‘Speed limit cut can lower deaths’

Move to gazette 30kph in school zones a timely measure, says expert

KUALA LUMPUR: The decision to gazette a speed limit of 30kph in school zones is a timely measure to protect lives, says a road safety expert.

Executive director of Universiti Putra Malaysia’s Safe Kids Malaysia programme, Prof Dr Kulanthayan KC Mani, said that reducing vehicle speed even by 1kph can reduce the risk of death by 5%.

“If the average speed is reduced by 5%, the risk of fatal accidents can be reduced by up to 30%,” he told Bernama in conjunction with the 8th United Nations Global Road Safety Week, from May 12 to 18, themed “Walking and Cycling Safe”.

According to him, the impact of collision on human is highest at speeds exceeding 30kph because the human body can only absorb impact energy maximally at that limit.

“Exceeding 30kph significantly raises the risk of death,” he said.

Statistics in 2023 showed that Malaysia recorded nearly 600,000 accident cases and 6,473 deaths, equivalent to one accident every 53 seconds and one death every 80 minutes, and of the total, more than 67% of the victims were motorcyclists and passengers.

Prof Kulanthayan said the speed limit measure needs to be supported with safe infrastructure such as 30kph signboards, road bumps, pedestrian crossings, bicycle lanes, safe bus stop areas, and the use of reflective clothing as well as bicycle helmets for children.

“The use of technology such as monitoring cameras, electronic cameras, and dashcams also needs to be expanded to enhance enforcement and monitoring on the roads,” he said.

Last month, Transport Minister Anthony Loke said that the government will gazette a speed limit of 30kph in all school zones.

He said that an average of 70 deaths were recorded each year in school areas.

According to the World Health Organisation, a speed limit of 30kph in populated areas, schools and pedestrian zones has been scientifically proven to reduce the risk of death and serious injury, as well as supporting safer walking and cycling.