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THE Consumers Association of Penang views with concern the attempt to revive the proposed new medical check-up system for commercial vehicle drivers known as eKesehatan, which was shelved last year.

When this system was first proposed, it was supposed to involve using the services of a "gateway provider", Supreme System, and drivers would have to pay RM80 for the medical test when renewing or applying for their licences.

Under this system, doctors would have to register first if they wish to be on the panel to conduct these check-ups. The director-general of Health and president of the Malaysian Medical Council, Tan Sri Ismail Merican, and heads of doctors' organisations had expressed reservations about this scheme at that time. CAP renews its call to the government and Road Transport Department (RTD) to review their approach in handling medical check-ups for drivers. For one, is there a need for a "middleman" to handle a medical check-up system, with its accompanying additional costs and procedures? The RTD could instead liaise with doctors and transport companies or drivers themselves for a check-up scheme that costs much less. An arrangement could be made with the Health Ministry for commercial vehicle drivers to be examined by government doctors at special units set up within government hospitals. The payments for these medical check-ups could then be made directly to the government. If the services of private doctors are needed, CAP urges the authorities to consider the recommendation by the Transport Workers Union that medical check-ups be conducted on RTD premises. The RTD could engage the services of private doctors for this and eliminate the middlemen. The money that would have gone to a gateway provider could instead be used to recruit more staff who are IT-proficient and capable of managing an RTD database on drivers' medical history. These measures would reduce the potential for abuse.