

KERATAN AKHBAR

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Work together to deal with waste issues, local authorities told

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BUTTERWORTH: Local authorities can better deal with the problem of plastic waste by working with the people and empowering them rather than depend on the use of technology.

This was the common theme put forward by various local governments at the two-day International Zero Waste Cities Conference in Penang that began yesterday.

They advocated continuous engagement with local communities to ensure waste was discarded responsibly.

They also encouraged a reduction in the production and use of plastic bags or an

outright ban of the item.

They said this could reduce the need for equipment such as incinerators to get rid of waste.

Penang state executive councillor Phee Boon Poh, who heads the environment committee, said the state's efforts included a move away from single-use plastic bags and the setting up of a green council to ensure sustainability in all development projects.

He said the people could be enticed to do their part for the environment if they were rewarded for recycling and severely punished for polluting the environment.

"The approach may be different but the outcome is the same - to reduce waste and to find ways to recycle," he added.

The conference is jointly organised by the Consumers Association of Penang, the Global Anti-Inclinator Alliance (GAIA) and the Break Free from Plastic Movement.

Plastic waste became a major problem for Asean nations after China stopped importing waste from developed countries for recycling. The waste is now being sent to Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia and the Philippines.

GAIA Asia-Pacific executive director Frollan Grate said local authorities from different cities could share their solutions.

He cited the example of San Fernando in the Philippines and Bandung in Indonesia that have helped one another become zero waste cities.