Deer Editor

ALLOW me to comment on the kind of attitude that I think has contributed to making this country poor. We celebrate negativity too much. When Flames lose, we say, 'boastfully,' 'I knew it!' When someone falls in their personal or individual pursuit, we go out on the hilltop and proclaim 'Amasi ansa.'

Sadly, this spirit has gone on even to the level of government. Every time a new administration is in, we celebrate when things are not going right. When President Joyce Banda took over in April 2012, many Malawians blew the trumpet and declared themselves prophets when the cost of living skyrocketed following the massive devolution of the kwacha.

Throughout her period, we went on to undermine the administration of Joyce Banda to the extent that everyone said that a woman was incapable of running the country. Of course, there were deficiencies in her governing style but are we really honest that a woman cannot be president in this country or we were just feeding on lies and individual to consume most of us?

Now we have a new administration headed by President Peter Mutharika. He is only six months in charge but we have already started pointing fingers because of the inflation, because of water shortages in Blantyre City, because of a few industrial actions for pay rises and a few other things.

Are we really serious that anyone would come into this country and correct all the deep-seated malaise in a fortnight? I was even shocked to see that attitude to a letter published in this newspaper last week when some health rights activist lashed at the Peter Mutharika administration as not being different from his late brother's reign and for not offering hope to Malawians.

Are our consciences really clear when we are making some of these accusations?

But, of course, I am not surprised with this position taken on this administration and the previous administrations. Malawians love to see others fail. They will hardly acknowledge good things someone is doing and they will be the first to criticise when things go wrong instead of contributing to solutions.

As individual citizens, we need to change this defeatist attitude. Only when we do so shall we together find ways that would make the Flames a continental force. Only when we change our attitude shall we play our part in helping different administrations for this country deliver according to the dreams of the nation. Negativity will take us nowhere.

Edwin Dzonzi, Blantyre

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SUBJECTS OF UNNECESSARY CRITICISM? — Peter Mutharika and Joyce Banda

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Dear Editor,

AS Malawi joins others in commemorating World AIDS Day, it is important that a country we take stock of how we have fared in our national HIV response.

Looking back over the past 30 years of HIV, the country has made great strides in controlling its epidemic. The number of AIDS related deaths has gone down as more Malawians living with HIV are now on antiretroviral treatment (ART). As of last year, the total number of people on ART was 472,865, with 102,856 initiated in 2012 alone, reflecting acceleration in treatment rollout.

Malawi has become a global leader in reducing mother to child HIV transmission and has implemented Option B+, which provides antiretroviral treatment to all HIV-positive women who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Studies show that men who undergo VMMC reduce their risk of getting HIV by 60%. Over time, protection is stronger and once a critical mass is circumcised, women are also protected.

Unfortunately, Malawi lags behind other countries in achieving its VMMC coverage targets. Latest figures show the country has reached a mere 4 percent of its goal of circumcising 50 percent of eligible men.

That said, credit should be given to the accelerated pace over the last year. According to Pepfar, Malawi’s leading funder of VMMC, the number of male circumcisions performed has increased from 3,314 in 2012 to 67,384 in 2013. Numbers are projected to be higher in 2014.

As commendable, especially given how late Malawi started its VMMC implementation, what can we do to maintain this pace or even surpass it?

This is such an important question, especially at a time when we continue to hear that funding for prevention programming is going to shrink even further. VMMC is not a silver bullet, the partial protection it offers could help slow the spread of HIV in Malawi for men and women. This one low cost procedure needs to be brought to scale just like we have done with other strategic like PMTCT (Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission) and ART (HIV Testing and Counseling).

As global funding moves towards treatment, it is important that Malawi keep an eye on ensuring prevention is adequately resource as well. Only by putting into perspective all prevention strategies, can we begin to talk about ending the epidemic.

Eric Mteka
Iliongeve

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Malawi should accelerate VMMC