

King calls for strategy to curb road accidents

By Mohammad Ghazal

AMMAN — King Abdullah on Monday instructed the government to draw a comprehensive strategy to curb road accidents and casualties in Jordan.

Chairing a meeting of the Higher Council for Traffic Safety, the King said the strategy on traffic safety should be implemented in line with a timetable and a clear programme that specifies the duties of related institutions and authorities.

The Monarch added that mechanisms to evaluate the national study should be included. He stressed the importance of drafting a law to activate the council's role, tasks and duties.

“There is a need to tackle problems behind traffic accidents to preserve the lives of citizens as well as their properties,” King Abdullah reiterated.

Violating traffic laws, unqualified drivers, narrow roads, sharp turns, inadequate sidewalks and poor planning are main reasons behind road accidents, according to a Royal Court statement.

Jordan Traffic Institute (JTI) President Colonel Emad Hojrat said yesterday 98,055 traffic accidents occurred last year, killing 899 people and injuring 18,019.

According to JTI figures, road accidents in Jordan kill a child every 35 hours, and an adult every 10 hours.

Financial losses of accidents amounted to JD258 million in 2006, compared to JD220 million in 2005, said Hojrat, who added that the country loses JD700,000 every day — 2.5 per cent of the gross domestic product.

Minister of Interior Eid Fayeze told reporters yesterday that the country's roads are unable to cope with a surge in vehicles.

There are around 755,477 licensed vehicles now. Fayeze said 100,000 vehicles are licensed annually.

He added that a draft law on traffic safety was recently sent to the legislation bureau.

The law is expected to help reduce traffic accidents by 80 per cent as it imposes stricter penalties for violators, said Public Security Department (PSD) Director Lieutenant General Mohammad Aitan.

Aitan added the PSD will increase the number of traffic policemen in the summer.

Tuesday, May 29, 2007