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Singapore

Singapore business groups warn of 'complexities', more traffic jams if firms banned from ferrying workers on back of lorries



Workers ferried in lorries in Singapore.

Renald Loh

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SINGAPORE: Any move to eliminate the transportation of workers on the [backs of lorries](#) for safety reasons involves "real, practical and operational complexities", a total of 25 business bodies said in a joint statement on Tuesday (Aug 1).

The business chambers and associations, covering a wide range of industries, were responding to a call on Jul 24 by various advocacy groups and others for a timeline on banning the practice.

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That statement followed an accident in mid-July involving a lorry which appeared to be ferrying workers, with [26 men taken to three hospitals](#). This follows various accidents involving such lorries over the years.

The statement from the business community, including the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises, released to the media, said: "In the process of transitioning to safer transportation modes for workers, it is essential to acknowledge that society must be ready to accept a change in the social compact."

One consequence of transporting workers more safely would be more traffic on the roads and greater commuter congestion, it added.

"The call for regulatory change to eliminate worker transport on lorries is a matter of great concern for us," added the bodies, which cover industries including construction, food manufacturing, marine and logistics.

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On Jul 24, more than 40 groups, businesses and individuals put out a joint statement calling for the Government to provide a timeline of measures working towards banning the transportation of workers on lorries.

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They included bodies advocating for foreign workers and other groups, a law firm, a music events firm, a mental health advocacy group and activists for a range of causes.

Speaking to TODAY last month, Nee Soon Group Representation Constituency Member of Parliament Louis Ng said that he supports the Jul 24 statement, and had at the July sitting of Parliament also reiterated his call for such a timeline ahead of a ban on the transportation of workers on the backs of lorries.

The business community's statement on Tuesday was addressed to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Acting Minister of Transport Chee Hong Tat and Senior Minister of State Amy Khor.

The business groups said that the situation regarding safety in the transporting of workers had improved over the years but presents "real challenges that demand responsible and thoughtful engagement with various stakeholders".



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"As a business community, we are proud to share that many of our larger companies have successfully transitioned, either fully or partially, away from transporting workers on the back of lorries."

The Road Traffic Act does not allow for passengers to be transported on the back of lorries, however it makes an exception for transporting workers employed by the vehicle's owner or if it is carrying someone injured in an emergency situation.

The business groups' statement added that geographical constraints, limited infrastructure and economic realities that certain regions and industries face play a part in necessitating the widespread practice of transporting workers on lorries.

"Regulatory changes have the potential to acutely affect industries that have historically relied on this practice, leading to potential delays in completing projects and risking the livelihoods of workers who depend on these industries for their employment."

It also stated that the associations are "resolutely committed" to working closely with the Government, relevant authorities, labour unions, and safety experts to develop a "well-considered strategy" to ensure the safety of its workers.

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The statement ended by saying that the business groups appreciate the public's sense of urgency of addressing worker safety, and that they would "continue to navigate the complexities involved and actively seek innovative ways to enhance worker safety".

This article was [originally published in TODAY](#).

The 25 business groups that issued the joint statement: Commitment in Protecting the Lives and Livelihood of Our Workers

Association of Small & Medium Enterprises



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