

'Sarawak must take lead in domestic waste management to reduce number of landfills'

KUCHING: The Sarawak government is taking proactive steps to lead the country in domestic waste disposal by aiming to reduce overall waste generation and identifying the most effective methods for sustainable waste management.

According to Deputy Minister of Urban Planning, Land Administration and Environment Datuk Len Talif Salleh, the state government has agreed to explore long-term solutions, including waste-to-energy technologies and incineration as viable alternatives to conventional dumping practices.

"We are preparing a policy paper under the Natural Resources and Environment Board (NREB) to ensure Sarawak takes the lead in domestic waste disposal," he said during the Sarawak Earth Day 2025 celebration at Politeknik Kuching yesterday.

Highlighting the urgency of the issue, Len Talif noted that Malaysia was facing a shortage of suitable dumping sites due to rapid population growth.

He added that existing landfills were often unhygienic and pose serious environmental risks, particularly during heavy rainfall, which could result in leachate (liquid that drains from waste), along with other pollutants flowing into Sarawak's river systems.

"Sarawak is rich in rivers, and contamination threatens not only the environment but also public health, as it enters our food and water sources," he cautioned.

Premier Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg had announced that Sarawak would shift towards modern waste management practices in August last year.

This would include the state government's proposal to establish two thermal treatment plants (incinerators), with



Len Talif (right) visits an exhibition booth set up at the event venue during Sarawak Earth Day 2025 celebration at Politeknik Kuching. — Photo by Mohd Faisal Ahmad @doe.gov.my

suitable locations to be identified following a feasibility study by the Sarawak Economic Planning Unit (EPU).

Echoing Len Talif's sentiment, Trienekens (Sarawak) Sdn Bhd group chief executive officer Stephen Chin stressed that reducing consumption was the most crucial aspect of effective waste management.

"Waste management is not just about disposing of your waste, but also about how we manage it – not just through recycling, recovery or upscaling, but through the more difficult task of reducing consumption," Chin said.

Yesterday's event was held in conjunction with the global celebration of Earth Day, observed annually on April 22.

Themed 'Our Power, Our Planet', the event was jointly organised by the Department of Environment (DoE) alongside various state and federal agencies, industries and local communities.

Participants included Trienekens (Sarawak) Sdn Bhd, Politeknik Kuching, Kolej

Komuniti Mas Gading, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), Padawan Municipal Council, Sarawak Natural Resources and Environment Board (NREB), Sarawak Department of Youth and Sports, Sarawak Forestry Department, Sarawak Forestry Corporation, the Health Department, Sarawak Rivers Board, and students and community members from Kampung Trombol.

The programme and activities held were centered around environmental themes, including a clean-up at Trombol Beach, the PolyCC (polytechnic and community college) Talent 17 competition, a treasure hunt, an eco-themed cake decorating contest, a design-and-build sculpture competition, and a tree planting initiative.

Also present were Sarawak Environment Department director John Rampai, NREB Sarawak Controller of Environmental Quality Datu Jack Liam, Politeknik Kuching director Samsudin Mohd Saleh, and Padawan Municipal Council chairman Tan Kai.