

Malaysia's pedestrian infrastructure sparks debate

PETALING JAYA: While there is praise from influencers and social media users for the surprises and delights offered by Malaysia to tourists, there is dissatisfaction too, not least of which is pedestrian walkways.

A TikTok video, posted by an avid traveller @earthnomadslava that went viral a couple of months back, had called out Malaysia for its “inadequate pedestrian infrastructure”.

“An observation about Malaysia so far, it is not a walkable country. Everybody drives everywhere, there are a lot of cars, barely any sidewalks, no pedestrian crossing, not walking friendly.

“Even to the recreational park, it's all walled off around. The entry to it is a driveway into the parking lot. You drive to the park to walk. Everyone is driving everywhere,” he said in the clip.

The video sparked a debate on social media with many agreeing to his observation while others pointed out that the country's hot and humid weather was not ideal for walking.

A local public transport user, executive Ben Lee, 27, said the main issue is in last-mile connectivity, adding that some areas totally lack a walkable path to access them.

“Even in most of the city centre

areas, pathways (from the train station) tend to be exceedingly narrow (allowing only a single file at a time) as it sits beside a massive highway or road that has cars whizzing past constantly.

“And then there are skybridges or zebra crossings that are insanely inconvenient, located anywhere from over a half km to sometimes even a kilometre away from a station.

“This means a pedestrian has to walk an extra 1km or more just to cross a simple busy street to get to the other side of the road,” said Lee, a regular train commuter.

Other problems, he added, include poorly maintained walk-

ways to the bridges.

“Many have severely uneven paths, potholes or untrimmed vegetation. In some cases, the pathways end abruptly before you even reach anywhere near the bridge,” he said, adding that the person will then have to walk on the busy road until the pathway reappears again.

Lee said it is important to make public transportation user-friendly for people with disabilities as well as make it easier for tourists to use buses and trains.

“Cleanliness and amenities in toilets, public areas and transportation hubs must also be improved,” he said.



Case for concern:

Tourists walking past an unmaintained fountain near Dataran Merdeka in Kuala Lumpur. Many Malaysians say walkways in the country are poorly maintained, have severely uneven paths, potholes or untrimmed vegetation.

— AZMAN GHANI/The Star

For Siti Fazilah Ariffin, public toilets are still lacking in child-friendly features.

“While I see more improvements at the malls, public toilets are still not up to mark.

“I believe that the government is talking about tackling the issue of hygiene in public toilets but it must seriously consider access for parents, especially those travelling alone with young children,” said the 30-year-old.

Communications officer Iris Mohamed, 31, noted that there are no child-friendly toilets in the rest and refreshment areas.

“Sometimes I have to use the toilet for the disabled, which is

the only place I can bring in my child and stroller,” she said.

Iris said that although the standard of public toilets is improving, what is needed is better access not only for parents but also for those with special needs.

When contacted, Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) said the top complaints received on public facilities or infrastructure included street lights, housing area lights, potholes and damaged roads.

“In terms of the number of complaints, we can say it is very low. DBKL prioritises providing convenience and comfort to every resident and visitor to the city,” it said.