Whether there is an airbag or not in the front passenger seat, the back seat is always safer. The dashboard and windscreen could also pose a danger to the child.

OR S. KULANTHAYAN
Expert: Back seat safer for children
‘Safety seat in front could harm child when an airbag triggers during collision’

PETALING JAYA: It is best to put a child safety seat on the back passenger seat and fasten it securely, said Universiti Putra Malaysia Department of Community Health senior lecturer Dr S. Kulanthayan.

He said many people were still unaware that the child seat should not be placed on the front passenger seat because an airbag, triggered during a collision, could harm the child.

“But whether there is an airbag or not in the front passenger seat, the back seat is always safer,” said Dr Kulanthayan.

The hard surfaces such as the dashboard and the windscreen could also pose a danger to the child, he said.

Dr Kulanthayan, who is also Safe Kids Malaysia executive director, said children weighing below 9kg should be placed with their head facing in the opposite direction of a normal seating position on the rear passenger seat.

“Children weighing between 9kg and 18kg can be seated on the rear passenger seat with their head facing towards the front. Those weighing between 18kg and 36kg can start using a booster seat.

“They can also start using a seatbelt when their weight is above 36kg or have a height of at least 145cm or are above eight years old.

“The whole idea is to make travelling safer for children,” said Dr Kulanthayan, adding that in countries which had laws on child restraint, the child safety seat had to be placed on the rear passenger seat.

On Monday, The Star reported that the Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research (Miros) had found that 11% of 131 drivers drove with children on their laps.

Miros revealed that a preliminary finding of a study also showed that 90% of 236 children aged four and below were not placed in safety seats while in a vehicle.