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Malaysian drivers lack road courtesy

Mohd Fuad Abdul Aziz

NEWS on road accidents has become a common phenomenon in Malaysia and there is nothing shocking or bizarre about them.

The latest that I have read in the New Straits Times says "Accidents rise as school holiday crowds jam roads" (NST, May 28).

A Japanese teacher of mine once told me that he was advised (by his superior in Japan) not to take road transportation if he needs to travel in Malaysia.

As such, he used the railway transportation. Why? I asked.

He answered in a simple way, "too many accidents".

This conversation took place in 1990. It seems that more than 10 years ago, the story of accidents on Malaysian roads had become global.

Today my Japanese teacher has long gone back to his country.

Perhaps if he is still here he might succumb to road phobia.

Exaggeration, one might say, but then again look at the statistics.

Malaysians are generally known to be courteous but behind the wheel, I doubt it.

It is as if there is an unknown force that somehow turns us into drivers from hell.

I witnessed on one occasion a person wearing a ketayap (a Muslim skull cap), a person normally presumed to be well-mannered, overtaking indiscriminately.

A few weeks back, my car was knocked from the rear by another car but I was not that furious with the driver because the actual culprit was a taxi driver who suddenly stopped in the middle of the road of fast moving traffic to take a passenger.

And of course, as usual the taxi driver did not use his indicator signal. The dumb thing about that particular taxi driver was that there was a bus and taxi stop that is less than 50 metres in front of him.

Noticing that an accident had occurred behind him due to him, he drove off without a thought about what he had caused.

I am positive that this sort of incident has happened to many of us and believe me it will happen and can happen to anyone.

Nowadays, one cannot escape from these drivers from hell who don't bother about any form of road courtesy.

Another type of driver who is no less a nuisance is the road-hog.

Driving at less than 60kmh on a road with a speed limit of 90kmh can cause so much fury to the rest especially when he is in pole position and you cannot overtake due to the traffic in the opposite direction.

If he is driving a heavy loaded lorry or a post-war bus, one can understand and take it easy but if he is driving a relatively new car, one feels this is definitely not justified.

I wonder whether the authorities can issue a summons to such road-hogs because I heard that our neighbouring country does take action against such drivers.

I remember watching the news on television when our Prime Minister Datuk Ser Dr Mahathir Mohamad made a statement regarding these reckless drivers.

He said that one should not think that since he is a good driver he can go off speeding for you can never be too sure that you will not end up in an accident.

I am sure even schoolchildren know that speed kills since they watch television.

And I am sure everybody knows not to drink and drive.

Well, there is only one conclusion to this phenomenon - the attitude problem.

No matter how frequent road-safety campaigns are carried out throughout the country, people will not change unless they make an effort to use just a little common sense when driving.