

# Perish the thought of using plastic bags

If you want to save the world from global warming, don't even sell it in the first place



**W**ITH only two weeks into the year, things are already well heated up on the home front.

It is not just the huge graft cases involving civil servants that have grabbed our attention. Besides Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak declaring this year as the “year of delivery” for the public sector, the weather has also been a scorching start for Malaysians.

With temperatures hovering between 34°C and 36°C in Putrajaya over the past week, fewer families are going out to parks in the evenings, folks are taking shorter morning strolls, and more sniffing colleagues are turning up at the office.

The air-conditioner sellers and ice-cream parlours are the only establishments that are embracing the searing climate with open arms.

Although the hot and humid weather may not alter our country's ranking as the sixth best to retire in (according to International Living's latest Annual Global Retirement Index), it surely affects the productivity of those commuting to work and those exposed to the hot sun while working.

It is not just Malaysia that is feeling the heat as global warming is clearly effecting the rest of the world. The number of heat waves, severe droughts, brutal hurricanes and drenching rainfall is on the rise.

The recent floods in Kelantan and Terengganu alone had caused tens of thousands of people to evacuate their homes over the past weeks, and damaged nearly 200 kindergartens.

Flood relief efforts were immediately launched from Putrajaya, which saw members of the People's Volunteer Corps (Rela) making their way to the east coast last week.

Global warming is an increase in the earth's average surface temperature due to greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and methane, which are caused by the burning of fossil fuel. Studies have shown that the average global temperature has increased at the fastest rate over the last five decades.

While there are many human activities that require the use of fossil fuel, there are also those that we can reduce and eventually eliminate from our daily lives.

One of them is the production of plastic bags.

**>> Continued next page**

**>> From Page 18**

It is estimated that five trillion plastic bags are being produced each year, making it approximately 700 pieces a year for every single person on the planet.

My young son may have used more as we are guilty of disposing of many of his soiled diapers in scented plastic bags.

Plastic bags require vast amounts of water and energy to produce, but are only used for an average of 12 minutes. They do not biodegrade and will remain in landfills and oceans for thousands of years.

As such, when the authorities in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya decided to ban the use of plastic and polystyrene packages, there was little resistance to the move.

Perhaps, the rising cost of electricity due to frequent use of air-conditioning and having to spend

more on ice-cream have made it easier for people to comprehend and accept the ruling.

From the first day of the year, hypermarkets have gladly stopped giving plastic bags to shoppers.

Although enforcement will only start on Sept 1 for Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya, restaurant operators

must use biodegradable food packaging instead of polystyrene. Those who fail to comply will be slapped with a fine of up to RM2,000.

While visiting nearby shopping malls and neighbourhood supermarkets over the last two weeks, it is encouraging to see most of the operators abiding with the ruling.

However, I do have a bone to pick on the sale of plastic bags. If saving the environment is the objective, then the bags should not be provided at all.

As I observed despondently, many are not deterred in paying the trifle amount for the added convenience of

packing their groceries.

Undeniably, shopping without the indispensable plastic bags is unthinkable, particularly when buying a big bulk of weekly supplies.

Many people who choose not to pay for plastic bags may have to endure the awkward scenario of squeezing two bottles of shampoo under their arms, while gingerly balancing a box of cereal on one hand and a bunch of broccoli on the other.

A possible option is for retailers to sell recyclable bags.

You heard it here first — a whole new industry of designing and supplying fashionable recyclable bags is

about to kick off in the country.

Yes, it will definitely take some getting used to in ensuring that we always carry recyclable bags each time we step out of the house.

However, only time will tell if this “little” inconvenience is worth it when future generations are able to

swim with the turtles, enjoy evening strolls and breathe clean air.

---

**azuraa@nst.com.my**

With more than 15 years in journalism and a masters in counselling psychology, the writer is always drawn to the mystery of the human mind and behaviour

This 'little' inconvenience is worth it to save the environment

## **GIST(ENGLISH)**

**WITH only two weeks into the year, things are already well heated up on the home front. It is not just the huge graft cases involving civil servants that have grabbed our attention. Besides Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak declaring this year as the year of delivery" for the public sector, the weather has also been a scorching start for Malaysians.**