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PM to be briefed on road fatalities

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Federal Traffic Police and the Road Transport Department will this Friday brief Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the increase in road fatalities during the double festive season.

Transport Ministry Parliamentary Secretary Datuk Chor Chee Heung said Dr Mahathir was very concerned over the problem.

"Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik will also be given a briefing on this matter tomorrow," Chor said in an interview today.

Despite Dr Mahathir's comment that the motorcyclists were "suicidal" and that the manner in which some of them rode "terrified him", Chor said the number of fatal accidents had increased.

During the double festive season this year and despite "Ops Statik", the nationwide operation to curb road accidents and reduce fatalities, 338 fatalities were recorded, an increase of 24 during similar double festive season last year.

Despite all the efforts made, motorcyclists and motorists seemed to "throw caution to the winds".

During Ops Statik, 12,294 accidents were recorded, an increase of 21.06 per cent over last year's figure of 10,155.

What should be noted, Chor said, was that motorcyclists and pillion riders accounted for most deaths, with 190 fatalities or 56.21 per cent of the death toll.

"There is also talk that the existing laws under the Road Transport Act are not deterrent enough against motorcyclists and motorists," he added.

He said the ministry together with the RTD and police would study the provisions in the Act and, if possible, make them more stringent and enhance the penalties.

Road safety representatives from certain advanced countries had said the country's traffic rules were not strict enough.

On the Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Rahim Noor's statement that reckless drivers would be detained even if no death or serious injuries resulted from the accidents, Chor said the statement should be viewed as a suggestion.

"The police can investigate such accidents and even invoke Section 117 of the Penal Code to enable them to seek a remand order up to 14 days to facilitate investigation," he said.

He said the question whether to make it compulsory or not would depend on individual cases.

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