

**PETALING JAYA:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob's proposal to build drag racing circuits in every state would not put an end to the mat rempit menace in the country or enhance the development of motorsports, said road safety experts.

Universiti Putra Malaysia Road Safety Research Centre head Assoc Prof Dr Law Teik Hua said while the prime minister's heart is in the right place, and the nation's sports performance must be enhanced, it cannot be realised solely through the construction of drag racing circuits.

Ismail Sabri had said on Saturday that the facility would allow youths to participate in motorsport activities through proper channels, adding that the proposal would enhance the development of motorsports, and that it would be included in Budget 2023, which is to be tabled in October.

However, Law said: "The funds allocated for the construction of drag strips should be used to implement other, more efficient measures. In general, (people from) the neighbourhoods, especially the ones where illegal racers come from, do not view their action as being particularly bad.

"Therefore, there is no significant social barrier to deter illegal racing behaviour. Thus, there is an urgent need to educate illegal racers and the entire community about the detrimental effects of illegal racing."

He added that drag racing circuits would not prevent or reduce illegal racing.

"Having legal racing activities would not satisfy racers because there are no obstacles or barriers in drag racing circuits.

"Only racing locations with other drivers

# 'Racing circuit plan may not work'

➤ Illegal racers seek thrill of dangers, challenges present on roads among other motorists: Safety expert

and diverse road topography would provide the highest level of racing enjoyment because they derive an adrenaline rush from it. Racing on a highway will gain motorists' attention and concern. This is another reason they want to participate in illegal racing," he said, adding that existing or new drag racing circuits would not solve the problem as they do not "meet the requirements" of illegal racers.

Law also said some parents may be incapable of preventing their children from engaging in illegal racing activities. But the authorities, schools and social welfare departments, can provide them (parents) with adequate support to address the issue.

Meanwhile, Alliance For Safe Community chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye said the government's proposal to build racing circuits must first be thoroughly studied by experts.

He said a committee must be set up to study the financial, medical, social, educational and safety aspects of the proposal before firm recommendations are made.

"It is a truism that while some of the new proposals produce the intended results, others need a longer gestation time."

Lee added that Ismail Sabri's proposal may serve to reduce the number of illegal racers.

"So, the question is, will more drag racing circuits help curb this menace? Going by records, this is unlikely to happen. Even with the existing racing circuits, illegal racing on the highways and country roads have been increasing, with the authorities lacking the resources or will to discourage it.

"The committee I am proposing must also look into prioritising government actions and proposals that deal with the real bread-and-butter issues facing the people, before implementing measures that some may consider esoteric," he said.

"We must avoid knee-jerk reactions. Drag racing is extremely dangerous. This sport involves high speeds, reckless driving and total disregard for traffic laws. But therein lies the thrill for those who participate in it."