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Tajuk : Taking AIME at diseases

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M'sian doc in Rio with outbreak-detecting app he created

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PETALING JAYA: As Malaysian athletes join 11,000 others in their quest for Olympic glory from today, one Malaysian now in host nation Brazil will be working hard to save lives through his dengue-predicting mobile application.

Dr S. Dhese Baha Raja (*pic*) developed AIME (Artificial Intelligence in Medical Epidemiology), a disease-prediction mobile platform that can warn of possible outbreaks three months in advance and can pinpoint them to within a 400m radius.

He was welcomed in a country that has for months been plagued by the Zika virus, which is spread by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, the same insect that transmits dengue.

Leading a team of 10, the 32-year-old public health practitioner and epidemiologist started work in the

host city Rio de Janeiro on July 18.

He has been busy developing a preliminary pilot programme for stakeholders and clinics in the city and its surrounding areas.

Having clinched a string of awards for developing the app, Dr Dhese, who co-founded AIME Inc, was approached by the Brazilian government to determine specific areas where the Zika virus was likely to emerge ahead of the Rio Olympics.

"The work is important to provide public health officials with web-based platforms to track the outbreak of the virus," he told *The Star* from Rio where he will be until the end of the Games.

"The next stage would involve bringing this technology to local communities."



Dr Dhese said one of the more challenging aspects of Zika prevention in Brazil comes from the reluctance of medical practitioners to embrace new technology.

"Often, they become afraid that computers and technology will eventually replace them.

"Getting people to understand and believe in technology is important for more innovation in the field," he said.

Dr Dhese is also looking forward to introducing the app in Malaysia, as well as the Philippines, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, India and the United Arab Emirates soon.

AIME Inc, said its co-founder, also dreams of becoming the "Google of infectious diseases", a reference point for all such diseases in the future.

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"We will be partnering with mobile provider Webe Digital Sdn Bhd to bring the crowdsourcing mobile-based app to Malaysia by October to deal with dengue outbreaks," said the Sabah-born Dr Dhese.

Malaysians back home have been supportive, he said.

"There have been over 50,000 pledges received from Malaysians so far," he revealed.

Last month, Dr Dhese was recognised by Harvard University, along with AIME Inc co-founder Rainier Mallol, as among the top young health innovators, for developing the app.

It considers variables such as wind direction and velocity, rainfall, thunderstorms, solar radiation, construction sites and altitude to predict dengue and Zika hot-spots.