

Surefire way to take out waste

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KUALA LUMPUR: The mere mention of incinerators tend to evoke angry responses from those living in their vicinity but judging from the discussions at a recent seminar, they may become part and parcel of city living in the not-too-distant future.

The matter was raised at the Kuala Lumpur Draft City Plan 2020 workshop where it was revealed that city folk generated up to 3,000 tonnes of solid waste each day and a big chunk of it was household waste.

A majority also do not practise the 3R concept of Reuse, Recycle and Reduce and fail to carry out waste separation for plastic, bottles, papers and non-disposable items such as batteries.

City Hall mayor Datuk Ahmad Fuad Ismail said next year, the council's cost for waste disposal would increase from RM33 per tonne of garbage to RM49.

"As prices have soared, the increase in operational cost is inevitable. We are paying almost RM20 million each year for the city's waste disposal," he said.

Fuad said at present, the city's solid waste collected by Alam Flora was sent to the Taman





Landfills take up land, contaminate the environment and are a health hazard. — *File picture*

Beringin landfill for compacting and then the Bukit Tagar landfill for disposal.

"The trip to Bukit Tagar is about 70km away, and there are two trips per day daily, which eat into our budget. Having incinerators would cut down on the money spent on waste disposal," he said.

Fuad said many illegal landfills were being closed as they had a negative effect on the environment. Currently, there are more than 250 illegal landfills in City Hall's jurisdiction.

"We are shutting down these illegal landfills but it is a costly operation. We have closed 33 illegal landfills which have badly affected the environment and spent almost RM200 million to treat the sites," he said.

Fuad said the proposal to have incinerators would be looked into by the public review committee which was reviewing all feedback relating to the draft plan.

He said many misunderstood City Hall's role in waste management and failed to realise that the local authority merely monitored and regulated the disposal of waste, which was handled by Alam Flora.

"The concession between Alam Flora and the Solid Waste Management and Public Cleanliness Corporation has yet to be settled and this has caused setbacks such as Alam Flora not changing its compactor lorries which many claim spill leachate on the road, causing a foul smell," he said.

Alam Flora research and development department senior manager and speaker Sarifah Yaacob reminded those present not to throw their curries and other liquids into their waste bin as this would produce leachate in the lorry garbage compactors.

"Please separate your garbage accordingly and dispose of liquids in the sink and not into the waste bin," she said.

The plan for incinerators received the support of the 500 participants at the workshop.

They were convinced of the benefits of having incinerators after listening to a presentation by Danish International Development Assistance Solid Waste Management Component chief technical adviser Ib Larsen who spoke about the success of incinerating waste in his country.

Larsen said waste has been a problem since the early 1960s and incineration was a way to dispose of waste as there were too many landfills.

"We had about 1,200 landfills in Denmark but slowly, we are minimising the use of land for landfills. Until 2008, we had a total of 29 incinerators built to process 100,000 tonnes of waste per year," he said.

Larsen said recycling also played an important role but it did not reflect much in the reduction of waste produced by household consumers and industrial activities.

"The Danish government had to regulate the recycling programme by imposing taxes on raw materials such as glass, and imposing compulsory waste separation in dividing combustible from non-combustible waste to safeguard the environment and lower the contamination from landfill," Larsen said.

At the workshop, participants were also told of the benefits of developing a green building, rain water harvesting in residential and commercial development and recycling waste to generate income.