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Ding-dong dengue battle: GMOA appeals to President

By Dhananjani Silva

The Government Medical Officers' Association (GMOA) has asked President Mahinda Rajapaksa to appoint a presidential committee to find "practical and scientific methods" to check the dengue epidemic.

The request for the President's intervention comes as the Ministry of Health and the GMOA continue to disagree on how to conduct the nationwide dengue prevention programme.

The GMOA said it was hopeful of a favourable response to the association's written request to the President.

"A genuine attempt should be made to explore newer and sophisticated methods which could be successful in preventing the spread of dengue," the GMOA letter stated. "Methods which have shown success in other countries should be adopted after proper evaluation and a feasibility study."

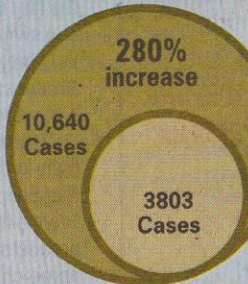
The GMOA said the committee should be given "the task of exploring new methods of prevention, amending the flawed Dengue Prevention Act, and taking necessary steps to restore public trust."

The letter says emphasises the "need to allow the professionals and the scientists" who are competent in handling the problem to make the decisions, adding that "decisions taken by the politicians with regard to technical matters will not serve the country and certainly not the Government in the

The Dengue Debacle

As the Health Ministry and doctors clash over how best to control the spread of Dengue fever, there is an alarming rise in the number of persons being afflicted with the disease in the country.

Comparison of First Six Months of 2008 and 2009



Comparison of Deaths owing to Dengue



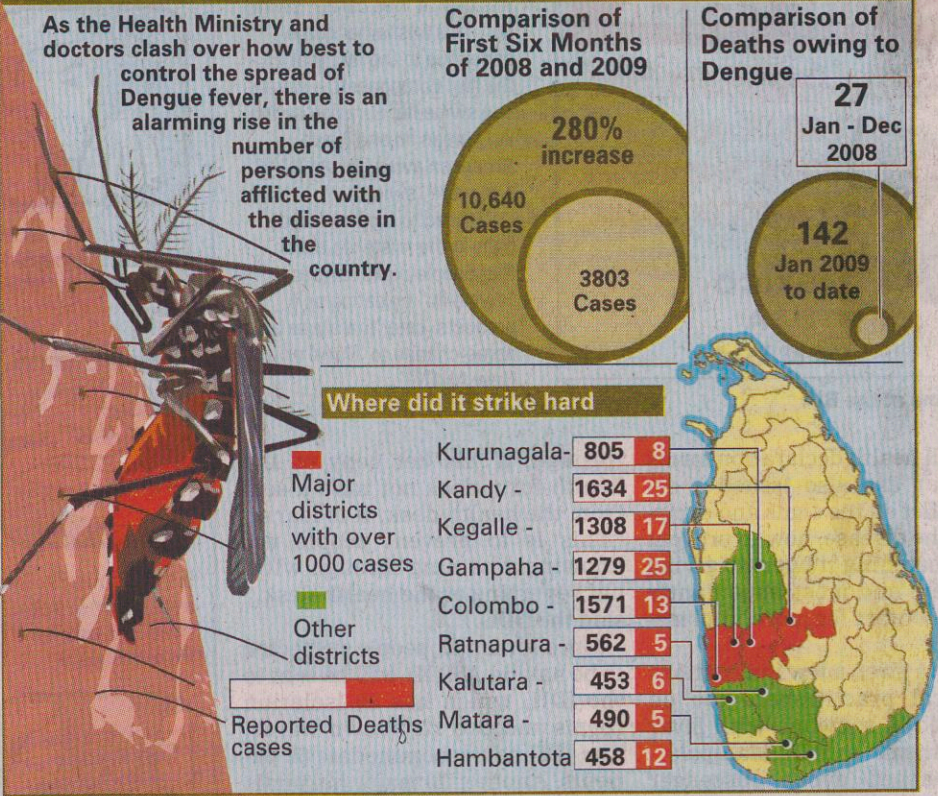
Where did it strike hard

Major districts with over 1000 cases

Other districts

Reported Deaths cases

Kurunagala	805	8
Kandy	1634	25
Kegalle	1308	17
Gampaha	1279	25
Colombo	1571	13
Ratnapura	562	5
Kalutara	453	6
Matara	490	5
Hambantota	458	12



Graphic by Indramurthi Jayasuriya

“Methods which have shown success in other countries should be adopted after proper evaluation and a feasibility study.” - GMOA

long run.” GMOA Assistant Secretary Dr. Upul Gunasekara told The Sunday Times that it was important to get all the stakeholders involved.

“We should seek the advice of experienced consultants, university professors, and so on.”

Minister of Health Nimal Siripala de Silva told The Sunday Times that the Health Ministry

would welcome the appointment of such a committee, adding that representations from stakeholders would be considered before important decisions were made.

“Scientists, experts and officials from the Medical Research Institute are always involved in discussions. Also, 95 percent of those coming under my medical administration are doctors,” he said.

Responding to criticisms that the Dengue Prevention Act was “chaotic”, Minister de Silva said the regulations were framed by competent medical professionals and gazetted. The public had 15 days to scrutinise the Act and make objections.

Parliament will devote half a day this week to discussing the dengue epidemic.