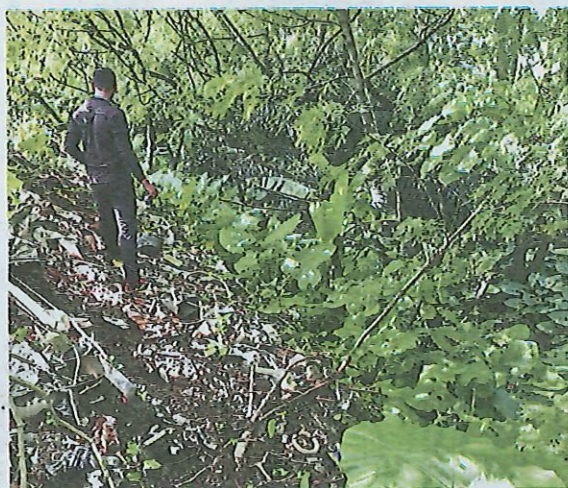


KERATAN AKHBAR

NAMA AKHBAR: THE STAR

Taking business of nabbing culprits seriously

Waste regulator takes 33 companies and 37 individuals to court but wishes heavier penalties can be imposed as deterrent



Those dumping rubbish illegally are now doing so in remote jungle areas.

Stories by BAVANI M. bavanim@thestar.com.my

SINCE the Solid Waste Management and Public Cleansing Act 2007 (Act 672) came into force in 2011, a total of 33 private companies and 37 individuals have been prosecuted for illegal dumping in seven Malaysian states to-date.

The Act governs Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, Johor, Melaka, Negri Sembilan, Pahang, Kedah and Perlis.

Solid Waste Management and Public Cleanliness Corporation (SWCorp) is the regulator of waste in these states.

The first case taken to court was in 2014, where a family-owned construction firm in Tampin, Negri Sembilan was charged for illegal dumping of waste under Section 71 (1) of the Act.

In Kuala Lumpur, 19 illegal dumping cases were brought to book.

No case has ever been prosecuted in Putrajaya but one case is currently being investigated.

The offence carries a fine of between RM10,000 and RM100,000 or a jail term of between six months and five years, or both.

Collectively RM201,000 in fines have been imposed on those

caught dumping waste illegally.

However, surprisingly no one has ever been penalised for the maximum amount of RM100,000.

The highest fine imposed so far was in a case in Sungai Petani, Kedah where the culprits were ordered to pay RM30,000, while the highest fine in Kuala Lumpur was only RM17,000.

"In Kuala Lumpur, sad to say, most offenders get away with just a slap on the wrist," said SWCorp Federal Territories director Mohd Zahir Shaari.

"Last year alone, we had four illegal dumping cases in Kuala Lumpur and each offender was slapped with the minimum RM10,000 fine.

"It is disappointing, considering the work it takes to catch the culprits in the act and book them, confiscate the vehicles and the paperwork that goes into preparing the investigating paper.

"So after all that effort, to see them (accused) get off so easily can be demoralising to my team," he said.

Mohd Zahir has good reason to feel demoralised.

He said his entire team would be present in court during sentencing but they were often left disheartened when environment polluters were let off easily.

Illegal dumping hotspots in Kuala Lumpur



A lorry caught dumping rubbish on a plot of privately owned land.

"My team works hard to catch these guys but the justice system needs to do its part as well," he said.

Illegal dumping of waste, be it industrial, chemical, construction or household waste poses a big problem to the environment.

The problem is especially critical when waste is dumped near water bodies, drains and jungles where contamination is likely to happen.

"Imposing the maximum penalty of RM100,000 is, personally to me, a very small price to pay for trying

to destroy the environment.

"However, the courts do not seem to think so as each time the sentence meted out is only the minimum RM10,000 fine," Mohd Zahir noted.

"We need to send a stern message that any form of environmental pollution is unacceptable and the perpetrators must be held accountable."

He said if Malaysia was strict with environmental polluters, there would be less incidences of illegal dumping in the country.