

Cabinet wants to put the brakes on Mat Rempit

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■ **By Anis Ibrahim
and Jason Gerald**
news@nst.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: The Cabinet has instructed the Transport Ministry to introduce harsher penalties for illegal motorcycle racing, including confiscating racers' machines.

The ministry has been asked to review existing laws and submit its proposals to the Cabinet.

The penalties being considered include heftier fines for the racers, colloquially known as Mat Rempit, and the suspension of their licences as well as making it an offence for anyone to organise such races.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Razak said it was necessary to introduce stiffer penalties.

"We are also considering legal ac-

tion against the sponsors or organisers of illegal races. I hope it will be a strong enough signal to show how serious the government views the Mat Rempit problem," he said.

At present, illegal racers are charged with reckless and dangerous driving under the Road Transport Act.

Upon conviction, first-time offenders can be fined RM5,000 to RM15,000 and can be imprisoned for up to five years.

Second-time offenders can be fined RM10,000 to RM20,000 and can be imprisoned for up to 10 years.

"The ministry will forward its proposals soon," Najib said after launching the ministry's Deepavali and Hari Raya road safety campaign.

Earlier, Najib proposed that traffic summonses be issued on the spot.

"Traffic policemen who come across

those flouting traffic rules should issue summonses immediately.

"The practice of giving discounts should be stopped, otherwise traffic laws will not be taken seriously.

"Road safety should be strictly enforced and offenders should not be allowed to escape the law," he said.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Chan Kong Choy said the number of vehicles on the roads during the festive season increased up to three-fold.

The Mat Rempit problem also irked Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam, who said if the Mat Rempit did not change through the soft approach taken by Putera Umno, it would be better to jail them.

"If this approach is not successful and they can't be bothered to pay fines for breaking traffic rules, then it

is better to send them to jail.

"They can repent while doing their time, and this will also act as a deterrence to others who want to show off their skills and participate in illegal races.

"They are endangering their lives and those of other road users."

He spoke after launching the state balik kampung road safety campaign in conjunction with the coming Deepavali and Hari Raya celebrations at Malacca Sentral.

Ali, who is also Umno vice-president, said: "I hope Putera Umno is not disappointed and take this as a failure. If we cannot get the Mat Rempit on the right track by the current approach, we have to look at other means to address the issue.

"Besides this, strict enforcement has to be taken against them."