

Improve transport facilities for this group

WHEN the word "public" is used in the phrase "public transport", it clearly suggests that the transportation are meant for public use. This means that the transport must be for all to enjoy, not just for certain groups.

Recently, there was a report in the *New Straits Times* on improvements that can be made to our local public transportation. One of the aspects that needs improvement is the user-friendliness of our public transport, especially for the disabled and senior citizens.

One of the writers of this letter is Mohd Hidzir, who was born without legs and walks with both his hands. Due to age factor, he sometimes needs to use the wheelchair, especially to travel to far places.

Based on his experience, using local public transport is very difficult and believes that ramps should be provided for wheelchair-users. Currently, there are insufficient ramps for ease of travel. For disabled people who take taxis, our cabbies are still untrained to help this group.

The disabled do not have the facilities to travel by bus or train. Buses and trains must be equipped with ramps to allow people with wheelchairs to easily get on and off.

These are some important aspects that need to be improved. As many would see having a disabled or old people in their family a "burden", improve such facilities as they will give a "new life" to both the disabled and their family. They can do and contribute more to their community and are able to do things on their own.

In the United Kingdom, it is not a hassle for the disabled, elderly and mothers with strollers to use public transport, such as buses and trains. For instance, the floor level of the bus can be lowered to help those with wheelchairs and strollers to board. The bus drivers are trained to unfold the wheelchair if needed. The newer buses also provide a specific space for wheelchairs, so that they don't have to compete for space with other wheelchairs or strollers.

It is interesting to note that in most Western countries, it is important to ensure that all public transport vehicles must be accessible to disabled people. Disability laws were established to ensure minimum accessibility requirements are met by providers and operators of public transport, infrastructure and premises. This is something that we can implement in this country to help this group.

If we already have one, we have to ensure that it is effective and enforced.

In the United States, disabled people are reported to travel a third less often than the public in general, and they use taxis 67 per cent more than others.

So, the taxi drivers are also trained to help the disabled or senior citizens.

Besides that, various methods are used to assist this group, including making announcements of stops; boarding platforms for buses and trains that are easily accessed by the disabled; and information on the best way to reach the destination.

Here, human factor is also important.

If we do not have an efficient system to help this group, we have to educate our drivers to have a certain level of awareness of the disabled and elderly.

Drivers can be more friendly and more helpful to this group, and they can then be our "support system", at least for now.

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