

INCREASED PENALTIES

MINISTRY ASKED TO DEFINE ILLEGAL RACING

Without it, those driving above speed limit may also be considered illegal racers, says expert

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A ROAD safety expert has called on the Transport Ministry to define "illegal racing" before imposing heavier penalties for the offence.

Universiti Putra Malaysia's Road Safety Research Centre head Associate Professor Dr Law Teik Hua said distinguishing illegal racing from other offences related to reckless driving was crucial to ensure clear and fair enforcement.

"Currently, Section 42 of the Road Transport Act 1987 provides for a maximum fine of RM300 for

offences related to reckless driving, such as speeding or using a mobile phone while driving.

"The ministry is planning to raise the maximum fine to between RM5,000 and RM10,000 for illegal racing.

"But, without defining 'illegal racing', the interpretation of the offence would rest in the hands of enforcement officers.

"So, those caught speeding may also be viewed as 'illegal racers' and be slapped with higher fines or even imprisoned.

"Personally, I feel that the revised maximum fines should apply to all offences under Section 42. Still, the ministry must provide a precise definition of illegal racing to ease enforcement efforts," he told the *New Straits Times*.

Transport Ministry secretary-general Datuk Isham Ishak, on Aug 9, said the ministry was mulling to amend Section 42 of the Road Transport Act to pro-

vide heavier penalties for illegal racing.

This, he said, included raising fines from RM300 to between RM5,000 and RM10,000, as well as a jail sentence.

Isham said the amendments would allow enforcement officers to take action against workshops modifying motorcycles for mat rempit and against parents whose underage children were caught illegally racing.

Spectators cheering on illegal racers along the streets would also face the music, he

said.

However, Law said reviewing the legislation must be coupled with other measures to deter illegal racers.

"We cannot rely on ad-hoc enforcement techniques any more. The government must establish a taskforce to plan, monitor and crack down on illegal racing.

"The community should also



Dr Law Teik Hua



Motorcycles seized in a police operation against illegal racing in Gombak, Kuala Lumpur, last year. FILE PIC

be roped in to enforce the law. At present, most neighbourhoods only silently lament when mat rempit create a nuisance on their streets.

"But, the community must be educated on the dangers posed by mat rempit to other law-abiding road users.

"Encourage them to report illegal racing to the taskforce that, in turn, would lead to speedy enforcement," he said.

Law also agreed with the ministry's decision to haul up parents whose children were caught participating in illegal racing.

However, he said parents should be cautioned first and punished only if their children were caught repeating the offence.

As for workshops modifying motorcycles, Law said these premises would cease to operate once the other measures were implemented.

Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research (Miros) chair-

man Dr Wong Shaw Voon urged the ministry to set a timeframe for road traffic offenders to pay their summons.

"If offenders could defer paying summons for years, then heavier penalties would not be a deterrent.

"Robust enforcement requires three elements — sure, swift and severe actions. Severe penalties, but if not meted out swiftly, would still not be effective," he said.

Wong also lauded the ministry's decision to use cameras to capture images of mat rempit and spectators, which he said, would boost enforcement.

Nevertheless, he said the ministry must continue to focus on community education, especially among the younger generation, to prevent them from becoming mat rempit.

"Enforcement is effective to yield quick outcomes. But, it can only be sustained through continuous education and awareness campaigns," he said.