

Stricter law soon against drink driving

PUTRAJAYA: The government will review the Road Transport Act 1987, in particular laws governing driving under the influence. The review, said Transport Minister Anthony Loke, would include an assessment of blood alcohol content (BAC) standards, possible heavier penalties for offenders, as well as the effectiveness of awareness campaigns. Loke said the government was looking at reviewing the BAC standards in Malaysia, which would see them using the World Health Organisation's (WHO) standards as reference. Under WHO's standards, the prescribed limit is 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood. Under Section 45G of the Road Transport Act, Malaysia's threshold is 80mg of alcohol per 100ml blood. The section specifies the prescribed limit of 35 microgrammes of alcohol in 100ml of breath and 107mg of alcohol in 100ml of urine. Loke said the existing laws governing drink driving were "quite liberal".

"We will amend the penalties for driving under the influence of liquor and drugs under Sections 44 and 45 (of the Road Transport Act 1987)," he said here yesterday. Under existing laws, offenders face a fine of between RM8,000 and RM20,000 and a jail term of between three and 10 years. Loke said his ministry would consult with stakeholders to gather their views. "We hope to present the draft to the cabinet in few months. We hope to table the amendments in Parliament during the second session, either in June or July."

He said the ministry would examine other aspects namely enforcement, health assessment and stepping up awareness campaigns on drink driving. "We will look at the enforcement as it is under police jurisdiction, including the use of breathalysers. There are provisions on a (temporary) suspension of driver's licence against offenders. "Apart from reviewing the law, we will take into consideration other aspects like strengthening enforcement and public awareness of drink driving. "The 'Dont Drink and Drive' campaign, for instance, has been around for a while, but there is a need to boost awareness programmes to address the accidents caused by drink driving."

Drink driving has been a perennial issue, with the latest case reported in Penang on Jan 25. A man, 24, was arrested after crashing his car into a motorcyclist while driving under the influence. The motorcyclist, 40, suffered severe injuries to the head and body.

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