

'No' to teenage p-riders

➤ Move to reduce hiring age limit for sector would increase road fatalities, school dropout rate: Experts

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PETALING JAYA: Road safety experts have raised concern over the recent announcement by the Transport Ministry to lower the age limit for motorcycle-based delivery riders from 21 to 18.

Traffic psychology and road safety expert Prof Dr Rozmi Ismail said allowing 18-year-olds to be employed in such positions could result in a large number of road crash casualties, although the ministry's intention is to help them generate income through the p-hailing jobs, that are defined as delivery of packages or meals by motorcyclists.

Rozmi said his statistics show 80% of traffic collision cases involve motorcycles, particularly among teenagers.

"I totally disagree with the move for safety reasons. (At that age) they cannot really understand road regulations in terms of road safety, such as why there is a need to slow

down at certain places and avoid illegal turns and entries, because they are young.

"If we agree to the decision, I think we have to ask ourselves if we want to see many more people dying on the roads. It's a loss for the country and they are quite young to die."

Rozmi added that maintaining the age requirement for p-hailing riders at 21 would make a big difference. Although it only differs by three years, teenagers need experience to navigate on the roads.

He said 18 is the appropriate age to begin studying and gaining knowledge, rather than exploring something without proper guidance, which could land them in trouble.

He also urged delivery riders to follow the traffic rules because their wrongdoings could mislead the younger generation.

"Maybe they could take a driver's license first, but they should be given a few more years to understand (traffic) regulations as it involves public safety. This is because the learning process is quite long.

"Delivery riders beating the traffic lights have become the norm, and they don't feel guilty. They are creating new norms and endangering other road users. That is the issue that needs to be addressed.

"That is why I'm very worried about the new generation adapting these wrong habits and behaviour from delivery riders who are reckless on the streets."

Meanwhile, Universiti Putra Malaysia Road Safety Research Centre head Assoc Prof Dr Law Teik Hua said any proposal to reduce the age limit of p-hailing riders to 18 would impact students who are expected to pursue tertiary education.

"It is expected that lowering the age limit would increase their exposure to the risk of road death. The policy would have an impact on current student academic progress and increase the rate of dropouts.

"Although it would help lower-income teenagers increase their family earnings, it would jeopardise the nation's long-term goals of producing highly-skilled workers.

"In light of the concentration of p-hailing services in the Klang Valley, it is anticipated that this policy would increase the number of motorcycles on the roads, thereby aggravating traffic congestion as well."