

# Not letting waste all go to waste



THERE is a country renowned for its impressive facilities, yet it adopts a rather outdated approach to cleanliness and maintenance. Yes, that country is our beloved Malaysia. For a considerable period, both our government and environmental advocates have been striving to instil a sense of community responsibility in Malaysians. You may recall the attempt to impose fines on individuals for neglecting their role in recycling. But here's the conundrum: Why does our commitment to environmental preservation appear to be progressing at a glacial pace?

Our current waste management system is the issue at hand. We have multiple bins at home for segregating our waste but do you know where it all ultimately ends up? Yes, you guessed it – in the same old outdoor bin. And those ubiquitous plastic bags? We use them as if they possess some magical, one-size-fits-all quality for our trash. Purchasing specialised garbage bags? Well, that seems like an excessive effort and cost, considering we'll eventually dispose of them. Once our waste departs our homes, it mysteriously becomes someone else's problem. A sense of duty? Not quite. Convenience takes precedence. Sorting garbage is perceived as the responsibility of building waste management contractors and the destination of our waste, whether legal or illegal landfills, doesn't appear to concern us.

## A Taiwan lesson

Around 20 years ago, a restaurant in Taiwan taught me a remarkable



## Mall perspectives

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Honorary Secretary



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lesson about environmental consciousness. They said: "Please don't leave your toothpick in the food. It's not considerate towards our farm animals." It may seem a bit unconventional, right? I have never encountered a similar approach here, neither from my family and friends nor any restaurants in Malaysia. I understand that the concept of repurposing leftovers for farm animals may sound like something out of a heist movie, but the Taiwanese successfully put it into practice. So, why can't we?

In Taiwan, when the garbage truck plays its catchy tunes, families rush to tie up their trash bags and bring them outside. Yes, you read that correctly; they have specific schedules for their trash dance. In certain regions of France, there are no fancy trash rooms in apartment buildings. Instead, you embark on a quest to find the common shared trash area, often located a few blocks away. In many places, disposing of trash is a communal activity—a chance to engage with neighbours and perhaps indulge in a bit of gossip.

Now, in Florence, Italy, they have instituted a five-colour trash system. Depending on your building type and the bins available, you must match your trash with the corresponding colour code. Ignoring these guidelines could cost you up to 500 euros – a sum that's one-tenth the price of a high-end Rolex Datejust (if you can even acquire one).

## Everyone must play a role

You see, developed countries and more sophisticated areas grasp the

significance of waste management. It's not viewed as a form of entertainment. Instead, it is considered a serious matter with specific regulations and responsibilities. You can't simply dispose of your problems without adhering to the proper procedures. This isn't solely the responsibility of building owners just because they have paid rent or purchased a unit in the building.

Now, let's return to Malaysia. Enhancing maintenance costs and improving waste management is not the sole duty of building owners, management bodies or the council. We must instil the notion that maintaining our environment clean and sustainable is the responsibility of each one of us, and we shouldn't let all our efforts go to waste. We anticipate the authorities to continue promoting their previous recycling programs to remind the community about the importance of waste management for a sustainable future. Without a well-established waste culture, we will eventually face shortages of foreign workers, trucks or recycling centres to effectively address the issue.

How much longer will we tolerate the ongoing ordeal of foul-smelling dump trucks with underpaid foreign workers clinging on for dear life? When will Malaysia finally attain developed country status? It won't be solely determined by financial indicators or impressive statistics. Instead, it will be when our grandchildren witness a proud Malaysian stepping out of a waste truck, operating a robotic arm like a sci-fi superhero and handling trash with finesse. Now, that's a scene worth eagerly anticipating!