

Rethink paraquat ban, Govt urged

STAR - SEP 2003

BAGAN SERAI: Farmers here have asked the Government to reconsider the proposed ban on the weedkiller paraquat, describing it as a backward step in boosting padi output.

At a feast held in Sungai Gedung here yesterday, banners signed by farmers throughout the country over the past two months were unfurled.

The banners, with a combined length of 300m, had about 500 signatures as well as words extolling the goodness of paraquat.

They would be handed over to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Moha-

mad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi soon.

Abdul Rani, who is a committee member of the Chenderong Balai Area Farmers Organisation, said farmers could increase padi output up to 10 tonnes per hectare using paraquat.

"Other types of weedkillers take more than 10 days to get rid of the weeds in padi plots unlike paraquat, which can do the job within half a day.

"This enables us to proceed faster in our chores and increase our padi harvest as envisioned by the Government," he said.

In mid-July, 15,000 farmers in north Seberang Prai appealed to the Government to reconsider the proposed ban, saying it would prolong the padi-planting duration by 15 days from the present 115 days.

In his speech, Abdul Rani said the rise in suicide cases using paraquat should not justify the proposed ban in Sept 2005 as there were also other types of poisons in the market.

"The interest of farmers should be of utmost importance to the Government," he added.