myanmar leader for briefing him on the development and situation in Myanmar.

"The briefing was a good one. It gives us the opportunity to understand better the situation in Myanmar and also what the Myanmar government is doing at the moment," he said.

On Myanmar's entry into Asean, Abdullah said Dr Mahathir had told Than Shwe that he hoped Myanmar would join Asean by next year as the seven-member grouping celebrates its 30th anniversary.

JPJ Director-General Datuk Haji Pahamin Rajab said he saw no reason why taxis without the hands-free kit could not pull up by the roadside to communicate with their control centres.

He was commenting on the Automobile Association of Malaysia's suggestion that the government relax the ruling on taxi drivers.

Federal traffic police deputy chief acting ACP Dell Akbar Khan said

police would not be conducting any specific operations to nab motorists using handphones while driving.

"Nonetheless, policemen have been directed to issue summonses on the spot when they come across such errant drivers," he said.

Policemen would also be stationed at accident-prone spots like in Jalan Ampang, the Bukit Bintang and Jalan Pudu areas where the use of handphones by drivers was a common sight, he said.

Dell said "static operations" would be conducted in collaboration with the JPJ to ensure drivers comply with the ruling.

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