

City calls for garbage separation

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By MOHD IZHAM HASHIM

KOTA KINABALU: The practice of separating rubbish is the first step to tackle the city's persistent garbage problem and turning Kota Kinabalu into a clean, green and healthy city.

City Hall Director-General, Datuk Joannes Solidau underlined greater cooperation from city folk to separate their waste at home is crucial for the success of the ongoing cleanliness campaigns in the movement to ensuring Kota Kinabalu achieve its zero-waste city status.

"The most important factor for managing waste effectively, ultimately boils down to getting citizens to sort their own rubbish by separating recyclables from non-recyclables and this makes waste collection more easier and efficient," he said.

Meeting reporters while heading the City Hall Waste Separation pilot project at Alam Damai Condominium, Joannes acknowledged public attitude on the importance of separating waste is still low as many are unaware of the rigorous process involved in managing waste.

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"It is high time we change this wrongful habit of tossing all kinds of garbage in the same bin which only makes waste management more laborious and complicated, he said.

The move, according to Joannes, is crucial to reduce the amount of rubbish being sent to the Kayu Madang Landfill which is reaching capacity within 2-3 years.

"With a population nearing 2 million citizens, the city is already struggling with its mounting garbage problem, now just think what it'll be like in another 5-10 years as the city's population increases," he said, noting effective waste segregation practices would divert waste from landfills through reduction and recycling.

Joannes pointed out that 80 per cent of garbage disposed at landfills can be recycled and reused while only 20 per cent are non-recyclable which needs to be eliminated. However, in developed countries like Japan, he noted waste management systems are so efficient that nothing is wasted in the process, with 100 per cent of garbage being recycled and reused.

"In contrast, we throw ev-



Joannes (far left) sharing a moment with residents at Alam Damai Condominium during the programme

erything here and it's quite saddening there's so many stuffs being thrown away that's actually valuable and can generate income," he said, adding recycling is even a full-fledged multi-million dollar industry in many developed countries.

This underlines the importance of getting citizens to get

into the habit of separating their waste effectively, said Joannes, noting even recycling companies require enough volume to make their operations viable here.

About 40 residents from Alam Damai Condominium spent their weekend to learn to separate their wastes in an interactive session with vol-

unteers from CEEA Akita City, JICA, University Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and City Hall personnel.

Joannes said the pilot waste separation campaign carried out in collaboration with Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Conference of Earth Environment (CEE) of Akita City,

guides residents through interactive, educational activities to separate their waste into three main categories - papers, plastics and metals.

"Most of the waste that is segregated properly are then packed and sold to recycling centres in West Malaysia and China," he said, noting Sabah currently does not have a recycling processing facility.

He said the campaign which started earlier this year is a three-year pilot project designated at three selected residential areas which are Alam Damai Condominium, Taman Jindo and Taman Green View where the selection was made based on the household income of each area.

Joannes said City Hall is serious to ensure the success of its project which serves as a guideline for residents, and finds waste management practices needs to be backed by the law to make it effective.

"We hope that our proposal to make waste separation mandatory by law can be considered to put an end to the habit of mixing different types of waste together," he said.

Meanwhile, he said the campaign was aimed at encouraging residents to partic-

ipate actively in separating their waste, noting volunteers from University Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and CEEA of Akita City will also be carrying out a detailed survey to gather information from residents on the effectiveness of the campaign.

Touching on management of organic waste, Joannes lamented that rubbish bins are filled to the brim with all kinds of rubbish and recyclables are piled up with food waste which attracts vermin such as rats, flies and other harmful pathogens.

"The population of rats in the city are flourishing because our garbage bins are filled with food wastes. We must separate our waste properly or face problems with infestations of disease-carrying vermin which present a bad image for the city," he warned.

He said the proposed new law includes specific time schedules for city folk to dispose their garbage so that garbage trucks can collect them effectively.

"Proper timetables will help residents to know when to throw their garbage to ensure their rubbish are collected quickly," he said.