

02/01/1998

Bad attitude and manners of our hand-phone users

Mikhail Mashudi

I SAW the movie Titanic at one of the countries best cinemas, the Tanjong Golden Village at Sunway Pyramid, on Boxing Day.

The biggest cinema at TGV was packed with people who had gone to see the most expensive movie ever made, which has been nominated for eight Golden Globe awards. Not just people mind you, but also a cinema full of handphones.

Unlike other college friends who adore video compact discs, I still enjoy sitting down in front of a big screen, pop corn in hand, watching a movie in a hall with an excellent sound system. It's the viewing experience and the effect of it all that makes the RM9 that one has to pay worthwhile. Even more so for a movie like the Titanic.

But, of course, there are those little gadgets which urban folk don't leave home without, myself included.

Even in the darkness of the cinema, the presence of so many handphones did not go unnoticed. One after another they rang, some of them awfully loud. To my disgust, many took their calls there and then but most sought out the nearest exit to answer their calls. This continued throughout the three-hour movie.

I wasn't the least bit pleased and so were a lot of other people. I tolerated the interruptions at the beginning, but towards the end of the movie, my patience wore thin when the handphone of someone, one row behind me, rang with its volume set at the highest level.

I began to wonder after a time whether I was the only one in the entire cinema who had my handphone tuned to the "silent" mode.

What has happened to urban society? Have we become so selfish, rude and totally inconsiderate to others except ourselves? Has the pace of development something to do with such rude and ill-mannered behaviour?

I can understand the need for certain individuals, such as doctors, to have their phones switched on. Even so features such as voice-mail, short-messaging and the vibrating-call alert has made it possible to receive calls without offending others.

I have heard of incidents where handphones have rung in the middle of a church service, in mosques and in temples. Have we become more important than God?

Still, I doubt the cinema was packed with doctors that day. Rather, they were a group of "I-must-be-reached-at-all-costs" folks who selfishly chose to have their handphones on, at the expense of others.

This behaviour is totally unacceptable and is a reflection of our attitude and manners. It gives a glimpse of urban society's "real" values and beliefs. We seem to be losing the community spirit in favour of personal benefit. The extent of this loss, as demonstrated that day in the cinema, is alarming.

At the rate we are going, we are still a long, long way from the caring society Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has envisioned. We have to change, know our limits and, most importantly, have a certain amount of consideration for other people because we are not alone in this world. We share it with billions of other people.