

Give kids proper helmets, parents urged

Expert: Safety headgear can reduce severity of injuries and prevent death

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PETALING JAYA: Parents need to pay serious attention to the use of proper helmets for children in view of the holiday season, said a road safety researcher.

Universiti Putra Malaysia's Safe Kids Malaysia executive director associate professor Dr Kulanthayan KC Mani said police statistics showed that the number of road crashes stood at an alarming 489,606, resulting in 6,706 deaths last year.

Out of the number of deaths, 62.6% involved motorcyclists and pillion riders, with 56.4% of them mainly from head injuries and 29.6% from multiple injuries which might include head injury.

"Thus, deaths from head injuries among motorcyclists were at a high 56.4% to 86%," he said.

He said a proper helmet could reduce the risk and severity of injuries by 72% and decrease the likelihood of death by up to 39%.

He said the police's 2014 road accidents statistics showed that children aged 15 and below contribut-

ed to 20% (77 deaths) of the 399 total deaths among pillion riders in 2014.

"Road deaths among motorcycle pillion riders were high," said Dr Kulanthayan, adding that 48.9% of those who died did not wear helmets.

He said among 200 primary school pillion riders aged six to 12 observed in four schools (two each in urban and rural areas) from 2005 to 2006 in Klang, Selangor, it was found that 57% of them used helmets in urban areas while only 23% used helmets in rural areas.

"Those who wear child safety helmets with Sirim label among children was only 3%. That means 97% of children travelling on motorcycles were not protected by the use of a proper helmet," he said.

As many as 37% of the child pillion riders observed used adult helmets, 24% used toy helmets and 36% were not using any, Dr Kulanthayan said.

Universiti Putra Malaysia's Safe Kids Malaysia, a member of National Road Safety Council of Malaysia recently launched the Motorcycle Child Helmet Initiative

to save young children who travel on motorcycles.

With the support of the Road Safety Department, the university had provided 1,600 free child safety helmets and motorcycle safety education material to parent rider and child pillion passenger to 23 primary schools in Selangor.

"The university believes this initiative can reduce risk among motorcycle travellers and supports the Sustainable Development Goals set by United Nation to halve road deaths by 2020," said Dr Kulanthayan.