

There's no harm in slowing down

DBKL's plan to reduce speed limit in parts of capital city a simple solution to saving lives

BAVANI M

bavanim
@thestar.com.my

Citycism

GOING around Kuala Lumpur on foot is no walk in the park.

Take it from someone who spends a lot of time walking and relying on public transport.

Despite Kuala Lumpur City Hall's (DBKL) efforts – including upgrading roads, pavements and walking paths, and installing traffic lights with sound, signage on reduced speed limit as well as speed bumps and breakers – to make pedestrians feel safe and at ease, it hasn't produced the desired effect.

Just ask the people living and working in the city's central business districts and they will spew their frustrations over motorists who have no qualms about pulling over when and wherever they fancy, no thanks to roadside hawkers dominating some city walkways.

Motorcyclists, especially food delivery riders, treat the roads like they own them, constantly invading paths meant for pedestrians.

Take Jalan Sultan Abdul Samad in Brickfields for example.

This congested main road with many speed barriers is one of the most dangerous stretches in the capital city.

As I am part of the Brickfields community chat group on WhatsApp, I am privy to the hundreds of photos and videos captured and posted by irate members daily.

The multiple traffic violations by motorists – from running a red light to speeding over zebra crossings and almost hitting pedestrians, including schoolchildren – are simply mind-boggling.

And this area is supposed to be a safe township in the Brickfields Bandar Selamat programme, under LA21, which is a community programme to get residents and stakeholders to work together to establish sustainable development.

Brickfields is also a township with many visually impaired folks. Where is everyone rushing to?

When did this *tidak apa* attitude silently take over the area?

Traffic jams have always been a bane in the capital city, but of late, the gridlock combined with the sheer number of incidents involving people disregarding traffic rules makes my blood boil.

The prevailing situation has put the onus on pedestrians to be extra alert and cautious when crossing streets.

While I would like to hope that the person behind the wheel is a law-abiding driver, history has taught us that accidents can happen because the driver was high



There are signs in the traffic-choked Brickfields' Jalan Sultan Abdul Samad cautioning against speeding.
— Filepic

on alcohol or drugs, or was tired or distracted by their mobile phone.

It has been reported that 80% of road accidents in Malaysia are caused by human error.

According to police data, in Kuala Lumpur alone, over 200 lives are lost every year in road accidents.

In national statistics, Kuala Lumpur contributed to 3% of road deaths.

The percentage of fatalities caused by speed-related crashes is 30%, while serious injuries account for 31%.

Speed-related crashes include out-of-control vehicles overturning and hitting roadside objects.

This is why I am totally supporting DBKL's move to reduce the speed limit on selected city roads to 30kmph.

For the uninitiated, DBKL and

Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research (Miros) are working on introducing speed limits for selected zones in the city.

Apart from making Kuala Lumpur a pedestrian-friendly and safe city, the idea of reducing speed limit is also aimed at getting people to slow down.

To the naysayers who think this move will worsen traffic and increase stress, I beg to differ.

While I agree that strict enforcement of road and traffic laws are important and drivers caught breaking them must be punished, I also agree that reducing the speed limit can help reduce road deaths and serious injuries to vulnerable road users.

This was proposed by experts at the Conference on Global Road Safety in Stockholm, Sweden in February 2020.

Nine recommendations were made to achieve a new target of reducing road deaths and serious injuries by 50% by 2030, and central to that is mandating a 30kmph speed limit in urban areas.

Since Malaysia is one of the countries that ratified the "Stockholm Declaration" on road safety, it was only fitting that Kuala Lumpur as a capital city should follow suit.

The logic here is that slowing down saves lives.

The faster the speed of the vehicle, the more distance is needed to brake safely. It's as simple as that.

Lowering speed limits reduces the risk of serious accidents and keeps vulnerable people like pedestrians, children, elderly folk, the disabled, cyclists and scooter riders safe.

So slow down, people!