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'We don't want your plastic'

Yeo sends clear message to countries sending their trash here

By R. SEKARAN
rsekaran@thestar.com.my

BUTTERWORTH: The message is clear to all developed countries: Malaysia is not a place to recycle your plastic trash for you.

In an unprecedented move, Malaysia has succeeded in sending back 150 containers with 3,737 tonnes of plastic trash back to the countries of origin, most of which are developed countries.

"This will continue indefinitely. We will send the trash back every time they are brought into our country. It will be done again and again. Let's see who is more persistent," said Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change (MESTEC) Minister Yeo Bee Yin at a press conference at North Butterworth Container Terminal.

She announced yesterday that the 150 containers had come from France (43), United Kingdom (42), United States (17), Canada (11), Spain (10), Hong Kong (9), Japan (5), Singapore (1), Portugal (3), China (3), Bangladesh (1), Sri Lanka (1) and Lithuania (1).

They were shipped illegally into Port Klang, Penang Port and a port in Sarawak, with papers showing that they contained other material.

But Customs and Department of Environment have been keeping a sharp eye for them.

Yeo said there are another 110 containers of plastic trash waiting in the three ports to be sent back.

They carry about 20 tonnes of



Back and forth: Yeo (front row, second from left) with MESTEC chief secretary Datuk Ir Dr Siti Hamisah Tapsir (on Yeo's left) and Penang State executive councillor Phee Boon Poh (right) checking the plastic waste containers before sending them back to its country of origin in Butterworth.

waste each and came from USA (60), Canada (15), Japan (14), United Kingdom (9), Belgium (8), Mexico (1), Hungary (1), France (1) and Jamaica (1).

She said the repatriation exercise does not have any cost implication to the government as it is borne by the exporters or the shipping liners.

The government's battle against recycling companies smuggling in plastic trash from abroad began when China put a complete ban on such imports into its country, leading to major disruption of the global plastic recycling system.

China's ban caused plastic trash from developed countries flowing into other countries, especially Malaysia.

Packed tightly into cargo containers, smuggled plastic trash is in fact

municipal waste and come with bits of putrefying food teeming with foreign bacteria and fungus.

Recyclers here, some of them illegal, are known to sort out only high grade plastic from the smuggled waste which fetch good prices, while cheap material such as plastic bags were burned or illegally dumped in many parts of the country including Penang, Kedah, Selangor and Sarawak.

Yeo said the National Action Plan for the importation of plastic waste will be launched next month.

"It will be a guide to all enforcement agencies to strengthen and standardise enforcement and procedures to combat illegal trans-boundary movement of plastic waste."

As a party to the Basel Convention,

Yeo said Malaysia imposes strict requirements on the movement of waste to ensure it is conducted in a manner to protect human health and environment.

Around 300 million tonnes of plastic is produced every year globally, according to the Worldwide Fund for Nature.

In November, Britain agreed to take back 42 containers of plastic waste that came from its country.

On May 28, more than 400 tonnes of plastic waste in Port Klang was shipped back to the countries of origin.

Watch the video
thestartv.com

