

On Sept 28, Yeo made it clear that the Federal Government would not spend a single sen to send illegal waste-filled containers back to the countries of origin.

"It's not just about the cost; it's about dignity. Why do they send things to us and we still need to pay them to send it back?" she said.

She insisted that the senders must be responsible for paying the fines for importing illegal waste until "they have collected back their waste".

Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change Ministry deputy secretary-general Dr K. Nagulendran was quoted in *The Star* last month as saying that there were over 200 containers of plastic waste imports waiting to be sent back to their countries of origin, and nearly all of these containers do not have approved permits (APs).

He also said that the challenge was in identifying the country of origin as many of the containers had been abandoned by unscrupulous recyclers.

Sahabat Alam Malaysia research officer Mageswari Sangralingam said Malaysia was in a quagmire now because the government was not able to stringently enforce regulations nor control the type of waste being imported into the country.

"Unscrupulous exporters and middlemen will find loopholes and our communities and the environment are the ones burdened with the pollution," said Mageswari.

That is why her organisation has been calling for the government not to issue any more APs to import plastic waste and step up enforcement measures.

"We are not a dumping ground.

"If other countries like Cambodia, Indonesia can send back the waste, Malaysia should be able to identify the exporters as well as importers and send the waste back," said Mageswari.

Meanwhile, the logistics industry has become cautious when foreign parties seek to send waste material to Malaysia.

"We ask the sending party to

furnish full information of the receiving party in Malaysia and will only carry out the shipment once we have contacted them (the receiving party) and have ascertained that they are a legitimate business," said a source from a logistics and shipping company of international standing.

He said the containers of waste material languishing at the ports must have been sent quite some time ago when shipping and logistics agents were not as cautious as they are now in regard to shipment of waste.

"That is why," he added, "the senders cannot be traced".

"If it was being sent now, we would be having full details of both parties and would have also checked them out," he said.