

We can make a difference to Earth

Professor Tan Sri Dato' Dzul kifli Abd Razak

Comment

New Sunday Times - 03/29/2009

60 Earth Hour was observed yesterday around the world. It had one mission: an act by the global population in unison to create a new awareness on the state of affairs of planet Earth.

Organised by World Wide Fund for Nature, Earth Hour has been hailed as the biggest ever global movement involving hundreds of millions of people who participated by switching off non-essential lighting for an hour yesterday.

Cities ranging from Las Vegas to Sydney, from Cape Town to Kuala Lumpur went dark for an hour.

It was a highly symbolic event that demonstrated an opportunity on how the problems of the world can be collectively tackled.

One such problem relates to the seriousness of climate change. One such opportunity is in Copenhagen this December where world leaders will discuss and hopefully agree on the need for a global climate deal.

For this purpose, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reportedly urged citizens around the world to join Earth Hour to demand action on climate change from their leaders, apart from taking concrete action to conserve energy even for a relatively short time.

"Earth Hour is a way for the citizens of the world to send a clear message. They want action on climate change," he was quoted as saying.

He underlined the seriousness of climate change and the consequences ahead. "We are on a dangerous path. Our planet is warming."

Hence, we must change our ways to protect the people and the planet.

"We need an ambitious agreement. An agreement that is fair and effective. An agreement based on sound science," said Ban Ki-moon.

This prompted many to regard yesterday's global participation as a kind of a global referendum. The aim was to transform Earth Hour into the world's first global election against global warming.

According to Ban, it would be "the largest demonstration of public concern about climate change ever attempted".

Voting for Earth Hour was by switching off all non-essential lights for an hour last night. Leaving them on would have contributed to global warming.

The number of votes targeted was one billion, especially from populations that had the privilege to make a choice.

The result of the votes will be presented to world leaders at the Global Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen 2009.

The outcome of the "voting" is significant as it will help to determine the course of future actions that will replace the Kyoto Protocol when it expires in a couple of years.

Earth Hour, which began in Sydney in 2007, managed to persuade about 2.2 million homes and businesses to switch off their lights for an hour.

Last year, it grew into a global sustainability movement, with about 50 million people switching off their lights.

Universiti Sains Malaysia's campus proudly joined other famous landmarks in the world, such as the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, Rome's Colosseum, the Sydney Opera House and the Coca Cola billboard in Times Square, by remaining dark for 60 minutes.

It is believed about 3,000 cities, towns and municipalities in more than 80 countries participated in this global event.

In Malaysia, the Petronas Twin Towers, the KL Tower and the Penang Bridge were some of the landmarks that supported 60 Earth Hour.

Universiti Sains Malaysia, with its mission to be sustainability-led, participated again.

Although the impact of such action is bound to be a far cry from what the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change stipulates, that is, a 50 to 85 per cent reduction in emissions to turn the current warming trend around, especially when it is held one Saturday night a year, it is the will that counts.

In other words, if 60 Earth Hour can emerge as a global success, chances are that more intense collective action can be taken in the near future, especially when world leaders can come to a global understanding, if not consensus.

[Terms & Conditions](#)