Expert: Include hazard perception test in driving syllabus

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SERDANG: The driver's education curriculum should be updated by incorporating the hazard perception test to ensure motorists are competent and safer drivers while on the road, says a road safety consultant.

Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research (Miros) Associate Fellow Tengku Ahmad Marwan Tengku Mahmud said the last time the curriculum was updated was in 2014.

He said currently, the syllabus for the hazard perception test is developed by Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM).

"It is important for a driver to learn and pass the hazard perception test, as the majority of accidents happen due to the failure to recognise these hazards earlier.

"Developed countries such as Britain and Australia have this test to improve a motorist's competency.

"Miros can carry out research to ascertain whether the current curriculum is sufficient and identify the weaknesses that can be improved," he said, adding that this research can be included into the driver's curriculum.

Tengku Ahmad Marwan was one of the panellists at a road safety dialogue titled "The Game Changer" at the university yesterday.

The dialogue was moderated by UPM vice-chancellor Datuk Prof Dr Ahmad Farhan Mohd Sadullah.

The speakers included road safety activist and former Miros chairman Datuk Suret Singh, Malaysian rally driver Karamjit Singh, Malaysia International Search and Rescue founder and chairman K. Balasupramaniam, and head of UPM Road Safety Research Centre Assoc Prof Dr Law Teik Hua.

When asked about Malaysian drivers' mentality and attitude, Tengku Ahmad Marwan replied that the standards of local drivers are still "very low".

He added that their knowledge is lacking and only adequate to pass the test to obtain a licence but not to become a safer driver.

"This is why 80% of the road traffic accidents are due to human error," he added.

On the hazard perception test, Law said the current driving exam merely ensures that the person knows how to drive but guarantees nothing about being a safe driver.

"During our training, our study found that many young motorcyclists are not sensitive to fixed object hazards.

"They don't think they (the objects) pose a hazard. Some don't even see the red light.

"They need to be trained to be aware of the hazards a second earlier to avoid accidents," he said.

Law also suggested the use of artificial intelligence for better road safety.

UPM's first AI-powered road traffic app, called Automatic Road Incident Detection System (Arids), uses social media apps and Google traffic data to provide better information on road accidents, he added.

"It works 24 hours, is low cost and uses a cheap computer based on information received from observation points.

"In Kuala Lumpur, we have 2,000 observation points.

"The system goes through these observation points to see if it finds incidents of delay (on the road) and notifies the user via WhatsApp.

"For example, if the colour of one of the observation points is green as indicated in Google Maps, and, after some time, it changes from green to red.

"This signifies something has happened.

"We then channel this information to the users in real time and allow them to take action.

"By doing this, we can give timely assistance to road users," he said.

He added that real-time notification is one function used to identify black spots.

The data collated from this system can also be used for transportation planning and to deal with road congestion.

Law said Arids is currently being used by Kuala Lumpur City Hall, the Malaysian Highway Authority and Putrajaya Holdings.