

18/02/1997

Lorry operators seek review of outdated laws

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LORRY operators want the Government to do away with outmoded laws which they say affect Malaysia's industrial competitive edge.

"Some of the laws on axle loading and black smoke emission are clearly outdated," Pan Malaysia Lorry Owners' Association (PMLOA) president Tiu Ah Chai said.

On axle loading, Tiu said lorry operators want the maximum weight allowed per axle to be raised from 10 to 12 tonnes.

Lorry operators, he said, are sometimes forced to overload as cargo owners are reluctant to pay for more trips in order to abide by the weight limit.

"At 10 tonnes per axle, some lorry owners are forced to overload, as some bulk cargo like steel coils can weigh up to 25 or 30 tonnes per trip when a lorry can only load about 20 tonnes," he said.

"Lorry owners end up being the losers either way. If we overload, the fines and compounds can exceed transportation charges, and if we refuse to overload we lose business," he told Business Times.

Some large and bulk cargo is meant for national mega projects and heavy industries in the country.

Lorry operators also want the Government to come up with an official announcement in "black and white" on when the Cabinet allows an interim period for operators to overload to overcome the shortage of lorries.

Tiu pointed out that several years ago when the Cabinet allowed operators to overload by 25 per cent of the permissible tonnage but without issuing a directive, the police and Road Transport Department continued to issue summons to lorry owners for overloading.

"The insurance companies may not entertain our claims if our lorries overload and are involved in accidents," he said.

He said the PMLOA also wants Section 107 of the Road Transport Act that pertains to the maintenance of vehicles regarding smoke emission and allows the police to issue summons to lorry operators without proper evidence or tests, to be amended.

Tiu said the PMLOA also wants levy charges and tolls to be excluded from the tariff structure. He said the tariff of 16 sen per tonne/km (25 sen per tonne/mile) has not been revised for 38 years when there were no toll roads and levies. The current tariff structure is silent on toll and levy charges.

"We want the new structure to state that cargo owners will have to bear toll and levy charges," he said.

The PMLOA also wants the authorities to allow lorry operators to issue documents which are equivalent to bills of lading that are issued to ships or airway bills to airlines.

The bill of lading or airway bill is a legal document which allows shippers to collect payment for their goods.

Tiu said the matter will be discussed at the PMLOA meeting later this month.

"We will then forward our recommendations to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the Entrepreneur Development Ministry which is formulating a new public transportation bill," he said.

Tiu said general lorry transportation operators realise their role in supporting the country's industrialisation programme and want to improve and inject professionalism in the trucking industry.

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