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COMMENT by Vinoshan Ganesan

Managing our rainforests sustainably

RAINFORESTS are unquestionably the oldest living ecosystems on Earth, with some surviving in their present form for at least 70 million years. There are two different types of rainforests – tropical and temperate. Tropical rainforests are located in warm climates around the equator.

Further north or south of the equator, temperate rainforests are located close to the colder coastal regions. It rains all year round in the hot, humid habitat of the tropical rainforest.

According to research from around the world, most rainforests are divided into four distinct layers: Emergent, canopy, understory and forest floor. Each layer has distinct characteristics due to differences in water, sunlight and air circulation. Despite covering only 6% of the Earth's surface, rain forests are incredibly diverse and complex, home to more than half of the world's plant and animal species.

Rain forests are extremely crucial for a various reasons, including:

1. They contribute to global climate stabilisation,
2. Provide a home for a wide range of animals and plants,
3. Prevent erosion, drought and floods, and
4. Is a fascinating location to visit, with many incredible features which people cannot find in the other parts of our nation.

Malaysia is blessed with rich natural resources. Taman Negara Rainforest is one of our most valuable treasures. This location is part of Peninsular Malaysia's Taman Negara National Park.

It is a well-known ecological tourism destination that draws between 80,000 and 100,000 tourists each year. This landline spans 4,343sq km and has been around for 130 million years, implying that the forest once accommodated dinosaurs.

Hundreds of thousands of plants and animals have made their home in the Taman Negara Rainforest due to the favourable climate and ecosystem.

There are over 200 mammal species, 479 bird species, 150,000 insect species, and at least 280 tree species per hectare.

Taman Negara Rainforest also offers rainforest trekking expeditions, including the world's longest canopy walkway (500m long and made up of ten bridge sections).

Throughout the years, our government has taken numerous initiatives to safeguard one of our country's most prestigious treasures, Taman Negara rainforest including:

1. Offsetting carbon emissions by investing in forest carbon projects. Malaysia has made an ambitious commitment to reduce the intensity of its carbon emissions (compared to 2005 levels), notably a 40% reduction by 2020 and a 45% reduction by 2030.
2. Sultan Ahmad Shah Environmental Trust (Saset) organises the Go Green with Saset (GGWS) programme, which focuses on planting forest trees. On Feb 15, 2020, 1,500 forest trees were planted in the Ichat River Permanent Reserve (HSK), Cameron Highlands in the GGWS.
3. Forest Research is conducted by Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) and Universiti Putra Malaysia to find good forest management and conservation methods. FRIM joined hands with experts from Japan, Germany and Britain to produce a Tropical Forest Action Plan.
4. Malaysia's Forestry department runs a forest plantation project to ensure a sufficient supply of wood for local use in the future. Tree species with breeds such as acacia, magatium, batai, and senduduk are planted in fields and cut down in turn after 30 years or 50 years.

Forest plantations were initiated in Johor, Pahang, Selangor, and Negri Sembilan. However, the number of mutual agreements with our government, NGO and private businesses should be increased. Only a few NGO, such as Treat Every Environment Special Sdn Bhd, were associated with our government.



Rainforests are home to more than half of the world's plant and animal species.

"We must ensure forests are managed sustainably for future generations. This commitment should be based on a strong policy framework."

Collaborations with NGO and companies will bring a new perspective to the table, and there will be many sources available to our government for research on rainforests in our country.

At the same time, corporate companies can be required to be more environmentally-friendly in their projects and research, and in exchange, the government can engage with these respective groups on a national scale.

As residents of this beautiful nation, all we need to do is make small adjustments in our habits to maintain our country's resources from being destroyed.

Steps to save Taman Negara

1. Choose products that give back to nature: When you buy a product, choose companies that donate directly to environmental causes such as products that have sustainable certification.
2. Stop deforestation: Choose foods and items that are produced responsibly to compel companies to alter their methods. According to a study

conducted by the United States Forest Service, if everyone in the US cut meat consumption by 25%, it would reduce annual greenhouse gas emissions by 1%.

3. Be informed: People are more likely to support the cause if they are aware of what is happening to rainforests and the indigenous communities that depend on them.

4. Be a volunteer: Contribution of your time can make a difference. Societies all over the world are coming to terms with the fact that humans, as a species, require rain forest resources. Our performance as guardians of these resources has been dismal thus far. We must urgently reverse this trend and ensure forests are managed in a sustainable manner for future generations.

This commitment should be based on a strong policy framework, and as humans, it is our responsibility to protect our rainforests.

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