



Sahabat Alam Malaysia
Friends of the Earth Malaysia
For Environmental Justice

1, Jalan Joki, 11400 Penang, Malaysia
Tel No: +604 827 6930
Fax No: +604 827 6932
Email: foemalaysia@gmail.com
<https://www.foe-malaysia.org>

Press Statement

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Sungai Pinang pollution is a long-standing issue

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) is not surprised to learn that a tonne of rubbish is being collected from the log boom in Sungai Pinang daily. This is a long-standing issue of littering due to a lack of aggressive enforcement action by the government.

Penang State Infrastructure Committee chairman was quoted by the media attributing the pollution situation to the attitude of people who continued to throw their rubbish indiscriminately. We often associate littering with people's behaviour but we need to find out why are they doing so. Is it a question of lack of education, apathy or is it a matter of poor management of waste disposal and inadequate infrastructure?

Penang's Waste Segregation at Source (WSAS) Policy in 2016 has been enforced since June 1, 2017. Why are citizens not complying with the regulations under the Local Government Act where they are required to segregate their waste into two streams - recyclables and general waste before collection?

We believe with education, adequate waste management planning, supporting facilities including for collection of bulky items, proper implementation and stringent enforcement the problem of waste dumping can be addressed.

Among the plans by the Penang state government to address the Sungai Pinang pollution is to build parallel drains that would trap the rubbish from being washed into the river. This measure and river clean-ups may help reduce the volume of waste but the river pollution would still be a burgeoning problem if we do not stop the pollution at its source.

Solid waste in the form of trash, bulky waste and garbage in rivers are visible. We also need to be aware of other pollutants such as organic waste, sewage, chemicals and microplastics. We are all aware of the consequence of river pollution, and thus must take measures to effectively tackle the pollution.

Firstly it's important to understand what are all the sources of this river pollution. The Penang government, many decades ago had identified the sources of pollution in the Sungai Pinang River Basin and come up with strategies to address the pollution problem, including environmental education to citizens to stop littering. It is high time the government starts to aggressively implement these action plans.

Meenakshi Raman
President
Sahabat Alam Malaysia