

# 'INTERAGENCY COOPERATION NEEDED'

This is to prevent congestion on highways, crowding at rest areas and petrol stations, say road safety experts

## KUALA LUMPUR

**A** COORDINATED and systematic interagency effort is needed to facilitate the movement of people between states at this point of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Road safety experts say this is the only viable way for the government to carry out a "one-way" return journey plan for city folk who are stuck in their hometowns due to the Movement Control Order.

Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research board member Professor Dr Wong Shaw Voon

said cooperation across government agencies and departments was needed to ensure the smooth and safe movement of people on the road.

He said this was also to prevent congestion on highways and crowding at rest and relaxation centres or petrol stations.

"As people would need to apply (for a permit) for this, an online database must be made available for security personnel manning roadblocks to cross-check names of those permitted to travel between the states.

"At the rest and relaxation centres, highway operators should control crowds and limit the number of people using the restrooms at any one time and ensure social distancing is practised," he told the *New Straits Times* yesterday.

He also said the movement of people should be scheduled or done in stages.

"Even on long weekends, there is a crawl on our highways, hence it would not be wise to allow all those who apply to leave at one go."

Wong said the public, too, needed to be responsible in the decisions they make before applying to go back home.

He said it was important for people to prioritise their travel needs and play their part to help stop the spread of Covid-19.

"Some families may need to make critical decisions and sacrifices.

Larger families may choose to go back in batches, for example.

"This is a critical time not just for ourselves but also for the whole country, so we have to make some considerations before



Professor Dr Wong Shaw Voon

taking this journey."

On Thursday, Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the government was gathering data and studying the best way to allow this one-time journey. He said those who needed to do so would need to register online or make an appointment at the nearest police station.

Associate Professor Dr Law Teik Hua said he would not recommend allowing the one-time journey unless the government, especially the Health Ministry, implemented Covid-19 screening and monitoring.

"However, if it is implemented, the government should allow movement based on geographical regions and by 'qualified' drivers or travellers only. Those who are 'qualified' are those who have undergone screening, and have had their de-

tails recorded to know their origin and destination."

Law, who is Universiti Putra Malaysia Engineering Faculty Road Safety Research Centre head, suggested that vehicles be

given some form of indication to stick on their vehicles, which will ease enforcement during roadblocks and spot checks.

He added that it would be ideal to limit the number of occupants per vehicle to control the number of cars and travellers. This, he said, would address the issue of crowding at rest and relaxation

centres or petrol stations.

"Social distancing must remain a top priority."

Law said it was advisable not to allow public transport services during the MCO unless precautionary steps had been taken.



Associate Professor Dr Law Teik Hua