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BATTLE AGAINST DENGUE

Illegal fogging danger

by **Llew-Ann Phang**
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PETALING JAYA: About 80% of 84 fogging contractors registered in Selangor should have been prosecuted for operating without a licence from the Pesticides Board. Instead, they were given lucrative contracts with the authorities turning a blind eye to such illegal practices.

The days of "instant fogging contractors" will hopefully now come to an end. The state government and the 12 local councils will meet officials of the Pest Control Association of Malaysia (PCAM) today to rectify the situation.

It is learnt many of these pesticide companies received lucrative two-year contracts - each worth RM2 million - under the previous state administration.

The PCAM is concerned that having non-professionals on board will be detrimental in the fight against dengue as over time, the mosquitoes build a resistance to the effects of the poisons administered.

Its president, Ang Tan Loong, said the firms registered under the Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry's Pesticides Board may not have received proper instructions on the dosages required to overcome the resistance that the Aedes mosquitoes have developed.

"The risks involved in having unregistered and unqualified contractors carrying out fogging is the lack of expertise in dosages involved, and new methods to rid the larvae," Ang told *theSun* yesterday.

He said PCAM has been invited by the state government to draw up strategies in today's meeting with 25 representatives of local councils,

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mostly comprising health directors.

Ang inferred that some in the state government had aided and abetted the unlicensed contractors, by giving excuses that they have licences to store and sell chemicals.

"But they do not have the licence to administer these pesticides, that is, the pest control operator's licence," Ang said.

In his letter to the state government offering PCAM's services, Ang said the present mode of thermal fogging is constrained as the mosquitoes

tend to "flee" and are repelled from one fogged area to another only to return when they again are fogged in that particular area.

Over time, the mosquitoes build a resistance to the effects of the poisons used.

"Our main offensive is to create a smoke screen with the circumventing Anti-Spiral Fogging System which creates a smoke trap, enveloping from the perimeter of the targeted area and spiralling to the epicentre,

as opposed to the conventional method of fogging which tends to chase mosquitoes," Ang said.

A Pesticides Board official said there over 300 pesticide companies registered with the board, and admitted that there are "many" illegal pesticides used.

She said in the fight against dengue, the firms involved have to inform the board about the works to be carried out, the pesticide registered with the board and the permit for the advertisement to inform the public on the fogging times.

Pest control companies without the necessary permits can be jailed six months and fined RM1,000 for the first offence under the Pesticides Act 1974. Subsequent offences will incur a year's jail, a fine of RM2,000 or both.

In 2007, the Subang Jaya Municipal Council (MPSJ) came under fire for trying to set up a consortium of pest controllers not registered with PCAM or the Pesticides Board. The then MPSJ president, Datuk Md Arif Ab Rahman, is today state financial officer while the general manager of the consortium, Othman Omar, was recently appointed general manager of state-owned PKNS.

EPAPIC



GOODBYE, MJ ...

A poster board containing greetings from fans of the late Michael Jackson was on hand during a candlelight vigil in front of Hitsville, the Motown Records Museum in Detroit, Michigan, in the United States on Sunday. The pop star died in his rented Los Angeles home last Thursday.

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PKR whip sacked as MPSP councillor

by **Opalyn Mok**
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GEORGE TOWN: Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) whip Johari Kassim (*pic*), who led a boycott of the swearing-in of Mokhtar Mohd Jait as Seberang Perai Municipal

Council (MPSP) president earlier this month, has been sacked from his MPSP councillor post.

State executive council for local government and traffic management Chow Kon Yeow said the state executive council made the decision at its meeting last Friday and it was effective from yesterday.

The decision was made in accordance with Section 10 (4) of the Local Government Act 1976 which stated that the councillor's seat is to be vacated if his appointment was revoked by the state authorities or if he resigned from the post or if there was a conflict of interest that disqualified him from holding the post.

Chow said the decision represented a stern warning from the state government. "All other councillors should take note of this action and know that the state government is serious."

Chow said no action will be taken against the other PKR councillors who joined the boycott as removing Johari served as "a good enough warning".

He added that the decision was reached by the state exco after discussions between Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng and state PKR chairman Zahrain Mohamed Hashim on the issue.

Johari will not be able to appeal against the decision as there are no provisions for this under the Local Government Act.

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