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THUMBS UP ...Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye (fourth right) together with Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Dr Yee Moh Chai (second right), Chairman of Kim Teck Cheong Group of Companies Datuk Lau Kok Sing (front, second left) Mayor Datuk Abidin Madingskir (fifth) and other invited guest showing the Kim Teck Cheong Safety and Health Policy plaque after the signing ceremony yesterday.

Workplace safety, health good for business – Lee

By Nancy Lai

KOTA KINABALU: Safety is a good business, according to National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSSH) chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye.

With a safe and healthy work environment, a company's employees' productivity as well as morale will increase and strengthen, said Lee when officiating at the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Seminar for Kim Teck Cheong Group of Companies here yesterday.

Lee pointed out that to many people the subject of occupational safety and health is a very mundane subject but when it comes to an accident, they are very excited to hear all about what happened.

"Safety is far too important to be ignored. This is because it is a human rights issue and as far as NIOSSH is concerned, we want to promote this to all industries," he told reporters yesterday.

"We want to impart to the industry the message that safety is good for business as an accident free workplace is a healthier environment for employees who in return will be more productive, thus increasing the company's

productivity as well as revenue," he said.

Lee stressed that safety cannot be taken for granted as the consequences are far too serious as accidents can result in the loss of lives, therefore stoppage of work.

A loss of life would mean that the company and the country would have lost a skilled manpower, he said, advising employers never to cut cost of the occupational safety and health in their premises.

"If you cut costs you will pay more when accidents happen and I am personally very worried about the increasing cases of commuting accidents that have occurred over the past few years," he said.

Lee said that while accident cases in the workplace have dropped by about 45 per cent in the past 11 years, the cases of commuting accidents in the past six years had increased by 40 per cent.

"From 67,163 cases nationwide in 2000, the number of accidents in the workplace decreased to 35,088 in 2011," he said.

According to him, in 2006, a total of 17,104 commuting accidents were recorded and the figure increased to 24,208 in 2011.

"My suggestion to employers is to include education on safe

driving and safe riding in their occupational safety and health training as steps to reduce commuting accidents," he said, adding that the element of managing road safety is equally important in the aspect of occupational safety and health in the workplace.

Lee disclosed that in Sabah, as of May this year, a total of 363 cases of industrial accidents had been reported to the state SOCSO involving 116 cases in the state capital, Sandakan 74, Tawau 96, Lahad Datu 36, Keningau 22 and Labuan FT 19 cases.

He also said that there must be greater commitment by industries particularly the SMI/E operators to adopt a work safety culture and do more to prevent or minimize industrial accidents through good occupational safety and safety practices.

To him, occupational safety and health training for SMIs is of paramount importance and the operators should see training as an investment and not an expense.

"In the global economy, occupational safety and health issue are among the key determinants to a company's competitiveness through productivity enhancement and efficiency," he said.