



We only have One Earth

In conjunction with World Environment Day on June 5, environmental NGOs share with Sharon Kam their fears and hopes about the world we live in. Many of them have the same message but they never tire in stressing the fact that it is we the people, Malaysians, who hold the future in our hands.

WHAT are the major threats to the environment in Malaysia?

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM): There are indeed many threats to the environment in Malaysia, such as continued deforestation which is unsustainable, disappearing biodiversity and species extinction, degradation of environmental quality – water, air, noise and so on.

However, what underlies all these threats is poor planning, lack of integration of environmental parameters into all levels of decision-making and weak implementation and enforcement of good policies and laws.

Malaysia has good policies on paper – such as the National Physical Plan that sets out what are environmentally sensitive areas that need to be protected from all forms of development. Yet, they remain on paper. One major threat of course is the fragmentation of powers between the federal, state and local government level.

WWF Malaysia: Forest conversion and fragmentation which could lead to loss of natural habitat and create human-wildlife conflict; pollution and consumer behaviour (i.e. over-use of natural resources).

Malaysian Nature Society (MNS): Bad land-use planning – lack of integrated land use and natural resource management and planning or rather no planning. Poor enforcement of laws and regulations.

Lack of trained personnel for natural resource management and enforcement of environmental legislation (i.e. not enough capacity within government). Lack of public awareness and participation as well as private sector involvement in environmental planning and monitoring.

What do you hope for or hope to see done for the environment in Malaysia within the next five years?