

Bad roads drive bad behaviour, says expert

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Lee and Lillian.

LEE said infrastructure quality could itself affect how motorists behaved behind the wheel. He said a motorist travelling on an ageing or uneven road might have to concentrate on avoiding potholes, depressions and other surface defects instead of giving full attention to signs and surrounding traffic.

“If the infrastructure is not there to support good behaviour by a driver, you cannot blame him,” he said.

Lee said road safety involved an interconnected system of infrastructure, road users and enforcement rather than any one element operating independently.

Where infrastructure and road conditions were good but motorists continued to behave dangerously, enforcement would have an important role, he said.

However, where infrastructure itself was deficient, this also needed to be addressed rather than attributing the problem solely to human behaviour.

Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Associate Professor Lillian Gungat similarly cautioned against treating human behaviour as an isolated cause of road crashes.

“Using a mobile phone while driving, rushing and peer influence, particularly among younger road users, were examples of human factors that could lead to risky behaviour,” she said.

However, she said human behaviour could also interact with road and environmental conditions, making it necessary to examine the various factors together when investigating crashes and developing solutions.

Lillian said this was also reflected in engineering education at UMS, where students were exposed to actual road accident cases so future engineers could better understand the interaction between road design, human behaviour and safety.

She said awareness should ultimately go beyond campaigns and become part of road users’ everyday habits.

The forum was moderated by Jimmy Pamo and formed part of Best Conference 2026, themed “Future Infrastructure: Strengthening Standards & Empowering Infrastructure Technology”.