MSW Management in Malaysia—Changes for Sustainability

Agamuthu Pariatamby

1 Introduction

Municipal Solid Waste is solid, other than emission or effluent, and is regarded as inevitable, valueless by-product due to human activities, and is generated at a rate and discarded after use when no longer needed by the generator. Waste consists of materials that are no longer considered valuable and subsequently disposed off (Tchobanoglous et al. 1993).

In Malaysia, urban waste generation increased 3% annually due to urban migration, affluence and rapid development (Agamuthu 2001). In 2008, approximately 31,000 tonnes of waste were disposed off into 260 landfills in Malaysia (Agamuthu et al. 2009a, b). Municipal solid waste (MSW) problems have been gaining prominence in Malaysia due to the ever increasing waste generation and the ineffectiveness of the existing mechanism to tackle the problem holistically (Agamuthu and Fauziah 2006). Early management of solid waste involved very little effort since waste was generated at a manageable level and generally consists of organic materials such as food waste, paper, wood and others (Fauziah et al. 2007). This began to change with the increase in the human population and advancement in living standards. Quantity of waste generated increased together with the complexity of waste where plastic and other mixed waste became a significant portion in the waste stream. This called for an appropriate waste management system to avoid the proliferation of disease and the deterioration of environmental quality through pollution.

---

Agamuthu Pariatamby (E3)
Faculty of Science University of Malaya, Institute of Biological Sciences,
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia