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Talking alone won't do

THERE is no doubting the resolve of the Housing and Local Government Ministry to rid the country of mosquitoes. As the case is with clogged drains, poorly maintained public amenities and lack of hygiene in many parts of the country, the problem of this winged blood-sucking insects must be stopped at all cost. The threat of other vector-borne diseases, too, has not been completely vanquished where the shadows of long-forgotten afflictions and epidemic lurks in the mountains of garbage, the choked city waterways and the plenteous mosquito breeding grounds. Hence, Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh's announcement that RM85 million has been allocated for the anti-mosquito and cleanliness campaign which was launched in April is welcome news and speaks volumes for the Government in its relentless efforts to wage war against this threat.

With such a big capital outlay, and with numerous measures being lined up, the public can be assured that the authorities will undertake serious and consistent actions that will help to minimise, if not eliminate, the problem.

Attention is also given to dengue, which, despite all the efforts taken, is still with us. Through various measures taken so far, some parts of the federal capital and elsewhere can now be seen cleaner than before, with varying degrees of success.

However, there is still much to be done to overcome problems of cleanliness in the town and other areas. This can only be achieved by the authorities concerned with the full co-operation of the public. Without unrelenting efforts and public co-operation, new buildings and public facilities will not take long to descend into a decrepit state. Lackadaisical attitude on everybody's part will result in safe public areas being turned into potentially dangerous ones. If allowed, such lack of attention, by the authorities and the general public, will turn into national shames as they only serve to reflect debasement and perversion of the society. Fortunately, things are still under control now, but the crux of the problem, as lamented by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad some time back, is that the nation must improve on the maintenance culture.

The fact that many still flout the municipal rules (some blatantly) reflects the people's scant regard for the rules aimed at maintaining public places and amenities. The people must respect and comply with such rules for, if left unchecked, will not only erroneously suggest an inefficient enforcement machinery at work, but also jeopardise their own lives. We have seen it all before: A public health danger caused by wilful neglect of and the failure of a heedless society. We do not want such scenario to recur. Prevention is certainly better than cure. The RM85 million allocated for the anti-mosquito and cleanliness campaign is proof of the Government's seriousness in facing the problems.

With such a whopping allocation meant for the good of the people, one can only expect the authorities to get down to serious work to stem the menace once and for all. Whilst the lack of money may have been a constraint in the past, the local authorities should now try to be enterprising and creative in doing things. While waiting for funds from the ministry, local authorities should begin immediately to intensify regular checks and elicit the support of community and residential groups to keep their surroundings clean.

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