

# NIOSH: Prevent leptospirosis problem from getting worse

By **NATASHA JOIBI**  
natajoibi@thestar.com.my

**PETALING JAYA:** The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has urged all relevant authorities to step up efforts in tackling the increasing number of leptospirosis cases in the country.

In a statement, NIOSH chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye said there was a critical need to get rid of rodents to prevent the problem from getting worse.

He said relevant agencies must give top priority to environmental hygiene in waste management operations and rodent control to prevent leptospirosis.

"The increase in the number of rats and mice can worsen the spread of the disease.

"All local authorities must adopt effective and sustainable measures to get rid of rat-infested areas and regularly clean up garbage disposal sites," he said.

Lee also added that food operators must exercise their civic responsibility to keep their premises clean to prevent an increase in the rodent population, including hiring pest control services to destroy the rodents.

"Many drains and backlanes of eating establishments are infested with rats.

"Food and rubbish thrown into the drain supply the rodents with food, which encourages the growth of the rat population.

"If these food operators do not do their part, then enforcement action is needed," he said.

Lee said local authorities should

also continue to carry out campaigns to educate the public and increase awareness on how to prevent leptospirosis through the inculcation of good habits.

The dangers of leptospirosis came to the fore again after it was reported that 11-year-old tahfiz pupil Mohamad Thaqif Amin Mohd Gaddafi had died from the disease.

On April 19, Mohamad Thaqif was warded following alleged abuse by the school's assistant warden, who is also an ex-convict.

His legs had to be amputated due to bacterial infection.

The infection also spread to his right arm. He died on April 26.

On Monday, Health director-general Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said Mohamad Thaqif had died of leptospirosis and not from trauma or injury.



**Disease carriers:** Many drains and backlanes of restaurants are often infested with rats because of discarded food and rubbish.