

FROM PAGE E1

SAM: We would like to see greater political will to really make the environment a priority at all levels of government, especially at state and local government level. Politicians speak of the need to balance between environment and development but they do not see that the environment has already paid the price in terms of degradation and resource depletion. There is indeed a need to balance in favour of the environment before it is too late.

Until and unless we learn to live with the environment, we will not be able to sustain ourselves as nature's capital runs out and is polluted. Take the case of water for example.

Until and unless we give greater priority to protecting our water-catchment forests and clean our rivers, our water resources will get scarcer and dirtier. Building more dams is no solution as when we have no more good water catchment forests, they will be no more water. So it is vital that we give better effect to the environmental policies and laws.

WWF Malaysia: We would like to see the establishment of wildlife ecological corridors that link our forests; effective protection and management of our crucial eco-system; drastic reduction of pollution levels through effective enforcement and awareness programmes; to see society embracing a "green" lifestyle, i.e. by practicing the 3Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle) and more efforts from the media, corporate and public sectors to raise awareness to the public.

MNS: We hope that environmental planning would be on par with economic planning - that it will be given priority, resources and funding. We also want to see the relevant agencies strengthened - in terms of technical capacity and enforcement effectiveness and that environmental education begin in schools at the earliest level.

There is also need for more recognition of the role of other stakeholders including

All Malaysians need to wake up to doing more for the environment. We need to understand how our unsustainable consumer lifestyles cannot continue at the expense of the environment and how we need to push the government for better policies and implementation.



Deforestation (top) at the Belum forest and landslide at Bukit Gasing. Both show the lack of enforcement by the authorities

NGOs, civil society, academia and local communities. The national environment council also needs to be "stronger" and more proactive. We also want to see state governments being held more accountable for environmental planning and control; application of the polluter-pays or user-pays principle; and more financial or tax incentives for the public and private sectors to adopt best practices, reduce resource, energy use and waste production to help protect the environment.

What about in the short term? Is there anything we need to do urgently and immediately, today?

SAM: There has to be a greater sense of urgency about the environmental crisis facing us in the country. Many do not even realise that fundamental changes are necessary in the way we consume and live.

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Take the case of using cars. How many of us will give up our cars in favour of public transport? Sure, the public transport system must improve and that is what we are campaigning for. But are we as concerned and conscious citizens willing to give up our cars for public transport? Are we willing to pay more for excessive use of water and electricity? Are we willing to conserve more? Are we willing to reduce our generation of wastes? This is why environmental awareness and understanding is most urgent.

WWF Malaysia: Practise the 3Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle) and act as the eyes and ears to the authorities in reporting illegal activities (i.e. selling of tiger meat/ tiger products, river pollution, etc.)

MNS: The government should commission the preparation of a "State of the Environment" report for Malaysia - to be undertaken by an independent body and presented to Parliament, for action. The most immediate action which will bring the most short term benefit is to

promote the Reuse, Reduce and Recycle strategy and a love of the environment via a national campaign with private sector partners and to introduce an environmental education programme in schools and in companies.

What is your wish for Malaysians in relation to the environment?

SAM: Our wish is for Malaysians to realise that we cannot continue to ignore what's happening around us and to see how we are contributing to the degradation of the environment. It would be great for every Malaysian to be an environmentally concerned citizen and activist. We should expose those who destroy and degrade the environment. We should adapt to lifestyles which are more environmentally sound - consume less; push for sustainable alternatives; push an end to unsustainable ways of life like contributing to more garbage or more pollution and really become a true friend of the environmental cause.

WWF Malaysia: For Malaysians to make an active effort to learn and understand fully the various environmental issues we are facing today, and to take action, where possible, to improve things.

MNS: That we reach a point where all Malaysians recognise that the state of our environment is our shared responsibility and that Malaysians will reawaken to the beauty and bounty that Nature provides for us and to realise that we need to protect nature even as nature provides for our basic needs.

How long have you been wishing the same things? Is anyone listening?

SAM: SAM has been saying many of these things as early as the late 70s. Not enough people are listening. If more were listening, then we would not have lost so much these past years. However, it is better late than never!

WWF Malaysia: Long enough. There have been improvements. At the same time, there is still a lot that needs to be done.

MNS: Many years, and we have seen some small, largely "band-aid" type efforts to improve. Hearing yes, but listening no!

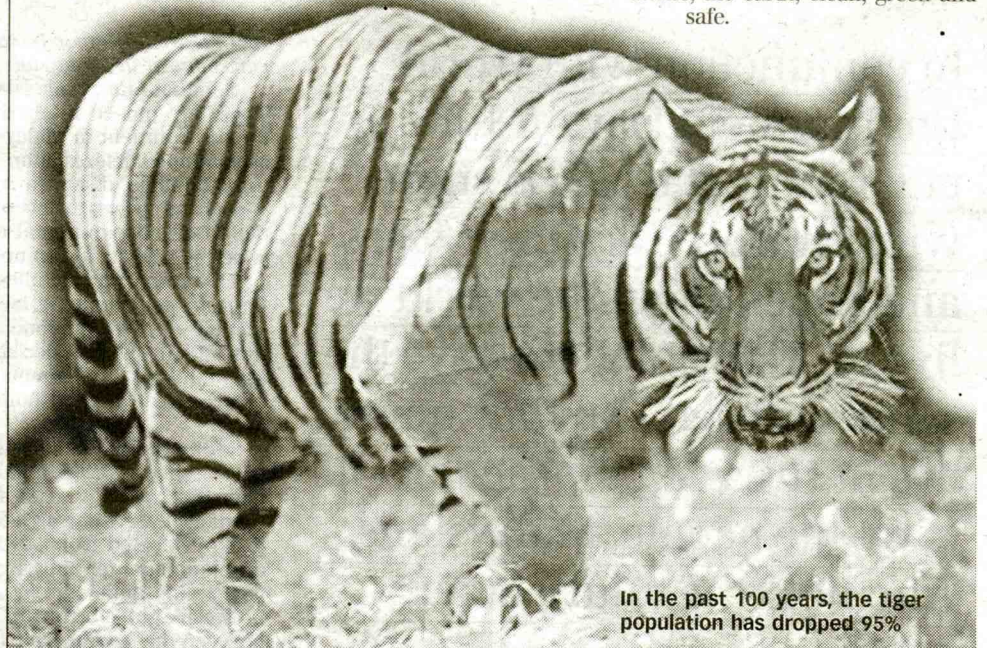
Any other comments?

SAM: World Environment Day should not be celebrated only in one day a year! Every day should be an environment day. Only then, will we make a difference.

WWF Malaysia: Our environment is the only one that we have and will ever have, so it is crucial that all Malaysians learn our roles and the effort to contribute to its long-term conservation. The government should also be proactive by focusing on preventive measures instead of merely corrective ones.

MNS: The government of Malaysia should realise and acknowledge that all their efforts to promote development of the country and its people is ultimately meaningless if we can't (or won't) take the necessary steps to ensure a safe, secure and sustainable environment. In the global arena, we talk the talk, but our actions speak louder than words.

If man really is so smart, let him prove it by saving himself and the other species in the world from destruction by keeping our only home, the earth, clean, green and safe.



In the past 100 years, the tiger population has dropped 95%



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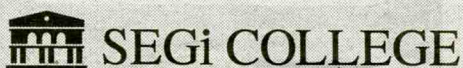
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