



YOUR OPINION

Tour buses are not tourism products

THE growing call to return tour vehicle regulation from the transport authorities to the Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry may sound intuitive at first glance. But from a governance, safety and international best-practice perspective, it is a dangerous policy shortcut.

Malaysia has already lived through the consequences of fragmented commercial vehicle regulation. Before 2010, licensing sat under business-oriented boards that prioritised market entry over post-licensing enforcement. Vehicles accumulated summonses, drivers built long offence records, and yet operations continued with minimal systemic consequence.

That institutional failure led Parliament to create a unified national land transport regulator under the Land Public Transport Act. That consolidation was not cosmetic; it was a structural safety correction. Undoing that consolidation now would be a policy regression.

The Tourism Industry Act empowers the tourism authorities to regulate the business of tourism, such as travel agencies, tour operators and tour guides. It was never designed to regulate brake systems, speed limiters, driver fatigue management, black-box monitoring or vehicle engineering standards.

Those technical powers sit squarely under transport law and are enforced through integrated operations with road transport, police and vehicle inspection agencies (*pic*). Shifting licensing authority to a ministry without roadside enforcement assets, inspection infrastructure or real-time transport databases would not strengthen safety. It would distance regulation from the very systems that make enforcement possible.

The tragic tour bus crash in Gerik on June 9 this year, which claimed 15 lives, illustrates this clearly. Investigations showed that both the vehicle and the driver had accumulated multiple outstanding traffic offences across different enforcement databases. The failure was not



that the vehicle was regulated by the transport authority. The failure was weak real-time data integration between enforcement agencies. That is a digital governance gap, not a jurisdictional flaw.

There is also a deeper structural conflict that must be acknowledged. Tourism bodies are incentivised to maximise visitor arrivals, expand capacity and keep operating costs competitive. Transport safety regulators are incentivised to restrict unsafe vehicles, impose compliance costs and slow down risky operations.

These incentives inherently pull in opposite directions, and that is precisely why most mature economies separate tourism promotion from heavy vehicle safety regulation.

In the United Kingdom, tour and coach licensing is regulated by transport commissioners, not tourism bodies. In Singapore, all vehicle licensing and cross-border enforcement are handled by

the Land Transport Authority, not the tourism agency. Malaysia should not drift away from this global norm precisely as it prepares for Visit Malaysia 2026.

Public trust in Malaysia's transport safety does not depend on which ministry logo appears on a permit. It depends on whether unsafe vehicles are physically kept off the road.

There is also a hard economic dimension that cannot be ignored. A single high-profile tourist bus accident during Visit Malaysia 2026 would carry not only tragic human cost, but also substantial insurance exposure, litigation risk and international reputational damage to Malaysia's tourism brand.

Safety governance is therefore not an obstacle to tourism growth; it is a precondition for it.

Where reform is urgently needed is not in shifting institutional powers, but in fixing enforcement architecture. Malaysia still operates with fragmented systems across transport

licensing, traffic enforcement, vehicle inspection and tourism business registration.

What is required is a unified digital framework where enforcement officers can instantly verify vehicle permit validity, driver compliance and tour licensing in one scan.

Automatic permit suspension for serious safety offenders must become standard. Joint roadside operations must be institutionalised and data-driven.

Tourism needs a strong promoter. Transport needs a strong safety regulator. Weakening either will ultimately weaken both.

Malaysia's tourism image will not be safeguarded by moving files between ministries. It will be safeguarded by keeping unsafe vehicles off the road. That is a transport function, not a tourism one.

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Workforce must be prepared to survive AI wave

THE recent announcement by HP Inc. to cut thousands of jobs globally as part of a pivot towards artificial intelligence is a stark warning on the structural realignment of the world's workforce happening in real-time. It follows similar moves by tech giants like Amazon and Microsoft.

Is Malaysia's workforce prepared to pivot or will we be left behind? TalentCorp's 2024 Impact Study shows that about 620,000 jobs or 18% of the total workforce in core sectors are expected to be highly impacted by AI, digitalisation and the green economy within the next three to five years. When we include medium-impact roles, that figure swells to 1.8 million employees. That is 53% of our workforce facing significant disruption.

Are Malaysian companies thoroughly assessing which roles within their structures are at risk? More importantly, are employees aware that their daily tasks might soon be automated?

Productivity is the promise of AI, but productivity without ethics is a liability. We witnessed this grim reality in April when a teenager in Kulai, Johor, was arrested for allegedly using AI to create deepfake pornography of schoolmates.

This incident raises a terrifying question about our future talent pipeline: as these young digital natives transition into the workforce, do they possess the moral compass to use AI tools responsibly?

Upskilling is no longer a corporate buzzword for talent retention; it is a necessity for future-proofing our economy.

As indicated by the TalentCorp study, skills transferability will become the norm. The ability to pivot – to move from a role that AI displaces to one that AI enhances – will be the defining trait of the successful Malaysian worker.

The layoffs at HP and other giants are a preview of the new normal. Companies must move beyond basic digital literacy to deep AI literacy, auditing their workflows and preparing their human talent to work alongside machines.

On their part, employees must accept that the job they have today may not exist, or will look radically different, in three years.

We must act with urgency to ensure our workforce is resilient, ethical and adaptable enough to survive the AI wave.

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Anti-Bullying Tribunal a real turning point if done right

THE Anti-Bully Bill 2025 is one of the most significant child protection reforms Malaysia has seen in years.

One of the most promising aspects of this legislation is the establishment of a child-friendly Anti-Bullying Tribunal. Victims aged 18 and below or their parents will be able to file complaints without complicated legal steps or high financial costs. This removes one of the biggest barriers that families face when seeking help.

The Tribunal is also expected to deliver decisions within 60 days. For victims, timing matters.

Bullying affects emotional health, academic performance and a young person's sense of safety. Waiting months for institutions to "investigate" often leads to more trauma. A fast and clear process shows that the system finally understands the urgency of protecting victims.

But accessibility must come

with proper safeguards. The Tribunal needs to operate in a trauma-informed way with privacy protections, sensitive interviewing procedures and psycho-social support.

A process that is meant to help victims should never overwhelm or traumatise them again.

Bullying today is no longer limited to physical or verbal aggression. It includes online harassment, impersonation, doxxing, edited photos, viral rumours and even AI-generated deepfakes.

Harm now spreads faster, lasts longer and reaches wider audiences. For this reason, the Tribunal must be equipped to handle modern forms of evidence. These include screenshots, video recordings, posts that have been deleted, anonymous accounts and content that circulates across multiple platforms.

The Tribunal must also understand the use of AI tools and how

they can be misused to imitate, distort or target individuals.

If the Tribunal is not prepared for digital-age bullying, it risks falling behind at the very moment when young people need protection the most.

The Bill also places responsibility on institutions. Schools and educational bodies will now be required to take active steps to prevent bullying, investigate complaints and ensure victims are not retaliated against.

This is essential because many cases worsen due to inaction or fear of reputational damage.

The Tribunal includes both compensatory and restorative tools. This balance is important. Counselling, mediation and rehabilitation may help young offenders address their behaviour, especially if they are struggling with their own challenges.

But restorative approaches should never replace consequenc-

es in serious cases. Victims should not be pressured to "forgive and move on".

The Tribunal's ability to order compensation, mandate counselling, issue digital removal orders or require formal apologies reflects a system that takes accountability seriously.

Malaysia now has an opportunity to build a safer environment for every young person. This requires proper training, digital capacity, funding and strong oversight. The law is a significant milestone, but its success will depend on how faithfully it is carried out.

Every young person deserves to feel safe in their learning environment. The Tribunal can help make that a reality if the commitment to protect victims remains at the centre of its work.

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