

We need action plan now

I AM writing in response to the recent statement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak that the public should not blame the government whenever a disaster occurs.

Global warming and the monsoon were often blamed for disasters like floods.

There is a flip side, however, when it comes to flooding in relation to the discharging of duties by local authorities.

There is a basic requirement for them to be proactive to mitigate the impact of natural disasters. This is the bare minimum service owing to ratepayers.

There is little use in blaming the government or any other parties for disasters.

A proactive stance would be to prevent the disaster from occurring or to at least mitigate the impact.

Disaster prevention is a discipline of its own, requiring rigour, systematic planning, consistency in application of control measures and collaboration between the people, government agencies and other parties.

This partnership is still lacking in general and the attitude of some local government officers with a lackadaisical attitude is not helping much.

I am writing from experience in communicating, documenting and highlighting potential flood-mitigation measures to local authorities in my residential area.

There appears to be no or limited interest in seeking out and addressing flood mitigation and control measures.

Even after repeated online input,



*There appears to be **little interest by local authorities** to seek flood mitigation and control measures.*

letters, photographs and highlighting of actions that could be taken to minimise the impact of flooding over the years, there is still little action from the authorities.

I also agree with Najib that it is no longer acceptable to blame the floods on abnormally high rainfall, global warming or the monsoon. It is time that we take a look at our own backyard and scrutinise the actions and inaction of local authorities.

Are our drainage and irrigation

infrastructure built accordingly to best engineering standards?

Have we thoroughly explored flood mitigation and prevention efforts?

Have we educated the public in preventing floods? Is input from the public being reviewed and addressed accordingly?

These are basic questions that we need to address at the local government level before going global with our efforts.

We have to realise that the emo-

tional distress, physical anguish and financial losses incurred each time a flooding incident occurs can make the staunchest individual crumble.

Emotions and sentiments run high when a disaster strikes. This creates a malicious environment.

If there are no changes to the approach taken to flood mitigation, prevention and management, it will not be surprising that the blame game continues.

We have witnessed countless examples of disasters in the form of landslides.

Are we destined to repeat history with the flooding incidents that we are now experiencing at a higher frequency?

It is time to stop the blame game, take stock of the matter at hand and get related parties to develop jointly an action plan.

This will contribute towards cultivating ownership and promote cooperation between government agencies and the public.

Much has been debated, documented and spoken of by officials in local authorities behaving like little Napoleons in their own circle of influence.

Concerns about floods can be construed as a challenge to initiate change and demonstrate true leadership.

Responsibility and accountability needs to be assigned and implications for non-performance made visible. Only then, can we stand a chance of moving away from the blame culture and progressing towards a more prepared culture.

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