

DISGRACEFUL PROUD OF THE DEVELOPED NATIONS

~ Do you really recycle? ~

After consumed a bottle of drinking water at home, probably you would ask your children to segregate the bottle for recycling, but what you wouldn't know is, this plastic bottle may end up at Jenjarom, Malaysia, about 6,500 miles away from the UK, 8,800 miles away from New Zealand or 9,300 miles from the US.

When I saw the photo of a Malaysian young woman holding a kid in front of a big heap of waste plastics disposed at her home ground in Jenjarom as published by Nita Blake-Persen of RadioNZ in her story entitled "*An Unbearable Smell in the Air: NZ's role in the Malaysian plastic dumping ground*", I started to think of a reason why should these villagers suffer from other peoples' problem, whether it is from UK, New Zealand or the US? Is it simply because they are poor and the one who dumped the plastic wastes are rich and have the power to pollute? Do developing countries have obligations to manage pollutions created by the developed countries? Don't you feel guilty that these Malaysian villagers have to suffer from the waste plastics that you have dumped from your home thousands of miles away?

Unwanted wastes sent from developed countries to developing countries is not new, but news. This problem has been reported by many international journalists before such as the disposal of E-wastes to China, India and many African countries. Also, exportation of so-called secondhand products from developed countries to poor countries in Southeast Asia, South America and African regions, in which all these products at the end become unwanted wastes on the lands of the poor countries.



Throughout last year New Zealand sent 6,300 tonnes of plastic waste to Malaysia – Nita Blake-Persen, RadioNZ

It is no doubt to be PROUD of achieving high recycling rate, but is there a DISGRACEFUL story hidden behind?

With the import ban of 24 types of waste materials as announced by China from 2018, more than 7 million tones of waste plastics previously processed by China was struggling to look for new destinations, i.e. any piece of lands on earth where these million tones of waste plastics can partly be recycled into raw materials, while the remaining or waste residual to rest in peace either into the landfill, marine, incinerator or even openly burnt. Worst even is the pollution created from the entire process of improper waste plastics recycling, through storage, washing, cleaning, melting and heating etc. Moreover, million of tones of carbon emission or the carbon footprint along the way of thousands miles of transportation, why should this be made a burden to the Mother Earth when the whole world is talking about carbon reduction?

Peoples from developing countries including myself are taught in school that there are many countries out there that are much developed not only in terms of their infrastructure development, utilities, but also human behaviors. We always have an impression that the developed nations are rich and high in terms of awareness, they do no spitting, no littering and they segregate their waste properly for recycling, they do things that we from developing countries have to always learn from.

Today, we learnt that a lot of plastic wastes consumed by the developed nations are dumped on my country's lands in Malaysia. What is going on? Look at the statistics, all the countries that proudly claimed to be leading in terms of recycling rate are developed countries, Germany (66%), Austria (56%), Belgium (53%), Switzerland (53%), Netherlands (52%), Australia (51%), Sweden (48%), Denmark (46%), Italy (44%), UK (43.5%), Norway (43%), Poland (42.5%), Finland (41%) and France (40%) and the US (35%). I started to doubt about these numbers, do you really do recycling in your countries? You probably don't? Are you really proud of these numbers?

We do understand the responsibility lies on the shoulders of both the exporting and importing countries, and not all developed countries are doing the same. However, trading of waste plastics worldwide is not well controlled and mostly business driven at the moment. The issue has emerged to become not just business issue, but about ethics, abuse, cross-border pollution and impacts to the flow of wastes of the entire world.

To all peoples from the developed countries, please hear the vows from the villagers, they do not want to live with your plastic wastes surrounded their homes, they do not want their children to grow up unhealthily on the wastes dumps as playing ground. Please control the destinations of your own waste, please do not give to others what you would not want them to give to you, please do not trade "pollution" to poorer countries.

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