

SPEECH OF MR. CHUA SIAN CHIN, MINISTER FOR HEALTH
AT THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE "KEEP SINGAPORE
CLEAN & MOSQUITO-FREE" CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE AT THE
EXHIBITION ROOM OF SINGAPORE CONFERENCE HALL, ON
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It is my pleasure to be able this morning to inaugurate the National Campaign Committee which will plan and organise the second mass health campaign undertaken by Government aimed at raising to higher levels the state of public health, in particular, the environmental health in our Republic.

It is not necessary for me to state that last year's "Keep Singapore Clean" campaign has been an extremely successful campaign. The results are all there for you to see. Our streets are cleaner, people generally do not litter and there is an aura of tidiness and cleanliness that is both refreshing and stimulating. All this change of attitude within a period of 12 months is a tribute to the ability of the people of Singapore to accept a new situation and a challenge to an old problem. Our places of work, our factories, our homes, our estates and so on, are all better and more pleasant places to live in; healthier too for all.

There should, however, be no misconceptions about the measure of the success of the last campaign and how this successful result has been brought about. This success has been the result of much hard work, organised planning, extreme perseverance and consistent follow-up. The active participation and support of both private and public agencies in the many activities in connection with the last campaign created the public awareness needed to bring about this transformation.

The public awareness and education was further supported by the extensive reorganisation within the Environmental Health Branch of the Public Health Division with the provision of an improved work force, better organised

removal service and the provision of adequate vehicular fleet for public cleansing work. The passage of the Environmental Public Health Act in last December followed up by firm enforcement of the provisions in this Act, in particular Section 26 of the Act relating to uncleanness in public places, has served as a constant reminder to those, whom education alone would not suffice. The Destruction of Disease-Bearing Insects Act passed last year has given new teeth to cope with the mosquito problem and will be rigorously enforced after the present campaign.

Why then is the need for this campaign when last year's campaign has been so successful and a change of ways has already been created? This year's campaign is necessary for two reasons. Firstly, it serves as a reinforcement of the primary objectives of the "Keep Singapore Clean" campaign and to move them to even better and higher standards. Secondly, it has as its objective the bringing into focus a persistent public health problem - the mosquito menace.

Singapore is a tropical country and given any collection of water, one can be assured that the breeding of mosquitoes is an inevitable result. Mosquitoes do not breed only in public places easily accessible to health staff. They breed in people's homes and gardens, in their backyards, work places and stores. The control of mosquitoes, therefore, calls for a more extensive operation. Enforcement teams will have to visit homes and other private premises and ensure that conditions for the propagation of mosquitoes do not exist. I would like to emphasise here that it is not enough to have clean public roads, clean drains and clean side-walks. These alone will not eliminate the mosquitoes. In fact, it must be considered that our real and effective control of the mosquito problem has yet to come. It is for this reason that we have decided to focus

our attention this year on the mosquito menace. It is hoped that during the course of the campaign there will be stimulated an awareness to the sources of the mosquito breeding and an awareness of how individuals can prevent mosquito breeding from taking place. There are simple precautions which every householder can take to ensure that mosquito breeding does not occur and thus, reduce the overall mosquito density markedly; these precautions we will publicise during the month.

I am also not unmindful that there are other major responsibilities in the prevention of mosquito breeding which are the responsibility of various public authorities. Public drains need to be cleansed regularly and have to be kept in a good state of repair at all times or they can constitute serious breeding places. If drainage is inadequate and not integrated to meet the needs of a catchment, excess water will find its own level and breed mosquitoes there. Septic tanks need regular supervision and effective maintenance not only from a sewerage point of view but from a mosquito-control viewpoint. Refuse collections, scrap dumps, junk yards, all provide prolific sources of mosquito breeding that have to be kept in check. These have to be tackled by public authorities by the effective exercise of their normal functions. These are just a sample of the varied sources of mosquito problem.

It is the combined efforts of what is done both by the public in private premises and what is done by public agencies in enforcement and maintenance that will ensure in the long run a mosquito-free Singapore.

Contrary to popular belief, mosquito breeding is no longer just a nuisance. It is true that malaria carried by the Anopheles mosquito has been eradicated from our main island; only a few local cases of malaria occur, mainly in the outlying islands that are of indigenous origin.

Last year, out of 396 cases reported to the Health authorities under the Quarantine & Prevention of Disease Ordinance, some 18 cases could be regarded as indigenous origin. They do not, however, constitute the major outbreak which were isolated cases in different areas. The Anti-Mosquito organisation spent approximately \$1½ million each year to maintain vigilance against malaria.

More serious are the diseases which are caused by, what are popularly known as the nuisance mosquitoes. For instance, the incidence of dengue haemorrhagic fever last year was 848 cases with 18 deaths. The full incidence of the disease is not known as this disease is not notifiable and its manifestations, I am told is such, that a number of the more mild cases may pass off unrecognised.

In order to prepare for this phase of our health programme, in May the former Anti-Mosquito Department was reorganised; the responsibility for ground operations has been transferred to District Health Officers and their field staff in the same manner as the responsibility for public cleansing and public health work was handed to District Health Officers last year. A Vector Control & Research Branch was established from the former Vector Control Unit to provide the strong nucleus of a staff organisation to carry out intensive work on effective mosquito control techniques in the local context and develop methods to provide the necessary professional and technical support for ground operations.

I am pleased to note that Government Ministries, Statutory Boards, private organisations who are present here, among themselves cover the entire population in one way or another. They have come forward to offer their support for the campaign and to participate through their organisations. I need only add that the Ministry of Health will give all

the necessary technical and material support which has already been indicated to you in separate group discussions. Posters, leaflets, stickers and such like are being prepared for wide distribution during the campaign month. Competitions and other activities are being organised and group participation at constituency level will also be organised. In addition, the revival of the various competitions held last year will stimulate interest in keeping places clean and lead to the development of a continuing interest in health. The prize-giving ceremony for these competitions will be held at the conclusion of the campaign at the end of October.

In conclusion, I would like to state how very pleased the Government is that there has been a wonderful response to the proposal to hold this campaign; I now have much pleasure in formally inaugurating the National Campaign Committee.
