

Cabinet strikes out move to slash fines

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PUTRAJAYA: The deal of the year is dead.

After just two days, the move by the police to slash fines by between 50 and 70 per cent has been squashed by the Cabinet.

Officially, the novel move has been deferred indefinitely. But judging from the comments made by ministers during their weekly meeting yesterday, it is unlikely motorists will ever enjoy such good discounts on traffic fines.

The Cabinet felt that for traffic compounds to act as a deterrent, the amount must make the motorist feel the pinch.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Chan Kong Choy said: "We must send out the right message, especially to hardcore traffic offenders, and those who commit serious traffic offences."

An average of 11,000 motorists are issued summonses every day. On Monday, Internal Security and Public Order director Datuk Mustafa Abdullah announced reductions of between 50 and 70 per cent for various offences, including speeding, driving without a licence and beating the red light.

He said the move was aimed at discouraging Malaysians from bribing police to escape heavy fines, and helping motorists in light of the rising cost of living.

But while his announcement was embraced by the public, it left Chan seething. The *New Straits Times* understands that neither he nor Internal Security Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi were consulted by the police.

Chan said it was crucial for enforcement agencies, in this case the police and the Road Transport Department, to have better co-ordination. There would be confusion if the RTD and the police had two different sets of compound rates.

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Chan

"If the gap is too big, there will be problems, especially in dealing with serious offences like speeding, reckless driving and beating the red light," he said.

Chan said he was directed to hold a meeting with the Internal Security Ministry, the Road Transport Department and the police, to review the revised rates.

Datuk Emran Kadir, the RTD director, supported the Cabinet's decision, saying that any com-

pound for a traffic offence should have deterrent value. He noted that over 60 per cent of summonses issued by his personnel were settled.

"The rate is good, as we blacklist those who don't pay up. Motorists may be a bit slow, but they will have to pay up or face difficulties renewing their licence and road tax."

"Perhaps the police could think of similar methods to get offenders to pay up."