

# Time to turn household waste into cash, says Zuraida

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SUBANG JAYA: The Housing and Local Government Ministry will implement initiatives to reduce household waste, following the previous administration's failed attempts to handle the issue.

Its Minister Zuraida Kamaruddin said the ministry is looking to implement stricter guidelines on illegal plastics industries, come up with new national policies on plastic waste management, and educate and enable the public to turn trash to cash by 2020.

"We need to look at stricter enforcement because there is an abuse of policy.

"Recently, 17 illegal plastic factories in Sungai Petani were shut down, but instead of merely compounding them RM300, we will come up with an Investigative Paper (IP) to look deeper into the problem.

"While there are rules and regulations in place, we are lacking enforcement. We need to also focus on separation at the source.

"Countries such as Japan and Finland have been practising this for more than 40 years. We have a long way to go, but we have great examples to follow."

Currently there is US\$600 billion in plastic waste revenue, Zuraida said, adding that it would be lucrative for Malaysia to capitalise on it.

"In a pilot programme to turn trash to cash, we are working with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and counsellors to teach the residents of Ampang to look at trash as cash. This is especially important in People's Housing Projects (PPR) and B40 residential areas, where the money can be used for the benefit of their children.

"If managed well and with good regulations, proper plastic management can be a modern and advanced industry with no threats or hazards to the environment.

"The world still needs plastic. So until we find an alternative to plastic we have to protect our environment and marine life, this is the way forward for Malaysia."

Zuraida said her ministry will be documenting a standard operating procedure (SOP) for other residential areas by December this year.