

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS PLAN TO SUBMIT VIEWS TO MINISTRY

Dialogue participants want S'pore to focus on reducing waste

AMANDA LEE
leeguiping@mediacorp.com.sg

SINGAPORE – Singaporeans need to look beyond the focus on recycling and consider the other “Rs” such as “reduce” and “reuse”, so less waste is generated in the first place.

This was among the opinions that surfaced at a dialogue yesterday to gather views from the public, which environmental enthusiasts hope to compile and submit to the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources.

The ministry is reviewing the Sustainable Singapore Blueprint, which was launched in 2009 and sets out strategies and initiatives for Singapore to develop sustainably as a society.

Speaking at the dialogue, Mr Teoh Soon Kay, a manager at the National

Environment Agency's Waste and Resource Management Department, said that, with Singapore's growing population and scarce land, a new offshore landfill is required every 30 to 35 years.

“Waste treatment is not just about burning it and putting it on the ground. We have to look upstream to minimise and prevent waste and then to recycle waste,” he said.

Last year, 61 per cent of the Republic's waste was recycled. Semakau Landfill — Singapore's only landfill — is estimated to run out of space by 2035 if the current rate of waste growth continues.

While Mr Teoh pointed out that Singapore has set a recycling target of 70 per cent by 2030, participants suggested reducing 10 per cent waste per capita by 2017 and introducing the con-

cept of the “6 Rs” — reduce, rethink, refuse, repair, recycle and reuse.

Said Mr Tan Hang Chong, assistant honorary secretary of the Nature Society (Singapore): “This would help in reducing the amount of waste you need to recycle in the first place and thus make recycling a measure of last resort.”

Agreeing, environmental consultant Eugene Tay said people need to acknowledge how much waste they are creating. “There should be a basic responsibility that you have to take care of your waste,” he added.

The lack of awareness of recycling and reducing waste was also flagged as a concern, with participants suggesting that a mascot be created to promote recycling and that education on environmental issues be made com-

“**Waste treatment is not just about burning it and putting it on the ground. We have to look upstream to minimise and prevent waste and then to recycle waste.**

Mr Teoh Soon Kay
MANAGER AT
NEA'S WASTE
AND RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
DEPARTMENT

pulsory at pre-schools and primary schools by 2018.

One participant suggested having a countdown meter to point out the number of days before Semakau Landfill is filled up. Another proposed banning the use of styrofoam by next year.

It was also suggested that recycling bins be better located at public housing estates and that mandatory recycling or segregation for waste disposal should be a clause for all government contracts by 2018, where relevant.

However, most participants felt that, facilities and schemes aside, the desire to recycle and reduce waste must come from the individual.

Said 33-year-old Saitong Hwang-kuntham, a fund associate: “Kids pick up habits before going to school. They need to start young and we can start by educating their parents first.”

The dialogue session yesterday, called Conversations on Sustainable Singapore, was one of three co-organised by Nature Society (Singapore), Singapore Management University club SMU verts and Green Future Solutions. The third session on Food Security (Food Supply and Food Waste) will be held on May 24.