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Dealing with the motorcycle menace

Pola Singh

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed struck a chord recently when he hit out at motorcyclists for dicing with death each time they take to the roads and highways.

An understanding of why motorcyclists behave the way they do - with blatant disregard for basic road rules - is essential to identifying remedies.

Over the years, the number of motorcyclists in the country has grown significantly. Because of this, the enforcement of road rules for these road users has become difficult.

Due to other commitments by enforcement authorities, motorcyclists have been virtually ignored.

Because of poor enforcement, errant motorcyclists often get away with wrongdoing. They are not issued with summonses for speeding, carrying more than one pillion rider, overtaking at double lines, disobeying traffic lights (they move when there is no oncoming traffic and not when the light turns green), indiscriminate parking and so forth.

Any urban motorist will have noticed how arrogant and impatient motorcyclists have become (motorists are not angels either - but that's another issue!).

The sad thing is that even new motorcyclists with provisional licences behave no differently.

I have had countless near-accidents with motorcyclists simply because the rear lights of these motorcycles are not working.

There are compelling reasons to reassess current measures. First, the attitude and the need to raise the consciousness of motorcyclists will have to be addressed. Motorcyclists may not be fully aware of the danger of their reckless driving to themselves and other-users.

Having been a motorcyclist myself, I never realised my precarious position on the road until I could afford to drive a car. I am positive there are thousands in the same predicament; they are oblivious of the danger to their safety and that of other road users. Hence the education aspect is important.

The current advertisements on the radio and newspapers on this theme lack focus; they are ineffective in getting the message across.

Because of the growing number of motorcyclists, enforcement of road rules will continue to be ineffective. Are the police and other enforcement authorities willing to delegate some of their powers to the ordinary man-in-the-street?

What I have in mind is that ordinary citizens be empowered to book offending motorcyclists (and other road users). Cameras and video-cameras will come in handy here.

If a member of the public can show solid proof to authorities that a traffic offence has been committed, the individual will get a reward from the fine paid by the motorcyclist.

A great load would have been taken off the shoulders of enforcement authorities. Road users will be more careful and will abide by traffic rules, as they know they have in their midst unofficial enforcement officers who could land them in trouble. And the police would have their coffers filled without much effort!

The media should play its role by continuing to highlight the rising number of deaths and victims of accidents involving motorcyclists.

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