

'Lower speed limit could save lives'

However, authorities should also ramp up enforcement, experts say

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PETALING JAYA: The reduction in speed limit on federal roads from 90kph to 80kph for eight days beginning today is meant to increase safety, said the Works Ministry.

This move is backed by safety researchers, who said the temporary lowering of speed limits, even by a mere 10kph, can help reduce road accidents, especially when it is accompanied by stern enforcement.

Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) Assoc Prof Dr Law Teik Hua said a 10kph reduction strikes a balance between mobility and safety.

He said the primary concern in lowering speeds is avoiding conflict between motorcycles and cars, especially in rural and sub-

urban areas.

"If the speed limit is lowered further, it will cause traffic congestion and motorists will end up spending more time on the road. Lowering the speed limit by 10kph is just right.

"However, it is insufficient to solely rely on lower speed limits. Traffic enforcement should also be beefed up at federal, state and municipal roads where most accidents occur.

"Accidents between motorcycles and other vehicles are also more likely on these roads compared with highways," said Law, who heads UPM's Road Safety Research Centre.

He told *The Star* that although public transport is a better option, Malaysians prefer travelling in their own vehicles as the said method of commute offers better mobility.

Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research director-general Dr Siti Zaharah Ishak said reducing speed limits would decrease the severity of impact on victims in road crashes.

She said the 10kph speed reduction could also help save lives.

"Most motorists will be travelling along major expressways and federal roads ... the traffic volume will slow them down.

"As for state and federal roads that have a low traffic volume, authorities should have initiatives to deter speeding," Siti Zaharah said.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia traffic and road safety psychologist Prof Dr Rozmi Ismail said that with over one million vehicles expected to ply roads nationwide during the upcoming Chinese New Year, there will be little opportunity for motorists to

travel at dangerous speeds.

He said lowering the speed limit even minimally by 10kph could help prevent road mishaps involving motorcyclists.

"Road accident fatalities are highest among motorcyclists and pillion riders. They make up about 65% or more of the annual average traffic fatalities of about 6,500 deaths. Enforcement on bikers should be increased during this period," he added.

Malaysian Road and Transportation Safety Association president MD Hairolazaman Muhamed Nor said lowering speed limits could reduce the severity of accidents and give drivers a better response time in dangerous situations.

Authorities, he said, should also act sternly against drivers who display unsafe and reckless behaviour on the road.

Hairolazaman also said speed limits should be lowered at high-risk areas such as intersections, downhill slopes, sharp bends and areas affected by crosswinds.

On Tuesday, Road Transport Department senior enforcement director Datuk Lokman Jamaan said heavy vehicles will be banned from the roads for four days – Feb 8, 9, 12, and 13 – in conjunction with Chinese New Year.

Last year, the speed limit was lowered to 80kph on federal roads and 70kph on state roads by the Works Ministry.

Despite such measures, there was still a steep increase of 41% in road accidents with 15,999 cases recorded compared with 11,325 in 2022.

Road fatalities were also higher at 134 deaths compared with 119 in 2022.