

Penang folk enduring many traffic nightmares
New Straits Times
13 February 2013
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GEORGE TOWN: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's pledge to resolve traffic woes during his two-day visit here was much anticipated news for Penangites who were praying hard for a long-term remedy to the painstaking daily traffic-crawl during peak hours.

As a tourism magnet, Penang island was also choked up during the school holidays and the main festival periods as local and foreign tourists made a beeline for the state.

The most well-known traffic crawl hotspot in the state would be the Penang Bridge, where some have endured traffic jams that stretched to two hours.

During the morning rush, there would be a massive crawl at the end of the 13.5km bridge on the island side heading towards Bayan Lepas while during the after-work peak hour, the traffic on the other side of the bridge would be congested from its toll plaza in Prai, stretching to the Permatang Pauh exit.

If there is one road considered to suffer from massive traffic snarl on the Penang island, it would be Jalan Masjid Negeri. The 4km stretch, from Jalan Tunku Kudin in Gelugor to Jalan Scotland, is plagued with heavy traffic almost every hour of the day as it serves as one of the arterial roads connecting to Gelugor, Batu Lanchang, Air Itam and George Town. Despite traffic police manning the intersection, the heavy flow of traffic has the road bursting at its seams.

Another nightmare for many Penangites is Jalan Air Itam, where the traffic stretches out to the famous tourist destination of Penang Hill.

The narrow, bottle-necked roads are often difficult to navigate with series of traffic lights making it difficult to traverse as heavy vehicles and motorcycles jostle for space.

In George Town, Jalan Magazine, which serves as the main entry point for those travelling from the Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu Expressway, there is always a gridlock during peak hours.

Besides that, Jalan Dato Keramat, Jalan Penang and other adjoining roads surrounding Komtar also suffer from bumper to bumper crawls during peak hours.

Jalan Burma, which is one of the longest roads on the island, compounds the traffic congestion as many cars are parked on both sides of the road, reducing it to single lane traffic.

Towards the north, Jalan Kelawai and Persiaran Gurney are packed with vehicles as shopping complexes and other tourist destination dot the area.

The Penang Island Municipal Council has plans to make these two roads one way in an attempt to alleviate the traffic problem there.

Down south of the island, in Bayan Lepas, the Tun Dr Awang Roundabout is infamous for its traffic snarl. There are traffic lights to ease flow but many have complained that the intervals were too short, causing jams for a few kilometres.

The nearby Jalan Tun Dr Awang, heading towards Bukit Jambul and Balik Pulau, is also inundated with cars during rush hours.

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Source: <http://www.nst.com.my/nation/general/penang-folk-enduring-many-traffic-nightmares-1.217391>