



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement

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Address Solar Panel Waste Management and Promote Energy Saving

In conjunction with World Environment Day on June 5, 2024, it is time for us to reflect on our role in safeguarding our planet. This year, the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) highlights the growing importance of managing solar panel waste and adopting energy saving practices.

The adoption of solar energy is a positive step towards reducing reliance on fossil fuels and combating climate change. However, the increase in solar panel installations brings with it the challenge of managing solar panel waste effectively.

It is reported that by the end of 2022, around 1.94 GW of solar generation capacity has been installed in Malaysia. As solar energy usage increases, it is crucial to address the environmental impact of solar panel waste, considering that the installed solar capacity is projected to reach 4.71 GW by 2025 and will be growing rapidly.

Solar panels contain toxic materials such as Copper Indium Gallium Diselenide (CIS/CIGS), Cadmium Telluride (CdTe), Amorphous Silicon (a-Si), and many more. These hazardous substances can be released into the environment during production and disposal, posing significant environmental and health risks if not managed properly.

As approximately 80 million tonnes of solar panels worldwide are projected to reach the end of their lifespan by 2050, the need for safe and effective disposal and recycling becomes critical, and researchers estimate that by 2028, solar e-waste will contain over 1 billion USD in harvestable materials.

Lithium solar batteries also present potential fire hazards and environmental risks if not disposed of properly. These batteries can catch fire when exposed to heat, crushed, or when they come into contact with moisture. Moreover, toxic materials from solar panels can leach into the soil and water, leading to contamination.

To mitigate these risks, we urge the Malaysian government to formulate and enforce solar panel waste management regulations and ensure establishment of safe solar recycling facilities to handle the growing solar panel waste. Solar panel recycling facilities will guarantee the recovery and reuse of important materials, hence decreasing the need for virgin resources and limiting waste sent for disposal.

In addition to addressing solar panel waste management, we encourage the public to adopt energy saving practices. Simple measures can significantly reduce energy consumption, save costs, and lower carbon emissions. Here are some practical energy-saving tips:

1. **Switch to Energy-Efficient Lighting:** Replace traditional incandescent bulbs with LED bulbs, which consume up to 90% less electricity and have a longer lifespan.

2. **Unplug Appliances When Not in Use:** Many devices continue to draw power even when turned off. Unplugging them can save energy.
3. **Optimize Air Conditioner Use:** Set your AC temperature between 24°C-26°C to cut energy consumption by more than 20%.
4. **Clean Air Conditioners Regularly:** Replacing a dirty, clogged filter with a clean one can lower your air conditioner's energy consumption by 5% to 15%.
5. **Use Smart Devices:** Smart automation systems can detect when devices are not in use and turn them off automatically.
6. **Conserve Water Heating Energy:** Reduce the use of hot showers, which account for a significant portion of household energy bills.
7. **Maximize Natural Light and Ventilation:** Open windows to reduce the need for artificial lighting and air conditioning.
8. **Practise Efficient Laundry Habits:** Wash full loads of laundry to maximize the energy efficiency of your washing machine.
9. **Iron clothes all at once:** Iron clothes in bulk to avoid reheating the iron.
10. **Energy-efficient Transportation:** Walking, cycling, and using public transport reduces carbon dioxide emissions by 45%, decreases pollutants in the atmosphere and improves air quality.

On this World Environment Day, let us collectively commit to sustainable practices that will protect our environment for future generations. We urge the government and industry stakeholders to ensure availability of infrastructure for the safe recycling and management of solar panels and batteries. In this regard, CAP had submitted a memorandum to relevant agencies on 23 May 2024 urging prompt action to be taken on this and other issues to ensure a just energy transition.

Additionally, adopting energy-saving technologies such as energy-efficient appliances and lighting will significantly reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions. Promoting energy conservation through encouraging behaviours that conserve energy and fostering a culture of sustainability is crucial. Together, we can create a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable future.

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