

### PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

## Education, awareness key to tackling illegal dumping

**RECENT** incidents of illegal dumping of rubbish and even potentially hazardous chemicals into Sungai Klang have put the spotlight on the issue of gaps and weaknesses in Malaysia's waste management system.

A lorry dumped household rubbish into the river recently and days later 250 drums of glycerin were found on the river bank.

More recently, a local academic posted a video which showed that illegal dumping has continued in a forest in Gombak even after local authorities were notified, and after the Gombak Public Works Department said it would seal off this and nine other illegal dumpsites in the area.

This secret and illegal disposal of waste of all types is a serious leakage from the waste management system, and the source of pollution in the rivers, seas and oceans.

Illegal dumping, whether into rivers or on idle land, threatens the environment and, in the long term, our health and safety.

It also costs money, in the form of clean-ups or healthcare, or even a drop in the value of property in the vicinity.

Ultimately, the bulk of this cost is borne by the public, either as taxpayers or customers.

In order to reduce illegal dumping, the authorities must examine and understand where and why such leakage occurs, and address the gaps to create an effective waste management system for Malaysia.

To do this requires wider collaboration among all the parties involved — from regulators to business and industry and to



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consumers and households.

Regulators are not limited to the National Solid Waste Management Department and the Department of Environment, but include local authorities in every state as well as the Department of Irrigation and Drainage.

Illegal dumping is driven by economic incentives and convenience and, in the absence of punishment or ineffective enforcement as demonstrated earlier this year with the plastic waste dumping issue.

Illegal dumping, like littering, is also a behavioural issue which cannot be addressed through blanket bans.

It must be addressed as an infrastructure and system design issue and not just as an enforcement issue.

Illegal dumping and litter are sources of environmental pollution, be it on land or at sea.

The Malaysian Plastics Manufacturers Association (MPMA) and Malaysian Plastics Recyclers Association (MPRA) have advocated the proper disposal of rubbish and waste under our "Don't be a Litterbug" campaigns and "Use a Bin" programme since 2012.

We need to continue our education efforts on proper waste disposal, practising the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle) and, more urgently, we need to work towards establishing an advanced plastics recycling industry for Malaysia.

Recycling is a core component of an effective waste management system and plays a vital role in protecting the environment.

It is the key element of a circular economy, a system that moves away from the old "take-make-use-throw" progression.

In a circular economy, waste becomes a valuable resource, to be recycled as raw material, made into new products and not thrown away. This reduces the need to extract more natural resources and the impact on the environment.

MPMA and MPRA are committed to developing a clean, vibrant and healthy plastics recycling industry that would boost the country's recycling rate and contribute to a cleaner, greener Malaysia. But we cannot do this alone.

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MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION  
AND MALAYSIAN PLASTICS  
RECYCLERS ASSOCIATION**