

All revved up for safety

SEREMBAN: The Transport Ministry is working with automotive companies and motorcycle manufacturers to incorporate safety features in new vehicles in an effort to reduce road accidents and fatalities, says minister Anthony Loke.

“The time has come for us to use technology to enforce our laws in a better way.

“We are already working with these companies to see how we can incorporate safety features in cars and motorcycles to prevent drivers from violating traffic laws,” he said after launching the Yamaha Balik Kampung road safety campaign here yesterday.

Loke said that 548,598 accidents were reported on Malaysian roads last year with 6,284 fatalities. The number of fatalities reported in 2017 were 6,740.

The number of accidents reported in the first quarter of this year were 133,912 with 1,483 fatalities.

Loke said ministry officials have held several rounds of talks with manufacturers on the matter. However, he did not elaborate.

“We have to remember that accidents can happen even if you lose your focus for a second or two.

“You can have as much enforcement as you want but if road users are not prepared to change their mindset, we will not be able to reduce road accidents or fatalities,” he added.

Asked if the ministry had plans to increase the age for youths before they can apply for a motorcycle licence, Loke said there was a proposal for this but no decision has been made.

He said the proposal was made as motorcyclists and pillion riders made up 65% of all road fatalities.

“There are pros and cons to the proposal. One drawback is that if we raise the age from 16 at present, then there is a possibility that more young people will be riding without a valid licence.”

Separately, Loke said Batu Pahat has emerged as the top district in the country with the highest number of road fatalities, with 547 deaths reported from 2015 to 2017.

“It is startling because it is even higher than places like Kuala Lumpur where there are a lot more vehicles,” he added.

He said Selangor, Johor and Perak have emerged as the three states with the highest number of road fatalities.

Apart from Batu Pahat in Johor, the other districts with the highest number of fatalities in the state were Johor Baru South (315) and Kluang (296).

Ipoh had the highest fatalities in Perak with 402 followed by Manjung (261) and Hilir Perak (232).

In Selangor, Kajang has the highest number of cases with 347, followed by Klang South (270) and Kuala Selangor (260).

Loke said the ministry will work with other agencies such as the Public Works Department and local councils to check why these districts had high road fatalities.

In Alor Setar, the police have identified six road accident hotspots in Kedah and will focus on them in the 15/2019 Op Selamat (Road Safety Operation) until June 12.

The locations in five districts are Kota Setar at the 46.5km of North-South Expressway (NSE), Kubang Pasu (20km NSE), Pendang (63.1km NSE), Bandar Baharu (171.3km NSE North Bound) and Kuala Muda (109.4km and 83.3km NSE).