Dear Editor,

DOMESTIC consumers produce two types of waste. One is organic waste and the other is waste from packaging materials from the goods we buy. Organic materials are biodegradable and do not pose a threat. Packaging material is not and requires our attention.

Industries should start finding alternative materials for packaging.We can start by not using styrofoam for take-aways in restaurants and eateries. There are containers made from tree fibres as well as oil palm tree fibres which are paper-based. We can opt to use these.

Another is to use stainless steel and glass utensils as these products can be reused after cleaning.Other industries can use corrugated paper boxes and pack aging for strength.Glass bottles and metal-based packaging is a good choice as these materials can be recycled.

The government should give tax incentives to industries that change to alternative packaging. A grace period should be given and enforcement should be implemented after that.

Consumers should also do their part. It is our responsibility to ensure that we do not buy over-packaged or unrecyclable packaging. It is possible to save 15 plastic bags in a shopping trip by using our own bags.

You can reduce shortage and waste by buying only what you need. Do not get carried away with price cuts and sales dis counts. Take into consideration the type of products you buy. By support ing eco-friendly products, you contribute to reducing the impact on the environment.

Buy reusable and recyclable packages such as paper, glass and metal. Separate the waste in

your house. Collect those that are recyclable and sell them. There are collection centres that collect recyclables for charity. Some shopping complexes have established collection centres.

We urge the government to look into setting up more collection bins and getting residents' associations and office building management to take charge.Reducing waste cannot be done by one party alone. It takes the collective effort of consumers, industries and the government.

By working together, we will be able to reduce the impact on the environment. This Earth is the only one we have. The future is in your hands.

Piarapakaran Subramaniam
FOMCA programme manager