



Plastic waste caught at booms across Sungai Gombak.



By closing the loop, plastics would no longer be classified as waste.



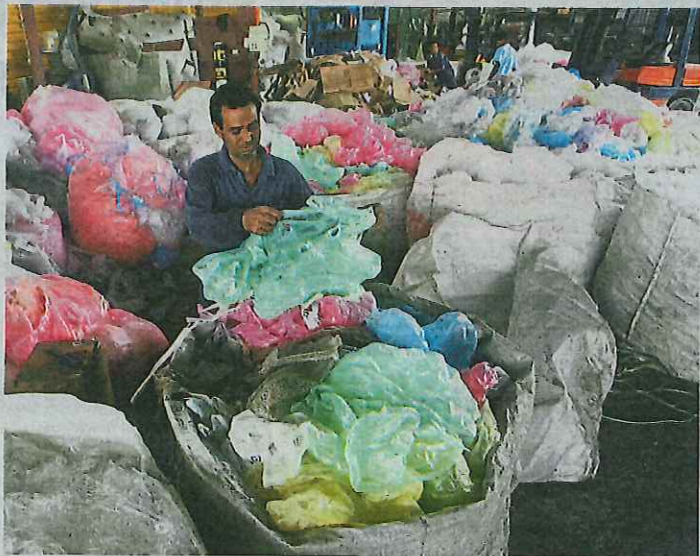
Ho De Leong



Manufacturers should ensure that packagings have a second life and value in them.



Khairul Ab Gahani



Recyclable plastics can be recycled many times for use.

plastic waste, which saw developed countries sending rubbish to countries in South-East Asia, including Malaysia.

"A study published in the Science Advance journal in June last year estimated that 111 million metric tonnes (122 million tonnes) of plastic waste – or about half of what China absorbed in the past 30 years – will be displaced by 2030 because of China's National Sword policy.

"Recognising that money can be made from the world's plastic waste, the number of illegal recycling factories are on the rise in Malaysia.

"Instead of recycling, these illegal factories dump or burn the scraps to cut cost, releasing toxic chemicals into the atmosphere," he said. Mohammad said burning plastic waste could increase the risk of heart disease, damage the nervous system, and link to severe illnesses such as cancer.

"Experts say the city desperately needs to recover, recycle and reduce the use of plastic, but others believe the solution must go beyond recycling.

"Recycling is good, but it is not the final step. Others believe new solutions to promote a circular economy will be the only way forward.

"We need a more robust and efficient waste management industry," said Mohamad, adding that without continuous improvement and creative thinking the country would not be able to reach the target of diverting 40% of waste by 2020.

Julian Hyde, the general manager of Reefcheck, a coral reef conservation non-governmental organisation, worries most about plastic wastes on beaches that threatened

the marine ecosystem.

"Coral reefs are ecologically important because they are a breeding ground for fish. Malaysia is a big consumer of fish, so without coral reefs there would not be any fish to eat.

"We are doing beach clean-ups but this effort is not going anywhere.

"We are trying to find ways to stop plastic from getting to the beaches. There are about 40 river booms in Klang Valley.

"We went to see one of them being pulled out and many people from the Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) were involved in the cleaning process, which took about two hours. About 50kg of plastic was recovered.

"But how does it get in the river in the first place? We are trying to find the solution here and not trying only to clean river booms all over," he said, adding that DID spends RM5,000 a month on this.

Hyde said transporting plastic waste out was not economical especially in places like Mantanani Island in Sabah.

"Currently we are transporting plastic waste out of the island to be recycled as there is no waste management system, and the cost of renting a boat and lorry to do the job is expensive," he added.

He said the island folks' waste disposal mechanism was to throw plastic bottles into the sea.

"They do not know how to recycle. But we can make them change their habits, get a collection system, while the industry players work a way to recycle it," he said.

Reefcheck, he added, placed bins and collected 2,500 to 3,000 plastic bottles a week from the island's 1,000 population.



Landfills are filled with plastic materials that cannot be recycled.