

**KERATAN AKHBAR-AKHBAR TEMPATAN
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Nipping dengue in the bud

NO-FLY ZONE: MRCB will be the first to use Mousticide, a non-toxic and biodegradable biolarvicide to combat dengue in KL Sentral and Brickfields

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MALAYSIAN Resources Corporation Bhd (MRCB) has drawn a long-term environmental plan to fight against dengue.

In collaboration with the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry (Mosti) and Entogenex Industries Bhd (Entogenex), MRCB has taken a step further by being the first to use Mousticide, a non-toxic and biodegradable biolarvicide to combat dengue.

MRCB's managing director Tan Sri Mohamad Salim Fateh said KL Sentral and Brickfields would be first to participate in the anti-dengue programme.

Salim said the function of Mousticide was to kill mosquito larvae. The product contains two natural active ingredients — the TMOF protein and Bti bacteria that work together to enhance the larvicide effect 100-fold.

"This is a safe product that is harmless to the environment as well as the public. We want to ensure that the entire KL Sentral and Brickfields area is dengue-free.

"It is a long way to achieve this, and MRCB is taking it one step at a time. Once the area is free of dengue, we will move onto the next location. A special task team will be monitoring the process of the application," he told a press confer-

ence held at MRCB's office in KL Sentral, recently.

He said the programme is also in line with their corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Mosti Minister Datuk Dr Ewon Ebin, who witnessed the launch of the product, encouraged other private and public companies as well as the public to use Mousticide as it will help to eradicate mosquito larvae.

"MRCB's initiative signifies a milestone and through the partnership with corporate sectors, we are able to achieve our goals in sustaining the environment in the country."

He said EntoGenex is a biotechnology company that is dedicated to create and implement solutions to eliminate mosquito borne diseases.

EntoGenex is supported by Mosti and is envisioned to develop natural and sustainable solutions that are safer and more effective than toxic chemicals, he said.

EntoGenex founder and director Marcus Francis said the challenge of mosquito control lies in controlling of their reproduction.

"It is easy to use. All you need to do is just sprinkle the Mousticide in breeding areas. Larvae dies within one to six hours after the application is applied and the product lasts up to three weeks.

"We have received positive response from several countries such as Singapore, United States and Sri



Mosti Minister Datuk Dr Ewon Ebin (second from right) with MRCB group chief executive officer Tan Sri Mohamed Salim Fateh Din (right) spraying Mousticide at the launch. By Khairull Azry Bidin

Lanka. However, Mousticide will be applied in three locations in the Klang Valley and in Kelantan.

"The product is designed for indoor and outdoor use. It was created using the mosquito DNA where it will be eaten by the larvae after being applied. This will suppress its digestive system and kill

the larvae before they mature," he said, adding that the application was used in Taman Sri Gombak and Setapak, in 2010.

He said after five months of monitoring the areas, no new case was reported.

He said the product comes in two formulations — rice husk (gran-

ules) and powdered. He said the Mousticide rice husk is applicable for domestic use and can be applied directly by hand into larvae breeding sites.

The powdered form is used for large-scale purposes and can be applied by vehicles with mounted sprayers.

A boost for SMEs

REBRANDING SIRIM: The demands for innovation have become more stringent and complex

THE 2015 Budget again shows the country is in good hands. It demonstrates responsibility in managing the current state of the economy and also the vision to ensure the sustainability of the nation's continued well-being. Kudos to the government.

The 2015 Budget also offers much opportunity for the constructive inputs of science in order to effectively deliver many of the proposed projects. One which stands out is the proposal to develop a National Water Blueprint.

The Academy of Science has always raised this as a matter of urgency for the country. The academy, with its impressive list of fellows who are former leaders of science in the country, would be in the best position to participate in this very important exercise. In fact, the academy is already closely scrutinising the 2015 Budget to prepare the necessary support mechanisms to realise the aspirations of the government, especially those initiatives where science can make the difference.

Among the initiatives articulated in the 2015 Budget, one which also captures the attention of the scientific fraternity in the country is the proposal to rebrand Sirim (formerly known as the Standards and Industrial Research Institute of Malaysia).

Over the years, Sirim has been an important instrument of applied research and development (R&D) in the country. It has served the nation well, not only in developing new technologies for industry, but also in crafting the necessary standards of international standing for the country.

But times have changed. The world has become more competitive. There are also new entrants to the global competition. And the demands for innovation are more stringent and complex.

The manufacturing economy, for example, has also witnessed drastic change where design and innovation are prerequisites. Both have become more strategic. Not to mention the need for manufacturing to be more resource efficient and sustainable. Rebranding Sirim should aim to help rejuvenate its

capability to meet the new demands of industrial R&D. Strengthening the link between Sirim and the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is crucial. The budget's SME Technology Penetration and Upgrading Programme is a step in the right direction.

Over the years, the role of SMEs in the economy has turned more prominent. Currently, SMEs contribute 33 per cent to gross domestic product (GDP) and the share is targeted to increase to 41 per cent by 2020. There is no doubt innovation can help realise this target.

In fact, studies in many countries have shown that SMEs are more adept at innovation than their bigger counterparts. This is especially glaring in the knowledge-based SMEs. We all know how Microsoft, Facebook and Apple all started, of course. They all had their beginnings as SMEs. Now they are all powerful global companies. But this can

happen in such developed economies as the United States because of their more mature innovation ecosystem. We still have difficulties there. We need to learn from the more successful models of

countries which have achieved success in SME innovation ecosystem.

Among the Asian nations, Taiwan and South Korea are two candidate countries we may want to consider. In Europe, Germany is another example. The Fraunhofer network of applied research has been the subject of much study. Its effective academy-industry linkage is cited as the key success factor of SME innovation in Germany.

Sirim may want to establish strategic partnerships to adopt and adapt some of these successful innovation models. However, at the end of the day we must eventually develop our own model, taking into account the local culture as well as our stage of development. It would not be constructive to adopt other country's models in total. Adjustments are necessary.

It is made clear in the 2015 Budget that we as a nation are moving into an era of intensely competitive global market place. We are living in a global economy where innovation can make a difference to competitiveness. Not investing in innovation is no longer an option. It has become an imperative.

We have the resources to do it provided we put in place the right innovation ecosystem. Over the years we have implemented many instruments of innovation. They just need some fine tuning.

The SME sector is obviously the target group where innovation is most needed. And Sirim is the right technology partner for SMEs. Rebranding Sirim is, therefore, the way forward.



Dr Ahmad Ibrahim
Fellow, Academy of Sciences Malaysia



Over the years, Sirim has been an important instrument of applied research and development in the country.

'Climate change will affect us but no cyclones'

SPARED: Nation will only get tail impact like storms, says Met official

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MALAYSIANS can breathe a sigh of relief because the country is not on the path of typhoons, tropical cyclones or tornadoes, said the Malaysian **Meteorological Department**.

Its deputy director-general, Dr Mohd Rosaidi Che Abas, said Malaysia would not be hit by tornadoes as it was located near the equator.

"Climate change is likely to have a significant effect on Malaysia by creating extreme weather conditions, increasing sea level and rainfall, or causing high temperatures leading to drought.

"Our country will only be affected by the tail impact of any cyclone, such as thunderstorms."

He said the recent waterspout phenomenon

in Pendang, Kedah, was a result of the inter-monsoon period.

Rosaidi said it was a normal occurrence due to the atmospheric instability during the inter-monsoon period from October to November and April to May.

He said a waterspout was a whirling column of air and mist which was a lot weaker than a tornado, and localised to one place.

He said the formation factors of waterspouts and tornadoes were different as a waterspout would disappear before moving away from its source.

For a tornado to occur, Rosaidi said the atmospheric change should be extremely unstable, where dry air overlaid moist air near the earth's surface.

"Big cumulonimbus cloud cells and strong wind shear must be present and in contact with the ground to cause a tornado.

"Tornadoes can form in areas where winds at all levels of the atmosphere are not only strong, but turning in a clockwise or veering direction," he said, adding that the tornado would create major damage than just damaging roofs or uprooting trees.

He said global warming and human activity were the primary causes that could lead to minimal atmospheric instability.

