

Conduct clean-up ops, govt urged

➤ 'Return all idle plastic waste to senders'

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SUNGAI PETANI: The government has been urged to take steps to remove all plastic waste that remains in recycling plants across the country.

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) senior researcher S. Mageswari said that since the ban on the import of plastic waste came into effect on Oct 26, the waste that is still in Malaysia should be sent back to the countries of origin.

"What is important is that we do not allow such waste to lie idle at the plants or ports," she told *theSun*.

Early this week, the United Kingdom agreed to take back 42 containers of plastic waste that had been sitting idle at the Butterworth container terminal. The waste had been imported illegally.

Mageswari, who is a key associate of the global movement Break Free from Plastic, said there are at least six recycling plants here and another five in Penang that have permits to treat plastic waste.

The plastic recycling business is estimated to be worth billions of ringgit.

She pointed out that Malaysians are already generating plastic waste that has to be recycled.

"The problem we have now is that imported plastic waste is

dumped here. There is a lack of enforcement. We do not have control over what waste ends up in Malaysia," she said.

As a result, she said, Malaysia has been saddled with the task of addressing the plastic waste problem of other countries.

"These countries send us waste that cannot be recycled, too complex to be recycled or not cost-effective to be recycled," she added.

She pointed out that Malaysia is already struggling with the problem of treating waste that is produced domestically "so we do not need to import more to complicate matters".

The residents who live close to the industrial area of Sungai Petani have been complaining for years about pollution caused by plastic waste recycling operations.

The plastic is subjected to high temperatures to turn it into resin, but in the process, toxins are released, polluting the air, land and water.

A plastic recycling plant operator told *theSun* that it had complied with the strict regulations laid down by the Department of Environment and the local council.

He alleged that the residents were over-reacting.

Kedah DoB director Tunku Khalkausar Tunku Fathahi has instructed her officers to investigate the pollution claims.