

'Find ways' to destroy hazardous items

BY SIRA HABIBU

PENANG: Household items containing hazardous substances, including polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) that can potentially cause cancer, are being indiscriminately dumped in rivers and municipal landfill.

Science, Technology and the Environment deputy minister Datuk Zainal Dahalan said a concerted effort between the various agencies and ministries was needed to ensure household items containing hazardous material were "safely destroyed".

"Items such as old fluorescent lamps, refrigerators and televisions sets must not be disposed as regular household garbage," he said, adding that old transformers and capacitors contained PCB.

He said this after opening the 'Stop PCB Pollution' Inter-

national Symposium jointly organised by the Consumers Association Penang (CAP) and Japan Offspring Fund supported by the Japan Environment Corporation's Fund for Global Environment.

There was also a need to streamline 'overlapping' jurisdiction and regulations drawn by various government agencies and ministries such as the Department of Environment, the Local Government and Housing Ministry and Health Ministry to check pollution caused by household items containing hazardous materials.

Acknowledging the need to properly treat and dispose household items that contain scheduled wastes, he said the Environment Quality Act 1974 and Environment Quality (Scheduled wastes) Regulations 1989 would also be amended.

"However, imposing a stiffer

penalty is not the answer. We have to increase public awareness on the issues," he said.

PCB-containing consumer products should not be dumped on municipal landfills which were not designed to handle hazardous waste, he said, adding that PCB-containing materials must not be destroyed via incineration, without proper treatment.

"High level exposures to PCBs have been shown to be extremely dangerous to human health. Studies also provide supportive evidence that PCBs have potential cancer-causing effect," he said, adding that PCB was common in old transformers and capacitors.

"PCB is banned in Malaysia. But the outstanding issue is to find ways to properly dispose old stocks containing PCB," he said.

Malaysia, having signed the Stockholm Convention on



Zainal: Imposing a stiffer penalty is not the answer

Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) on May 16 last year, was committed to protecting public health and the environment, he said, adding that PCB was also a POP.

"Malaysia has been given US\$418,000 (RM1,588,400) by the Global Environment Facility to develop a National Implementation Plan for the management of POPs within two years," he said, adding that Malaysia was one of the 12 pilot countries developing the plan.

CAP president S. M. Mohd Idris called on the ministry to tighten regulations and increase enforcement measures to check PCB pollution.

"Exposure to PCB can contaminate breast milk and cow milk, thus putting children at risk," he said, adding that PCB exposure was also possible by air and through skin.

'High level exposures to PCBs have been shown to be extremely dangerous to human health'

Checkpoints on lookout for doping suspect

PENANG: All immigration checkpoint personnel have been directed to look out for the New Zealander senior track rider who allegedly doped a horse at the Penang Turf Club (PNTC) in Batu Gantong here on Saturday morning.

George Town OCPD Senior Assistant Comm (II) Abdul Wahab Ahmad said the foreigner, in his 30s, would not be able to leave the country as the immigration checkpoints from the north to the south were on the lookout for him.

The track rider was spotted acting in a suspicious manner by several workers at the stables at about 9am that day. He was beaten up by the group who suspected that he had doped a horse called *Minnale Magic* which was tipped to win Race 6 on Sunday.

The P.K. Yeap-trained horse belonging to a prominent Singaporean businessman was withdrawn after an unidentified chemical compound was discovered in its blood. It is not known whether the chemical used was to make the animal run faster or slower.

It is learnt that the PNTC

committee called up the suspect to be questioned later that day. He was allowed to leave while a report was lodged at the Patani Road police station the next day.

By the time a police team was sent to his house, the foreigner, who had been working in the country for the past five years, had gone missing.

Police have classified the case as mischief against animals under Section 428 of the Penal Code which carries a two-year jail term, fine or both, upon conviction.

Meanwhile, a 32-year-old man died after he was beaten up by a group of people in Jelutong here on Saturday.

The man was rushed to the Penang Hospital where he died about 7am yesterday of serious head injuries. The motive of the attack had yet to be determined by the police.

In another incident, a lawyer's wife, in her late 40s, was robbed of cash, jewellery and bottles of liquor worth more than RM20,000 by three youths and a woman in Glugor yesterday afternoon.