

PM calls for more stringent driving tests

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KEPALA BATAS, Sat. — Training courses for new drivers need to be made more stringent to produce quality drivers.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has suggested that the courses should cover all aspects, including developing more civic-conscious drivers who are courteous and think of the safety of others.

"We need to study all aspects to help reduce the country's present accident rate, especially during festivities. These include making it difficult for new drivers to obtain their licences.

"I believe by doing so, we will be able to produce better drivers in future," he said, adding there was also a need to further develop the country's public transport system.

The Prime Minister said this after playing host to some 100,000 people who visited his constituency's Hari Raya open house here.

Among the guests were Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Abdul Rahman Abbas and his wife Toh Puan Majimor Shariff. Also present were Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and several menteris besar.

Abdullah was asked to comment on the rise in road fatalities and road accidents during the current *Ops Sikap* exercise.

Abdullah attributed the rise in the number of road fatalities to "human factors".

"Most of our drivers think they are good on the road and as such, couldn't care less about others. I just don't understand these drivers."

He said, adding that despite the introduction of numerous road safety programmes, the accident

rate continues to escalate.

"This happens every year. I just don't know why Malaysian drivers allow themselves to be killed. It is up to them whether they want to be safe or otherwise."

Abdullah stressed the need for

new drivers to learn car handling and have knowledge of their vehicles to ensure safety at all times.

Today, the ninth day of *Ops Sikap IX*, brought the death toll to 145, a 13 per cent increase from last year.

There were 790 road accidents yesterday.

On the second day of Hari Raya, 18 people were killed, including nine motorcyclists, four drivers and three passengers, one pedestrian and a cyclist.



COMING TOGETHER: Abdullah greeting guests at his Hari Raya open house in Kepala Batas yesterday. People from all walks of life, some from as far away as Kuala Lumpur, were treated to a spread of satay, *koay teow* and *laksa Penang*. Abdullah arrived at 10am accompanied by his two children Nori and Kamaluddin and son-in-law Khairy Jamaluddin. Among those present was his schoolmate from the Bukit Mertajam High School, Koid Kee Loon, 69. "I have been attending his open house for the past 12 years, since the time he was the Foreign Minister. I come because I am proud to have a friend who is a Prime Minister," he said.