



Miros stand slammed

Musa takes DG to task for saying drivers high on drugs not priority

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THE Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research (Miros) director-general Professor Dr Wong Shaw Voon has surprisingly declared that bus drivers on drugs are not part of their high priority study.

In an immediate response yesterday, former Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Musa Hassan slammed Miros for treating the matter lightly and ignoring a crucial aspect of road safety.

Musa told *The Malay Mail* anything involving public safety should be taken seriously, more so if scores of lives were in the hands of an individual.

“As this research is about public safety, it should indeed be a high priority project. Even if only one or two bus drivers are involved in drugs, the matter should still be looked into immediately because people’s lives are placed in harm’s way. No matter what, public safety should be on the top of any research list,” he said.

Musa was responding to Wong’s comments after the Road Transport Department revealed it had nabbed 46 express bus drivers who tested positive for drugs under ‘Op Selamat’ since it was launched on Aug 12, in conjunction with Hari Raya celebrations.

Wong said Miros conducted a research before Hari Raya with regards to express bus drivers under the influence of drugs to gauge the seriousness of the situation.

“We began the research early this year. In order for our research to be comprehensive, we needed figures from the police and hospitals, which we are working on.

“It is still premature to say when the research will be completed because currently, this is not a project with high priority. This is because the number of such bus drivers are very few,” he told *The Malay Mail*.

Wong did admit, however, that bus drivers, or any intoxicated driver for that matter, posed a massive danger to passengers and other road users.

“However, one must first understand why some bus drivers succumb to taking drugs.

Some take drugs to keep them alert so they do not fall asleep behind the wheel.

Of course this does not justify the fact that they are putting their passengers’ lives at risk,” he said.

Meanwhile, two days after RTD's shocking announcement, the Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD) came up with a figure of their own on the number of bus drivers caught under the influence of drugs while on duty.

SPAD, in a statement, said the actual figure was four instead of 46. From that four, it said one had consumed medication prescribed by a doctor. The clashing figures by the two authorities also drew flak from Musa.

He said RTD and SPAD are sending confusing messages to the public by revealing contrasting figures.

"If they want to reveal figures, do it correctly. If not, people will lose trust in the authorities," he said.

Transparency International president Datuk Paul Low also said it will be difficult for people to trust the authorities if they keep giving out inconsistent numbers.

"It is important for them to deliver accurate figures and stand by it. Don't just come up with 'feel good' figures. It is alright if the figures paint you in a bad light.

"The most important thing is to come up with ways to overcome this problem."