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Horrified by behaviour of taxi driver

James Mason

ON Tuesday, May 20, about 2pm, I witnessed an incident that was shameful to Malaysia.

I was in the taxi queue with many others at Terminal Two of the airport in Subang. The traffic at the terminal was very heavy with cars and taxis stopping and picking up arriving passengers.

A foreigner stopped his car to allow two young women with their baggage to get in.

A taxi, number WEA 5352, pulled in behind the stopped car and the taxi driver immediately began shouting obscenities in English at the foreigner and his guests.

"F... you!" he shouted at the top of his voice. Not once but many, many times. The crowd standing around was shocked. What a spectacle. The foreigner and his lady friends were obviously taken aback and hurried to get into the car.

The taxi driver jumped out of his taxi in a threatening manner shouting "F... You!" at the top of his voice.

The foreign women were obviously intimidated and afraid of what this man was threatening to do. By this time many people had gathered and were obviously appalled by the man's behaviour.

The taxi driver knew perfectly well how offensive he was being. He was shouting other obscenities in English and his command of the language was quite fluent. He continued shouting the "F" word until the car had driven off.

I was shocked and ashamed for Malaysia. Is this the way that you want foreign guests greeted at the airport?

Your Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is doing a wonderful job of promoting Malaysia and the Multimedia Super Corridor all over the world.

He promotes Malaysia as a civilised and sophisticated country and he encourages multinational companies to come here.

But all his efforts would be undone when visitors arrive at the airport and are met by abusive and threatening taxi drivers.

I have mentioned this incident to both Malaysians and foreigners since my arrival here and I have been very surprised to hear the reaction. "It happens all the time ..."

"Those airport taxi drivers are a law unto themselves..."

"They are a disgrace..."

The tales they tell are of abuse, extortion, overcharging and just bad, rude service.

In Singapore, there was a problem with the airport taxi drivers.

They were gossiping about the Government to incoming visitors.

The Singaporeans realised how important first impressions are to incoming tourists and potential investors. They stepped in and cracked down very hard on the taxi drivers.

Why isn't that done here?

Why are these taxi drivers above the law?

Do they have special protection?

The unpleasant experience at the airport will certainly give me pause for thought when we decide to move our electronics operations here.

James Mason

CEO IntelElec

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