

MALAY MAIL

Singapore's National Environment Agency clarifies plastic waste returned after Malaysian importer failed to get permits

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Three containers of plastic waste sent back to Singapore, where they were inspected by the National Environment Agency. — Handout via TODAY

SINGAPORE, Jan 22 — Malaysia returned three containers of plastic waste to Singapore earlier this month because the Malaysian importer had failed to obtain the required permits, and not because the Singaporean exporter had violated the rules, regulators here clarified today.

In total, Malaysia has repatriated 150 containers of plastic waste to various exporting countries — including four to Singapore, according to a report in *The Straits Times* on January 20.

But the National Environment Agency (NEA) told TODAY today that only three containers have been returned to Singapore, adding that it was seeking clarification on the discrepancy.

In its statement, the NEA said that on November 20 last year, Malaysia's Department of Environment (DoE) told NEA that a Malaysian importer of three containers of plastic waste from Singapore had not obtained the permits required under Malaysia's domestic legislation.

On January 13 this year, Malaysia returned the three containers to Singapore.

NEA inspected the containers and found baled "low density polyethylene plastic films".

This type of plastic is widely used in packaging. It does not fall within the scope of the Basel Convention on Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Waste and Their Disposal, to which both Malaysia and Singapore are contracting parties, NEA added.

After investigating, NEA found that the Singaporean exporter did not violate the Basel Convention by exporting the three containers of waste.

Instead, they found that the Malaysian importer failed to obtain the required approval permit from its National Solid Waste Management Department.

In 2018, over one third of Singapore's recyclable materials, such as paper, plastic, glass and metal, was exported for further processing and recycling.

Plastic recyclables were exported to countries such as China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam.

The NEA said it is working closely with other agencies and local industries to further build up local recycling capabilities, so as to better extract resources from waste and enhance Singapore's resilience in waste management.

The agency is also studying various e-waste and plastic recycling solutions and technologies available in the market, and assessing their suitability for adoption in Singapore. — TODAY

