

(6 January 2021) The Star 1p3

Ministry plans to make cycling safer in KL and Putrajaya

PUTRAJAYA may become the city of choice for cyclists if the Federal Territories Ministry's plan to convert under-utilised motorcycle lanes into bicycle lanes materialises.

On Oct 29 last year, Minister Tan Sri Annuar Musa said a study was being done to convert lanes that had been gazetted for motorcycle use only.

The plan came about after observations that motorcycle lanes were underutilised, Annuar said.

"We are also looking into providing other facilities such as pit stops and car parking bays for cyclists.

"We will also consult cycling associations in the country for their input on safety aspects and what other facilities can be provided.

"It is hoped that this will encourage families to cycle and spend time doing healthy activities," he was reported to have said.

A similar plan is afoot in Kuala Lumpur and the ministry is in the process of identifying suitable locations to complement existing bicycle lanes.

The plan came amid a police reminder that action would be taken against those who fail to abide by safety measures, such as equipping their bicycles with functioning safety lights, brakes and a bell.

This follows the death of a 34-year-old woman cyclist who was hit by a lorry on Dec 19 in Putrajaya.

In a Bernama report on Jan 2, Putrajaya OCPD Asst Comm Mohd Fadzil Ali said offenders would be

hailed to court and could face fines of up to RM2,000.

He said enforcement was needed to ensure safety among road users as there was an increase in cyclists in the administrative capital.

"Cyclists who break the law face punishment under the Road Transport Act 1987 and Road Traffic Rules 1959," he said, referring to reckless riding and failing to abide by traffic signage.

Six accidents involving bicycles were recorded in 2019 and 11 in 2020.

ACP Mohd Fadzil reminded cyclists to ensure that they were always visible to other road users for their safety.

"Cycling activities at a suitable time and place are also crucial in reducing road accidents," he said.



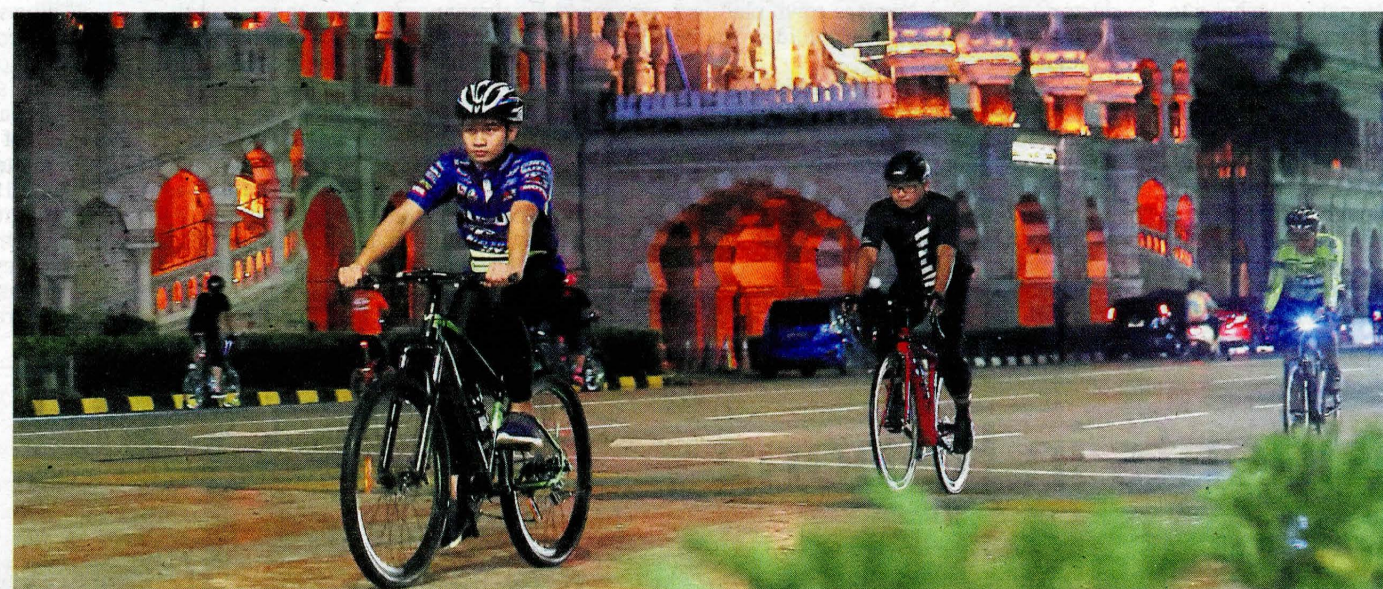
Putrajaya may become cyclists' city of choice if the FT Ministry's plan to turn under-utilised motorcycle lanes into bicycle lanes materialises.



Tan worries the banning of cycling on highways may stifle the growth of the cycling community.



Ariff says there is no one-size-fits-all solution to implementing a ban on cyclists using highways as some road users have no other way to get around.



Many have taken up recreational cycling since the conditional MCO began last June.



Ahmad (left) and Wong say all road users need to respect one another. — Filepic



Rules regarding cyclists should not affect those who cycle to work or rely on bicycles to earn a living.

nise that they are restricted from certain roads, made clear through gazettement and signage.

"As soon as such signs are erected, we know that it is illegal for us to ride there.

"Only four highways have been gazetted by legislators and a handful of highway operators have exercised their prerogative to exclude bicycles from their highways with signage, and that is clear to us."

Ariff, who is involved in developing athletes and organising international road races, said experienced cyclists were working within the confines of the law to avoid problems.

"We are looking for and hoping to get some clarity, either through a Federal gazette, signage or dialogues with cyclists," he said.

He is of the view that the interest in cycling will be increasing.

Ariff said there was no one-size-fits-all solution to covering the grey areas, as some cyclists had no choice but to use segments of open-loop highways to get to their destination.

"For example, a commuter travelling from Damansara Jaya in Petaling Jaya or Taman Tun Dr Ismail in Kuala Lumpur will need

to use parts of the Damansara-Puchong Expressway (LDP) to get to an LRT station.

He pointed out that any blanket approach would affect other users, mainly those who relied on bicycles in making a living or for travel to work.

General feedback

Netizens from both sides of the divide have voiced their views.

Some support the move to ban bicycles on highways, saying cyclists still have access to federal, state and municipal roads.

Cyclists, however, opine that they should be allowed to use motorcycle lanes on certain highways as it was safer.

Seasoned cyclists also said that common sense was necessary when deciding which highways or trunk roads to use.

Bukit Jelutong Cycling Club (BJCC) president Ahmad Salleh agreed that busy highways were too dangerous and cyclists knew this well, but it made little sense to prevent them from using motorcy-

cle lanes.

"While there is still a speed difference between bicycles and motorcycles, the risk on highway motorcycle lanes is much lower than on trunk roads, which are used by every type of vehicle.

"We are all for using motorcycle lanes, like the one on Guthrie Corridor Expressway (GCE) which we have been using since 2008.

"Traffic volume on motorcycle lanes there is low compared to other highways, and it is separated from the main highway."

Ahmad said many cyclists also used the Shah Alam Expressway (Kesas) for various purposes, including to get to work.

Sadly, the poor judgement displayed by new cyclists and lack of guidance had led to public displeasure, he acknowledged.

"What is frustrating is that we are all road users.

"We are not asking the government to change the infrastructure, we merely want to access highways," he reiterated.

BJCC captain Daniel Wong acknowledges that road users may

come across some inconsiderate cyclists, hence the negative reports on social media.

"There are cases of newcomers who ride in the city on nice bicycles and hog the roads with their support cars, but we are not in that group."

BJCC vice-captain Azman Rahman agreed that cycling was a growing trend and there must be solutions to ensure the healthy activity was done in a safe manner.

He said cyclists frequently encountered aggressive motorists as well as lorry and bus drivers who would drive too close to cyclists.

"Other road users need to be educated about sharing the road with us cyclists instead of being aggressive," he added.

Positive development

On a more positive note, the Youth and Sports Ministry initiated a dialogue on Sept 24 last year, involving the Road Transport Department, Malaysian Highway

Authority, Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research and National Sports Institute as well as cycling associations and clubs, to discuss prevailing issues.

The ministry had said that it would study feedback from the dialogue and hold another meeting before presenting its findings to the Youth and Sports Minister.

But months after the announcement, Bicycle Friendly Malaysia president Johan Arifin Sopiee said cyclists still did not know whether they were allowed to use ungazetted highways and those without signage banning bicycles.

The association wants the authorities to improve communication with stakeholders.

"We will appreciate it if they can tell us what we can and cannot do.

"Put it in black and white because we are only hearing from the media that we cannot use highways.

"If it is the law, we will abide by it.

"Until then, we cannot be certain," Johan added.