Recall unsafe lightning rods

THE fire at Putrajaya Hospital on April 11 has raised some concerns about the types of lightning protection systems used to protect public and private buildings.

The health minister had raised the question as to why the lightning rods installed on the building did not protect it from the lightning strikes. While the real cause of the fire is still under investigation, it should be pointed out that the lightning rods used at the Putrajaya Hospital are of the early streamer emission (ESE) type that do not comply with the Sirim lightning protection standard, MS-IC05205.

Based on information from Wikipedia, the effectiveness of the ESE lightning rods, which were introduced in this country 20 years ago, have never been proven. This information is based on numerous studies by lightning scientists and engineers a decade ago. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lightning_protection_system)

The University of Florida, which is renowned for its lightning research, published a comprehensive report in 2002 that highlighted the ineffectiveness of the ESE and other non-conventional lightning rods in protecting buildings from direct lightning strikes. This report is frequently mentioned by scientists and engineers when the subject of ESE lightning rods is brought up. (www.lightning.cee.ufl.edu/PDitherodars/docs/pdf)

In fact, the ESE Lightning rods have already been declared as a risk to public safety in a warning issued in 2005 by the International Conference on Lightning Protection (ICLP), an international scientific organisation that focuses on lightning research and safety. (www.iclp-centre.org/warning.html)

The warning was issued because the ESE lightning rods were found to be no better than the ordinary conventional lightning rods in protecting buildings from direct lightning strikes. This report is frequently mentioned by scientists and engineers when the subject of ESE lightning rods is brought up. (www.lightning.cee.ufl.edu/PDitherodars/docs/pdf)

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The problem is compounded when buildings belonging to the Works Ministry, Sirim and many universities also use the ESE rods, thus giving the public the wrong perception that the use of the ESE rods was acceptable. Since the ESE rods do not comply with Sirim standards, it is only proper that ministries and agencies set the right example by replacing them with Franklin rods that are designed and installed according to Sirim standard.

It makes no sense to allow the use of ESE rods since they have been declared dangerous. The proper action against the ESE rods is for the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry to recall them.

Zahar
Kuala Lumpur

I WISH to thank CitizenNades for highlighting one of the major causes of problems with Tamil schools in “Can a GP do heart surgery?” (April 27). I was told that two out of three pupils from Tamil schools in this country fail the UPSR examinations. About 6,000 to 7,000 boys are among those who fail UPSR every year. Is it any wonder that some of these boys become “doomed” to a “tough life” as an adult.

The problem has obviously been exacerbated, when they “graduate” from secondary school without a proper education. If a child does not get a foundation in pre-school and primary school, he or she is almost certainly doomed to a “tough life” as an adult. The problem is more serious when the rural Indian community is affected, by the rural urban migration of Indians in the last 30 to 40 years. I am sure a similar parallel exists if one studies the problems faced by the “Redan” in the city. The lack of education of a few generations of ancestors of these migrants in the estates/rural areas does not help the problem.

The government needs to look into this problem “seriously” and provide whatever assistance necessary to solve this problem. I am told that the standard response from the BN has been, this is an MIC matter and we will not “interfere”. Well, it is a “national problem” – not MIC, MCA or Umno or PKR problem. We must give every child in this country the opportunity to be the best he or she can be.

We should have a “No child left behind” policy, backed by action plans that ensure the achievement of the goals of the policy.

Concerned Malaysian
Via email

An offer to help Tamil schools

I FULLY support the views expressed in “Can a GP do heart surgery?” (CitizenNades, April 27) on the state of Tamil schools in Malaysia.

The article rekindled my memory. About two years ago, I approached a few Tamil schools and had offered my assistance to teach English in the week-end and poor. It was my way of contributing to the community. After the primary discussion with the headmasters and teachers, I received neither response nor feedback. Sufficient to say that I lost interest thereafter.

I am prompted (by guilt!) again to offer my assistance to any Indian pupil or school that needs my assistance. Thank you for highlighting the sad situation in the Tamil schools. The government’s denial syndrome and apathy, coupled with petty internal school politics, has certainly contributed to the mess.

Lakshmi G. Nair
Via email