

# Maintain paraquat ban, says NIOSH

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KLJALA LUMPUR, Fri. — The Government should abide by its decision to ban the weedkiller paraquat, the National Institute of Occupational Safety Health (NIOSH) chairman, Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye said today.

He said the product was extremely harmful, highly toxic and dangerous for plantation workers.

“Although paraquat was banned last Aug 27, many companies which had obtained permits to sell the product before the ban was issued, can still do so until all their permits expire in April 2005,” said Lee when contacted.

Each permit is issued for three years.

Lee was commenting on two articles published in the *New Straits Times* today, “Ban on paraquat: PM’s help sought to review board’s decision on weedkiller” and “Paraquat side-effects suffered by 30,000 women in rubber, oil palm industries”.

One of the articles reported that paraquat caused side-effects such as vaginal burns and still-born births which had affected 30,000 women workers in the rubber and oil palm industries.

The other said that the Malaysian Oil Palm Association, National Association of Smallholders and Malaysian Estates Owners Association are seeking Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad’s help to review the ban imposed on paraquat.

Lee said the ban should be enforced as soon as possible.

“Even countries such as Switzer-

land that exports paraquat to other countries has also banned the usage of this product in their own country due to its harmful side-effects,” said Lee.

He added that paraquat was classified by the Malaysian Pesticide Board as Class 1 (B) which meant it was a dangerous chemical.

Lee suggested the use of other products which are less harmful such as Basta 15 and Round Up.

On another matter, he said NIOSH had recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bayers Corpscience, the distributor of agricultural chemicals.

The MoU seeks to create awareness among employees in the agricultural sector to be more health and safety conscious in their work place.

“Workers in these sectors must be given proper protective equipment.”