

Publication	New Straits Times	Section/Page No.	Letters/Pg.18
Date	Monday, 6th September 2010	Lead Article	Yes
Headline	Who Looks Out For Us?		

Motor insurance

Who looks out for us?

I WAS involved in a bad car accident in December last year. Fortunately, I came out of the accident unscathed. Considering the state my car was in, I had a lot to be thankful for and reminded myself that there should be no whining or complaining in having to go through the formalities of lodging a police report and making the insurance claims.

Unfortunately, being thankful did not prepare me for my dealings with the workshop and insurance company.

First, I was informed by the insurance company that my car had to be sent to a workshop that was on their panel.

Second, considering the state of the car, the workshop informed me that repair costs would be very high. Hence, it would be best for me if the insurance company declared the car as "beyond repair".

At that point in time, the es-

timated resale value of my car was around RM84,000 and the estimated cost of repairs was around RM72,000, subject to valuation by the insurance company's adjuster.

The insurance adjuster took two months to come up with a cost valuation for the vehicle. After much prodding, he eventually informed me that the insurance company felt the car should be repaired and the cost of repairs was slashed down to RM54,000 — a reduction of RM18,000 (25 per cent) from the initial cost.

More delays ensued, including processing the paperwork and the ordering and delivery of replacement parts.

More than six months passed and repair works had not even begun on my car. After much hassle, arguments and threats of legal action, the insurance company finally agreed to certify the car as "beyond repair" and I finally got

my long overdue payout at the end of July.

The above is a simplified version of a more complicated scenario.

Bearing the above in mind, the following questions need to be answered:

- What rights do car owners have to choose the workshop in such cases? I was not given the choice as the workshop that I am familiar with was not on the insurance company's panel.

- Shouldn't the car owner be consulted before the workshop, adjuster or the insurance company determines whether a wrecked car should be repaired or is beyond repair?

- Considering the limited choice that a car owner has, how can the car owner be assured of the quality of work done and that the parts used are genuine ones?

- Shouldn't car owners be given some form of guarantee that repairs will put the car back in good

state, as if the accident had not occurred? This should include ensuring that the parts replaced are genuine ones.

- Considering the cost of repairs is often significantly reduced by the insurance company, how can a car owner ensure that genuine replacement parts have been used and the services provided by the workshops are of high quality?

- Why do car owners end up losing? Are workshops charging excessively or are insurance companies slashing prices to avoid bigger payouts, to the detriment of car owners?

- Is there any government body that monitors the quality of repairs to ensure that the car is safe and roadworthy, post repairs?

I hope someone can shed some light on the above.

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