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JEEPNEY FARE IN THE PHILIPPINES

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“Have you ever wondered why the fare for a short jeepney ride in the Philippines can be less than the price of a candy bar?” The answer lies in the complex system of economic challenges faced by both commuters and drivers. Jeepneys are the most popular mode of public transportation in the Philippines, serving as a lifeline for many commuters. They are known for their vibrant designs and crowded seating. However, the fare system has been a subject of debate and controversy, raising questions about its fairness and sustainability. The jeepney fare should be adjusted to reflect the rising costs of operation and ensure fair compensation for drivers, in order to improve the quality of service and address the economic struggles faced by drivers.

Some argue that vehicles contribute various accidents due to the improper maintenance and inefficient engines of these vehicles. In a report by Mariz Umali on GMA News "24 Oras" on March 19, 2024, the speeding jeep driver who went to the other side of the road where he hit two motorcycles was caught on camera. Three people riding two motorcycles were killed after they were hit by a jeepney that allegedly lost its brakes in Ternate, Cavite. The dead were identified as Staff Sergeant Gerlyn Nicolas, of the Philippine Marines, who was riding a motorcycle, and the other motorcycle riders Gregorio Salazar, 54, and Caledonia Gutierrez, 40. When vehicles are not properly maintained, issues such as worn-out tires, faulty brakes, or insufficient steering mechanisms can compromise their performance and safety. Additionally, inefficient engines that consume excessive fuel can lead to unexpected stalls or reduced acceleration, increasing the likelihood of accidents on the road. The Land Transportation Office (LTO) and Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) have been working to ensure that vehicles comply with emission standards and undergo regular inspections. Efforts are being made to identify and penalize vehicles that do not meet the required standards. In terms of accidents caused by inadequate maintenance and inefficient engines, it is crucial to emphasize that responsible vehicle ownership and proper maintenance practices are essential for ensuring road safety.

The increasing expenses faced by jeepney drivers, such as fuel prices and vehicle maintenance, make it necessary to adjust the fare. According to a report by the Philippine Statistics Authority that the average price of diesel fuel in the Philippines was \$0.58 per liter in 2016, with a maximum of \$1.01 per liter in 2012, the average price of diesel fuel has significantly increased in recent years, putting a strain on the operating costs of jeepney drivers. Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) Secretary General Renato Reyes stated that, the increase in fares is a result of the government's alleged lack of action on the increase in the price of petroleum products. One of the Filipino drivers says "Even a small tax reduction, they can't do it. They do not want to reduce the source of confidential and intelligence funds. The crossing is clearly not enough, so it is necessary to raise the fare for drivers," said Reyes. One of the drivers affected by the increase in gasoline prices, who are asking for help to have an increase in the fare price. The increase in gasoline prices results in additional expenses for jeepney drivers. Because of this, it is difficult for them to recover their expenses and have sufficient income to support their needs and their families. Increasing the fare price may be a solution to address the needs of jeepney drivers to have sufficient income to meet their needs. This is a challenge faced not only by jeepney drivers but by the entire transportation sector. The increase in fare prices should be studied and discussed thoroughly to ensure that not only the jeepney drivers will benefit, but also the passengers and the entire

transportation system. The rising fuel prices not only impact their daily earnings but also make it challenging for them to cover the cost of fuel needed to operate their vehicles efficiently. Adjusting the fare to reflect these rising costs would ensure that drivers can sustain their livelihoods and continue to provide reliable transportation services.

Jeepney drivers work long hours and face various challenges to provide transportation services. Many drivers rely solely on their earnings from driving to support their families and meet their daily needs. In an interview by Brigada News FM Legazpi with Ronel Nebres, founder of Driver Safety Enforcement in the province, he said that many people will insist on increasing the price especially of basic goods because of the expenses when it comes to transporting the goods. Other than this, he said their take-home income will be low. Therefore, Nebres asks for the understanding of all commuters because they will have a restriction on charging fares especially the minimum fare. Said that, there are regular passengers who are getting used to giving PHP10 or PHP11 even though the tariff is PHP12. It is expected that they will now ask for additional pesos from regular passengers who will still pay the tariff mismatch, but retain the 20% discount for PWDs, students and others. For now, according to Nebres, it is possible that the fare will not increase because the price level of diesel is only at PHP63-64, compared to when diesel was at PHP80 so the minimum fare was raised to PHP12 from PHP11. Meanwhile, their only request as drivers is the cooperation of commuters. With the current fare, it can be challenging for them to make ends meet and provide for their loved ones adequately. Fair compensation would ensure that their hard work and dedication are adequately rewarded, allowing them to improve their living conditions and provide a better future for their families. Jeepney drivers often endure difficult working conditions, including heavy traffic, long wait times, and exposure to pollution and weather elements. Despite these challenges, they continue to provide essential transportation services to the public. Fair compensation would not only recognize and value their dedication and sacrifices but also motivate them to continue delivering quality service to commuters.

Adjusting the jeepney fare to reflect the current economic situation is necessary to ensure fair compensation for drivers and improve the quality of service. The government and relevant authorities should conduct a thorough assessment of the fare system, taking into account the economic realities faced by both commuters and drivers. This assessment should lead to the implementation of fair and sustainable changes that benefit all stakeholders, ensuring a reliable and efficient jeepney transportation system for the Filipino people.

