

SARAWAK, MALAYSIA Dato Sri Ang Lai Soon's 2017 Earth Day Message

IS INTEREST IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION A RICH MAN'S PASTIME?

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What is Earth Day?

Most of us have heard of Earth Day but some of us may not know what it really is.

It is the day we show our support for environmental protection and conservation.

How many of us ever really think about our environment? Some years ago a friend, who is a lawyer, told me it was a rich man's pastime! In 2005, the world was rather shocked to see the extent of the damage caused by Hurricane

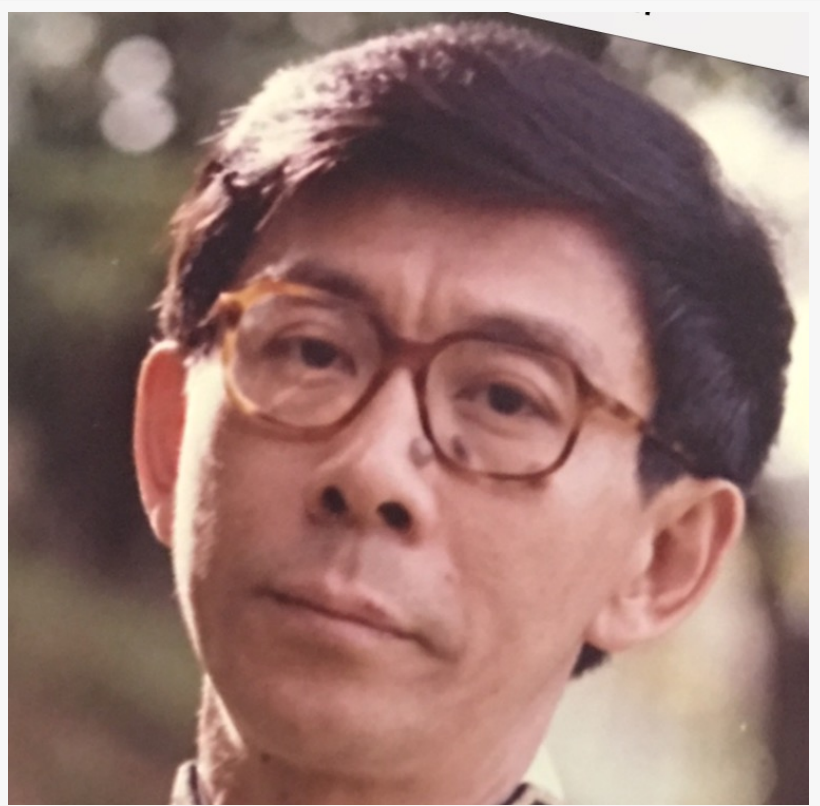
Katrina, considered one of the five deadliest hurricanes and the costliest natural disaster in the history of the United States. Over 1245 people died. Hurricane Katrina almost destroyed the entire southern states, with a lot of people from the lower income group left stranded, but the wealthy people went off or moved to higher grounds. It is always the poor who really are not so privileged as they are always living in low lying areas or highly congested or polluted industrial areas for economic reasons.

It is imperative that the environment must always be protected at all times for everyone of us, rich or poor, and all living things including animals and plants.

Or notice as year by year more of our natural environment is eroded by ever-expanding population centres and clearing of our rapidly diminishing tropical rain forest for plantations?

Or pay attention to learned debates on climate change and whether we are really responsible for causing climate change.

Many of us have heard of World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and in Malaysia the WWF-Malaysia, which is doing sterling work in the field of environmental protection. We must support the good work of WWF and other NGOs which are trying to make the planet a more bearable place to live in.



How many of us have heard of UNEP, the United Nations Environmental Programme, an agency of the United Nations?

Yet this august body “has overall responsibility for environmental problems among United Nations agencies”.

One of the earliest environmentalists in the 20th century must be Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh who has been actively campaigning for a better environment with many books to his credit. Prince Philip is trying to create awareness. His son, Prince Charles the Prince of Wales has carried on the good work of his father. Many in a position of influence should contribute to the environmental cause by joining the environmental campaign.

Earth Day is said to be to show our support for protection of our environment and more than 193 countries take part by carrying out various activities that seem rather irrelevant - one famous city's botanical garden is hosting 'environmental community vendors, art and craft activities, live music., organic-food cooking courses etc.

Is that enough? Or useful?

We see all around us the effect that our activities have on our own landscape and experience with annual regularity the scourge of stifling haze from deliberate wiping out of tropical rain forests in this region.

The extreme and unbearable temperatures experienced today everywhere, the droughts, floods, typhoons, cyclones, melting glaciers, uncontrollable wild fires, smog and haze and other environmental disasters are the results of the abuse of the environment since the INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.

Surely, we, the people, and the leaders in the society, can turn Earth Day into a day when something more productive is done about protecting our environment.

By first and foremost considering how we can reduce our own footprint and that of our family and that of our group on the environment?

By simple things such as reducing wastage of food, turning off unnecessary lights, planting our own herbs and vegetables in our gardens, using water carefully, to give just a few ideas?

Using Earth Day to set up and establish our own routine practices that reduce the pressure on our own small way. That is set our own goals and keep to them.

And by our sheer numbers making a real difference.

Let us resolve on Earth Day to vote at all levels of government for representatives who pledge to legislate for all necessary measures to stop further deterioration of our environment and action to this end. However, legislation on its own is not good enough unless there is effective enforcement .

The future of the coming generations is at stake.

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