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Garbage and dirt

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RECENTLY Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad called on Malaysians to improve cleanliness especially in public places and toilets, hawker centres and flats. Why do we take things so easy that our leaders have to remind us of cleanliness?

Are we by nature 'unclean' or a 'dirty society'? Why do we care so little about garbage and dirt? It is not unusual to see some residents dutifully cleaning their surroundings and then dumping the whole lot on some open space. Is this the way to solve the garbage problem?

Who really are the cause of litter, the buyers, the manufacturers or the packaging people? The packagers blame the litter bugs. They say 'we don't create pollution or garbage, we only make packages. It is the messy public that does it!' The consumers in turn blame the packagers for making these 'throwaways'.

Garbage comes from both these sources. But who is to carry away all this garbage? Sometimes the municipal councils privatise these jobs to the contractors and this leaves much to be desired. They don't remove everything, but try telling them about the problem and it's like waving a red flag at a bull! The municipal councils must buck up and they can surely do a better job.

Some say it is the lackadaisical attitude of the people who leave their garbage anywhere but the rubbish bins. Some residents hang the garbage on tree trunks for days!

But let's stop pointing the finger at each other and play our part in managing garbage. To begin with, perhaps we need a better disposal system. Are plastic bags the answer? Can they be replaced by biodegradable and more environment-friendly ones? Then there is a need for stricter enforcement of laws. Those who litter should be heavily fined.

Let's also improve our lifestyles to become 'clean and tidy' and not a litterbug society. Let not people say we are a bunch of 'dirty people' who cannot even manage our own garbage.

Besides, cleaning up litter is a costly affair. Someone has to pay for disposal of such garbage and in the end it is the consumer who pays for it directly or indirectly. What a waste, in collecting waste!