

Covid-19 contributed to more clinical waste last year

KUALA LUMPUR: The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and Covid-19 test equipment in managing patients at healthcare facilities and quarantine centres has contributed to an increase in clinical waste generated last year compared to 2019.

Chief statistician Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin said the quantity of clinical waste generated in 2020 rose 18.1% to 39,883.32 metric tonnes compared to 33,756.99 metric tonnes in 2019, reports Bernama.

He said three states that recorded the highest clinical waste generation were Selangor, with 9,703.41 metric tonnes, followed by Sarawak (4,101.96 metric tonnes) and Kuala Lumpur (4,073.19 metric tonnes).

“The quantity of controlled waste generated by industries was 7,185,227.76 metric tonnes in 2020, a 79% rise, compared to 4,013,189 metric tonnes reported in 2019.

“The rise was from the power generation plant and water treatment plant industries, which were categorised as essential services,” he said in a statement yesterday, commenting on the Compendium of Environment Statistics, Malaysia 2021 published by the Statistics Department.

In terms of states, Selangor contributed the highest amount of scheduled waste at 28.5% followed by Johor (16.8%) and Negri Sembilan (16.2%).

Mohd Uzir said that throughout the enforcement of the movement control order last year, the country also recorded more days of “good” and “moderate” air quality status.

He said the Air Pollution Index (API) readings showed a decrease in air pollutant levels, especially in major cities such as Pasir Gudang, Petaling Jaya, Shah Alam and Cheras, Kuala Lumpur.

“The decline is due to the reduction of activities and less emission of pollutants into the air such as motor vehicle smoke emissions, industrial chimney smoke emissions and open burning activities,” he added.

Also, air pollutant substances such as particulate matter, ground level ozone, carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide showed a declining trend during the implementation of the movement control order and conditional movement control order.

However, air pollutant substances increased during the recovery movement control order as more businesses were allowed to operate and movement was less restricted.

Mohd Uzir added that the movement control order had also affected river water quality in 2020.

Based on the results of the monitoring of 144 river basins by the Department of Environment, 104 or 72.2% of river basins were in the clean category compared to 85 recorded in 2019.

Metered water consumption for the domestic sector, however, increased by 5.2% last year due to new norms such as working from home, home-based learning programmes and the movement control order that restricted people to their residences.

“Consumption for the non-domestic sector, however, decreased by 8% in 2020 compared to 2019 as some businesses were closed entirely throughout the first MCO while others were restricted to limited business hours,” he added.

The Compendium of Environment Statistics, Malaysia 2021 presents environmental statistics on six components - environmental conditions and quality; environmental resources and their use; residuals; extreme events and disasters; human settlements and environmental health; as well as environmental protection, management and engagement.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2021/11/30/covid-19-contributed-to-more-clinical-waste-last-year>