

Cycling safely begins with awareness on the road

PETALING JAYA: Closer collaboration must be made between transport authorities and cycling enthusiasts to ensure that cyclists don't get involved in traffic mishaps, says a road safety expert.

Associate Prof Dr Law Teik Hua of Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) said the authorities in collaboration with cycling clubs should educate cyclists on the selection of safe routes and group riding etiquette.

"Group cycling should be planned and registered, especially when it involves highways. Mass cycling events should be conducted only with sufficient marshalling and safety measures.

"Consultation with traffic authorities should also be carried out," he said in an interview.

Law was commenting on an incident last Sunday of an altercation between a bus driver and cyclists obstructing a bus lane at KM23 of the Kuala Selangor-Kuala Lumpur road.

"Policy-wise, it would be prudent to ban cyclists from highways and high-speed traffic roads unless they are participating in officially sanctioned events. As much as cyclists must be recognised as legitimate road users, it should not be to the extent of compromising



Safety in numbers:

A group of cyclists travelling along Jalan Kuala Selangor-Jalan Batu Arang.
— FAIHAN GHANI/
The Star

their safety on the road."

Law said a short-term move would be to enforce regulations that determine where cyclists may cycle.

"This includes putting limitations on highways where there are no bike lanes or shoulders wide enough for cyclists to pass safely.

"Highways are built primarily for high-speed motorised traffic.

"A wind blast from a passing lorry or a momentary lapse of judgement of a motor vehicle driver or even the cyclist can have catastrophic consequences," he added.

While it is understandable for cyclists to seek equal rights for the use of roads as other commuters,

he said being on roads where speeds exceed 110kph poses a major safety risk.

"They are endangering themselves and other road users. The majority of cyclists may underestimate the risks they subject themselves to when using such roads," Law said.

Malaysian Road and Transportation Safety Association adviser and former president Nik Mohd Salim Nik Mohd Salleh said Malaysian roads are not designed for recreational riding for cyclists, especially when they are in large numbers and move in a convoy.

"When this happens, they may end up hogging traffic as what occurred in the Kuala Selangor

incident. The authorities should find ways to enable this healthy activity to be carried out in a safe and controlled environment.

"Perhaps, a road stretch in every district can be dedicated at certain times and days for cyclist to ride with police and local council officials present to oversee their safety."

Road Safety Council of Malaysia executive council member Datuk Suret Singh said cyclists should use safety gear such as helmets at all times, suitable footwear and reflective gear when they ride at night.

"Cyclists riding at night on public roads in mixed traffic should be discouraged due to visibility issues. Cyclists ride at an average speed of 25kph or even lower. Such low speeds travelling with regular or high-speed traffic may leave them prone to mishaps."

Meanwhile, federal police traffic investigation and enforcement department director Commissioner Datuk Seri Mohd Yusri Hassan Basri said cyclists should avoid expressways as fast-moving traffic may pose a serious and potentially deadly threat to their safety.

To minimise the risk of accidents, recreational cyclists should ride at parks where such activity

is allowed or at residential areas where traffic density is lower, he added.

Mohd Yusri said more emphasis is given to overseeing the flow of motorised vehicles on Malaysian roads and that cycling activities are encouraged only during certain time periods or events such as City Hall's KL Car Free Morning held twice a month.

He said Rule LN167/59 of the Traffic Sign Rules 1959 states that bicycles, tricycles, rickshaws and animal-drawn carriages are prohibited from entering highways.

Comm Mohd Yusri said cyclists should comply with 18 rules under Rule LN165/59 of the Traffic Sign Rules 1959, which among them include the use of hand signals to indicate turning or stopping and to use the safest lane possible that is furthest from fast-moving traffic.

"Highway concessionaires and local councils should put up signboards that clearly prohibit this category of vehicles from expressways," he added.

Those who do not comply with the order can face fines of between RM1,000 and RM5,000, or imprisonment up to a year under Section 70(1) of the Road Transport Act 1987.