

## **RON92 return may trap motorists in pricey dilemma**

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**By Kow Kwan Yee**

Soon after the price for RON95 went up by 20 sen per litre, speculation on the government mulling over reintroducing RON92 has surfaced.

But certain quarters worry that the possible phasing out of the former and the return of the latter lower-quality fuel into in the market may eventually force motorists to switch to the more expensive RON97.

According to automotive expert Anthony Lim, the possibility is high that the government may phase out RON95 completely as the petrol kiosks cannot afford to provide so many varieties of petrol.

NONE "If RON92 were to be available in the market again, the petrol stations have to provide RON95, RON97 and diesel, which I think they can't cope with.

"This means, one of the petrol types has to be phased out. And I speculate it will be RON95," he told Malaysiakini during a phone interview yesterday.

Lim is a senior editor of Driven Communications Sdn Bhd that runs several prominent websites on automotive industry, including paultan.org.

Some may be forced to use RON97

Lim warned of the consequences of drivers pumping in the costlier RON97 eventually should RON92 be reintroduced.

He explained that some modern and high-performance cars could not run on RON92 as stated on the cars' fuel filler lid, specifying the recommended RON (research octane number) rating for each vehicle.

Lim said that while many cars can use RON92 without any issue, there would be a fair number of models that would need to switch to RON97 if RON95 were replaced, which would mean increased spending on fuel for these consumers.

Most modern Japanese and South Korean engines would be able to take RON92, but older carburetted vehicles would struggle with RON92, he said, including the early-generation Proton Saga. Additionally, continental cars mostly specify RON95 as the recommended minimum.

"According to UMW Toyota, all Toyota models sold here can use RON92, except for the Toyota 86 sports car, which needs RON97. The company added that the recommended grade for all its Lexus models is RON95 and above," he added.

'RON92 retards car engines'

jemaah al ehsan kuala besut pc 200713 umno information chief ahmad maslan  
The Star daily had earlier quoted Deputy Finance Minister Ahmad Maslan (right) as saying that the government is studying the possibility of reintroducing RON92 petrol if it is viable for local vehicles, but a decision is still pending.

RON92 petrol was completely phased out in September 2009 and replaced by RON95 given that its use was rather low - around five percent of the total petrol sales in the country.

Back then, RON92 petrol was priced at RM1.70 per litre while that for RON95 was RM1.80 per litre.

According to motoring magazine Hypertune editor Justin Toh, almost 92 percent of the cars running on roads are RON92 compatible, but cautioned that the lower-quality fuel would "retard" car engines in the long term.

He explained that low-quality RON fuels could cause denotation, which might lead to serious engine damage, resulting in loss of power.

"However, while nearly every car on the road may be able to run (on) RON92, engine performance, smoothness, fuel efficiency and maintenance cost may be severely affected," said Toh in a phone interview with Malaysiakini yesterday.

Hypertune is a monthly performance-oriented motoring publication in English established in 2001.

To this, Lim commented that currently, most Malaysians would not care much about how low-quality petrol damages engines ultimately.

"Under the pressure caused by the high cost of living, they (the consumers) may just choose RON92 compared to RON97," he said.

Lim also said that the possible reintroduction of RON92 at local petrol kiosks may not be the best alternative to ease burden of the middle class as they had to pay for higher maintenance cost after long-term usage of RON92.

He had also questioned the price for RON92 upon being reintroduced, and why the government claimed the low usage of RON92 was the reason for phasing it out of the market earlier, but is considering reviving it now.

Lim described this move as just old wine in a new bottle.

PDAM president: A backward move

Meanwhile, Petroleum Dealers Association of Malaysia (PDAM) president Hashim Othman was quoted by Bernama as saying that if RON92 petrol Malaysia would be frowned upon for having taken a backward step is reintroduced, as the leaded fuel would negatively affect the environment.

He commented that the move was not worth it as the government would have to face high costs.

"Many things have to be looked into if we want to reintroduce RON92 petrol. The question is whether it is worth it?."

petrol price hike panic consumer traffic jam at petrol stations 050608 06"By reintroducing RON92 petrol, we have to increase the pumps and tanks at every petrol station, who is going to bear all that costs?" he asked when interviewed by Bernama Radio24.

The series of announcements to hike up the RON95 petrol and diesel by 20 sen per litre and followed by RON97 by 15 sen per litre within the last few days, has sown confusion among the public.

The government's intention to go for RON92 petrol is described as a not thoroughly thought-out fiscal decision, giving birth to much uncertainties and speculation.

Some experts say it is not justifiable for the government to reduce the subsidy for RON95 petrol and study the possibility of replacing it with RON92.

Others had also pointed out that the government projects an image of indecisiveness with its flip and flops where the petrol subsidy and consumption issues are concerned when actually they should be reviewed comprehensively.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak had said that the move of subsidy rationalisation could reduce national fiscal deficit by saving RM1.1 billion annually.

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