

## IMPACT OF HEAVY VEHICLES ON TRAFFIC MATTERS ON SRI LANKAN ROADS

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### **Introduction**

Traffic congestion and traffic accidents contribute heavily to economic losses in the world. As Sri Lankan transport sector mainly depends on highway based services and facilities, highly complicated traffic mix are very common at any given time or location.

In such a scenario, heavy vehicles play a major role on traffic situation on roads due to its size, weight and efficiency. Due to lower braking capacity and difficulty in maneuvering, heavy vehicles contribute significantly to traffic congestion. The attempt of this paper is to highlight the importance of restricting and providing special facilities for heavy vehicles. Facts present here are based on a study conducted in the central province.

### **Methodology**

For the study presented in the paper, data collected from various sources and methods were utilized. Traffic volume data was collected from Road Development Authority and the accident data was received from Sri Lanka Police Department. In addition to those, questionnaire surveys were conducted among heavy vehicle drivers and other road user groups at few selected locations in the central province road network. Information collected from heavy vehicle drivers were varied from basic information

such as, gender, education level and specific information like travel pattern, travel behaviour, ability to trouble shooting and concerns on other drivers. Similarly, other road users also were subjected to questions like their road usage pattern and the perception on heavy vehicle drivers.

Conclusions are made based on the above mentioned data categorizing and analyzing using statistical methods.

### **Results**

As per the data collected from RDA, 21% of vehicles on roads in central province are categorized as heavy vehicles. Contribution of heavy vehicles to traffic accidents reported to police stations are as high as 40% compared to other vehicles. If a heavy vehicle meets with an accident with any other vehicle on the road, the major impact is on to the other vehicle. Considering the accidents involved with heavy vehicles, percentage heavy vehicle occupants killed or injured is 25% and those of other vehicles were as high as 47%. Even though the situation is such, there is no proper training for heavy vehicle drivers in Sri Lanka. It is a must considering the ability, attitude and behavior of the heavy vehicle drivers on roads. Out of the 120 drivers interviewed within Central Province in the survey, 7% of drivers attended only upto 5<sup>th</sup> grade in school education and while another

37% had education upto ordinary level. Out of the drivers interviewed, 38 % could attend to a minor repair of the vehicle when it is in a trouble. 38% of drivers were not aware about the hospitals in their route and 42% were not aware about the police stations on the route they regularly travel. While 30% of drivers drive more than 11 hours a day continuously when they drive, 55% of drivers did not have a mobile phone to contact their owners or any other party in an important occasion. Including these, a thorough training should be given to these drivers as a breakdown of a vehicle may close an important link of the country for a significantly long hour of the day.

According to the feedback received from other road users, they are also not very happy about the behaviour of heavy vehicle drivers while they are on road. Among other road users 51% said the heavy vehicle drivers cause severe problems very frequently to their movement on the road. 66% of them think that the main reason to traffic congestion on roads is due to heavy vehicles. 68 % of them propose to restrict the movement of heavy vehicle drivers during peak hours.

### **Conclusion**

As per the data available from responsible offices and surveys, it is clear that while heavy vehicles contribute to country's development, they need to be treated specially. As their size and capacity are different from other vehicle types, special rules and regulations, facilities should be provided to improve the safety and convenience of all the road users.

It is very important to separate them from the rest of the traffic to reduce conflicts and congestion. Heavy vehicles should permit to move during off peak hours unless otherwise it is important and urgent and on separate lanes wherever possible. Effective training programs, places for resting, safety measures should be taught to heavy vehicle drivers regularly. New rules should be introduced to control the use of heavy vehicles more effectively. Heavy vehicles should be allowed only when they are really needed and otherwise to replace with an alternative small vehicle. It is also important to inform and educate other road users about the importance of heavy vehicles for the country's economic development, until another safe mode of transport become more frequent like rail based freight movement.

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### **References**

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