There is Money in Sewerage!

Posted by: admin in MyBlog on Mar 31, 2011

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The paid sanitation or sewerage services come in two forms that are connected and non-connected services. Connected service is where the sewerage and kitchen wastewater goes straight to Indah Water Konsortium (IWK) or Local Government operated plants.

The non-connected service is where old housings and rural areas have their individual septic tanks that treat sewerage only.

These septic tanks need periodic desludging (removal of solid deposited at the bottom of the tank). Desluding will ensure that the septic tanks function is in optimum level.

The cost of desluding can vary from RM 200 to RM 300 or more. If desludging is not done, the sewerage will directly flow to drainage or river. This will directly pollute the water resources.

According to Malaysia Water Industry Guide 2010, a total of 6,434,483 Individual Septic Tanks and 5,519,616 Pour Flush systems are still operating in Peninsular Malaysia and Labuan.

The pour flush system has higher damaging capacity towards environment compared to individual septic tanks. This is due to the pour flush is direct discharge to environment.

These systems have to be gradually shifted to a sustainable connected system. This needs long term planning and huge investment.

For connected system, sewerage in cities is collected in centralized mode and is currently being treated and discharged at either Standard A or B based on Department of Environment's wastewater discharge standard.

This is actually an untapped resource especially for water stress locations. 50 - 80 % of water usage at domestic houses goes into sewerage system.

Sydney in Australia, Middle East countries, and Singapore are harvesting this resource for both potable and non-potable usage. Malaysia has huge potential to develop this field in domestic, commercial and industrial areas.

This treated sewerage wastewater can be used to cool machines and other non-food processing plants, water parks under local government, etc.

Dedicated pipes can be linked to high demand areas with special request. In addition to that, trucks that water greenery for local government can collect treated water at dedicated sewerage plants easily due to their mobility.

Much more can also be done to sustainably harvest methane from sewerage to reduce sewerage treatment plant dependency on electricity. This also means that, sewerage can become another sustainable renewable energy resource.

There is also possibility of converting the sludge into fertilizers for non-edible plants. AWER urges Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water to relook into this much overlooked sector.

Putting more monetary return on the wastes generated will reduce operational cost of sewerage treatment plant and also enable more enhancements in the technology used.

Let make more economic sense in sewerage as the resource will never deplete!

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Note: The above letter is an opinion of the author and does not reflect Klik4Malaysia's stand.