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The EPSM Viewpoint On Environmentalism

By

Ir Gurmit Singh
THE EPSM VIEWPOINT ON ENVIRONMENTALISM

BY

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THE EPSM VIEWPOINT ON ENVIRONMENTALISM.

Environmentalism is more than just conservation, pollution and depletion of resources. It is the entire gamut of human activities and ecosystem considerations necessary to ensure a minimum quality of life for every Malaysian.

From the perspective of the Environmental Protection Society Malaysia (EPSM), there is an urgent need to re-examine the headlong rush for "Western development" - right from the national to the individual level. And we certainly do not view the issues from an isolationist, anti-development or short-term and elitist angle. In the short time available, it is not possible to fully deal with our philosophy, perception of problems and possible solutions.

But we can highlight them briefly:

PHILOSOPHY

EPSM believe that the achievement of environmental quality entails
- Awareness of the finiteness of natural resources and the fragility of the ecosystems especially in tropical countries
- Equity in access to the various resources and inputs for meeting basic needs including nutrition, clothing, housing, energy and sanitation.
- Need rather than greed to be a dominant societal consideration - hence our opposition to all forms of exploitation and corruption.
- Simplicity in lifestyles and an attempt to live in harmony with nature so that man, animal and plant can co-exist in a sustainable pattern.
- An open society with participatory democracy where the citizens have access and ability to influence the highest policy making authorities.
- A free and independent media with a strong investigative arm which can keep the politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen accountable to the population.

PROBLEMS

The major Malaysian environmental problems, in our view, are:

1. Irresponsible exploitation of natural resources including forestry and land for purely political or economic reasons with little regard to long term impacts.

2. Headlong rush by the middle and upper class Malaysians into energy wasteful habits manifested by an obsession in private car ownership and lust for electricity.
3. Industrialisation and urbanisation with very little checks to minimise water, air and noise pollution.

4. Destruction of marine resources and fresh water fish through overuse of agricultural chemicals and pollutant discharges into waterways and seas.

5. Neglect of the state of occupational health in both the public and private sectors.

**SOME SOLUTIONS**

We offer the following ideas for action:

1. Immediate implementation of the Environmental Quality Act and all related rules/regulations throughout the country—without fear or favour.

2. Increased environmental education for all Malaysians—both through formal and informal means.

3. Full and active participation of citizen action groups in the Environmental Quality Council & Environmental Impact Assessments.

4. Immediate study of the actual National Energy Needs of Malaysia to be done in parallel to a National Energy Conservation Campaign and the search for renewable energy sources.

5. A greater exercise by ordinary citizens of their rights of expression in order to achieve a better quality of life.


**THE MEDIA'S ROLE**

From EPSM'S experiences, we would suggest that the Malaysian media:

- Enlighten itself on the full depth and scope of environmental issues by instituting investigative reporting—even creating environmental desks or positions.

- Be more responsive and sympathetic to citizen groups and citizens fighting environmental issues.

- Reach out more often to the scientists and technologists who are developing systems to cope with pollution problems.

- Help popularise life styles and practices which reduce demands on finite resources like oil and land or encourage the use of renewable energy sources.

- Encourage an open dialogue/debate among politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen and citizens—by removing the unnecessary wraps of...
EPSSM's challenge to the Communication establishment and operators is:

BE HONEST AND OUTSPOKEN IN COMMUNICATING THE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES TO THE VARIOUS SECTORS OF THE POPULATION, and do give a fair chance to the financially weak and volunteer-astarved citizen groups like EPSSM in their struggle to champion the poor victims of environmental degradation.

JOIN US IN THE FIGHT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY FOR ALL MALAYSIANS