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By Jegathisan Sivanesan

KOTA KINABALU: The Kota Kinabalu City Hall (DBKK) has been conducting learning visits to solid waste management facilities in the Peninsular with the hope of making Sabah cleaner, safer and more environmentally-friendly for locals and visitors alike.

According to self-compiled data sourced from the Ministry of Local Government and Housing (KPKT) from 2012 to 2022, there are 21 non-sanitary landfills throughout Sabah, making it only second nationally to Sarawak which tops the list with 43.

As for sanitary landfills, Sabah only has one, which is the Kayu Madang Sanitary Landfill. This landfill, which is located near the city area, had been affected by a fire in March this year which took firefighters several days to extinguish.

When asked to comment, Mayor Dato' Seri Dr Sabin Samitah said his side has a long-term plan to improve the landfill and solid waste management system in Sabah.

"We have also been sending our officers to the Peninsular to study the management methods of landfills there in order to better our system in Sabah.

"The things we learned there, especially those that can bring us the most benefits, will be practised here," he told reporters after officiating the soft launching of Rafflesia Chicken Hut (RCH) Express at Karamuning shopping complex here on Saturday.

On whether DBKK has plans to build more sanitary landfills in areas under its jurisdiction, Sabin said this will depend on the direction of the Sabah Government and the City Hall's capabilities.

He added that it has been observed that the number of landfills in developed countries has actually been decreasing in



The closed phase 1 and 2 site of Bukit Tagar Sanitary Landfill.

recent years, so this needs to be taken into account too.

"DBKK not only needs to align with the Sabah Government's direction, but it also needs to obtain the methods and machineries to replace the current solid waste management system with a more sanitary one that does not require building big landfills," he said.

In May this year, Borneo Post reporter Jegathisan Sivanesan had attended a workshop on investigative journalism in Petaling Jaya, organised by news portal MalaysiaKini.

Part of this workshop included a trip to the Bukit Tagar Sanitary Landfill (BTSL) at the Bukit Tagar EnviroParks (BTEP) in Selangor, which has been operating since 2005.

Berjaya Enviro Holdings Sdn Bhd managing director Koh Chee Yong had informed that DBKK was planning to visit the BTSL to learn about their management and practices.

Koh said the park consists of, among others, a well-planned sanitary landfill operating cell and a state-of-the-art leachate

treatment plant as well as an advanced landfill gas-to-renewable energy facility which has been supplying 400 million Kilowatt-hour (KWH) to the Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) grid since 2009.

The landfill, according to him, was designed to the highest standards of KPKT and US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), with a triple liner system consisting of compacted soil, high-density polyethylene (HDPE) and protection layer to prevent leachate seepage into groundwater.

With an airspace of 120 million tonnes, this landfill apparently has enough capacity to dispose of solid wastes generated from Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Putrajaya in excess of 50 years.

The writer observed at the site of Phase 1 and 2 of the sanitary landfill, which has been closed with the said liner system for several years, that there were no bad odors compared to traditional or non-sanitary landfills despite the piles of rubbish buried underneath.

Also interestingly, the park, which has a landfill footprint of 659 acres, has an additional 500-metre buffer zone comprising 1000 acres of underdeveloped land surrounding the landfill.

Koh informed that this buffer zone was put in place not only to ensure that nearby housing areas are not affected by their operations but also to conserve the environment.

In the same commitment to maintain the integrity of the environment, he said the aforementioned landfill gas-to-renewable energy facility uses a comprehensive strategy to generate green energy from landfill gas (LFG).

Koh added that their method of treating LFG via the above facility aims to promote sustainability of natural resource by reducing the use of fossil fuel in electricity production.

"With a fully engineered facility employing modern technology and international best practices, we aim to set the benchmark for solid waste management in the country," he said.