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**T**HE number of road traffic accidents reported during the recent school holidays highlights the need to address this issue urgently.

How we protect road users — young and old — from injury and death is one of the most emotive and pressing issues that road safety professionals have to deal with.

According to Associate Professor Dr Kulanthayan K.C. Mani, the executive director of Safe Kids Malaysia at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), road safety is a multidisciplinary issue that does not involve the transport or health sector only.

"Every sector has a role to play towards making roads safer. It is a shared responsibility since a road crash or injury can be caused by many reasons — vehicle, human and environment. Hence, it is critical that we have more professionals equipped with road safety knowledge to handle this epidemic," he shared with Higher ED recently.

Kulanthayan said road safety professionals are people who work towards the betterment of roads in their country or globally.

"As an example, civil engineers have a responsibility to build safe roads for all types of users, be they bus, lorry, van or car drivers, motorcyclists and bicycle riders, and pedestrians.

"Some countries build roads for car users and completely forget other road users, such as cyclists and pedestrians. This mindset has to change. Automotive engineers, too, have the responsibility to build safer cars for all road users."

It is the moral responsibility of all manufacturers to provide a safe product for their customers and themselves.

"Traffic enforcement personnel have a responsibility to enforce laws in the best way possible so that it is safe for users to travel on the roads.

"Driving instructors, as educators with value-added knowledge, will be able to impart more input in their teaching and training of new drivers and riders. This will, in the long-term, improve traffic safety in the whole country," said Kulanthayan.

"Health service providers equipped with road safety knowledge can prevent accidents or reduce the severity of injuries. A teacher with the same knowledge can mould the next generation of road users who are safety conscious."

He said there are many professionals from various sectors who have a role to play in road safety.

Thus, empowering them with knowledge will make a huge change in the values and services performed by them in their daily work.

To give road safety professionals a solid grounding, the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at UPM is offering postgraduate programmes that are designed to build capacity at global, national and local levels to reduce road accidents.

Available as the Masters of Science and doctorate (PhD) course, the programmes are taught in English and can be taken in either one of four fields — Health Promotion; Occupational Safety and Health; Health Education and Communication; and Safety, Health and Emergency Management.

"These fields of study are not new. But the focus for road safety professionals is the research they do.

"Research on road safety is not limited to only one field. It can be addressed via various fields since fatal accidents are a huge public health problem.

"For international students, the programmes represent an opportunity for capacity-building as their respective countries may be lacking experts in road safety," said Kulanthayan, who is based at the Department of Community Health at UPM's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences.

Asked why his faculty is offering the programmes, Kulanthayan said that while road safety studies can be done in other fields, the health sector has a vital role to play.

# There's a lot to learn about road safety



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**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
DR KULANTHAYAN K.C.  
MANI**

*The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at Universiti Putra Malaysia is offering postgraduate programmes to give road safety professionals a solid grounding in their work.*

It has to deal with fatalities, disabilities, rehabilitation, post-traumatic stress disorder, poor quality of life and many other issues resulting from road accidents.

Health issues, like poor vision, weak hand grip, obesity, fatigue, stress, anxiety and depression, may also contribute to road crashes.

"Thus, on this ground, the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at UPM is responding to the need of this situation to train more professionals in their respective fields, who can improve safety for all road users," he said.

Elaborating on the fields in the Master of Science and doctorate programmes offered by the faculty, Kulanthayan said Health Promotion is a study of public health.

"The field aims to build the capacity of individuals, family and communities to improve their health status."

Occupational Safety and Health offers knowledge, a subject-matter expertise that will help government agencies in formulating road policies, designing better prevention strategies and set up effective systems for the management of occupational safety and health.

Health Education and Communication encompasses adult education, community health, developmental communication, programme development, continuous professional education, and media and knowledge dissemination.

This field is jointly conducted with UPM's Faculty

of Education.

Lastly, Safety, Health and Emergency Management is designed to meet the critical need for professionals in communities and industry organisational settings.

Students' research will focus on discovering strategies to save lives and property, reduce damage and disaster recovery. It is a shared field with the Faculty of Engineering.

Kulanthayan said potential students have to choose their field of study when enrolling for the programme.

The have to consider their present field of work or future endeavours that match their needs and interest.

He said as the postgraduate courses are research-based, the duration is a minimum of two semesters up to six. The doctorate programme spans from a minimum of four semesters to a maximum of 10.

He said those who postgraduate programmes in road safety will definitely add value to the students' career.

"With the new knowledge they gain, they can make good decisions that will result in better safety for all road users.

"For example, for traffic enforcement officers, the knowledge can help him to plan, manage and communicate effectively with road users so that will lead to better compliance of traffic laws."