

LIFE&TIMES **GREEN**

# East meets waste

An expert tells **Aneeta Sundararaj** that with effective waste management, we will not only save the planet but also money

**M**OST people start becoming environmentally-friendly by sorting household waste into paper, glass and plastic. Then, they take this waste to a recycling centre and discard it in the hope that the waste will be disposed of in an environmentally-friendly manner. What if this process could become a sustainable business as well?

Ken Hickson of Sustain Ability Showcase Consultancy Asia Pte Ltd sees this as a distinct possibility.

"Sustainability is more than about helping the environment and committing to charitable causes. In a business sense, it involves corporate social responsibility, governance, ethics and transparency," explains Hickson.

"Say a company wants to invest in a Clean Development Mechanism project. They come to know of a small company that has developed solar power lights. They can invest in this business and provide these lights in an off-grid area. These new lights will replace kerosene lamps which can damage the environment."

Continuing, he says "It's a win-win situation." The company investing in such a project will get carbon credits and the affected area will become more environmentally friendly. The whole idea of carbon-credit investment in clean energy as an alternative or additional to what's happening now."

#### WANT NOT, WASTE NOT

What underlies Hickson's arguments is this: "There is a nexus between water, food and climate. It has been reported by the UN recently that water problems in many parts of the world are

chronic. If we don't crack down on waste, the situation will worsen as demand for food will rise," says Hickson.

After a pause, he asks: "Do you know how much food is wasted?"

Then he frowns and answers: "An Amerikkans throws away 15 kilogrammes of food each month. In 2010 alone, 15 million kilogrammes of food ended up in landfills or incin-

erators across the US."

Asia does not lag far behind as it is how to use this waste. "It's a paradigm shift. Rather than just getting rid of things, albeit in an environmentally-friendly manner, we need to see how we can use

these same things as a resource."

#### LOOKING EAST

Taipei is one of the best examples of waste management in Asia. Hickson explains how citizens of Taipei had to "hand over their waste in special plastic bags to the municipal council".

The council had special times and venues to collect such waste.

As a result, domestic waste in Taipei has dropped by 60percent in 10 years. "It's an example of effective collection, distribution and management of waste."

Waste can be categorised in the following manner: the first is chemical waste. This is waste from chemical plants and is both a health and environmental hazard. Then we have electronic waste such as televisions and telephones. Last is municipal waste such as food, paper and glass.

Reiterating his stance, he says: "Let's not just dump our waste. Let's use it."

He describes how, in Australia, there's a company that uses CO2 emissions from coal-fired power stations as fuel to grow algae. The oil from this algae is used as fuel and the algae itself is used as feed

stock for farming. "CO2 is just going into the air. Here's a good way to use it."

#### CLEANER EVENTS

Then, whipping out his calling card, he asks: "Do you know the paper for my calling card is made from by-products of sugarcane waste?"

Hickson goes on to cite a few more examples of companies around the world that re-use waste products.

First, there's Clean event which focuses on events like the Olympics and Formula 1 Races. "It manages what goes into events.

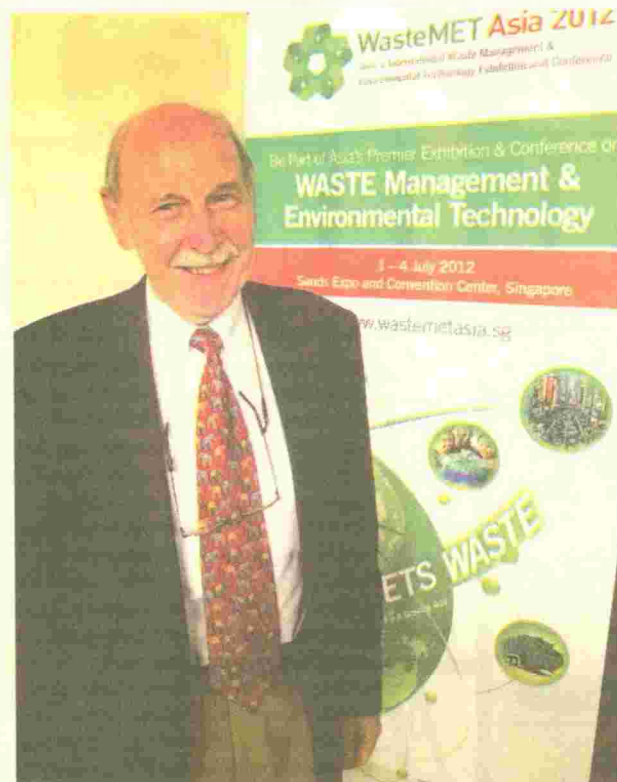
So, when you reduce the amount of packaging that goes into events, you can reduce the waste that comes out."

Alphabio Fuels is a Singaporean company that develops programmes to collect and process wasted cooking oil to make biodiesel.

Then there's Solena Jet Biofuel Project with British Airways where municipal waste destined for landfill sites will be processed and converted to biomass and organic products to be used to fuel jets.

Hickson's message is clear: "With proper effort in managing our waste effectively, we will not only save the planet, we will also save money."

Recycle rubbish and waste—should be a mantra for everyone



Ken Hickson believes that managing waste effectively can save us money as well as our planet

