

Time to discard old practices

Let's not wait for the government to legislate before doing the right thing



JUST because our forefathers did it, it does not make it right. I am referring to the practice of open burning. Back then, they did not know any better.

With so much information readily available today about the negative effects of open burning, we need to accept changes, whether by law or through our own actions.

Over two decades ago, I was taught during the Moral Education subject in primary school that burning rubbish was an acceptable way to dispose waste.

I remember seeing an image in my school textbook of a gotong-royong being conducted while villagers stood around a fire to burn the rubbish collected.

Although the Environmental Quality Act 1974 was already in place then prohibiting open burning, in some cases it was deemed "acceptable," but no longer.

Much has been said about global warming and its effects. The whole world is moving towards reducing its carbon footprint and the Federal and many state governments in

Malaysia have taken the lead.

But there are still those who burn rubbish, giving reasons like "we have always been doing it," "small fire, so no harm" and the like.

I believe they are the same people who are questioning the government's efforts in reducing single-use plastics by imposing a fee on distribution of plastic bags in supermarkets and hypermarkets.

Among the common complaints from some shoppers is that they are running out of plastic bags to line their rubbish bins and are forced to buy them, which they claim defeats the purpose of the policy.

The government is not making you buy bin liners but encouraging you to make lifestyle changes to reduce single-use plastic bags which are polluting the environment.

The government is creating awareness of composting and recycling to reduce waste that goes into our landfills.

We have to start somewhere. Get used to it and make that change.

I do not complain when ice cubes hit my mouth whenever I tilt the glass trying to get the last sip of my cold drink served without a straw.

I have accepted that I either have to bring along a stainless steel straw or experience the discomfort.

I also feel guilty when buying drinks served



Open burning is no longer acceptable as it is bad for the environment and worsens the haze — ZULAZHAR SHEBLEE/The Star

in plastic bags or cups because I have many reusable containers at home. I keep reminding myself to bring one along wherever I go.

The smoking ban in all eateries which started in January is another welcome policy.

According to a national survey by Health Ministry in 2015, 22.8% of the population aged 15 and above are smokers.

I see tables in restaurants clearing fast during lunch hour, probably because smokers leave early for their quick fix before resuming work.

This results in a better dining experience

for all and fewer worries about second-hand smoke, hygiene and food safety.

On the negative side, more people are smoking at entrances of buildings with cigarette butts strewn all over the ground.

Perhaps building owners should invest in designated smoking areas equipped with ash trays and air filtration systems with centrifugal fans to extract and clean the smoke before releasing it back into the environment.

We do not eat, live or do things the way our forefathers did, so why hold on to old practices? We need to think for ourselves and do what is right.