

Road signs a-maze in Malaysia
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There was a news report that some road signs in Kuala Lumpur are to be in the Jawi script. The Jawi names will be placed above the Bahasa Malaysia ones making the latter smaller and more difficult to read. If the main purpose of the Jawi road names is to assist the Arab or Middle Eastern tourist in Malaysia, why use Jawi and not Arabic?
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How many or how frequent do Middle Eastern tourists visit or pass by areas which are not a tourism destination? For most people, road signs and road names are to show the directions and locations. When we plan our journey, we will definitely depend on road names and road signs. From our own experience, we find Malaysian road signs leave a lot to be desired.

For example, when we travel from KL to Damansara, we see the sign 'Damansara Utama' at the beginning, but after the toll-gate near Damansara Intan, the sign disappears. It re-appears after we pass by Taman Tun Dr Ismail near the end of the road.

The placement of such signboards is not strategic or helpful to road-users. Another mess is that many road signs are always hidden along the roadsides. They appear at the road shoulder, blocked by billboards or banners, or some may appear after the entrance to our destination. What good is that?

Things became worse during the recent election campaign when banners, flags and posters were scattered along the road, some even blocking traffic lights. Politicians have a moral obligation to follow rules and regulations especially concerning safety. By allowing supporters to place their banners and posters indiscriminately, the political leaders did not show concern towards road users.

I would like to bring to the attention of your readers that there are very useful tools developed by the ISO (International Organisation for Standardisation) for standard and harmonised road safety signs. The latest move is the new standard to be developed, the ISO/PC 241, which will provide a structured, holistic approach to road safety that will complement government and industry programmes and initiatives including making road signs safer and friendlier to people with disabilities.

The responsibility shown by many parties - especially the government - in improving accessibility for the disabled and elderly communities is nothing more than just an eyewash. All stakeholders in making roads safer ie, the developers, the Works Ministry, the construction industry and Housing and Local Government Ministry should be aware of the tools mentioned above, because by implementing these standards, we can be truly an inclusive society for all regardless of our conditions.

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