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Dr Ling: M-cycles, bicycles can help reduce congestion

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The chaotic traffic situation in densely-populated Asian cities can be resolved if the motoring public is encouraged to use motorcycles and bicycles.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said it was a myth that developed countries had more private-owned cars than less developed countries as "more vehicles translate into massive congestions along city roads".

For instance, he said, Seoul had once experienced a chaotic traffic situation as a result of South Korea's vibrant economic growth which resulted in its population becoming more affluent that they began to buy cars.

"But as a result of massive traffic congestions, many car owners opted to use motorcycles and bicycles as an alternative mode of travel."

Dr Ling was speaking at the "Strategic Issues Forum" organised by the Asian Strategic Leadership Institute today.

He said Asian cities were densely populated unlike American and Australian cities.

In Kuala Lumpur, the density is about 300 people per hectare, Singapore (400) while that in Seoul, Hong Kong and Taiwan, about 1,000 per hectare.

This compares to the relatively low density of 14 people per hectare in American or Australian cities.

"In densely-populated cities, motorcycles are the best mode of transport because they are cheap and practical.

"Maybe we should encourage more pedestrians to own motorcycles or bicycles to ease traffic congestion and also safeguard their safety when travelling along congested roads," he said.

Also present were ASLI president Mirzan Mahathir and SungaiWay Group corporate adviser and ASLI director Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam, United States ambassador John Mallot and senior corporate executives of transport companies.

Dr Ling said it was uneconomical for single-occupancy vehicles to enter the city due to congestions and lack of parking spaces.

"About 1.6 million vehicles enter the city daily of which 17 per cent are single-occupancy vehicles while 70 per cent of them are high-occupancy vehicles with two or more passengers.

"The ministry is encouraging car-pooling as we want to limit the number of private vehicles to ease the congestions," he said.

Such chaotic situations were not confined here but were also experienced by motorists in Malacca, Johor Baru and Penang while Ipoh was now beginning to feel it.

To encourage car owners to use public transport, Dr Ling said the various transportation projects being carried out within the Klang Valley would provide "alternative modes of transport".

"The Government also introduced special bus lanes and set up two bus consortiums to provide feeder services to support the LRT and rail commuter services.

"The various modes of transport infrastructure will also serve as a model for other States to emulate," he added.

Mirzan said the forum would enable the participants to exchange their views and obtain feedback for their transport operations here.

"By sharing views, we hope to see some of the issues raised here

addressed by the Government.

"The forum will also allow foreign businessmen who are operating here to obtain a first-hand knowledge of Malaysia's future and challenges," he added.

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