

# Star ESG

ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIAL GOVERNANCE



## Of Earth And Water

While sustainability is a global issue that is recognised 24/7, 365 days a year by businesses and non-governmental organisations alike, World Water Day and Earth Day are among the most important celebrations worldwide

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# Much ado about Malaysia's water woes



By DATIN DARIA MATHEW  
and DORA HASHIM

**W**ATER is our most precious natural resource, essential for sustaining life on Earth. We depend on water for everything, from food to clothing, business operations and so much more.

In nature, plants need water to survive and grow, whereas over 10% of all known animals and about 50% of all known fish species live in freshwater ecosystems – lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands and aquifers. Despite its critical role for people and nature, freshwater is a limited and finite resource. Of all the water on earth, just 3% is fresh water.

Malaysia is blessed with rainfall exceeding 3,000mm annually, contributing to an estimated 900bil cubic metres of annual water resources. Surface water sources, primarily rivers, account for approximately 97% of our raw water supply for agricultural, domestic and industrial uses.

However, even though we are a water-rich country, we continue to face water security issues due to rising demand and pressure on water resources caused by population growth, urbanisation, industrialisation and agriculture. These issues are further exacerbated by river pollution, excessive demand, climate change impacts and unsustainable land-use practices.

## Water provision, consumption and demand

In Malaysia, water is mostly sourced from rivers and processed in water treatment plants. The water undergoes several treatment processes that comply with the Health Ministry's standards, then stored in service reservoirs. From there, a reticulation system helps to supply it to our homes, work premises, and wherever it is needed.

According to the Environment and Water Ministry, in 2020 Malaysians consumed on average 205 litres per day (l/day) of water, exceeding the World Health Organisation's recommended 165l/day.

Air Selangor reported that domestic and industrial use accounts for 53% of water demand, while agriculture accounts for the remaining 47%. Meanwhile, the National Water Resource Study predicts that water demand in Malaysia will increase by 103% by 2050.

The current high water consumption is unsustainable in the long run, as we would need to extract more water and build more facilities such as dams and treatment plants. Low water tariffs due to heavy subsidisation lead to taking water supply for granted, which can discourage the prudent use of water. On the other hand, industrial and commercial entities, though subject to higher water tariffs than domestic use, require consistent and large amounts of high-quality water.

Access to clean water also remains an issue for many rural communities. As of 2020, 53% of Orang Asli communities still do not have piped water. To sustain themselves, they rely on any available water resources, such as streams, groundwater, or rainwater harvesting. In these situations, proper watershed management is crucial to ensure water resource availability.

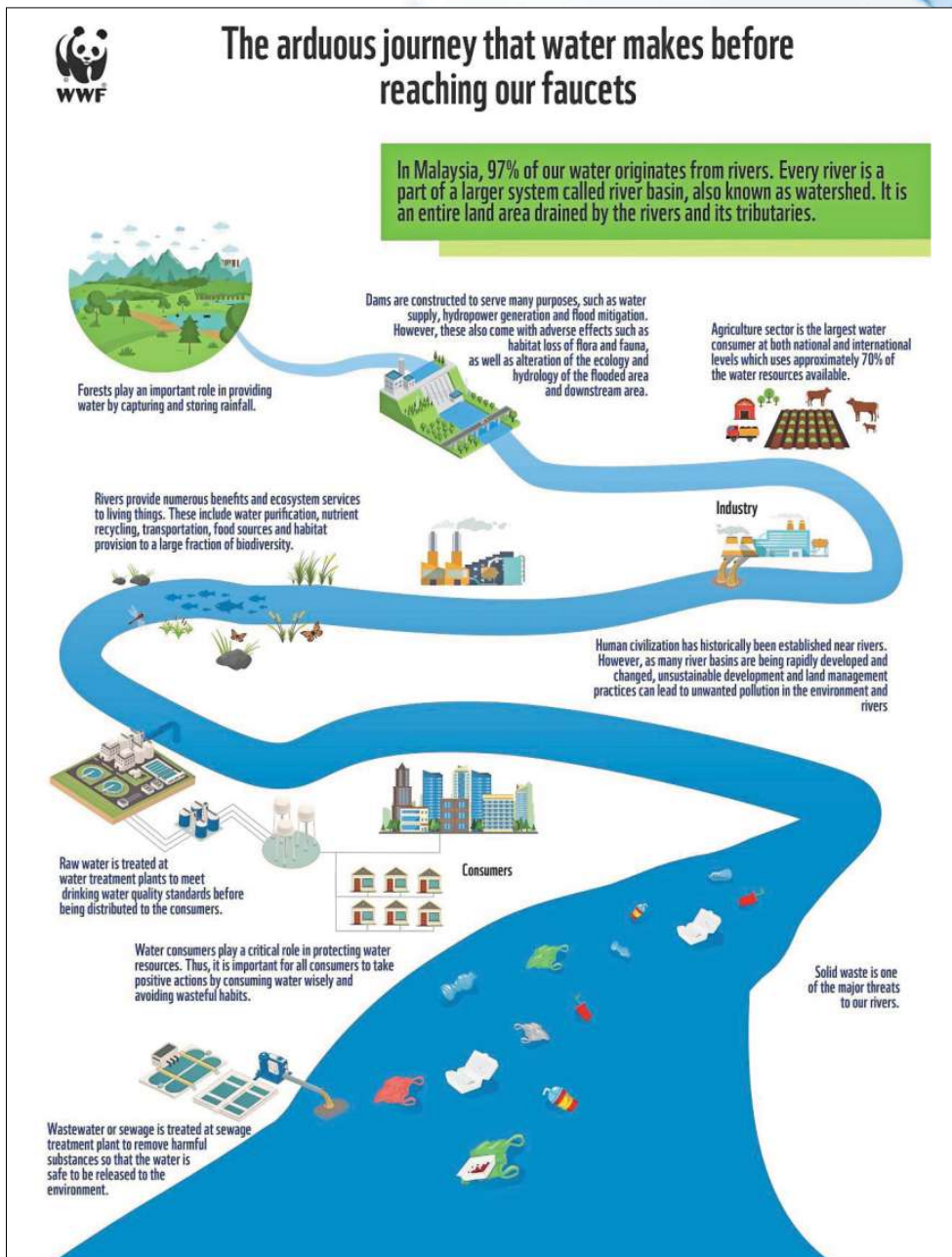
## Water stress

Nowadays, water service disruptions, floods and river pollution are common issues in Malaysia. While scheduled water cuts are necessary for maintenance and repairs, it is the unscheduled disruptions, often caused by pollution, that cause major issues.

These can take longer to resolve, depending on how severely polluted the water source is. In such cases, treatment plants must shut down to maintain water quality standards and protect public health. River pollution comes from point or non-point (NPS) sources. Point source pollution is identifiable from a specific and single location like industrial discharge pipes, NPS pollution is derived from various sources such rainwater runoff from a night market that carries trash, food waste and oils into storm drains and nearby rivers.







Journey of water (Infographic by WWF-Malaysia Freshwater Conservation Team)

Accounting for 70% of river pollution in Malaysia, NPS pollutions are more difficult to identify and regulate. The improper disposal of solid wastes including fats, oils and grease (FOG) also contributes significantly to the water pollution issue. FOG disposed of into sinks causes blockages, pipe bursts and overflows of raw sewage that end up in rivers.

When it comes to floods, factors causing them include climate change, incompatible land use, poor drainage management and pollution. With climate change, weather patterns have become erratic, causing more intense rainfall. Forests absorb rainfall and slowly release water over time via surface and groundwater flows. Deforestation in the upstream watersheds disrupts this natural process, which then causes an increased amount of water runoff. This can lead to floods in downstream areas, as seen in Baling, Kedah last year.

### Solving water woes

The current 12th Malaysia Plan (2020-2025), which complements the Water Sector Transformation 2040, incorporates strategies

to address water resources issues. Among these strategies are nature-based solutions (NbS) to tackle challenges for climate adaptation and reduction of water-related disaster risks by leveraging ecosystem services. Possible NbS approaches include keeping river corridors intact, restoring vegetation via tree planting and developing urban gardens along river stretches to aid in flood mitigation.

Sustainable land use management is also important, with developments planned in harmony with rivers. Meanwhile, apart from contributing to the quality of life, green spaces in urban areas can also be retained for stormwater management and pollution buffering. Malaysians could also turn to rainwater harvesting to reduce water consumption and save money on water bills. Flood preparedness training can also help in addressing flood challenges among vulnerable communities.

It is vital that we continue to prioritise the conservation and management of water resources, to ensure the availability of safe and affordable water for generations to come.



A river bank in the Klang Valley littered with dredged out waste from the river. This is an example of a non-point source pollution. – Image by Nurul Afiah Jamaludin/WWF-Malaysia



Site excursion during a flood preparedness training with the local community whereby they were interviewed to gather local information and database. – Image by Nurul Afiah Jamaludin/WWF-Malaysia



# ESG

in the news

## April 1

● **Cypark Resources Bhd's** major shareholder **Jakel Capital Sdn Bhd** hopes the appointment of Datuk Ami Moris as independent non-executive director to the renewable energy (RE) producer's board will help enhance corporate governance and the ESG agenda at the company.

Jakel Capital, which holds a 23.08% stake in Cypark, said her appointment reflected Cypark's board's move to embrace diversity, equity and inclusivity in its business.

## April 4

● **Nextgreen Global Bhd's (NGGB)** wholly-owned unit Nextgreen Biomass Sdn Bhd will use a special-purpose vehicle (SPV) called GTC Biomass Bhd for the construction, development and commissioning of 20 oil palm waste collection and processing centres throughout Malaysia.

NGGB, in a filing with Bursa Malaysia, said it will undertake the proposed centres in a joint venture (JV) with Greentech Malaysia Alliances Sdn Bhd (GTMASB), Koperasi Sahabat Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia Bhd and Koperasi Perkhidmatan Setia Bhd.

Nextgreen Biomass will provide investment opportunities in developing the centres and through its related company, Nextgreen Pulp & Paper Sdn Bhd, and it is obliged to purchase all oil palm waste or derivatives from the centres.

## April 5

● **Johor Corp's (JCorp)** subsidiary, **JLand Group Sdn Bhd (JLG)**, is working with international consultants to create a world-class smart and sustainable development called Ibrahim Technopolis (Ibttec) in Johor.

JCorp president and chief executive Datuk Syed Mohamed Syed Ibrahim said this is in line with the company's aim to become an end-to-end real estate solutions provider by implementing sustainable development strategies.

## April 6

● **G Capital Bhd (GCap)** has proposed to undertake a renounceable rights issue to part fund its 20MW mini-hydropower plant projects in Perak.

In a filing with Bursa Malaysia, GCap corporate exercise entails the issuance of 1.4 billion five-year redeemable convertible unsecured loan stocks (RCULS), with a nominal value of up to RM112.9mil at 100% subscription and at its nominal value of eight sen each.

GCap's projects are the mini-hydropower plants namely, Sg Perak Salu (10MW), Sg Temelong and Sg Ibul (8MW) and Sg Geroh (2MW), all anticipated to commence this year with expected completion dates in 2026 and 2027.

● Under a collaboration between **Sunway Property**, the property development arm of Sunway Bhd, and **Alliance Bank Malaysia Bhd**, homebuyers can leverage on the bank's sustainable mortgage financing packages for green certified Sunway projects.

The partnership, aimed at driving the adoption of green-certified properties towards sustainable communities, also enabled homebuyers to enjoy lower interest

rates and fast turnaround time for end-financing approvals.

## April 7

● **The Securities Commission (SC)**, together with **Bank Negara**, will engage with energy sector stakeholders to assess companies' readiness to meet the technical screening criteria under the Asean Taxonomy.

The consultation will be undertaken following the release of Version 2 of the Asean Taxonomy for Sustainability Financing (Version 2) last week.

In a statement, the SC said the results of these stakeholder consultations would be taken into consideration to finalise Version 2, which is set to take effect in early 2024.

"The refinement in Version 2 is a vital step in steering Asean and its member states to transition towards sustainability," said SC chairman Datuk Seri Awang Adek Hussin.

● Chinese automaker **Zhejiang Geely Holding Group Co Ltd** will invest RM30bil in the development and commercialisation of the Automotive High-Tech Valley (AHTV) in Tanjung Malim, Perak, says Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Chang Lih Kang.

● In line with its commitment to develop the country's carbon market via the voluntary carbon market – the **Bursa Carbon Exchange (BCX)** – Bursa Malaysia has announced that it has become a member of the International Emissions Trading Association (IETA).

Chief executive officer Datuk Muhamad Umar Swift said the move to join the IETA, a thought leader in carbon market mechanisms, was an important milestone for Bursa Malaysia.

## April 10

● **GUH Holdings Bhd** is in discussions with Prasarana Malaysia Bhd and Rapid KL to expand its e-scooter and e-bicycle business by tapping into the growing micro-mobility industry in the country.

GUH is pursuing the business through its subsidiary, Star Wheels Electronic Sdn Bhd.

Star Wheels managing director Eric Lee told *StarBiz* the company would work with Prasarana and Rapid KL to expand its retail outlets, service centres and assembly facilities to support the demand, repairs and maintenance work for e-scooters.

## April 12

● The government will launch a framework on ESG standards by year-end to help companies transition to renewable energy (RE), says **International Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz**.

Tengku Zafrul said while the framework will encompass all local industries, it will be focusing more on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in terms of funding and capacity building.

"Many of our export markets are asking exporters to be ESG-compliant. As such, we need to prepare our companies, especially SMEs, to transition to be more ESG-compliant or they might not be able to market their products overseas.

"The big companies have the ability to do it but this may not be the case for SMEs," he told reporters after the launch of Malaysia's first battery-energy storage system (BESS) for RE," he said.

● **IJM Corp Bhd** has committed towards achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 as it aims to reduce its carbon footprint and enhance its climate resilience.

The company said in a statement its carbon reduction strategy will focus on four key mitigation pillars across its own operations and value chain – energy optimisation, supply

chain advocacy, industry engagement and product stewardship.

● **Construction Research Institute of Malaysia**, a unit of the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) Malaysia, and YTL Cement Bhd, will partner to encourage construction excellence and promote sustainable construction practices in the wider sector.

## April 13

● **The International Trade and Industry Ministry (Miti)** is in talks with industry players in the automotive sector to review the National Automotive Policy 2020 (NAP 2020) and ensure the policy remains relevant in the future.

Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz said this is in line with the advancement of technology, where many new developments, especially regarding energy-efficient vehicles (EEV) and electric vehicles (EVs), needed attention.

● **Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB)** and its wholly-owned subsidiary, **GSPARX Sdn Bhd**, have signed a supply agreement for renewable energy with Aeon Co (M) Bhd for the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) facilities at all Aeon Malls and Aeon BiG nationwide.

Under the agreement, GSPARX will install and maintain a 77,000-kilowatt peak (kWp) PV system at the Aeon ecosystem for 25 years.

Each installation of the PV sites costs RM3mil to RM4mil and will be borne by TNB as part of its social responsibility towards the environment and efforts to encourage clients to participate in its RE initiatives to meet the net-zero target by 2050.

● **Proton Holdings Bhd** may accelerate the introduction of electric vehicles (EVs) suitable for Malaysian consumers as early as 2025 compared to 2027 as initially projected.

Deputy chief executive officer Roslan Abdullah said Proton is currently in the process of identifying suitable models of EVs that are more affordable and practical.

"We may have a model that is affordable but not practical, so we are identifying together with Geely to speed up the project and this is also on the recommendation of the government, especially Miti, to ensure that Proton accelerates the EV project.

"We will inform the media of the latest information," he said after the launch of the Proton Rahmah 2023 campaign.

## April 14

● **Reservoir Link Energy Bhd** has entered into an agreement with PT Unilever Oleochemical Indonesia (PTUOI) to undertake construction, commissioning and operations of a new wastewater treatment plant in PTUOI's premises in Sei Mangkei, north Sumatra, Indonesia.

The energy-related services provider, in a statement, said its 85% owned subsidiary PT EnviroTech Akva Indonesia entered into the agreement with PTUOI.

The tenure for the agreement will be for 10 years starting from the date of commercial operations.

● A lack of awareness, regulatory barriers, limited expertise, and cost are the main challenges that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) face in becoming ESG-compliant.

**Malaysian Investment Development Authority** senior executive director of investment policy advocacy, Sikh Shamsul Ibrahim Sikh Abdul Majid said in the past, companies focused primarily on maximising profits and reporting them to their shareholders.

However, in recent years there has been a shift towards a stakeholder-value approach. "As such, ESG becomes the key in Malaysia's

investment policies. The role of local companies, especially SMEs, is important for foreign companies to invest in Malaysia. If local companies do not embrace ESG, what Malaysia can offer to foreign investors will not be as competitive as other countries," he said during a panel discussion.

## April 17

● **Malayan Banking Bhd's (Maybank)** insurance arm **Etika** is beefing up its sustainability initiatives as the insurer prepares for expansion in Asean.

Chief strategy officer Chris Eng told *StarBiz* that one of Etika's vision is to ensure all its equity investments would meet its internal ESG guidelines by 2025.

"Research has shown that ESG-based investment funds have performed better than non-ESG funds, especially when there were market drawdowns, as the sustainability compliance of the funds acts as a form of risk management for the portfolio.

"Hence, it is not just about principles and going green but investing in ESG-compliant portfolios makes sense in the long run.

"Increasingly, as customers and investors demand more sustainability compliance among their fund managers, we will continue to see even more outperformance among ESG investments," he said.

## April 18

● **Salcon Bhd** has secured an engineering, procurement, construction and commissioning (EPCC) job for a 10.44 megawatt small hydro power plant at the Sungai Selangor Dam in Kuala Kubu Baru, Selangor worth RM65mil.

In a statement, Salcon said its wholly-owned subsidiary, Salcon Engineering Bhd, has accepted a letter of award for the EPCC contract from AIS Small Hydro Sdn Bhd.

## April 19

● **The Energy Commission (EC)** says it has capped the solar power plant export capacity at 30 megawatt (MW) under the corporate green power programme (CGPP) to expand the reach of the programme and make it more accessible to a greater number of businesses.

This is despite having recently increased the programme's quota from 600 MW to 800 MW.

## ESG opportunities

**ESG Consultant – Crowe Governance Sdn Bhd, KL**

Responsibilities include conducting risk assessments and recommending the best sustainability practices, developing strategies that integrate sustainability and responsible business practices into clients' operations.

Person to provide insights, analysis, and strategic plan on ESG initiatives and to work closely with ESG Manager to deliver actionable ESG strategies.

**Corporate Sustainability Senior Manager – S P Setia Berhad, Shah Alam/ Subang**

To manage the portfolio of sustainability projects across the organisation and to develop and maintain Setia sustainability framework, policies and procedures and set targets.

Candidate also to support business units in driving and executing projects to achieve sustainability targets and to assist in preparing five-year business plan for the Group and ensure the alignment of sustainability targets.

Write to us and submit your views on our stories, or on ESG-related issues that matter to you.

Email us at [ESGeditorial@thestar.com.my](mailto:ESGeditorial@thestar.com.my)

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# The water crisis and its impact on Earth

Investing in and protecting our natural capital

By ERIC QUAH and CHOW ZHI EN  
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**U**NDoubtedly biodiversity and water resources are closely interconnected in a complex ecosystem. Our country's rich biodiversity, including its vast tropical rainforests, plays a crucial role in the regulation and conservation of water resources.

According to Bank Negara's (BNM) 2022 annual report, Malaysia is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including water stress by extension.

The report outlined interactions between biodiversity and climate change, noting that "nature-related risks refer to risks from the decline or loss of ecosystem services, biodiversity, and natural assets (such as water and forests)."

One key takeaway from BNM's report is the importance of mindfulness when it comes to how we use our natural resources, as overuse not only harms our communities but also our economy in the long run.

Unfettered activities like illegal logging have a direct negative impact on the environment, from depleting natural forest covers to polluting our waterways. These actions lead to the loss of habitats and fragmentation of ecosystems.

Forests are also Mother Nature's defence system; they reduce soil erosion, prevent landslides, and regulate the flow of water since they act as a sponge that absorbs

rainfall and stores it within the soil, preventing it from flowing too quickly into rivers which can cause flash floods.

And when it comes to the water cycle, trees regulate precipitation, evaporation and flow. For instance, our forest canopy is responsible for storing and releasing water vapour, which affects our rainfall.

## Protecting our natural heritage

In recognising the importance of forests in preventing natural disasters, the government has implemented various measures to protect our forests, such as the National Forest Policy 2021 which is geared towards sustainable management and conservation of our forests.

In addition to these policies, the government has also implemented reforestation programmes to restore degraded areas, which help to increase the capacity of forests to absorb water and reduce the risk of flooding. These initiatives are not only beneficial for protecting vulnerable communities but also support the country's efforts to combat climate change by increasing carbon sequestration.

More than just mitigation measures, there's been steps towards investing in our natural capital and natural heritage sites over the last decade.

For instance, Royal Belum State Park – one of Malaysia's most iconic national parks located in the northern region of Perak – spans over 117,500ha and is home to the "other Malaysians" that include the Malayan

tiger, Malayan tapir and Rafflesia flower just to name a few.

The park is located within the Belum-Temengor forest and is one of the oldest rainforests in the world, estimated to be over 130 million years old. The forest complex spans over 300,000ha, covering parts of Perak and Kelantan, making it crucial in protecting the water catchment areas for the surrounding communities.

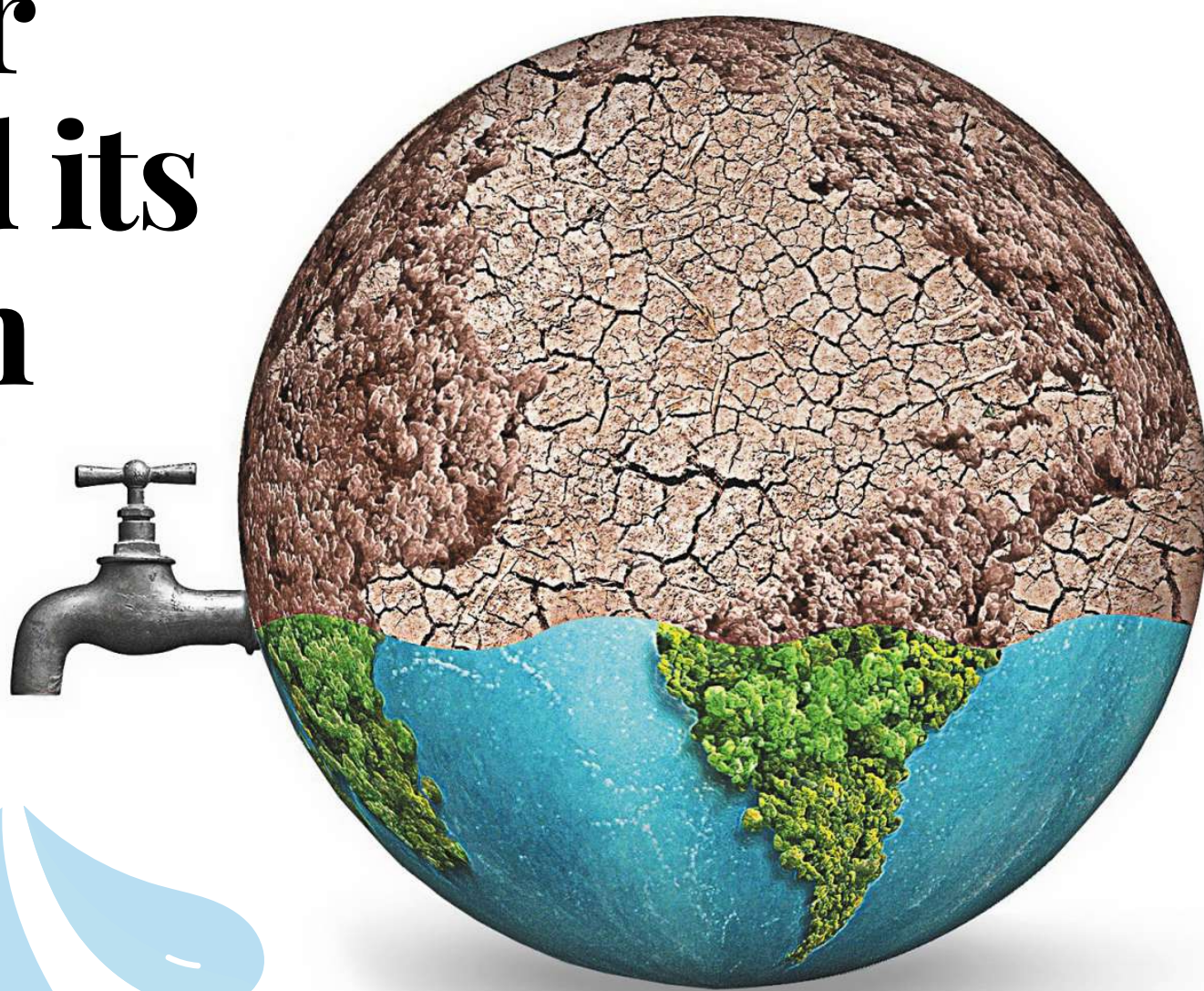
The Royal Belum State Park is also part of the Central Forest Spine (CFS) initiative, which was first established in 2014 with support from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The goal is to connect the fragmented forest reserves in Peninsular Malaysia to create a continuous forest corridor to improve wildlife migration, genetic exchange and ecological resilience.

Other forest complexes under CFS include the Greater Taman Negara Forest Complex and Endau-Rompin-Sedili Forest Complex.

*The Star* also reported that a total of 250,250.33ha of forests in Selangor have been gazetted as permanent reserves to date which is equivalent to 31.65% of the entire Selangor.

"The gazettelement was done under the Enactment (Application) of the Selangor Forestry Act," said State Tourism, Environment and Green Technology, Orang Asli Affairs Committee chairman Hee Loy Sian at the Selangor State Assembly sitting on Aug 2, 2022.

Earth Day serves as a timely reminder of our responsibility to protect and preserve the environment – conserving our flora and fauna is an integral part of this effort, as it helps maintain biodiversity and ecological balance.



Despite such a rich supply in Malaysia, the issue of its water scarcity is steadily reaching panic proportions.



# Water, water everywhere, not a drop to drink

Addressing water security, before it becomes a bigger problem

**W**ATER is such an important resource in the world that the United Nations (UN) designated March 22 as World Water Day, as a way to advocate the sustainable management of freshwater resources.

This year, the theme is on "Accelerating Change", as the UN urges governments to work four times faster to meet Sustainable Development Goal #6, which is the promise to provide access to safely managed water and sanitation to their population by 2030.

These criteria should be easily complied with for a country blessed with high rainfall levels that feed rivers and lakes, making them important sources for water.

However Malaysia could be facing a looming crisis. Despite such a rich supply, the issue of its water scarcity is steadily reaching panic proportions.

Treated piped water is available to almost all households as it stands at around 95.9% in 2019, (according to the United Nations *Malaysia: Progress in achieving SDG 6* report) but the rate that Malaysians are consuming is considered extremely high.

In 2020, domestic water consumption stood at 245 litres per capita per day for both Peninsular Malaysia and the Federal Territory of Labuan. This is a stark contrast to the UN benchmark of 165 litres daily water requirement per person per day.

Such high water consumption also resulted in a higher level of water pollution as this water will flow back into the system as waste.

Mirroring this sentiment is Malaysian Water Engineers Action Committee (MyWAC) chairman Ishak Hasnan, who shared in an article in *The Star* (February, 2020) that consumers' wasteful ways coupled with problems plaguing water concessionaires could potentially cause water supply disruptions in various states, creating a water crisis.

He stated that due to climate change, rainfall has slowly but surely moved away from the water catchment areas located inland to instead inundate coastal areas. This leaves catchment areas literally high and dry.

The water problems faced by the different state water concessionaires are ongoing issues that have given rise to separate disruptions in supply.

In Selangor, the problem of water pollution due to industrial runoffs and certain poorly operated sewage treatment plants caused major disruptions in the water supply to the public and businesses in recent years.

On Penang island, the water shortage problem can be traced to the availability of water catchment areas on the island, which at a total of 62.9sqkm, only represents 20% of the clean water needs to the island.

With a rising population and the fact that tourism is its lifeblood meant that the island has to draw 80% of its water from the Sungai Dua and Sungai Muda plants in Kedah, which has recently been embroiled in political controversies.

Down south in Johor, river pollution, drought at the Johor River dam and mechanical issues at treatment plants seem to be the reasons for the water cuts and shortages from 2015 onwards.

"If these issues are not addressed properly and consumers don't change their attitude towards water, it's not impossible for a water crisis to occur," Ishak said.

Compounding these problems are ongoing environmental changes that could worsen later this year as the El Nino weather pattern returns – heralding a hotter, dryer weather than usual, bringing about drought.

With these compounding problems it seems very likely that the country's water crisis would need to be addressed soon before another calamity causes disruptions to this most crucial resource.

For that, the Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change (NRECC) Ministry seems to have plans that can provide the solution to the ongoing problems.

Last month, at the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York, NRECC minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad acknowledged that "the climate crisis is a water crisis" and that the world is facing water scarcity, inadequate provision for sanitation, as well as more intense and frequent disasters and extreme weather events.

"By the end of 2025, we aim to reach 98% coverage of clean water for rural areas and 90% for sewerage coverage," he said.

Niz Nazmi also shared that a national agenda to transform the water sector into a dynamic and vibrant economic sector was also formed.

This Water Sector Transformation (WST) 2040 aims to significantly contribute to the national GDP, by providing quality affordable water to the people while creating new job opportunities.



On a national scale, the government had also formed the National Tiger Conservation Task Force (MyTTF) to protect and conserve our national icon, the Malayan tiger (*Panthera tigris jacksoni*), which includes maintaining its habitat through sustainable land use management and preventing encroachment and poaching activities.

It will also facilitate the resilient development of science, technology, innovation and economy (STIE) as well as a research and development centre to the sector.

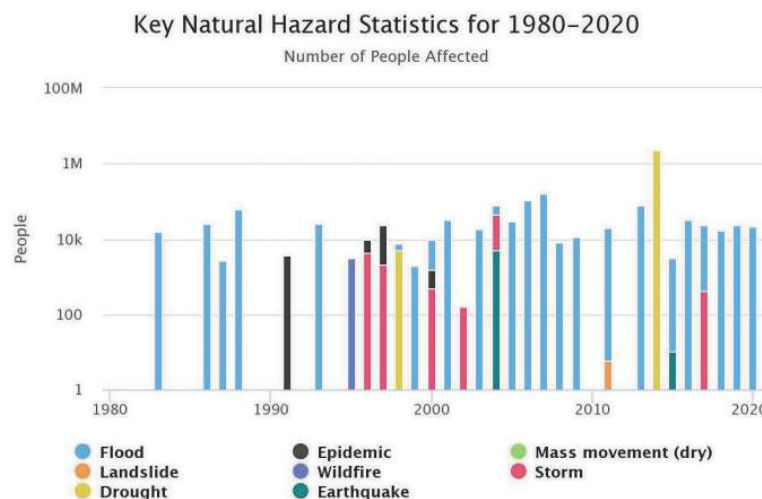
He explained that WST 2040 strategies are aligned with the UN's Water Action Decade aims.

"We want to empower people to ensure its implementation, strengthening governance at

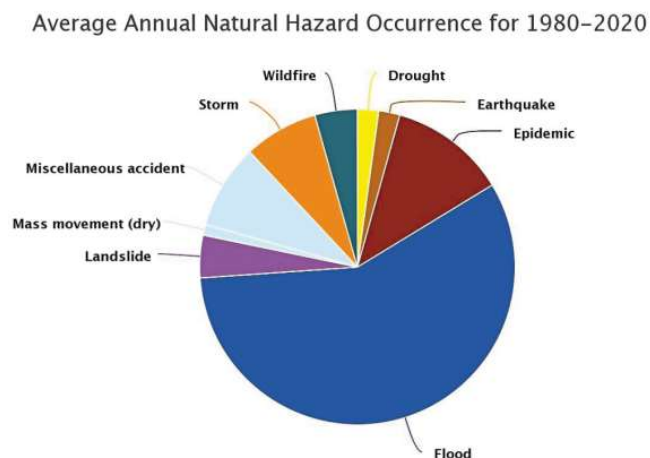
all levels while we enhance our financial capacity and infrastructure," he said.

To ensure a sustainable future, it is crucial for the government, businesses and individuals alike to take responsible actions to replenish and conserve our natural resources.

By doing so, we can protect our communities, preserve our livelihoods and create a better world for future generations.



Source: Climate Change Knowledge Portal, WorldBank



Source: Climate Change Knowledge Portal, WorldBank



# Securing Malaysia's public healthcare

By LEE CHONG HUI  
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IN 1948, the World Health Organisation's (WHO) constitution, a treaty between the nations of the world, came into force after the deadliest and most destructive war in human history.

Marking its 75th anniversary this year, WHO observed World Health Day along with its 194 member countries and partners across the globe and celebrated its successes including smallpox eradication, reducing the incidence of polio by 99%, saving millions of lives through childhood immunisation, declines in maternal mortality, and improving health and well-being for millions more.

Despite having made extraordinary progress in protecting people from diseases and destruction – improving public health across the globe in general – WHO called on a renewed drive for health equity to hasten achieving its “Health for All” agenda.

“We continue to face vast inequities in access to health services, major gaps in the world's defences against health emergencies, and threats from health harming products and the climate crisis. We can only meet these global challenges with global cooperation,” says WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Malaysia, part of the WHO network, is no different. The nation's healthcare system which has progressed since Independence in 1957 still carries certain cracks, but it isn't resting on its laurels.

## Making headway

The government's intention to table a Health White Paper to secure parliamentary agreement and commitment toward future-proofing Malaysia's healthcare system has been met with some scepticism, but ultimately, its tabling slated for June is highly anticipated.

“There will be elements of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and environmental, social and governance (ESG) in the Health White paper. We are awaiting it with great expectations,” says MERCY Malaysia president Prof Datuk Dr Ahmad Faizal Mohd Perdaus, a renowned pulmonologist (respiratory specialist) currently practising at KPJ Damansara Specialist Hospital.

He says the Health White Paper is expected to feature a recommendation for the implementation of a national social health insurance programme, which will be beneficial to the public health sector.

According to Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa, one of the strategic cores of the Health White Paper is to ensure the sustainability of health care financing by diversifying health care financing sources, with a special focus on the development of a national health insurance scheme.

“If the mandate is obtained through the approval of the Health White Paper, the ministry will take further steps by carrying out the necessary groundwork in developing a social health



On April 7 this year, the World Health Organisation (WHO) observed its 75th anniversary of World Health Day with the theme of ‘Health for All’.

insurance scheme, such as providing contribution rates that are appropriate, developing health benefit packages, determining the payment mechanisms and health care service providers,” she said in Parliament.

Dr Ahmad Faizal also points out the increasing number of public-private partnerships between the Health Ministry and the private sector post Covid-19 due to the realisation of the need to maintain a good public health system, keeping good records, up-to-date data and documentation.

“Covid-19 jolted us into the crucial concept of a whole of society, whole of government approach as an enabler in tackling public health crises. No one can be left behind and no one is safe until everyone is safe.”

This has led to the increased commitment by the government to boost the Health Ministry's budget for 2022 and 2023 – though people are continually advocating for it to be more than 5% of the total gross domestic product (GDP).

“With the increased realisation and increased financial allocation, there will be increased commitment to improving health services in the public sector as well as public health,” says Dr Ahmad Faizal.

He adds that even the private sector is giving more emphasis on the health aspects of employees, premises, organisation and has begun promoting and advocating for sustainable development or the incorporation of the UN SDGs into their business model.



MERCY Malaysia president Prof Datuk Dr Ahmad Faizal Mohd Perdaus says there will be elements of UN Sustainable Development Goals and ESG in the highly anticipated tabling of the Health White Paper.

## Memorable successes

Malaysia has made substantial progress in achieving good outcomes on health indicators and in providing affordable universal health coverage, gaining recognition and acknowledgement from international bodies.

“Malaysia has done well in a few aspects since our independence in 1957 where public health was not yet known.

“Since then, public health in Malaysia has been steered towards the wellbeing of the people of the country, maternal and child health, rural health and the combating of infectious diseases and rightfully earned recognition and applause from international bodies globally and regionally for achieving milestones that most other developing countries have not,” says Dr Ahmad Faizal.

The United Nations Development Programme recognised Malaysia's efforts in improving the population's health outcomes by providing high-quality as well as accessible health services and even made us a model for low-and middle-income countries to follow.

Additionally, a survey published by Ipsos that places the level of trust Malaysians have for its healthcare system at 64%. This outperforms the global country average and is the eighth highest among the 34 countries surveyed.

Malaysia was ranked No.1 in the world's best healthcare category in the 2019 International Living Annual Global Retirement Index.

WHO has also acknowledged the nation's strong capacity in outbreak preparedness and response which established a stable foundation in its Covid-19 pandemic outbreak



WHO director-general Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called on governments and leaders to take urgent action to protect, support and expand the health workforce as a strategic priority.

response.

To further secure progress and reforms that can be celebrated in the future, current issues must be addressed and health policies formulated with genuine consultation with stakeholders to prevent further cracks in the system – prevention is better than cure as most healthcare professionals might say.

Otherwise, public trust may wane due to lack of compliance with standard operating procedures, communication and meaningful engagements between the government with society, as well as poorly implemented health and healthcare measures.

Given that Malaysia has a new government in place after the last general election, will there be long-term healthcare reforms that stick? Only time will tell.



# “I am the river, and the river is me”

– Māori proverb



By AFZAA AZIZ and  
ADRIHANI RASHID

EARTH is often referred to as a water planet, being that water makes up over 70% of the earth’s surface. Over millennia, rivers have been the defining feature of human settlements as a source of drinking water, food, irrigation, power and transport.

The natural state of rivers is extremely diverse habitats that provide refuge and resources to an astonishing amount of biodiversity. Today, most water bodies are no longer in their natural state as the intensification of agriculture and development continues to degrade our natural ecosystems. Historically, human settlements were shaped by proximity to rivers.

The relationship we have with water has drastically changed with advances in technology for access to water and shifting modes of transport from waterborne modes to land or air through anthropological studies. The water bodies that first attracted human settlements and civilisations are now encased with pipes and concrete banks and often heavily polluted. We’re guilty of draining wetlands, building dams and excessively diverting water in an attempt to control where the water goes. We’re now learning that water does what it wants as we witness communities around the world struggle with extreme weather events of floods and droughts.

We’ve overlooked the natural processes of our hydrological systems that interact with soil, plants, animals and us.

The story of the Whanganui River tells a more hopeful tale. According to the Whanganui River Report, the Māori reside in settlements along



TRCRC partners with indigenous communities for collecting plant material for restoration projects to ensure the highest level of floristic diversity. — Photo by TRCRC team

the Whanganui River in New Zealand, a 290km-waterway that has served the community for hundreds of years and is considered an ancestor to them.

Alternate approaches on rivers from settlers resulted in the river being carved up to be owned and governed by separate legal entities. In a prolonged litigation battle, the local Māori fought to express their grievances and have their views – that the river is a singular and indivisible entity – recognised. In 2017, the Whanganui River became the first in the world to be granted environmental personhood status. The river was bestowed the same rights, protection and privileges as a legal person.



A natural river stumbled upon during TRCRC’s Banun team’s seed collection expeditions. — Photo by TRCRC team

This novel approach set a precedent and inspired other countries to adopt similar protection of rivers. In 2019, The Supreme Court in Bangladesh declared that all of Bangladesh’s rivers had the legal status of “living entities” in an attempt to protect rivers from growing pollution and encroachment. Three Himalayan rivers converge in Bangladesh to form the world’s largest delta and close to 80% of the population resides along these floodplains.

While this is not an end-all solution and the pursuit to save the rivers that have gained legal rights continues, it is transformative to how people relate to rivers and brings attention to the conservation efforts to better manage and safeguard these rivers.

We must recognise that nature’s rights come first because, in the absence of living systems and ecosystem services such as clean water and fertile soils, there is no human life.

To put it into perspective, the Klang River located in the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia has 11 major tributaries that flow from Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, some parts of Selangor state (Gombak, Hulu Langat, Klang, Petaling Jaya, Ampang Jaya, and Shah Alam) and eventually flow into the Straits of Malacca. Half of the river basin has been developed for various residential, commercial and agricultural uses and around 20% of



TRCRC planting trees with the local Temuan community from Kampung Kemensah along the Klang riverbank. — Photo by TRCRC team



Navigating the Baram river with the Penan community from Long Kerong, Sarawak. — Photo by TRCRC team

it has also been declared as permanent forest reserves which was also previously reported in the news.

The approximate length of 120km of the Klang River falls under the purview of multiple different governing bodies which poses a challenge to how the river can be best managed.

Through nonprofit environmental engineering organisation The Ocean Cleanup, considerable efforts have been undertaken to improve the water quality of the Klang River that is deemed to be among fifty of the most polluted rivers in the world.

Clean ups need to be coupled with restoring the riparian zones along the Klang River. The riparian zones are the land area between the aquatic and terrestrial habitat. When intact, riparian zones are important habitats for biodiversity and provide ecosystem services such as water quality improvement, flood mitigation, riverbank stabilisation and natural wildlife corridor.

For instance, the Lower Kinabatangan river in Sabah is one of only two places on earth where ten primate species are found, including the orangutan, proboscis monkey and Bornean gibbon. It is also home to over 250 birds, 50 mammal and 20 reptile species as well as 1,056 plant species.

The Lower Kinabatangan River is protected under the Sabah Wildlife Conservation Act 1997 and is

actively being restored by the local communities in partnership with civil society organisations.

The increase in fragmentation of tropical rainforests underscores the importance of maintaining riparian zones as corridors and connectivity for biodiversity conservation. More significant efforts and investments are needed for habitat and species recovery. The restoration of human-altered riparian zones will eventually help to increase biodiversity value and allow ecosystems to perform their beneficial functions.

Waterways are an excellent habitat for various species which would facilitate ecological functions such as pollination and seed dispersal which are vital for the survival of riparian vegetation.

As biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation become more mainstream, we urge everyone involved to pay attention to conservation priorities, particularly the restoration of riparian corridors which can slow the unprecedented biodiversity loss we are experiencing today.

By maintaining and rebuilding these highways for biodiversity, we can ensure that species and their genetic diversity can survive for many more generations to come.

You can do your part by advocating for projects that plant the right tree in the right place, ensuring that we maximise benefits gained for the resources invested into conservation efforts.





# Enhancing transparency in ESG reporting

By YAP LENG KUEN

STAKEHOLDERS – investors, employees, customers, communities and governments – are paying closer attention to the social and environmental impact of businesses.

Companies monitor and report on their progress in ESG matters through ESG and sustainability reporting, whereby they also publicly communicate their commitment to these issues.

Also called non-financial reporting, ESG and sustainability reporting provides information on a company's environmental and social performance, using appropriate indicators, and ideally, quantifiable metrics.

In Malaysia, transparency in ESG and sustainability reporting has come into focus; the Global ESG Monitor (GEM) on transparency has found that companies on the benchmark FBM KLCI had fallen behind in transparency, scoring an average of 54 out of 100 points.

Companies with high scores include Tenaga Nasional Nasional Bhd (TNB), Press Metal Aluminium Holdings Bhd and RHB Banking Group.

GEM is an independent research initiative dedicated to investigating ESG transparency which is not just about stating the positive aspects.

"Companies must also disclose negative aspects, as failure to do so can lead to accusations of greenwashing (with unsubstantiated claims)," said GEM co-founder Michael Diegelmann.

## Strive to be transparent in ESG reporting

"Those that deeply engage with ESG issues and pursue sustainable development can benefit in the long term – a better reputation, higher customer loyalty, increased employee engagement and reduced risk of negative impacts on the environment and society," said GEM co-founder and head of research Ariane Hofstetter.

Companies need to understand their current status and utilise strategic tools such as materiality analysis (a tool that identifies ESG topics that are relevant and impactful to an organisation and its stakeholders).

Competitive considerations may prevent the disclosure of certain information companies can follow the "comply or explain" principle.

This principle allows companies to disclose their sustainability performance based on a set of

guidelines, but also provides some flexibility for companies to deviate from those guidelines if they have a good reason to do so.

Companies should not fall into the trap of "woke reporting", whereby the term "woke capitalism" is argued to be based on replacing economic with symbolic value.

In general, companies limit their disclosure practice mainly due to lack of well-analysed data.

They may have data on sustainability which is scattered in various parts of the business processes.

Therefore, they face difficulties in forming a holistic view of their state of affairs in regard to ESG performance, which then precludes them from disclosing.

"Companies need to start embedding data collection on sustainability into their information systems; the data collected should be processed and analysed, similar to what is done for business data – sales, production, cash and expenses," said member of the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Foundation Integrated Reporting and Connectivity Council, Dr Nurmazilah Mahzan.

GEM researchers have identified six dimensions that make up a transparent report:

- **Balance:** The extent to which the reporting mentions positive and negative aspects, as well as risks and opportunities.
- **Comparability:** Assessment if the reporting was aligned with frameworks and standards such as the Global Reporting Initiative, as well as provision of metrics, formulas and comparisons.
- **Accuracy:** Information on indicators, topics (qualitative) and delivering concrete information and methodology.
- **Timeliness:** Information on concretely set time horizons and a clearly stated reporting period.
- **Reliability:** The extent to which the reporting is externally audited; clear responsibilities or accountabilities and monitoring are defined.
- **Relevance:** The report being material according to stakeholders' needs and delivering ESG context, with a glossary.

## TNB sees benefits of transparency

By openly sharing information on its ESG and sustainability efforts, TNB has been able to build stronger

relationships with its customers, empower its employees and better understand areas for improvement.

ESG and sustainability reporting has become important at TNB as there are higher expectations from the investor community for companies to elevate their ESG commitments.

It also needs to drive the sustainability agenda to maintain access to capital and remain competitive.

TNB must continuously deliver beyond customers' expectations to remain relevant and competitive in its service offerings.

Such offerings include the transition to a cleaner source of energy, the enabling of more green energy options and digitalised intervention for better efficiency.

It also includes facilitating customers' participation in energy transition and empowering customers with energy efficient options.



GEM co-founder Ariane Hofstetter



Global ESG Monitor (GEM) co-founder Michael Diegelmann



Press Metal head of sustainability Ivan Gan

The overall TNB governance structure across the board of directors and executive management level spearheads its sustainability strategies and practices.

The sustainability and energy transition council was formed in 2022; it deliberates on the group's company's sustainability and energy transition strategies and implementation.

The TNB board of directors oversees and provides guidance, and is actively engaged in ensuring that TNB's culture reflects its commitment to integrity, trust and transparency.

The senior management is responsible for the company's environmental and social performance, and regularly reports to the board and its committees on TNB's ESG activities.

Meanwhile, the ESG function co-ordinates day-to-day ESG and corporate responsibility-related activities.

TNB ensures disclosure of its sustainability commitments covering its aspiration to achieve net zero emissions and to be coal-free by 2050, and its commitment to a 35% reduction in emission intensity and halving the coal capacity by 2035.

To ensure transparency in ESG and sustainability, TNB prioritises trust and accountability, providing its stakeholders the visibility on how it is meeting its commitments and responsibilities.

Its sustainability report on transparency provides a consolidated, comprehensive view of TNB's ESG reporting and data, ranging from its carbon footprint to workforce demographics to sponsorships and donations.

TNB practises compliance reporting with the adoption of local and global reporting frameworks as well as with regulations related to ESG and sustainability reporting.

TNB is moving into effective management of data required to track and report ESG risks and progress, while also driving the organisational and digital transformation.

## Press Metal prioritises ESG reporting

Companies should be held accountable for their sustainability goals, impacts and developments; one way of doing this is to make data and information public.

Though measuring and reporting

on its ESG performance, Press Metal is also able to identify opportunities to reduce its environmental and social impacts, as well as improve its governance practices.

"We prioritise reporting on ESG issues that are most relevant and material to our company and stakeholders."

"In response to the dynamic changes in the business domain, an extensive materiality reassessment was conducted for financial year 2022, to ensure the relevance of existing material matters," said Press Metal group sustainability head Ivan Gan.

Press Metal has progressively adopted recognised sustainability reporting standards and frameworks, that help to ensure that its reporting is consistent, comparable and relevant to stakeholders.

The company has undertaken thorough internal reviews to ensure that the information reported is reliable and credible, and is looking to undergo a limited assurance exercise for selected sustainability performance data and processes.

Press Metal has set short, medium and long term targets to eventually achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

While continuously improving its smelting processes, it has also invested in research and development to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

Besides incorporating the use of recycled materials in its manufacturing processes, it strives to achieve 10% reduction in water withdrawal intensity by 2030.

Press Metal focuses on non-disciplinary labour practices and community development; its group-wide human rights policy serves as a guide for its workforce to prohibit any form of human rights violations, including child and forced labour, and discrimination.

The company has adopted international best practices in corporate governance, such as having a diversified board of directors, effective risk management practices as well as regular reporting and disclosure to stakeholders.

Overall, the CEO and board are accountable for transparency in ESG and sustainability reporting, as stakeholders require as much information they can, to evaluate a company's impact on society and the environment.



# Inaugural ESG PIA shows industry hunger for green innovations

THE Star Media Group's ESG Positive Impact Awards (ESG PIA) judging session completed its second round on April 4, with the finalists pitching themselves to a panel of six judges at Menara Star.

The judging kicked off at 9.45am after a judges briefing by auditor EY.

Judges then withdrew into two rooms – split between the large companies and small-medium enterprises (SMEs) and mid-tier companies – as the finalists pitched their companies' environmental, social and governance (ESG) initiatives to the judges.

The sessions were conducted in-person, with each pitch and question-and-answer moment lasting 15 minutes. Almost all the finalists were present for the judging, which concluded at 4pm.

For this round of the judging session, Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA) Strategic Planning and Policy Advocacy (Services) Division senior deputy director Suthashini Supramaniam was the chief judge for the large companies category.

"As this is the first ever ESG PIA we can't compare with previous years on the quality of submissions, but the diversity of companies cuts across many industries and it

indicates that ESG is crucial," said Suthashini.

Accompanying judges are Malaysian Institute of Corporate Governance (MICG) governor Izlan Izzah and Green Growth Asia Foundation strategic advisor Dr Sarva Mangala Praveena.

Malaysian Research Accelerator for Technology and Innovation (MRANTI) chief commercial officer Khairil Anuar Sadat Salleh was the chief judge for the small and medium enterprise and mid-tier category.

"For SMEs, we're focusing on the impact these companies have made," said Khairil.

"As this is the first time we're doing this, we're not expecting perfection. There will be aspects we can improve on but we can quickly prove through this exercise how objective the companies are."

Other judges are Business Council for Sustainable Development Malaysia (BCSDM) board member Khor Yu Leng and Green Growth Asia Foundation executive director Dr Muhammad Mahadi Mohamad.

OCBC Bank (Malaysia) Berhad is the main sponsor of the ESG PIA, while Telekom Malaysia (TM) is the co-sponsor.

OCBC Bank Wholesale Corporate Banking vice president Voo Mun Hou

said the bank was encouraged by the turnout for the inaugural ESG PIA.

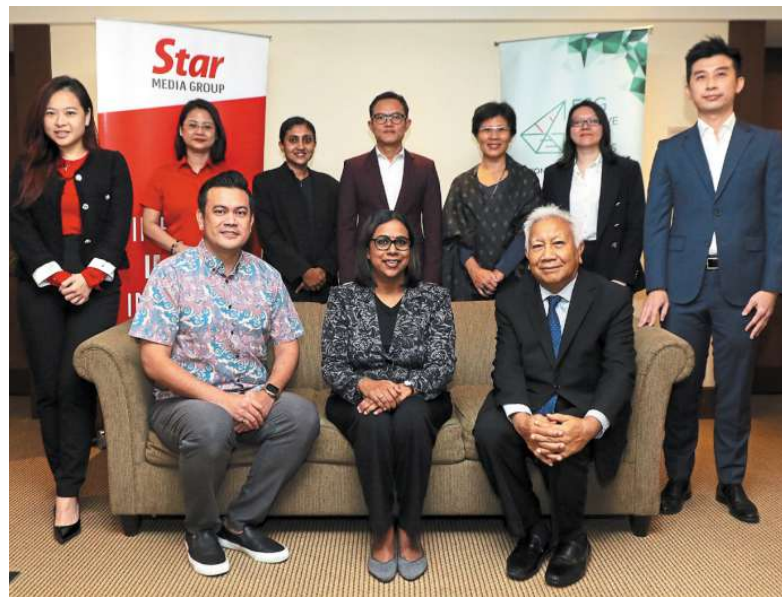
"We hope the Awards will help to unearth the impactful ESG strategies, programmes and achievements of both the smaller companies and larger ones – backed by solid data using scientific approaches – so others can emulate what they are doing more effectively.

"We believe that measurability is important because if a company's goals or ideas are too abstract, it becomes hard to gauge the impact they are leaving.

"Awards like ESG PIA help to create awareness about concrete steps that can be taken toward adopting a more sustainable future.

"When we learn from the journeys of the corporates and SMEs adjudged winners later, we will be in position to move closer to our sustainability ideals. Their stories and submissions will show other corporates that their company can embark on a similar ESG journey as well," he said.

"The most important step to take for companies who are unsure of where to begin is to get things in motion, and then you learn as you move along. Don't be afraid to make mistakes when you first start out,"



(Seated, from left) Green Growth Asia Foundation executive director Dr Muhammad Mahadi Mohamad, MIDA Strategic Planning and Policy Advocacy (Services) Division senior deputy director Suthashini Supramaniam, MICG governor Izlan Izzah, (back row, from left) EY auditor Arina Kok, Star Media Group chief business officer Lydia Wang, Green Growth Asia Foundation strategic advisor Dr Sarva Mangala Praveena, MRANTI chief commercial officer Khairil Anuar Sadat Salleh, BCSDM board member Khor Yu Leng, EY auditor Koh Jia Fang and OCBC Bank Wholesale Corporate Banking vice president Voo Mun Hou at the second round judging of the ESG Positive Impact Awards on April 4. – FAIHAN GHANI/The Star

Voo said, explaining that the banking sector did have its share of hurdles in the early stages of ESG strategies and initiatives too.

TM chief corporate and regulatory officer Tengku Muneer Tengku Muzani said: "We hope the participants will become champions in ESG and thought leaders for companies who will want to emulate their initiatives.

"The ESG PIA is an excellent initiative to build greater awareness and traction in strengthening sustainability practices across our nation.

"TM is delighted to be a partner and strongly advocates the efforts

and commitment of all Malaysian organisations towards our national objectives of a sustainable and responsible future.

"To create meaningful impact requires the collective efforts of all parties to raise awareness, promote collaboration, in support of our environment and the community at large. Only by working together can we create a more sustainable and responsible future for all."

"We can only be winners if everyone wins together," he said.

Stay tuned this May to find out who the winners of the inaugural ESG PIA are.

## Inspiring sustainable impact via support

### Green Growth Asia Foundation to drive region with economic growth while maintaining sustainability

By ERIC QUAH  
ESGeditorial@thestar.com.my

AS an independent civil society organisation that provides a platform for leadership, thought and action in responding to sustainability challenges in Asia, Green Growth Asia Foundation (GGAF) takes the lead to promote a new growth strategy that strikes a balance between economic development, social inclusivity and

environmental sustainability.

For that, it makes good sense that it is supporting the inaugural ESG Positive Impact Awards (ESG PIA) as a working partner.

GGAF envisions a resilient low carbon world built through strong, inclusive and sustainable green growth policies and principles focusing on Asia, by encouraging individuals, institutions, investors and political leaders to commit to practising the green growth concept

at all levels.

The green growth concept ensures Asian countries drive economic opportunity while sustaining natural resources and improving quality of life.

"As an ESG PIA working partner, we expect all candidates to demonstrate outstanding leadership in sustainability practices and showcase innovative solutions that contribute to sustainable development in the region," said

GGAF executive director Dr Mahadi Mohamad.

He added that as a partner in the awards, GGAF looks forward to recognising and celebrating companies that are making a positive impact in the Asia-Pacific region through their sustainability practices.

"We hope that this award will inspire more companies to adopt sustainable business practices and contribute to the region's green growth."

He also said that on the horizon are upcoming trends on how ESG will be reported.

"We will expect to see a rise in impact reporting, as there is a growing interest in measuring the companies' positive impacts on society and the environment.

"This reporting may become a more prominent feature of ESG reporting in the future," he shared, as ESG reporting moves away from today's focus of identifying and mitigating risks.

Dr Mahadi also highlighted the increased use of technology and AI in the future.

"With advances in technology, especially with the upcoming rise in AI, companies are increasingly using data analytics and artificial intelligence to collect and analyse ESG data," he shared.

"This may lead to more standardised and sophisticated ESG reporting."

Also, while environmental and governance factors have traditionally been the focus in ESG



'We hope that this award will inspire more companies to adopt sustainable business practices and contribute to the region's green growth,' says GGAF executive director Dr Mahadi Mohamad.

reporting, there is a growing recognition for the importance of social factors, such as diversity, equity, and inclusion and this could shift the types of data companies use to report on.

GGAF achieves its vision and goals through cutting-edge "green growth" strategies, programmes, projects and activities that drive economic prosperity within a socially inclusive context.

It is also underpinned by a strong sense of responsibility towards the environment and advances through education for sustainable development initiatives.







# The blue-green connection: Why we should invest in our waters

Compiled by ONG HUEY ERN  
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CLIMATE change affects all aspects of nature – from bigger, overt changes like weather anomalies and rising sea levels to our everyday needs, like food scarcity. Perhaps it is because our planet is covered 75% by water that we take it for granted for it seems never-ending. However, of all the water on earth, less than 1% is actually safe for human consumption.

Undoubtedly, the impact climate change has on the availability, quality and quantity of water is destructive and long-lasting. The water cycle is impacted by extreme weather which poses a risk for energy production, food security, human health, economic development and poverty reduction, as published in the UN World Water Development Report 2020.

To quote French oceanographer and conservationist Jacques Yves Cousteau: “We forget that the water cycle and the life cycle are one.”

## Reducing water pollution

Remember the days in school when everyone would get together to gotong-royong? Well, community cleanups can be a great way to reduce litter and debris in localised areas.

Harmful contaminants in rubbish pose a threat to marine and freshwater sources for both wildlife and human usage. Irresponsible waste disposal also clogs up waterways and results in unscheduled water disruptions.

This hampers businesses from operating efficiently, lives at home are halted for days on end, and in the event of late detection, there is also potential breakout health risk. Therefore, for

individuals, it's vital to practise proper waste disposal and to be mindful of water usage.

In tandem with personal responsibility, supporting non-profits such as The Global Environment Centre – who have also established the National River Care Fund (NRCF) – already have a system and activities in place for the public to participate in river cleanups and educational events.

Companies can also consider adopting a river to contribute towards environmental sustainability.

## Composting food waste

Composting is a process you can do at home by turning your biowaste into food for your garden.

Green scraps such as fruits and vegetable peels, coffee grounds rot quickly and add moisture, while grass cuttings, leaves and cardboard boxes are examples of brown composting material that contain fibre and create air pockets. These air pockets help prevent methane from being produced as a byproduct.

At the same time, composting food scraps reduce waste that goes to landfills and the decomposition process reduces the amount of methane released into the atmosphere; methane is a greenhouse gas that traps more heat than carbon dioxide and has a greater warming effect.

Adding compost to soil adds nutrients and helps the soil retain water better, meaning you won't have to use as much water for your garden. Compost can also replace heavy reliance on synthetic fertilisers which can be water-intensive.



## Supporting reforestation efforts

Reforestation is the process of restoring the land of its ecological functions to a period before it was degraded by human activities or natural processes. This could range from simply planting native species of trees in suitable soil environments to a more elaborate and involved ecosystem rehabilitation programme.

Lush forests will provide enhanced atmospheric moisture which in turn produces rain that we can then harvest for a number of uses. Ensuring our forests are plentiful helps to regulate the climate and to maintain wildlife habitats.

Financing tree planting and maintenance in support of larger reforestation projects, like Ape Malaysia, supporting NGOs working with state governments to legally protect intact forests or

even educating yourself through knowledge sharing activities held by organisations like Free Tree Society are just a few ways of making a positive impact and combatting deforestation.



## Wetland conservation

Wetlands is a broad term for when water covers or saturates an area of land; this includes mangroves, peatlands, even coral reefs. These natural landscapes are vital in maintaining water quality, supporting a diverse ecosystem and are especially important in controlling floods and providing protection from erosion and waves.

According to People for Peat (PFP), 56% of global peatlands are located in South-East Asia, these tropical peatlands store 42% of all soil carbon on Earth while only occupying 3% of the Earth's surface. Tropical

peatlands act as a natural flood protection by trapping and slowly releasing surface water, this combined function lowers flood heights and reduces erosion.

PFP allows businesses to embark on a tailored nine-month journey with PFP aimed at “optimising innovative solutions in business, finance and peat management with industry experts and investors”.

So, for companies looking to improve their environmental standing, this is a viable option for them to explore.

