

# 17 die in Raya exodus

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- 750 accidents reported on Thursday
- 60 road deaths since Ops Sikap launch

PETALING JAYA, Fri: The Hari Raya "balik kampung" exodus began today, overshadowed by 17 deaths and 752 accidents reported on the roads yesterday.

The figures were the highest in the last five days when people started returning to their hometowns.

Sixty people have died on the roads since the launch of *Ops Sikap* by police to emphasise safe driving and reduce the number of road accidents and fatalities.

More than 60,000 vehicles will head along the North-South Expressway today and tomorrow when the traffic volume is expected to triple.

More than two million city folk and Klang Valley residents will leave for their hometowns by road, rail and air.

Concerned by the many deaths and accidents reported at this time of the year Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad appealed to those driving to their hometowns not to rush.

"Drive slowly and carefully. It doesn't matter if we're an hour or two late," he said at the Sultan Abdul Halim airport in Alor Star before returning to Kuala Lumpur after a one-day visit to Kedah.

He reminded all road users to be careful during festive seasons like this so that the joy of their loved ones would not turn into grief.

He was disappointed that there were still many fatal road accidents despite the continuous road safety campaigns.

Bukit Aman said that the highest number of road deaths yesterday were recorded in Pahang and Kedah with four each followed by Perak and Kelantan, two each. Police issued 7,387 summonses (*see table on Page 6*).

Overtaking and switching lanes blindly were identified as the chief causes of accidents. Others included following vehicles too closely, reckless driving, mistakes by pedestrians, exiting and entering junctions without care and driving against the flow of traffic.