

Events

600 containers given out to reduce plastic bag use at bazaar >6

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REFUSE plastic bags and bring your own containers instead.

This is the message River of Life (RoL) wants to send out to the public when it comes to buying packed food and drinks from stalls.

In an effort to address the problem of plastic pollution, RoL organised a public outreach programme at the Jalan Telawi Ramadan bazaar in Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur, by giving out 600 free containers to visitors.

Present were Global Environment Centre (GEC) river care coordinator Dr Kalithasan Kailasam, Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) health department inspector Ahmad Fuad Jamaludin and Irrigation and Drainage Department (IDD) river basin management division senior principal assistant director Wan Marhafidz Shah Wan Mohd Omar.

GEC, a non-profit company, is tasked with the implementation of this project with DBKL as project partner.

Describing visitors' response as encouraging, Kalithasan said the concept of bringing one's own tiffin carrier or food container to pack food was not new.

"In the days when mobile hawkers visited neighbourhoods, people would come out of their homes with their own bowls.

"At work, they had those old-fashioned metal flasks," recalled Kalithasan.

He said the current shift could be attributed to the convenience of plastic bags.

However, when plastic bags are no longer useful, they pollute the environment, ending up in our waterways and killing marine life.

Wan Marhafidz pointed out that plastic bags made up most of the solid waste in gross pollutant traps (GPT) installed in our rivers to minimise inflow of rubbish into the sea.

During the free container

Driving home message on plastic pollution at bazaar

River of Life project coordinators give out 600 food containers in Bangsar



(from left) Ahmad Fuad, Wan Marhafidz Kalithasan and DBKL health officers with their complimentary containers offered to visitors at the Jalan Telawi Ramadan bazaar

distribution exercise, the three gathered feedback from visitors and revealed that inconvenience was the main reason behind not bringing food containers to stalls.

Some said they initially did not plan to pack food home but changed their minds later.

Those who did use containers said food remained fresh and safer in terms of non-contact with possible toxic elements from

plastic bags and they also wanted to preserve the environment.

Wan Marhafidz said it did not help that Malaysians had a bad habit of littering.

"Rubbish, including plastic bags, will eventually end up in the drains and rivers. In a month, we have to remove about 10 tons of rubbish from our GPTs.

"This costs us RM50,000 every

month. We can save this money if the society is more civic-minded," he said.

He added that plastic was the second highest waste composition after food waste and the key cause of clogged drainage resulting in flash floods.

On whether DBKL will enforce the "no plastic bag" policy by fining traders who give them out, Ahmad Fuad said the

directive should come from the Federal Government.

For now, DBKL hopes to raise public awareness with such programmes.

The RoL public outreach programme is an initiative of DID. It also aims to educate the public about the environmental impact caused by discarding food waste and cooking oil into drains.