

# NEW HOPE IN REDUCING ACCIDENTS

With low numbers due to pandemic, govt should focus on improving public transport, says NGO

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*Policemen and military personnel manning a roadblock during the implementation of the Movement Control Order in March 2020.*

FILE PIC

**A**S a result of the nationwide movement restrictions to curb Covid-19, the country has reported fewer cases of road accidents, signalling hope in achieving the United Nations (UN) Global Plan to halve road deaths and injuries by 2030.



*Professor Dr Kulanthayan K.C. Mani*

Chair of Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety's board of directors Professor Dr Kulanthayan K.C. Mani said as such, the government should fo-

cus on investing to enhance the traffic system, including improving public transport services and connectivity.

"Instead of being profit-centric, we should look at public transport as an investment to cut

losses caused by road crashes and fatalities.

"Productivity is affected when employees are involved in an ac-

cident and their deaths are a loss to the nation," said Kulanthayan, who was recently elected as the international organisation's chief — the first Malaysian and Asian appointed to the position.

In this matter, he said Malaysia was on the right track, with the development of rail projects like the mass rapid transit here and the East Coast Rail Link.

He said industries also played a huge role in protecting the safety of the workforce, which extended

to daily travels and should be part of their culture.

"Some companies included road safety as part of their employees' performance appraisal, especially those that place heavy emphasis on safety at the workplace. For instance, any workers who have been caught with traffic offences will likely have their records affected.

"Unions that are entrusted to protect the wellbeing of their members should also champion

road safety advocacy, assisting the country to achieve the UN's Global Plan in halving road fatalities by 2030."

Malaysia recorded a total of 418,237 road crashes and 4,634 fatalities in 2020. The numbers went down last year with a total of 370,286 road crashes and 4,539 fatalities were recorded.

He said earlier traffic data also showed a downward trend of road fatalities pre-Covid-19, with 6,740 deaths in 2017; 6,284 in 2018 and 6,167 in 2019, despite the increasing number of road crashes in the country.

A total of 533,875 road crashes were reported nationwide in 2017; 548,598 in 2018 and 567,516 cases in 2019.

According to the International Transport Forum, traffic volumes were 12.2 per cent lower in 2020 than the average statistics for 2017-2019 across the 11 countries that collected their travel volume data.

The number of road deaths decreased by 8.6 per cent in 2020 across the 34 International Road Traffic and Accident Database countries, a result linked to lower traffic volumes due to restrictions during the pandemic.