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Express bus service faces disruption (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - With only five days to go before the deadline for the mandatory use of the speed monitoring device, only 100 of the 4,000 express buses in the country have been fitted with the equipment.

This means there is a possibility that these buses will not be on the road after Jan 1 and even during the Hari Raya and Chinese New Year festive season.

Pan Malaysia Bus Operators' Association chairman Tan Sri Sulaiman Ninam Shah said most of the express buses had not been equipped with the device.

He said the disruption in the express bus service next month would be inevitable since the Road Transport Department had ruled that buses without the device would be banned from the road.

"Unless something is done quickly to resolve this matter, I fear the disruption could be prolonged until the Hari Raya season," he added.

Sulaiman denied his warning of disrupted service was meant as "a threat or a strike", adding the bus operators were only following the ruling by RTD.

"So far, only 100 buses out of the 6,000 express, tour and factory buses in service have been equipped with the device.

"And as the deadline is only a few days away, I do not think there is enough time to install them on all the buses," Sulaiman said when contacted by telephone today.

The device, which costs RM1,000, can be installed at 13 centres throughout the country.

The speed monitoring device ruling was mooted two years ago but its implementation was delayed because of teething problems with the equipment.

In February, the Transport Ministry directed tour and express bus operators to install the devices immediately, after the Cabinet agreed to various measures proposed by the ministry aimed at reducing accidents.

In a last-ditch attempt to defer the Jan 1 deadline, the association this week sent a letter to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to intervene in the matter.

However, the association has yet to receive a reply.

Sulaiman said they had to seek the help of Dr Mahathir since their various attempts for a dialogue with the Transport Ministry, had fallen on deaf ears.

On Wednesday, Deputy Transport Minister Datuk Mohd Ali Rustam said there had been no directive to defer the implementation of the ruling.

He also said since express buses without the devices would be banned from the road after the deadline, factory and school buses converted into temporary express buses for the coming Hari Raya and Chinese New Year celebrations must also be installed with the devices.

Sulaiman said the association believed its appeal was justified as it was not opposed to the ruling but was only requesting a deferment of the deadline since 90 per cent of bus companies were facing financial problems due to the economic situation.

He said the need to install the devices was not urgent as it could not prevent accidents.

It could only caution drivers if they exceeded the speed limit, he added.

The ruling to install the device is aimed at discouraging express bus

drivers from speeding, thus ensuring passenger safety.

The device will emit a warning each time the driver exceeds the stipulated speed limit and also record the number of times the speed limit is exceeded.

RTD will issue summonses not only to the driver but also the operator according to the number of offences committed.

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