


Need for independent oversight body to mitigate climate change



By [Dzulkifli Abdul Razak](#) - January 26, 2022 @ 12:08am



NSTP/GHAZALI KORI

MALAYSIA'S participation in Education Week at the Expo 2020 in Dubai recently demonstrates our interest in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

It saw various parties advocating an educational ecosystem for sustainable development for the future, notably in meeting the targets of Education for 2030, which coincides with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2016-2030.

As rightly pointed out by the higher education minister, education (SDG4) is the bedrock of ESD. It, however, must connect to as many of the 17 SDGs to make a difference in reshaping the future beyond just economic imperatives, enumerated in the 12th Malaysia Plan (2021-2025).

The ongoing pandemic, coupled with the devastating nationwide downpour and the resulting floods, make this point clear, that the SDGs cannot solve the problem satisfactorily, if at all.

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More importantly, complying to the desired standard operating procedures (SOP) is made more difficult due to a chaotic environment.

With the emergence of the more virulent Omicron, it adds to the nagging issue of vaccine inequity that the International Red Cross alleged to be "the ultimate evidence" for the emergence of the variant.

It points to the need to connect as many dots as possible in looking for a long-lasting solution to forge a truly sustainable future based on the ESD framework.

In light of the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia-SDG (APPGM-SDG) proposal for a climate change commission to be established, it makes for a perfect match.

Group chairman Datuk Seri Rohani Abdul Karim said the commission would act as an independent oversight body to regulate matters related to climate change, including adaptation and disaster risk management.

Against this background, the ESD would be the best conduit to disseminate and translate the recommendations made by the group based on the results of the research results by the APPGM-SDG team in 2020 and 2021.

The findings, though not new, are a timely reminder, that the "recorded floods due to development and land-use change activities that were not planned properly and lacked adequate risk assessment", as revealed at the special meeting on the floods in the Dewan Rakyat last week.

Other contributory reasons are unpreparedness and slow response to the disaster and overall structural planning, made worse by climate change.

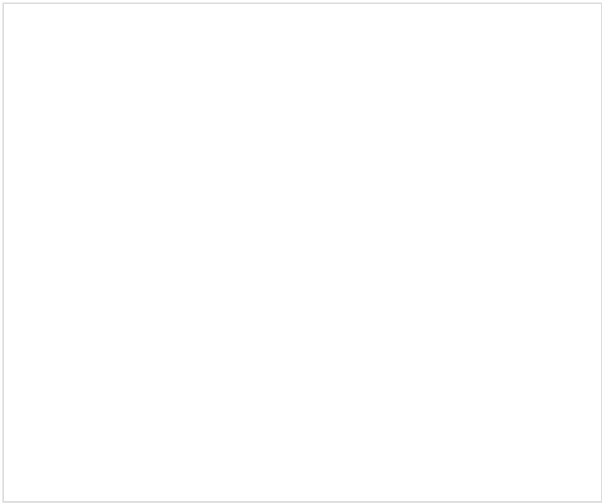
Reportedly, the impact of floods would be worse in the future with population growth, as well as the rate of urbanisation and economic development in flood-prone areas, coupled with the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather due to climate crisis.

In addition, it is also proposed that transformation in city areas have a more holistic and innovative water management system, as well as development in environmentally sensitive areas should be reviewed and stopped, and community-based disaster risk management implemented.

Other recommendations include:

ESTABLISH a Royal Commission of Inquiry to conduct an in-depth investigation on localised factors that contribute to the risk of flooding;

RFFVAI I IATF land-use planning including the state structure and local



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district plans, and the degazettement process of forest reserves in

Malaysia. Review the National Forestry Act 1984 to include public participation;

EXECUTE the National Adaptation Plan, in planning since 2015, which includes long-term scenario, risk-based planning, with clear responses and objectives;

STRENGTHEN and make use of "nature-based solutions" in environmental risk management and climate adaptation;

REEVALUATE and stop any development in environmentally sensitive and vulnerable areas, especially those that are highly populated;

ESTABLISH programmes for a more holistic and integrated water management, similar to the "Sponge City" concept, which can handle flash floods, the lack of water supply, urban heat island, air quality and deterioration of the ecosystem;

ESTABLISH a legal working structure that mandates a strategic environmental assessment for all policies, plans and programmes to inculcate a mitigation plan based on climate adaptation at all decision-making levels;

ESTABLISH community-based disaster risk management to better equip people for better disaster response in the future; and,

·ESTABLISH a mechanism to build back better for affected areas in terms of infrastructure repair, revitalisation of livelihoods, insurance for losses and damage, health, psychosocial services, among others.

The government would do well in adopting these recommendations, with several inter-ministerial activities to connect the dots, across political lines and barriers.

The writer, an NST columnist for more than 20 years, is International Islamic University Malaysia rector

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