

LIFE&TIMES **GREEN**

Some houses around Malaysia have installed rain water harvesting tanks.



Harvest all that rain

There's a way to cope with our water shortages that leverages on our rainy season, discovers **Aneeta Sundararaj**

YOU come in from your morning jog, bathed in sweat. You take off your gear, step into the shower cubicle and turn the knob. Not a drop of water comes out of the shower nozzle. Darn it!

You're one of the many homes in the Klang Valley suffering from water rationing. As you deal with your angst, you wonder if there's anything you can do to avoid another painful water rationing exercise. Perhaps you should install a tank to store water. However, the dilemma is whether to store this tank in, under, above or next to the house. Each method costs money, with some being rather exorbitant.

According to Yasmin Rasyid, there is a simpler way and that involves working with nature by harvesting rainwater and using gravity.

"Malaysians, unfortunately, are one of the highest consumers of water. On average, we use 220 to 250 litres of water or about 160 bottles of 1.5-litre water per person daily. The average Malaysian finds

it difficult to adapt to a reduced water consumption pattern. We've never had to deal with it before. I mean, this is tropical country with abundant rainfall. I remember drinking water from the pipe. Now, without a filtration system, no one dares to drink from the pipe," says Yasmin, 39, chairperson of the Malaysia Environmental NGOs (Mengo).

She adds that Malaysians are very good at complaining but generally clueless about what to do.

Waving her hand, she adds: "We should make full use of the rainy season and collect as much water as possible. I still remember how my grandmother would put buckets out to collect rain water to use later on. I feel that if every home is able to store water, we can reduce the water crisis considerably."

Yasmin identifies another aspect of the water crisis: For most Malaysians, when there is no water, they either choose to go to a relative's house or book into a hotel. What about those who don't have the same opportunities, such as people who live in shelter homes, old folk's homes and similar establishments. This is where the Waterful Sharing Campaign by Laneige Malaysia comes into the picture.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The company is launching its Waterful Charity Kit featuring a limited edition packaging design where RM10 from the charity kit will be contributed towards the targeted fund.

Foong Winnie, 38, brand manager of Laneige Malaysia, says: "Actually, we would like to do a call-out to

other corporations to join in this campaign so that more homes can benefit from this initiative. We envision the Waterful Sharing Campaign to be an annual effort where multiple stakeholders come together to make a difference."

Yasmin then identifies some of the problem areas referring to one of the houses that will benefit from this campaign, Praise Emmanuel Children's Home in Petaling Jaya.

"Look at the roof here. When it rains, the water falls onto the roof and comes down like sheets onto the front porch. What I'd like to do is create a gutter all around the roof through the gutter system and U-shaped lining pipes. The water will then collect in this gutter and be channelled into the pipe. The pipe will channel the water into the tank. This means that the rainwater harvested will be directed to a specific place in the house, in this case, the



Yasmin explaining how homes can benefit from recycling rain water.

toilet. We harvest the rainwater and use gravity. Simple.

"Also, I see that these children are trying to create a vegetable patch to grow their own vegetables. The water we collect from here can be used to water the plants as well."

The cost of installing such a rainwater harvesting system will, Yasmin hopes, not exceed RM20,000 per home.

In all, the Waterful Sharing Campaign hopes to raise RM60,000 between now and mid-September when the rainwater harvesting systems will be installed.

For now, the project will focus on three shelter homes for children. Adds Yasmin: "This is a litmus test to see how well the general public responds to the call for action to assist marginalised homes address water-related issues."

WAYS TO SAVE WATER

To add to these efforts, both women share some of their tips for saving water.

Yasmin says: "The easiest one, of course, is waste separation. People don't realise that water is used in everything. Even to make what you wear, the factory needs water. Dyeing

the cotton to make clothes needs water. When you drink from a can, it's not just the drink that uses water, even making the can uses water. Cut your hair short as it takes more water to maintain long hair. Shower time should be less. Children of today listen to music when they shower. I've told my daughter, one song — she is allowed to shower to one song. That's four minutes, tops."

Foong came up with a fun-filled way to save some water during the recent school holidays.

"Instead of everyone having a shower, my two daughters and I blew up the inflatable pool, filled it with water and all of us jumped in. Then, when we finished, we used the water for the plants and to wash the porch."

Ultimately, what Yasmin and Foong are trying to do can be summed up simply as re-customising a home so that the flow of rainwater is redirected in an efficient manner. Yasmin concludes: "For a home like this, the water collected translates to money saved on the water bill. For charity homes like this shelter home for children, the ultimate beneficiaries of what we're trying to do are, of course, the children."