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PM: We don't know what else we can do

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Government is at a loss as to what else can be done to prevent deaths caused by road accidents.

Reflecting the Government's exasperation, Dr Mahathir said: "We don't know what else we can do. We ask people not to rush and to drive slowly. What is wrong if they arrive at their destination 15 minutes late?"

"Although the authorities have taken steps to reduce accident rate, the Government cannot do anything if the road-users do not abide by the rules," he said at his Hari Raya open house in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Singling out motorcyclists, Dr Mahathir said: "They weave in and out of the traffic as if they are immune to death. But in actual fact they face the highest risk of death."

The Prime Minister was asked about the increasing number of road deaths, especially during the Chinese New Year and Hari Raya festivities.

Over the weekend, Federal Traffic Police Operations Room officer Deputy Superintendent Abdul Aziz Omar said motorcyclists and pillion-riders accounted for the highest number of fatalities with 18 deaths representing 81.8 per cent.

The daily average death toll is now 22, exceeding last year's by one.

Of the 560 accidents reported last Friday, Kuala Lumpur recorded the highest number with 94 cases followed by Perak with 83, Selangor with 79 and Johor with 64.

The number of fatal accidents came in the wake of "Operasi Pacak II", a special police operation to curb fatal accidents, which entered the 10th day yesterday.

The operation, the second to be introduced after the school holidays last December, was aimed at creating road safety awareness among motorists with the physical presence of traffic policemen along the 488 accident stretches of highways and roads.

"The motorcyclists themselves are playing with death. But I don't know what else to do because we have advised them, there are police, radar and lots that we have done," Dr Mahathir said.

"I don't know what else to do other than to stop using the roads altogether," the Prime Minister added.

The Prime Minister was also asked to comment on the traffic jams in the city, especially whether the bus lanes were going to be effective in reducing the congestion.

Dr Mahathir said: "We will not know yet as we are just about to implement it. We have to see first. But the public should comply with the bus lane ruling, otherwise it will be difficult.

"Given time, when the buses start moving smoothly, more people will switch to public transport.

"What we want now is for people not to use their own vehicles but use the Light Rail Transit, buses and the commuter train service.

"We are providing various public transportation facilities to make travel easy but people do not want to opt for this convenience."

Asked about car pooling, Dr Mahathir said the preference of people to travel alone in their vehicle was another factor which caused the congestion.

"If everyone follows rules such as travelling in high occupancy vehicles, giving way to buses, observing the yellow box regulation, there

will not be any problems."

Most of the problems were caused by drivers themselves, he added.

Bername reports: Road deaths nationwide fell by one to 21 yesterday, the eve of Hari Raya and second day of Chinese New Year, from Friday as the number of traffic accidents dropped for the third consecutive day.

A total of 430 road accidents was reported for the 24-hour period yesterday compared with 560 for the previous day, Federal Traffic Police Operations Room officer DSP Abdul Aziz Omar said in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Motorcyclists and pillion-riders continue to account for most of the deaths with eight reported yesterday.

Others were car drivers and passengers (6), pedestrians (3), lorry driver (1), van driver and passenger (2) and cyclist (1).

A total of 87 motorcyclists had died in the 10-day period since January 31 when police launched "Operasi Pacak II", a special operation, to prevent fatal accidents.

They formed the single largest group of road deaths followed by pedestrians (20).

Abdul Aziz said three of the deaths occurred on the highway and the other 18 took place on other roads.

Kelantan headed the list of road fatalities yesterday with five deaths followed by Selangor, Kedah, Malacca and Pahang which had three each, Johor (2), Terengganu (1) and Kuala Lumpur (1).

In the number of road accidents, Selangor had the highest with 73 cases, followed by Johor (69), Perak (64), Kuala Lumpur (42), Kelantan (30), Negri Sembilan (28), Penang (24), Malacca (23), Kedah (19), Pahang (17), Sarawak (14), Terengganu (13), Sabah (12) and Perlis (2).

Abdul Aziz said a total of 3,508 traffic summonses was issued to motorists flouting the law yesterday compared with 7,274 the previous day.

Advising road-users to be more determined in efforts to check fatal accidents, he said motorcyclists and pillion-riders must show greater concern for their safety on the road.

He also called on pedestrians to be more careful when crossing roads.

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