

## **Introduction**

- 1 Good morning everyone, residents, volunteers, ladies and gentlemen.
- 2 It is heartening to see so many of you here this morning for the 'Do the Mozzie Wipeout' Campaign Launch 2016 at Tampines.

## **Dengue and Zika Situation**

3 Many of you may have heard in the news that more than 3,000 dengue cases were reported this year alone. NEA has projected that dengue cases could possibly hit a high of around 30,000 cases this year. And this is due to the warmer temperatures, higher number of mosquitoes, as well as the change in the main circulating virus. Now there are four types of viruses where dengue is concerned. When there is a switch, say from DENV-1 to DENV-2 or DENV-2 to DENV-1, you may see a surge in cases.

4 Coupled with low herd immunity amongst Singapore residents against dengue, these developments signal a serious threat that could result in dengue cases hitting a new record high, more than the current record of 22,170 cases in 2013. And dengue isn't just a statistic. Dengue kills. In the first two months of 2016, dengue has brought two deaths among us. So dengue is not just a painful fever. Dengue is a real threat. Dengue can mean death.

5 With the threat of Zika infection looming, it is more critical to bring down the mosquito population in Singapore, as the Zika virus is carried and spread by the same mosquito that spreads dengue. Therefore, if we can bring down the mosquito population, we will not only mitigate the problem of dengue, we will at the same time, prevent the spread of Zika.

## **NEA's Dengue Control Programme**

6 NEA, together with the various agencies and other stakeholders, like the Town Councils, are represented on the Inter-Agency Dengue Task Force. They have been going around, checking and getting rid of potential mosquito breeding habitats in our public areas and housing estates. To date, they have conducted over 126,000 inspections. And of these, we have discovered more than 1,900 mosquito breeding spots as of last month.

7 NEA has also been focusing on areas with higher potential for dengue transmission and breeding such as construction sites. In January, NEA detected mosquito breeding in 12 per cent of the over 600 inspections conducted at construction sites.

8 As of 22 February 2016, about 73 per cent of the 455 notified dengue clusters have closed. But there are still some 120 clusters that are still active and I would like to urge premises owners to allow our officers to access their premises so that we can inspect and remove mosquito breeding places, as well as carry out insecticide spraying to kill the adult mosquitoes so that we can stop the chain of dengue transmission.

9 In fact, in Tampines West, we had also recently experienced a large dengue cluster of 280 cases which had just closed on 17 February 2016. Residents, NEA and the grassroots leaders had worked together to pin down the problem, to make sure that dengue did not spread further. Since the cluster was notified late last year, NEA has been going around Tampines to do multiple rounds of inspections in the estate. I am very happy that these rounds by the NEA officers, with support from the grassroots leaders and cooperation of the residents, have brought down the number of dengue cases in the area, and at the same time, raise awareness about how they can prevent dengue from spreading.

## **Launch of 'Do the Mozzie Wipeout' Campaign 2016**

10 Ladies and gentlemen, we have anticipated, as I mentioned earlier, a record number of dengue cases this year. With the potential threat of Zika virus reaching Singapore, and in view of the high Aedes mosquito population that we have been detecting, we really need the community to step up to help us eliminate this problem.

11 One of the things we have done is to bring forward the launch of our annual 'Do the Mozzie Wipeout' Campaign, ahead of the typical dengue peak season. This campaign is usually launched a little later in the year. But we saw the imminent danger coming, and that is why we brought it forward to warn everybody to take it seriously and do something about it.

12 This year, we want in particular to ask the whole nation, everybody, to make a concerted effort over the next 14 days to actively check for and get rid of stagnant water now by practising the 5-step Mozzie Wipeout to clear their homes and premises of mosquito breeding. . This is the number of days equivalent to two breeding cycles of the mosquitoes. If we can break these two cycles of breeding we would make a great impact. The concerted effort by everyone to eliminate mosquito breeding will be a powerful collective contribution towards suppressing the mosquito population.

13 This campaign will be supported by the local Advisers and the community, with the mobilisation of grassroots leaders and Dengue Prevention volunteers. They will be conducting patrols and house visits today and in the months ahead to advise residents on the common mosquito breeding habitats and share dengue prevention tips. They will also check for potential breeding areas in common areas in their neighbourhoods. Additionally, more than 5,000 grassroots leaders and CERT volunteers will be trained to conduct house visits, with particular emphasis on residences in yellow and red dengue cluster areas.

14 Complementing the door-to-door efforts by the volunteers, NEA has also stepped up its dengue prevention publicity and outreach efforts on TV, newspapers, bus stops, trains as well as community spaces to urge all to take action. Additional dengue alert banners will also be deployed to cluster areas to heighten vigilance. For the tech savvy, do download NEA's myENV app if you have not already done so. The app has a neat feature whereby users can configure their mobile devices to receive an alert if their place of residence and other commonly visited locations such as schools, offices or favourite hangouts fall within a dengue cluster.

#### **Announcement of revised penalty regime for home owners**

15 With the urgency of the situation, we need to take a tough stance against all parties who do not take heed of our persistent reminders and warnings against mosquito breeding. NEA has already taken tougher action against construction sites since last year, with more than 900 construction site related Notices to Attend Court issued and more than 100 Stop Work Orders against errant contractors.

16 As the majority of the breedings are still being found in homes, such as in domestic containers and flower pot plates and trays, we will likewise be toughening our approach towards errant home owners.

17 Currently, enforcement for mosquito breeding is taken against home owners when their place of residence is within a dengue cluster. With effect from 14 March 2016, 14 days after today's launch of the nationwide Do the Mozzie Wipeout effort, NEA will extend its enforcement regime to all residences found breeding mosquitoes, regardless whether they are within or outside dengue clusters. We will not entertain appeals unless there are really unique circumstances for us to consider. I therefore urge all home-owners to take this matter seriously and take immediate steps to remove and prevent mosquito breeding.

#### **Conclusion**

18 The best way to keep dengue cases low is to continue with our community efforts. Do the "Mozzie Wipeout" steps, to keep our homes mosquito-free. It is important that this becomes our lifestyle, not only when it is dengue season, but something we do throughout, it is part of how we take care of our homes. This does not require a lot of time, and doing so helps ensure that our loved ones do not get infected. Only when the community works together can we prevent dengue. Let's take action now and work together to fight dengue.

19 Thank you.