

PM: Drive carefully, each death breaks 300 hearts

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PUTRAJAYA: Please. Be more careful when returning home during the festive season as each loss of life will leave nearly 300 people in mourning.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Deepavali and Hari Raya should be a time of celebration but often turned into a period of sorrow for some due to death or injury on the road.

The Prime Minister said he became "very, very, sad" during festive periods, especially Hari Raya, due to such deaths.

"So many deaths (due to accidents). We want to celebrate but many either die or are injured.

"For each loss of life, at least 200 to 300 people will be crying for them, especially if the latter is the family's sole breadwinner," he said.

"It is my hope that this *Ops Sikap* and the reduced speed limit will be more successful in reduc-

ing road accidents," he said when addressing Internal Security Ministry staff at their monthly gathering yesterday.

Abdullah hoped the 80kph speed limit for motorists on federal and state roads would help reduce fatalities on the road over the next three months.

He said that while a zero-accident rate was impossible, it was possible to prevent accidents caused by speeding and reckless driving.

"So, drive home safely in order to be with your loved ones — and don't rush. Road safety is not only the responsibility of the police but motorists themselves," said Abdullah, who is also Internal Security Minister.

He said the government was prepared to further lower the speed limit during festive periods, if this would reduce accidents.

Abdullah urged policemen to drive carefully, saying that they should adopt defensive driving skills.

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Abdullah

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“There should be a zero-accident rate involving policemen in police cars or private vehicles.”

This also applied to staff of all agencies under the ministry, he added.

The Cabinet decided that the reduced speed limit would be extended to Jan 15 to cover other major festivals.

And if the move is found to be

effective in lowering the death toll during the *balik kampung* rush, the reduced speed limit will be made a permanent fixture during festive seasons.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Chan Kong Choy had earlier said that commercial vehicles, except those with permission, would be banned from roads on Oct 21, 22, 27 and 28.

This is to ease traffic flow and reduce accidents.

Chan had warned that a maximum fine of RM300 would be slapped on those who exceeded the speed limit, jumped queue, beat red lights, used the emergency lane or overtook along double lines. Offenders would not be allowed the right of appeal.

More than 6,000 policemen and Road Transport Department officers will be on duty during *Ops Sikap XI*, which ends on Oct 31.

Unlike last year, traffic offenders will not be issued on-the-spot fines as the move was deemed impractical.