

Extra 75,000 tonnes of food waste expected during Ramadan

By Dawn Chan - March 1, 2023 @ 3:22pm



There would be an extra 75,000 tonnes of food waste in Malaysia during Ramadan, if nothing is done to reduce wastage. -NSTP file pic

KUALA LUMPUR: There would be an extra 75,000 tonnes of food waste in Malaysia during Ramadan, if nothing is done to reduce wastage.

The figures were derived from an expected 15 per cent increase during Ramadan, which could see 19,228 tonnes of food waste generated daily nationwide.

This was compared with 16,720 tonnes of food waste collected on a normal day, marking an addition of 2,508 tonnes daily during Ramadan.

SWCorp chief executive officer Ismail Mokhtar today said food wastage was not only the highest in Malaysia but also the primary cause of pollution.

"If food waste is not managed well, we will continue to depend on dump sites, which are untreatable.

"So when there is a lot of food waste in dump sites, it results in pollution to the environment due to leachate, which needs to be treated.

"When the amount of leachate increases, so does the cost of treating it, and this is borne by the government.

"Leachate can flow and contaminate rivers, kill fish and pollute other food sources.

"We need to heighten awareness and we need people to join us to reduce food waste."

Ismail said SWCorp would conduct awareness campaigns in Ramadan bazaars in seven states as it was responsible for solid waste management and public cleansing.

The states are Perlis, Kedah, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya, Negri Sembilan, Melaka, Johor and Pahang.

He said it wanted bazaar traders to refrain from providing single-use plastics and for visitors to bring their own food containers and buy wisely.

"On an average day, there are 38,000 tonnes of waste, of which 44 per cent are food waste.

"Based on our studies, during festivities, food wastage would increase between 15 and 20 per cent.

"This trend has never changed over the years and remains a challenge for us to resolve."

He said it was vital for consumers to adopt the 4R practice of Refuse, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

He said there would be sufficient workers to manage public cleansing and waste collection during Ramadan and the Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebrations.

He said it was a non-issue as it had 26,000 workers in the seven states. Foreign workers made up 30 per cent of the workforce, he added.