

# **INCINERATORS: Are incinerators dangerous? Rubbish!**

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ACCORDING to a 2012 report, Malaysia is expected to produce about 33,000 tonnes of solid waste per day by 2010 and this is projected to increase by 3.5 per cent annually. At this rate, the disposal of solid waste in the country, especially in cities, may turn out to be a huge problem, if not handled professionally.

Burying waste in sanitary landfills is a crude and primitive method of disposal. This practice may be suitable in certain circumstances but for high-density, fast-growing cities, the use of incinerators has many advantages.

Despite the mounting pressure against the use of incinerators by certain quarters it must be pointed out that there are modern, environmentally safe and -friendly incinerators. Practically all developed countries are using incinerators to get rid of their waste, along with a strong emphasis on recycling activities.

The best thing about modern incinerators is that they are designed to mitigate pollution. Apart from this, they can generate energy from waste combustion.

I am not against the use of sanitary landfills. If we can afford the land and if it is managed professionally with minimum impact on public and environmental health, we should continue to use it.

As for Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, the Bukit Tegar sanitary landfill apparently has enough space for waste generated for the next 65 years. Under these circumstances it is logical and economical to continue using the Bukit Tegar sanitary landfill for the disposal of waste.

However, we should not rule out the use of incinerators in other parts of the country where landfills may have a potential impact on air, water and soil quality.

Landfills have been singled out as a contributor to the greenhouse gas effect.

The methane gas released from the decaying waste from landfills is choking and heats up the environment. Methane gas is said to have the ability to trap atmospheric heat 20 times more effectively than carbon dioxide.

As such, landfills without any mechanism in place to manage this harmful methane gas (trap or harness) should not be permitted to operate due to the risk to humans and the environment.

The authorities should continue to educate the public on the usefulness and advantages of using incinerators.

When citizens in many countries in Europe, the United States and Singapore are going about their chores with an incinerator in their backyard without any complaint, why is there so much fuss and resistance in this country?

Despite the many assurances by the authorities that the incinerators are of the latest design and are safe and environmentally friendly, I am puzzled over why certain groups are resisting it.

I am inclined to concur with the views expressed by Urban, Wellbeing And Local Government Minister Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan, that certain people in the community are playing on people's emotions, using "half-baked facts" that have influenced them to resist the building of incinerators.

The authorities should continue to engage the public to provide them the facts and information and to dispel any fear.

The public should also be wary of the true intentions of those who are leading the anti-incinerator campaigns as they may have a hidden agenda.

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