Preparing our children for a sustainable future

Exploring Sustainable Development

THE chaotic year of 2022 has come to a close.

Earlier this month, I delivered a lecture to over 100 students at the University of South Carolina, including a handful from Kalimantan and at least one from West Papua, to attend the Youth Investment Summit.

In the lecture, I explained the linkages between land use, agriculture, and the microeconomics illustrating how they affect each other and cannot be simply treated separately. Many in the audience flew in the air right after I finished talking. I was flooded with dozens of questions. The youth were not only so eager to learn about sustainable development but also very passionate about sharing their ideas and solutions in tackling some of the most pressing issues they care about.

The topics raised include poverty, tourism, education, democracy, and many more. The discussion was very interactive and stimulating.

The world has become very different. The key difference lies in the speed of change. Rapid technological advances have changed the world. Thanks to technological advancement, our generation has more than enough to eat, has become relatively healthier than our parents, and has been experiencing a population explosion. More talents than ever have emerged, driving technological revolution on an unprecedented scale.

However, various indications show that this state of affairs is unsustainable. The Earth’s resources are limited. As far as current technology is concerned, we have not yet found an effective way to slow down our consumption of resources.

The rapid increase in consumption volume and rate has put the earth under tremendous pressure. We see rapid changes in climate, sea level, water resources, biodiversity, etc. Some scientists have proposed to name this age of rapid change as the Anthropocene. Climate change is happening so quickly that our next generation will likely face a distinctive world. Climate change may increase the risk and frequency of natural disasters, such as floods and landslides, forest fires, pests and plagues, land degradation and crop failures, etc. Inevitably, and uneven distribution of resources may widen the wealth gap and deepen social conflicts, leading to incidents like food shortages and energy crises. It is scary to imagine what will actually happen.

Many people place their hopes on technology. However, it will always be some intelligent people who can come up with some magical technology to save the world.

The scenario from Hollywood movies may come true, but the recent pandemic has taught us a lesson – the process will be very painful. Many will suffer, and governments will lose their lives.

We need to have the capability to withstand and recover quickly when exposed to economically adverse situations. What prevents us from building resilience is our ignorance and lack of knowledge of the changing world.

Especially, educating children in developing countries is crucial for sustainable development at the very core. As one of the key drivers of change in the future, we need to prepare our children to face various challenges. As young people will shape the society of the future, it is important to give appropriate recognition for their contributions.

I believe that a sustainable future is in our hands. It is crucial that we educate our children to prepare them for a better future.

I look forward to a better year in 2023.

For Don Gong Sheng is a researcher at the University of Oxford and Harvard University. His research and writing focus on the intersection of bio-economy development with environmental restoration, with a special focus on African, European, and Indonesian smallholders.

Federation sets up disaster relief sub-units to reach out to flood victims

KUCHING: Four disaster relief sub-units have been established in Sarawak, Sibu and Behrang to complement the authority’s efforts in reaching out to flood victims, especially in difficult-to-access areas.

These sub-units in Kuching, Bau, Sebayau and Serian come under the supervision of the Disaster Relief Head Unit led by Captain Tan Kok Ching.

Speaking at a news conference on Sunday, Tan said the four sub-units will be led by their respective persons in-charge, who are mostly the local leaders to effectively address various aspects.

"Our federation’s Disaster Relief Unit was set up to tackle floods, and now its role has expanded to cover disasters such as flood.

The four sub-units will have their own teams to go around helping those who are in need, especially in view of the threat from the authorities that the southern part of Sarawak is at risk.

Tan said the federation will work closely with the authorities such as the Fire and Rescue Department and Sarawak Armed Defence Force (SAF) to assist victims in the event of disasters.

He added that they will also seek collaboration with the Sarawak Welfare Department as well as the Sarawak Welfare Department to address the needs of disaster victims.

The authorities have a provision to evacuate communities from flood areas, three meals a day at fixed times may not be sufficient.

He observed that there were victims of affected families who were sent to the evacuation centres to receive meals, most times, especially at night.

"These victims may miss their meals at night if we are not able to come in to provide meals. In addition, evacuation centres are not able to provide cooked food. We will need to be able to help with this.”

"We will have a cook, cooked food or essential items such as diapers and milk powder which may not be provided by the authorities," he explained.

Towards this end, Tan called upon members of the public to cooperate in order to enable various disaster relief units to serve the flood victims more effectively.

“Please appeal to the public to cooperate in our feed distribution so that we can distribute to the four sub-units, especially in Kuching,” he said.

Meanwhile, Kapitan Ehan Tan beams the Kuching and Bau sub-units and can be contacted on 082-887777, while Penghulu Law Kiah Seng (084-880888) and Lai Chau Ling (084-880887), in Sebayau and Serian sub-units.

To report floods, call Thomas Tan (019-5437648) or Tan Soon Hwa (019-6350582).

To donate to the federation, call office secretary at 084-266229 during office hours or 019-8885314, Kapitan Tan Teck Ming (019-6808830 or 019-5080673), or Tan Soon Hwa (019-5437648), who will be on 24-hour standby.

Among those present were Tan’s wife, the president of the federation Michelle Tan, and vice president Patricia ‘Wai Nang. (Photo: Sarawak Pos)

RM65-million Wang Residences project in Sibu launched, set to complete in early 2026

SIBU: The RM65-million Wang Residences development in Sibu is expected to reach completion in early 2026, says Dato Lau Ngie Hua, the chairman of development Dasin Group.

The project covers the construction of 365 units of serviced apartments, 35 units of small-office/home-office (SOHOs), and 35 shop units.

In his speech for the launch of the project at Star Mega Mall here yesterday, Ngie Hua described Wang Residences as ‘another milestone’ for Dasin Group.

Today marks another milestone for Dasin Group with the launch of Wang Residences - our first mid-to-high-end serviced apartments (undertaken) by our subsidiary company, Majestic Livings Sdn Bhd.

"Wang Residences is strategically situated along Jalan Tunuki Abdul Rahman - a dual-carriageway with good traffic flow. With greenery surroundings and rapid development nearby, it is property is perfect for home ownership and investment.

"The location provides easy access to all the major facilities, especially the Star Mega Mall - the largest mall in Central Sarawak - that is just a three-minute walk away.

"It is also 10 minute drive to the primary and secondary schools, and also a university (University of Technology Sarawak).

"The Sibu Hospital and a specialist medical centre are also within a 20-minute driving distance.

"Getting to Sibu Airport takes less than 20 minutes, thanks to the smooth traffic flow.

"The project aims to grab a six per cent discount on (the purchase of) serviced residential units that come fully furnished, under the pre-launch promotion," he elaborated.

Sibu Municipal Council (SMC) chairman Clarence Ting officiated at yesterday’s event, with Yen mogąm Datu Vincent Lau attending as a special guest.

On another subject, Ngie Hua said the Premier of Sarawak Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abang Johari bin Openg and the state ministers were presently working on a master plan meant to fully develop Sibu.

In this regard, he assured all that in the coming years, Dasin Group would continue to work closely with all the relevant quarters in developing Sibu.

Dasin Group vice-chairperson Datuk Wong Pek Hing, its executive director Lau Khan Chang and Dasin Management Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Lau Weng Chiew were also present at the event yesterday.

(From right to left) Lau Khan, Datin Patinggi Kiong Chiang, Michael, and others pose after the press conference.

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SIBU: Sibu Municipal Council (SMC) chairman Clarence Ting foresees that transportation issues will remain the local authority’s main challenge for next year.

"Next year there are two things on the top of my mind – number one is lorry parking. Lorry drivers transporting goods from one place to another coming to Sibu town currently have no place to park.

"Number two – the bus terminal at Jalan Pahlawan is too small already. So, we want to push for a new bus terminal.

"We foresee there will be more bus companies being formed in Sarawak, but then, our bus terminal is just too small," he said.

Ting told reporters this at the launch ceremony of Wang Sesidences at Star Mega Mall here yesterday.

"Elaborating on the lorry parking issue, he disclosed that he had received complaints from residents about lorries parked illegally at residential areas.

"He said SMC is studying the possibility of using the road shoulders for lorry parking as a temporary measure.

"There is a piece of land along Jalan Tun Ahmad Zaidi, which the (state) Ministry of Transport has identified.

"So they (ministry) want the council to take over and develop that piece of land," he added.

In a recent meeting with Kapit bus operators, Ting said he was informed that passengers preferred to be dropped off at Sibu Express Bus Terminal in Jalan Maju which is nearer to Sibu Central Market.

"These are some of change likely to happen in Feb or March so I think transportation is still main challenge for SMC in 2022," he said.

He opined that Sibu will continue to grow and that in completion of the Pan Borneo Highway will be the game changer for the riverside town."