

 It has been many months since the Solid Waste Management and Public Cleansing Act 2007 had been approved. The guidelines that are being developed for waste management will determine the future of waste management in Peninsular Malaysia and Labuan. Fomca hopes that waste management will not be bound to the three major concession-holders who subcontract the waste collection to others. This move is seen as helping the concession-holders namely E-Idaman, Alam Flora and Southern Waste Management financially. No man would like to do a business that brings a loss. Waste management begins at home and at the office for all of us. In addition to that, we need to manage the packaging of the goods that we are buying as eventually it becomes waste. The older way was to dump and bury everything in our landfills. Unfortunately, that is killing the environment in Malaysia. The new jargon in waste management is ♦sanitary landfill♦. The Jeram sanitary landfill was one of these pioneer ♦sanitary♦ landfills. This does not mean that it is good to have such landfills. Landfills are the last options in waste management. Even in Japan there are ♦zero landfill♦ areas. Again, with poor maintenance, these ♦sanitary♦ landfills are no better than the normal landfills. We have also heard of new incinerators being mooted. Past experience proves that many incinerators for solid waste failed in our country, namely because of our high moisture content. Rather than rushing this proposal, there should be one incinerator put up and tested full scale. There have been reports of incinerator (non-solid waste) which had emission problems during start-up and shut-down. How is this new technology proving itself? Incinerators are tagged as polluters. In many instances, there are no proper comparison mechanisms put in place between recycling, composting, Refuse Fuel Derive (RDF), and many other options. Has there been proven study which is good for us in Malaysia? In case both the incinerator and sanitary landfill options are vetted by ♦selected committees♦, can these committees and the technology providers be held responsible if their option fails? A strong sense of responsibility is needed. Many of these technology providers promise heaven but we get the opposite during operation. Public money is involved in putting up such facilities; they should not be wasted. Furthermore, all such facilities should abide by all rules and regulations pertaining to environment. Fomca hopes that: Take back policies are made available in stringent manner, Facilities for receiving recyclables are in place to allow people to follow simple ways to recycle, A real waste management industry is created and not just monopolies. Those who provide and approve waste management technologies must take responsibility if the system and technology fail. We hope that waste management is not taken as different parts. It is one entity. If a mother, student or even a business owner is not aware of their waste generation and its impact, all the systems that we plan will fail. Piarpakaran Subramaniam The writer is programme manager, Environment Desk, Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (Fomca).